

# **“Timeless Meta-Skills and Virtues My Parents Revealed”**

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There is no doubt that we live in a fast changing world where the technology has the most powerful impact in our lives. Technology has changed business procedures, has created new business models, new money and a whole new way of life with different challenges and of course more competition both at individuals and companies layer.

I am very sure that the image of Sophia, the humanoid produced by Hanson Robotics who spoke at the recent Future Investment Initiative was caused mixed feelings and questions to all of us.

How we cannot lose our human soul in the edge of the new era? How we will continue to be the manufacture of every technology and the driver of the progress from it and not the opposite?

These thoughts were first revealed when a big fight among students and our software engineer professor started at the lecture theatre. The students had complaints because at the semester project the professor marked the projects strictly using a software for automated exams and exercises check. This of course had as a result a lack of personal involvement from the professor which was apologizing by claiming that this automated solution was more appropriate and effective for software projects. In the other side students were made their cases for not rewarding the effort and some correct part of the code but only certain results. They were feeling deprived.

The above example best describes the progressive losing of human face AI progress can cause. The technology should adapt to human needs and to ensure a long lasting sustainable progress and not to dictatorize our lives. The dominance of the technocratic spirit, technological totalitarianism, the loss of emotion and imagination, the cold rationality and the dependence on the machine are dark shades of uncritical adoption of any new technology. A human is a wholeness of intellectual intelligence as well as, emotional and social. If we supersede the social and the emotional to the altar of intellectual the result will not be good. We live in a society where we develop social bonds. Through these social bonds every progress acquires meaning. Social and emotional intelligence are key factors in order to achieve technological progress without bring human into the background. Success in a fast-paced tech world doesn't make less important the value of personal contacts. All activities in the world are conducted by humans. Behind every technology there are humans. Its error to see technology as something omnipotence. Contrariwise human is the wight who has plenty of abilities and skills and can conceive technological novelties in order to improve his life.

The level of knowledge and skills available to people determines the type and quality of businesses, the innovation produced, and consequently, the possibility of creating new jobs. **Therefore, the factor "human" becomes even more important and has the main role in determining the level of economic growth and social progress.** It should therefore be on the market a satisfactory supply of human resources, both qualitatively and as well numerically. Within a digital ecosystem, cognitive ability and ability exploiting digital technology to the fullest extent possible, is essential. **The entire learning system and the culture of a company should emphasize by today's immense importance in the proper preparation of tomorrow executives and inside entrepreneurs.** The sooner this is done, the more will be the benefits for the society and the economy.

Employment, is not just the salary. It is perhaps one of the few activities that fill the life of human being. It leads to psychological balance, it has a strong social dimension and is a fuel to the prospect of evolution. Employment is the fullness of a man. Technology may appear to be threatening, but it is not so. **Technology can destroy professions, but never employment.** There will always be work underway and under development. There will always be creation and progress. We are the ones who need to evolve and evolve regulation that we are again called upon to adapt. Everything starts with man and ends up in his own satisfaction and completeness.

I think it's a blessing to have a "shell" of values, purpose, beliefs and personal meaning in a dramatically changing world where the every "new" can corrode what it has to stay untouched. After understanding yourself, developing certain virtues, merits, skills and characteristics is an important thing if you want to be long lasting successful. Cultivating the multiple intelligence and having certain personal traits can help you be competitive and not be an unladen ship at the waves of changes. Because having the elements which can transform you to a competitive economic being in every period is the ultimate timeless competitive advantage. There are many skills, traits and virtues I think are essential for continues success but because of the technological aspect of the 2018's Peter Drucker Forum essay theme I would like to analyze these four: *Learning, Systemic thinking, Phronesis and Humanity-humility* which are directly connected with the human approach management theories of Peter Drucker. **Of course, organizations by their structure, procedures, culture and management have catalytic role in cultivating certain timeless values, virtues and skills to their employees.**

**Learning** is a key procedure during which a person gains new skills, knowledge and behaviors. I believe that learning means deep understanding and practical implementation. I refer to the learning as the knowhow to assimilate new principles, concepts and to expand your knowledge. Having a certain skillset of learning and the ability to consolidate information as quickly as possible is critical. Those who know how to think need no teachers, is a well know quote of Mahatma Gandhi and in this direction i refer to learning as a key personal skill. Lifelong learning with speed and effectiveness is a challenge for the next decade. People have to gain a way of thinking and assimilation of information that allows them to build at what they already know in an integrated way. Adopting to changes

is definitely accompanied with learning. And learning means repentance (*Metanoia is the Greek word*). It means change of mind and change of conduct. "Change of mind and heart". The opposite of learning in my opinion is inertia with catastrophic consequences and failure as a result. The advocacy of learning in Drucker's work requires to be contextualized since learning has today become a routine requirement for both individuals and organizations. Nevertheless, learning practices will continue to be both a competitive advantage and a unique form of individuation for knowledge workers in contemporary organizations provided, of course, organizations realize this to be the case and do what they can to foster a learning environment. The act of individuation through the learning process however is not just for the advanced scholar, but, for all those who work under the rubric of "knowledge-work" or who identify themselves as "knowledge workers." And, there is, admittedly, a widerange of workers who operate under this category though the best known examples are that of the highly mobile IT worker and the management consultant. The most important twist in the tale of knowledge work however comes from the problem of the knowledge worker's longevity compared to that of the manual worker. For Drucker, the lengthening life-span of the knowledge worker is interesting for several reasons since he is a thinker who is much influenced by demography. The mobility of the knowledge worker then is not reducible to the changes in the nature of the social contract between corporations and their knowledge workers, but is complicated by the decline in the life-span of the major corporations due to a whole host of complex reasons that have been studied in the literature on corporate life-spans.

