

## *Beyond Hype*<sup>1</sup>

### **Is AI Putting Our Values as a Society at Risk?** <sup>2</sup>

**Ricardo Viana Vargas, PhD**

Emerging technological tools like ChatGPT, Co-Pilot, and Bard AI have taken the world by storm. But this is not new. Machines started to challenge humans decades ago. Do you remember IBM's Deep Blue in 1997, when [it defeated the world's best chess player](#), the Russian grandmaster Garry Kasparov?

If AI can compete with the most brilliant human minds, then who knows the limits of its potential?

#### **Brave New World**

How will AI impact the way we learn? Google developed an engine where it was faster to search for information than going to the library. During my master's studies in 2001, I was instructed by my supervisor not to rely on search engines for my research sources. Instead, I had to traverse the seemingly endless corridors of the university library to locate reference materials. This experience is one that I will never forget.

That sounds surreal today. 🤖

I do not doubt that Artificial Intelligence will help humans generate more profound information faster than we can imagine. The advancements are undeniable! However, we cannot disregard the side effects.

How will some of our values as a society be shaped? How will ethics, humanism, and collectiveness be addressed in the near future?

One of the most disruptive (and disturbing) [videos](#) I've seen recently was made by the Swedish philosopher and professor at Oxford University, Nick Bostrom. He highlights the possibility of the AI system overriding human civilization with its own value structure.

Let me be more direct and didactic here.

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: This series of articles by Ricardo Vargas, PMI Fellow and recognized thought leader, is based on his LinkedIn newsletter called [Beyond Hype](#) in which he periodically shares his thought on emerging issues and potential concerns related to project management or the PM profession. Ricardo is a former Chair of the PMI Board of Directors and the author or co-author of many books on project management, including [Project Management Next Generation: The Pillars for Organizational Excellence](#) (co-authored with Dr. Harold Kerzner and Dr. Al Zeitoun). Learn more about the author in his profile at the end of this article.

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*He mentions that if AI develops methods of expressing feelings like love, hate, and sadness, AI may have rights too. It means that machines may fight for their rights like any of us. They can fight against being turned off or avoid working when certain conditions are not met.*

I know what you may feel after reading this... It is scary, astonishing, and unsettling.

## Going Back to Earth

Now, let's move away from AI "Human Rights" and dive into our daily lives. Several ethical implications are arising, and we do not yet know how to handle them.

For example, there is a real potential for generative AI models to facilitate plagiarism. Have we entered an era of copy/paste 2.0? In fact, many institutions are starting to question the use of ChatGPT in education.

New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) and the Los Angeles Unified School District have already taken [steps to ban ChatGPT](#). Citing negative impacts on content safety and accuracy, one spokesperson said, "While the tool may provide quick and easy answers to questions, it does not build critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for academic and lifelong success."

But is the ban feasible? Is prohibition the right approach? Do we need these bans, or do we need to reinvent education?

It is a question that each of us probably has a different answer for.

Organizations must carefully consider where they seek technological assistance, how to mitigate its effects, and how to verify the outputs generated by AI models.

While AI tools are capable of generating vast amounts of information, it is ultimately up to human judgment to determine how, when, and where this information is utilized.

Imagine the possibilities of learning quickly, drawing meaning from infinite data sources to generate something unique. It is fascinating!

Here lies the power of AI that will lead us to the cure of diseases, waste reduction, fast development of medicine, and several other highly positive applications.

*Meanwhile, humans need to apply judgment and wisdom to use the right tool in the right situation. We must consider the ethics of using our knowledge for the greater good.*

There is no escape from that, at least for the moment.

## AI Will Disrupt Work as We Know It

White-collar jobs are in for a disruption. It is not just customer care, bankers, and legal assistants. According to a recent report from the investment bank Goldman Sachs, [as many as 300 million jobs worldwide could be replaced by AI](#). Traditionally considered "secure" white-collar jobs like lawyers, engineers, and doctors - everyone's work will be disrupted by AI.

Did you know that [ChatGPT is a licensed practitioner of law](#)? Recently, GPT-4 passed the Uniform Bar Exam with a 298/400, landing in the 90th percentile of top students. And its language model is getting smarter. In the earlier version, GPT-3.5's test score was 213/400, in the 10th percentile of students.

AI is improving incredibly fast. Perhaps "incredibly fast" is not fast enough to describe it.

Did you know that Instagram took 2.5 years to reach 100 million users, and [ChatGPT did that in a few weeks](#)?

The question for me now is not "Will AI change the way I work or not?" or "How soon will AI change the way I work?" The question now is, "Am I prepared to reinvent myself?"

The relevance of our work will be defined by what skills will be valued in the future, says former IBM CEO [Ginni Rommetty in an interview with Bloomberg](#) about her new book, *Good Power: Leading Positive Change in Our Lives, Work, and World*.

*If we do not reinvent what we do, AI will reinvent it for us.*

## Managing Projects with AI

As you know, my life is all about projects. I've spent more than 25 years finding ways to deliver better projects, and I have been engaged with AI in project management for quite a while.

And I have the same butterflies in my stomach as anyone else when I see what is coming.

In 2015, I published the paper "[Applying Neural Networks and Analogous Estimating to Determine the Project Budget](#)." In the article, I explained how mechanisms like Neural Networks could predict with a high level of confidence the probability of you meeting the budget of a future project based on the risk, size, and complexity of previous projects.

This article is eight years old.

Today, the tools discussed in the essay are child's play compared with what exists today.

I am 100% sure that generative AI will take a seat in the cockpit to manage and support our project efforts. And I am not saying it "may" take a seat. I am saying it "will" take a seat.

