by Santiago Iñiguez

Miracles, Technology, and the Mind: Why Our Future Depends on Using AI Wisely

A friend and former vice-president at a global bank recently asked what arguments she could use to challenge her colleagues' decision not to hire young analysts - because, as they claimed, "AI will soon do their jobs."

Around the same time, an American high-school student named Noah, with whom I had an exchange on LinkedIn, expressed a similar concern: he wondered whether pursuing a university degree still made sense if artificial intelligence was expected to replace a substantial share of today's professions.

Public debate echoes these anxieties. Some analysts point to a striking divergence in the US economy: since the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022, job openings have fallen by roughly one-third, while the stock market has risen by more than 70% - fueling the perception of an economy advancing at two speeds (Thompson, 2025). A recent report from MIT adds another sobering note: 11.7% of current US jobs are projected to be replaced by AI technologies (Laird, 2025).

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These concerns are reinforced by real organisational practices. During the recording of a recent television programme I participated in, the CEO of a major Spanish company explained that AI agents were already being used at her organisation to select drivers or assistants - primarily blue-collar roles for now, but with clear implications for white-collar ones, especially as AI systems begin to perform tasks once associated with corporate boards.

This Time, the Warning Is True: We Are Entering a Deep, Disruptive, Transformational Change

AI has accelerated a transformation that was already underway, prompting us to rethink not only the types of jobs that will exist but also the mindset required to navigate them. Technological progress can trivialise certain capabilities while dramatically elevating others. Paradoxically, as machines grow more sophisticated, the human contribution becomes at once more ambiguous and more essential.

The future of employment will rely less on executing predefined tasks and more on cultivating autonomy of thought, ethical discernment, and a sustained capacity for continuous learning. This calls for a renewed seriousness - not the rigidity of routine, but the seriousness of curiosity, responsibility, and craftsmanship.

Technological change should not lead to fear or resignation; it is an invitation to deepen our preparation. As some tasks become automated, new forms of work will emerge that demand imagination, interpretation, and judgment. The challenge is not to compete with AI, but to excel at what only humans can do: create meaning, exercise discernment, and build relationships of trust. To do so, we must recover habits of deep thinking that modern life often erodes.

The Discipline of Critical Thinking

If AI reshapes the world of work, critical thinking reshapes us. In an age of information abundance and instantaneous answers, the temptation is to outsource reflection. Yet critical thinking remains a discipline: the art of slowing down mental impulses, examining the origins of our beliefs, and testing the coherence of our reasoning.

Developing this discipline requires daily practice. It means questioning assumptions - especially our own. It means seeking opposing viewpoints not to relativise truth, but to refine it. It means distinguishing data from interpretation, facts from narratives, and expertise from opinion. And it means embracing intellectual humility: recognising that our reasoning strengthens only when exposed to challenge.

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AI does not diminish the need for critical thinking; it intensifies it. As algorithmic systems generate increasingly convincing texts, images, and analyses, our ability to evaluate sources, detect inconsistencies, and understand context becomes indispensable. Without critical thinking, AI becomes a generator of superficial certainty. With it, AI becomes a catalyst for deeper inquiry and sharper judgment.

Before Asking AI, Examine How You Think

The quality of our questions largely determines the quality of the answers. Asking AI is not a passive act; it is a cognitive interaction that reveals our intellectual habits.

When we ask without clarifying our intent, we receive vague or unfocused responses. When we ask without understanding the underlying problem, we risk being guided by the machine rather than guiding it. But when we ask with precision, self-awareness, and conceptual clarity, the machine becomes a powerful amplifier of our reasoning, rather than a substitute for it.

Thus, the first step in using AI effectively is introspective. How do we formulate problems? What assumptions are we bringing? What outcome do we truly seek? Interacting with AI becomes an opportunity to interrogate our own thinking—to refine our mental process, not only our prompts.

A New Humanism for a New Era

Taken together, these reflections point toward a renewed humanism for the age of AI. We often imagine technological evolution as a zero-sum game in which machines take over human capacities. But the transformation is more subtle: machines are assuming the mechanical aspects of thought, which compels us to cultivate the reflective, ethical, and interpretive ones.

Education - whether in universities, companies, or lifelong-learning settings - must adapt accordingly. Humanistic disciplines regain relevance not because they oppose technology, but because they prepare us to use it wisely. Philosophy trains us to question; history teaches us to contextualise; literature develops interpretation; the arts foster imagination. These are not nostalgic luxuries - they are the cognitive muscles that allow us to collaborate effectively with intelligent systems.

The workers, leaders, and citizens of the future will require both technical fluency and intellectual depth, a combination that no AI device can replace. They will need to engage with AI not as passive consumers but as critical thinkers and creative problem-solvers. They will need to bring moral judgment to decisions increasingly influenced by algorithms. Above all, they will need a sense of purpose, meaning, and dignity in a world where the boundaries between human and machine contributions are continually redrawn.

