

Welcome everyone – to the CBS Annual Celebration 2026.

I have been looking forward to this evening for a long time. And tonight, we will look forward – forward into the near AND distant future of AI.

But before we look ahead, I would like to take you back in history.

There are few places in the world, where history is more present than in London.

In the centre of London, right around the corner from Buckingham Palace, you find the historic and legendary auction house, Christie's.

Christie's is more than 250 years old. They have sold some of the wildest things you can imagine. A [noble palace](#). [Flawless diamonds](#). Art by Leonardo da Vinci, Vincent van Gogh, Claude Monet, Pablo Picasso, Andy Warhol and many others.

Back in September, however, even Christie's seemed star-struck by the item they announced.

[In their own words](#), they had "*undoubtedly the most important scientific instrument ever offered at auction*".

It wasn't Galileo's telescope. It wasn't Alexander Flemings petri dish. It was *La Pascaline*: The world's first ever **calculator** developed by Blaise Pascal in 1642.

In 1642, Pascals father oversaw the re-organising of tax revenues in Normandy. The 19-year-old Blaise Pascal invented the calculator to help him do so more efficiently.

However, the impact of Pascal's machine went far beyond this. When describing the new machine, Pascal's sister almost sounded like she described artificial intelligence:

The machine had, she said, "*found a way to perform all of its operations with complete certainty, without the need for reasoning.*"

Pascal's machine is a prelude to a time of computers and AI. A promise of a future, where humans and machines are ever more closely intertwined.

There is a David Bowie-quote that I really like: "*The future belongs to those who can hear it coming.*"

Sometimes the future is very loud. I bet *Le Pascaline* was also pretty loud. It must have been hard to imagine all the things that automatic calculation would allow us to do.

However, anyone listening to *La Pascaline* must have heard the future coming. The obvious promise of it. The immediate fact that businesses and governments *with* this technology would hold a strategic advantage over those *without*.

Today the future is also VERY loud. In fact, it feels like the world is changing louder and faster than ever before.

Every single day, AI technologies evolve. Every day, AI does something new with complete certainty without the need for human reasoning.

It is hard to imagine exactly what we will be able to do with this transformational power.

But anyone listening must hear by now, that businesses and governments *with* large AI-capabilities will hold a strategic advantage over those *without*.

Simply put: There is no question that AI will shape our future. As Professor Jan Damsgaard just said in the video: “*AI will be embedded in all processes, in all organisations.*”

What we should ask ourselves is: Who then will shape the future of AI?

Ironically, the myth and the power of AI lie in the fact that it removes the “who”. The magic trick is that it operates without the need for human reasoning. It seems to have a life of its own.

But we must remember the who. Not only the legendary rock band, but also:

Who will control the AI technologies we use?

We often regard new technologies as unstoppable and impossible to control. They are not. They are always controlled by someone.

Right now, 65 percent of global investments in AI come from either the US or China according to the [World Economic Forum](#).

And we have seen recently what American and Chinese control can mean.

Chinese and American tech giants also controlled all major social media platforms. And therefore, Europe struggled to control public information, consumer habits and the well-being of our youth.

If we do not control AI technology, someone else will. And they will also control our competitiveness, autonomy and geopolitical security.

AI brings business even closer to geopolitics. Private investments closer to public diplomacy. Innovation closer to international security.

Last summer, we launched CBS Geopolitics and Business Security led by Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen.

Businesses and decision makers are asking themselves, how Denmark and Danish businesses can keep and gain control in an AI arms race against superpowers. And I believe that CBS can provide important answers.

Secondly, who will understand what AI is doing?

AI will make it easier to do things, but harder to understand them.

Although Pascal made it easier to calculate, he did not make it easier for future generations to learn math.

As Associate Professor Christian Hendriksen says in the video: *“Technology has never reduced the number of jobs. It has just changed the nature of the task.”*

Case in point: As calculators in classrooms become more powerful, the math we teach in universities has only become more complex.

I believe this goes for AI as well. Sorry, students!

At CBS, we educate business leaders and decision makers of the future.

They will have to change what they do and how they work because of AI. As Professor Rob Gleasure pointed out just now: *“They might very well lose their job if they don’t!”*

AI can help us solve some of our most wicked and critical problems. But it can also confuse and mislead us. We must educate ourselves so that we can tell the difference.

Therefore, we must adapt to equip them to do it right:

- When AI automates desk research, universities must increase students’ ability for critical thinking.
- When AI allows anyone to summarize big data, universities must teach students to see through the numbers and understand ambiguity behind them.
- In short: When AI can help anyone produce a persuasive pitch, we must all have a very well-developed bullshit detector.

At CBS, we aim for a fully scaled AI integration by 2027. Across all educational programmes and research areas. And in our administration, too.

As a business school deeply rooted in Nordic values, it is our responsibility that our future alumni have the transformative capabilities to navigate complex dilemmas in the age of AI.

This leads me to my third and maybe the most important question. We must ask: Who will we choose to be in an AI future?

All things will increasingly be influenced by AI. Things we do or decide. Things we post on LinkedIn. Things we say in a welcome speech at CBS' Annual Celebration.

But what data influences the generative AI? Does the underlying data represent a diversity of opinions, cultures and languages?

How long will it take before that data itself is also mostly generated by AI?

This creates a paradox for us:

On the one hand, we MUST hear the future coming. We as educators, researchers and leaders must use AI and its fantastic possibilities. As Professor Ioanna Constantiou puts it: *"It's not possible NOT to use AI."*

On the other hand, while we are listening to the future, we MUST also be able to speak for ourselves. Think for ourselves. Define who we are and want to be. Uphold what Professor Anoush Margaryan in the video calls: *"The principle of the primacy of the human."*

We should not act only according to what our algorithms recommend. We also need free and independent ideas. Creative, critical and even radical research.

Minister of Higher Education and Science, Christina Egelund, had to cancel her participation tonight because of the election. But we should still applaud last year's political agreement, that was almost unanimously supported in the Folketing.

They agreed to long-term investments in critical research areas. And to increased basic funding for independent research and innovation at the universities.

Both are crucial for our ability as a nation to think for ourselves – and define who we are.

And all this leads back to the auction for Pascaline's calculator. Eventually, Christie's auction for *Pascaline* was withdrawn.

A French court said that the Pascaline could be classified as a *national treasure*. Therefore, it could not be allowed to leave the country.

If you ask me, that is how we should value AI. Our technologies, skills, and capabilities are a national treasure.

We are witnessing a technological transformation that will echo through the centuries. *We must hear the future coming.*

Thank you.