It is already affecting the way we report performance, the way we evaluate risks, and the way we budget projects, among several other applications.

AI can be applied everywhere in the project context. I discussed the power of ChatGPT in a [podcast episode](#) about how AI will change the field.

And this trend will not only affect incremental or traditional project management. The use of AI will have a substantial impact on agile project development. One of my last podcast episodes talks about it. You can listen to it [here](#).

This technology can redefine how we approach project planning, risk assessments, and performance evaluation, ultimately helping us achieve higher efficiency and success.

*But as with any tool, it is up to us to harness this power responsibly, ensuring that we maintain the human-centered values of collaboration, empathy, and ethical decision-making.*

And the time to take on this responsibility is now.

If we fail to grasp the extensive implications of AI in our work, perhaps in six months' time, AI will be the one teaching us how to do so.

## **What is in my Radar Recently?**

### **AI 'godfather' Geoffrey Hinton warns of dangers as he quits Google**

The BBC did a powerful interview with Geoffrey Hinton, considered the "godfather" of AI, about the growing dangers from the developments in the field. You can read/watch the interview [here](#).

### **A quick self-check to assess burnout symptoms**

Do not miss this insightful [article](#) from Harvard Business Review that provides a simple two-minute self-check to assess whether an individual is experiencing burnout symptoms. It suggests focusing on physical and emotional symptoms such as exhaustion, lack of motivation and decreased satisfaction with work.

### **Why art thrives at Burning Man**

Although it may seem unrelated, I plan to participate in [Burning Man](#) this year to seek out new and diverse experiences that foster my ability to think creatively and innovate. In

2018, I had the opportunity to attend TED in Vancouver, where I was able to watch Nora Atkinson's live talk about art at Burning Man.

If you're interested in exploring new and diverse experiences, I recommend watching Nora Atkinson's [TED talk](#) about art at Burning Man. It's truly inspiring.

## Quick Announcements

### Scholarship Program

I want to share something that fills my heart with joy and gratitude. I run a Scholarship and Financial Aid Program at my online school, supporting over 55 talented professionals from 26 countries so far.

I'm dedicated to securing more resources to keep this incredible program growing. We invite students from war-torn areas, low-income countries and regions, unemployed individuals, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented minority groups to apply. The applications are open year-round.

Please share [this link](#) with anyone you think might be eligible and could benefit from this opportunity.

### Ricardo's Keynotes and Events

Several people ask me about my upcoming keynotes, webinars, and talks. My website has a section dedicated to the public events I participate in. You can check all of them [here](#). Maybe a future event is happening close to you or covers a topic you find helpful for your professional journey!

### Your Voice Matters!

Access the previous issues [here](#).

*If you have any suggestions, comments, or anything else that will help me improve it, please send a note to [info@ricardo-vargas.com](mailto:info@ricardo-vargas.com) with your suggestions. I would love to hear from you.*

*Please feel free to share this article with your friends, colleagues, and other people you may find will benefit from it. They can also subscribe to my LinkedIn newsletter at [here](#).*

*Thanks for your support, and I hope it was helpful to you.*

*Cheers,*

*Ricardo*

## About the Author



### **Ricardo Viana Vargas, PhD**

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**Ricardo Viana Vargas** is Managing Partner at Macrosolutions, past Executive Director of the Project Management Institute's Brightline Initiative, past Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services ([UNOPS](#)) Infrastructure and Project Management Group, and former Chair of the PMI Board of Directors. Passionate about transforming ideas into action and a popular speaker at international PM events, Ricardo is recognized worldwide as a chief advocate for the project economy. Specializing in implementing innovative global initiatives, capital projects and product development, he has directed dozens of projects across industries and continents, managing more than \$20 billion in global initiatives over the past 25 years.

Ricardo shares his expertise with millions of professionals around the globe through his "[5 Minutes Podcast](#)," which he's hosted since 2007. He has written [16 books](#) on project management, risk and crisis management, and transformation, which have been translated into six languages and sold more than half a million copies. His latest book [Project Management Next Generation: The Pillars for Organizational Excellence](#), in partnership with Dr. Harold Kerzner and Dr. Al Zeitoun has recently been released.

Ricardo's influence on project management was affirmed when he became the first Latin American to be elected Chairman of the Project Management Institute. More than two decades ago, he founded Macrosolutions, a global consulting firm with international operations in energy, infrastructure, IT, oil and finance. Between 2016 and 2020, Ricardo directed the [Brightline Initiative](#), a Project Management Institute think tank bringing together leading organizations in a coalition dedicated to helping executives bridge the expensive, unproductive gap between strategic design and delivery.

Prior to his work with Brightline, Ricardo was Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services ([UNOPS](#)) Infrastructure and Project Management Group, leading more than 1,000 projects and \$1.2 billion in humanitarian and development projects. He has worked as a venture capitalist and entrepreneur in artificial intelligence, blockchain, big data, chatbots and machine learning resulted in tools and products that have revolutionized how users bring agility and agile management into project management software.

Ricardo holds a Ph.D. in Civil Engineering from Federal Fluminense University in Brazil and an undergraduate degree in Chemical Engineering, as well as a master's degree in Industrial Engineering from Federal University of Minas Gerais in Brazil. He can be contacted at [ricardo@ricardo-vargas.com](mailto:ricardo@ricardo-vargas.com) or [ricardo-vargas.com](http://ricardo-vargas.com) or LinkedIn: [com/in/ricardovargas](https://www.linkedin.com/in/ricardovargas).