When Miracles Go Wrong

Don't you sometimes find the interaction with AI devices almost miraculous? Whatever we ask - whether a complex question, a request for advice, or a mundane task - we receive answers that are articulated, polite, and often surprisingly empathetic. These systems respond with a fluency that can feel uncanny, as if an invisible intelligence were patiently attending to our needs. Yet it is precisely this sense of effortless magic that should prompt us to pause. Before embracing these 'miracles' without hesitation, we ought to consider what happens when remarkable capabilities are used without reflection or restraint.

In his anticipatory novel *The Man Who Could Work Miracles* (1901), British writer H. G. Wells imagined George Fotheringay, an ordinary clerk who suddenly acquires the ability to alter reality with a mere act of will. What begins as playful experimentation soon escalates into catastrophe as he attempts to 'fix' the universe itself -at

one point commanding the Earth to stop spinning. The result is disaster.

The enduring force of Wells's story lies in its warning: when power outpaces wisdom, and ethics, even good intentions can break the world. Fotheringay's salvation - restoring reality to its original state - comes only when he recognises the limits of his own understanding.

This moral applies with disquieting clarity to our moment. Artificial intelligence grants us capabilities that earlier generations would have perceived as miraculous: generating knowledge on demand, automating reasoning, creating images, predicting behaviour, and shaping information ecosystems. These powers reshape our social, educational, and economic realities with unprecedented speed.

And, as in Wells's tale, we risk misusing this power without fully grasping its consequences. The rapid expansion of social networks has already demonstrated the danger of deploying technology before understanding its impact: polarisation, disinformation, addictive design, erosion of attention, and widespread mental-health challenges. The problem was not the technology itself, but the absence of a framework for its responsible use.

AI holds extraordinary promise. But if implemented without foresight, it could amplify the very distortions social media introduced - at far greater scale. Uncontrolled power does not merely enhance our capabilities; it magnifies our vulnerabilities.

The misuse of AI often arises when we treat it as something it is not: a therapist, a confidant, or a substitute for human friendship. These systems can simulate empathy and offer plausible advice, but they do not feel, understand, or care. AI is an intelligent mirror - capable of reflecting our thoughts, amplifying our emotions, and shaping our choices - yet it lacks a soul, conscience, or lived experience. When we project human qualities onto it, we risk emotional dependency, distorted judgment, and a gradual erosion of authentic relationships. AI can assist, but it must never replace the depth of human connection.

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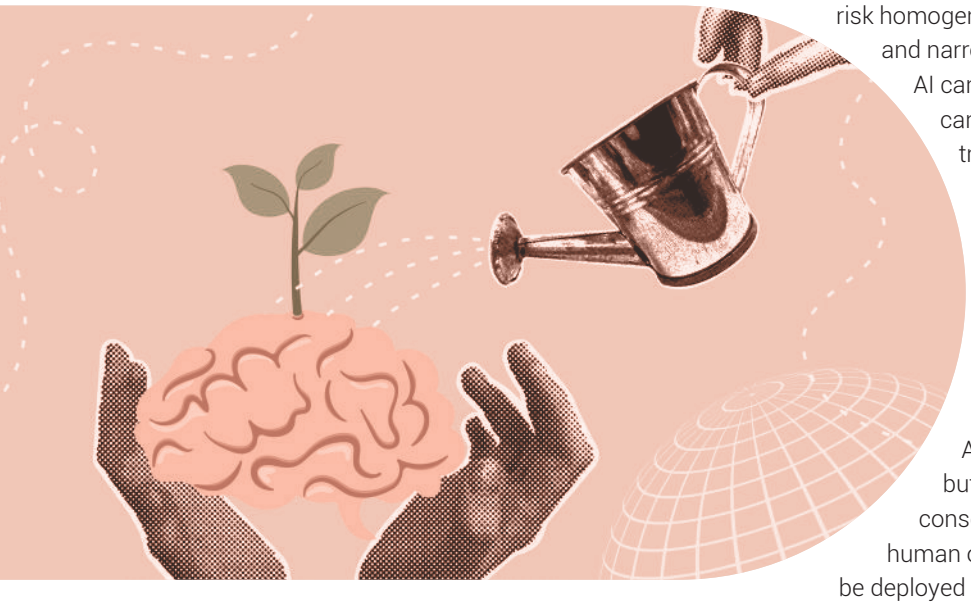
In corporate life, the misuse of AI often stems from assuming it can replace the very capacities that make organisations thrive: human imagination, innovation, and disruptive thinking. AI excels at pattern recognition, optimisation, and speed, but it cannot generate the intuitive leaps, creative risks, or unconventional insights that drive true breakthroughs. It lacks lived experience, moral judgment, and the ability to challenge assumptions with purpose. When companies rely on AI as a surrogate for human ingenuity, they



risk homogenizing ideas, reinforcing biases, and narrowing their strategic horizon. AI can enhance innovation, but it cannot originate the audacity that transforms industries.