**Systemic thinking** means ability to find and understand the linkages and interactions between the components that comprise the entirety. Because of the complexity of modern environment and the many components a person must find the way changing one component will affect the other. Systemic thinking is a timeless important ability as you should see the wholeness and not have a myopic view. The "system" appeared in scientific thinking in the 17th century, with Newton the rapporteur and starting from the dominant question of the scientific thought of that time: the movement of bodies in space. Technology affects systems and a digital affection in a single element can have a greater impact in a whole system. You have to be able to predict and find this impact. Systemic thinking assumes that knowledge is interpretive, recognizing the spiritual quality of life and living. Flood (1999, p. 82). Peter Drucker, talked about Knowledge Workers in his final work where the systems theory and system approach is obvious. To increase product development productivity (*and the personal productivity*) there needs to be a focus on quality of output. Drucker contends that the quality of output is as important, and perhaps more important, than the quantity of output. If you find a mismatch between informational needs of somebody doing work and the information that arrives with them, then you have a problem. If that's the case then the thing to do is take this problem, raise a flag, and move into the Continuous Improvement subsystem, which we will discuss separately.

**Phronesis** is a Greek word for a type of wisdom or intelligence. Since Aristotle, phronesis has been understood as a significant moral category. Aristotle implied, not only learning theoretical knowledge (*episteme*) or set of skills (*techne*) as the elements of business success but rather as a faculty entailing practical wisdom (*Phronesis*). He describes the concept as an intellectual and moral virtue that is “reasoned, and capable of action with regard to things that are good or bad for man” and as a ‘virtue which makes us use the right means’ (*Nicomachean Ethics*). He also claims that ‘it is impossible to be good in the full sense of the word without practical wisdom or to be a man of practical wisdom without moral excellence or virtue’. The ability to commit to moral values is directly related to practical wisdom. Those characterized as phronetic in their thinking and actions are committed to their people and cooperate with them in promoting an authentic behavior. This term is more suitable than anyone else in pointing the ability of people in digital age to perceive the paradoxes and ambivalences and make the appropriate choices in unfamiliar and dynamically changing situations. Many modern authors are insisting on the inclusion of practical wisdom in management development programs and professional educational systems. The incidents of frequent unwise decisions from a number of managers (*even experienced*) underline the necessity of wisdom in management practice. In this context, the Aristotelian concept of practical wisdom (*Phrónēsis*) is very relevant with lots of implications. (*Thomas, Shinto, 2017*). The practical wisdom and the need for right ethical decisions is a key concept in Drucker management philosophy. Through his books for executives and his talks he underlines the need of practical speed and wise decisions. *The Practice of Management* was the first book to look at management as a whole and being a manager as a separate responsibility and remains modern since its publication in 1954. *The Practice of Management* created the discipline of modern management practices. Readable, fundamental, and basic, it remains an essential book for students, aspiring managers, and seasoned professionals.

**Humanity and humility** are virtues that we should cultivate and protect if we want better days where the human value and the elevation of human wellbeing will be the direction of every effort for progress. Doing the right and having moral values as a compass to every ethical “storm” can have incredible long lasting gains. Nikos Kazantzakis the Cretan world known thinker has said “There is in the world this secret law, hard and inviolable: The evil always triumphs at the beginning and always beats in the end.” I completely embrace this view. If we not have sensitivity in social issues and certain level of social intelligence any progress is commended to fail and to have negative consequences to the human kind. I would also like to refer to humility as a meta-virtue of leaders and of every person. Many of you can say that humility can only stand in a utopian world. The good news is that humility is a virtue which can be learnt. The moment we will stop engaging in the pursuit of perfection that our competitive culture has made us think we ought to, will be the moment that we will realize that we are already perfect and that realization extends beyond our narrow self. At that time, something wonderful happens: we open up to new possibilities, as we choose open-mindedness and curiosity over protecting our point of view. We spend more time in that wonderful space of the beginner’s

mind, willing to learn from what others have to offer. (*Leadership Meta-Competencies* by Dimitris Bourantas and Vasia Agapitou, 2014)

Having and cultivating certain values, virtues and (soft) skills is the safest way to ensure a long lasting competitive advantage and both a self and an organization which has the ability of changing and developing the demanding technical and other hard skills. Trying to enhance some all-time classic traits and characteristics may be the one thing which can make us adaptable and transformative without losing our identity and purpose. Because beyond being able to program a computer, have a sense of robotic engineering or teach your child how to use the latest app, developing metaskills and meta-competencies is the most critical thing for surviving through every change and managing to be economically relevant.

The technology should expand freedom and release from slaveries. Slaveries of all types like economic, social, internal and external ones which put limits in human majesty. Technology must light the idea of freedom and not shrink it. The determination of human beings who create the technology -which has no soul- is the most critical fact for an anthropocentric utilization of every emerge technology. A knife in a doctor's hand can save lives. Contrary the same knife can harm lives in the hand of a killer. It's not about the knife but about the hand... From my young positive slam I hope to talk about the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution not in material terms and numbers but in human terms. And it's possible if we understand that the most valuable resource in earth is ourselves. Something so self-evident that has become so tricky nowadays to be embraced.