To prevent this, we must articulate - clearly and collectively - how AI should be used in the key spheres of human life. In education, AI must be a partner, not a shortcut. In the workplace, AI can augment productivity, but decisions with ethical consequences must remain under human oversight. In society, AI must be deployed transparently, with safeguards rooted in democratic values and human dignity.

The point is not to restrain innovation but to align it with the moral compass that defines us. Wells's Fotheringay ultimately chooses humility over omnipotence. Today, humanity holds a power that feels miraculous - but our future depends on the wisdom, restraint, and discernment with which we wield it.

Takeaway: The Most Important Technology Is Still the Mind

AI is transforming work - and thought. It challenges us to refine the way we reason, question, and learn. The future will belong not to those who merely master new tools, but to those who cultivate resilient minds: curious, critical, reflective, and self-aware.

Consequently, we should approach AI with genuine enthusiasm, recognising the many positive effects it can bring to every sphere of our lives, while remaining clear-eyed about the responsibilities it entails.

Before adapting technology to our needs, we must adapt our thinking to the demands of this new era. The most important upgrade is not computational - it is cognitive. And that journey begins not with a prompt to a machine, but with a question to ourselves.

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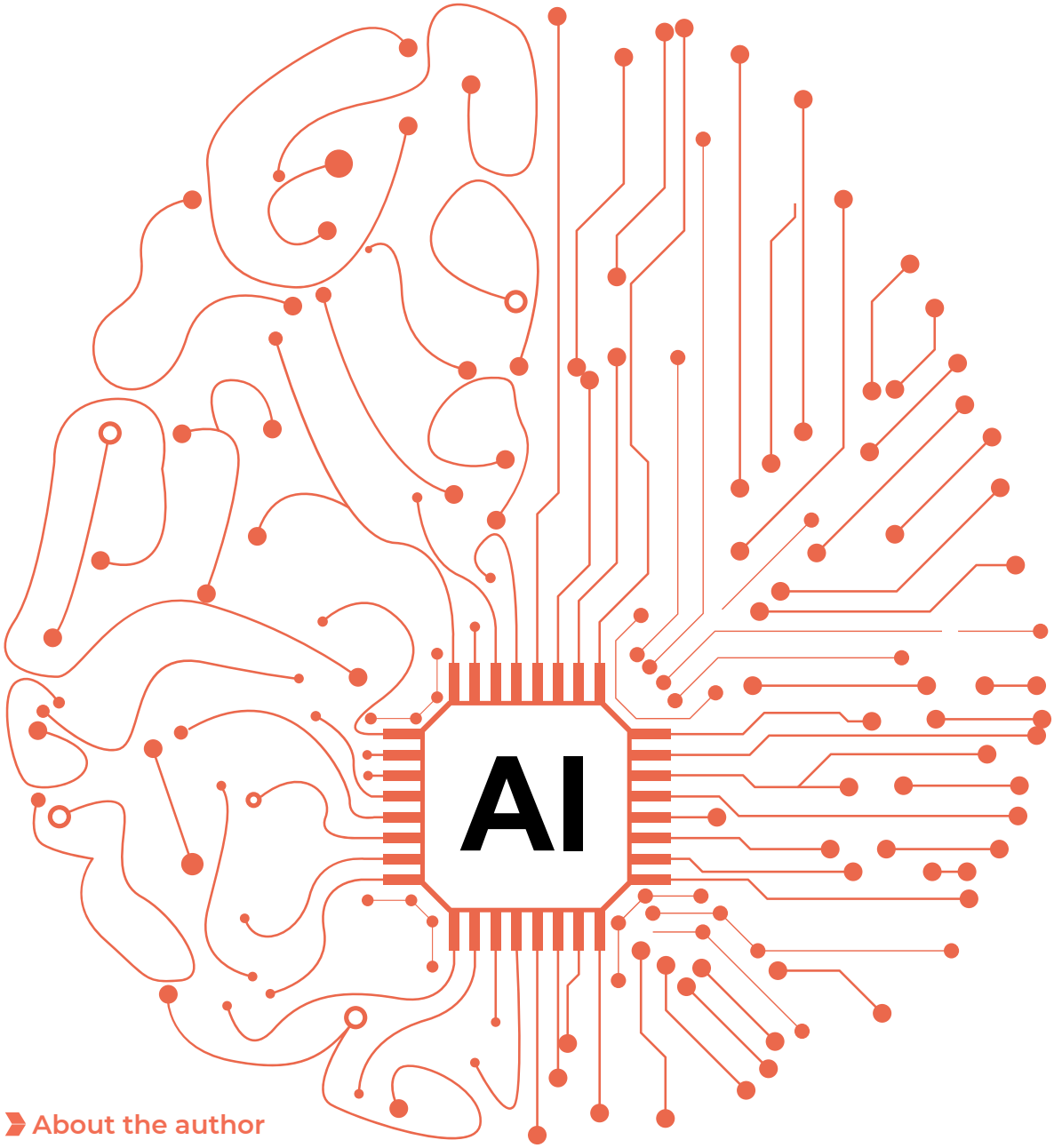

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