
Philosophy for Managers: Reflections of a Practitioner

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THE AIM OF THIS ARTICLE is to describe the significance and key challenges of philosophy for managers as perceived on the basis of a particular understanding of philosophy and my personal experience as a practitioner.*

The paper will be more visionary than argumentative. I recognise there are important alternative approaches but I will not engage in detailed analysis of them.¹ Drawing heavily on my own experience, the paper will present an outline and meta-philosophy of philosophical practices that have proven useful in actual interface with practising managers.

I have worked extensively with businesses since the early 1990s giving up to a hundred lectures per year and continuing. The primary working format has been that of a lecture with the occasional back-up of one-on-one discussions. Along with smaller companies such as Marimekko and Ensto, my most significant interface with managers has taken place with Nokia over the course of the years that transformed the Finnish company into a global leader of its industry with an astonishing market share of 35 % and more in mobile phones. This collaboration has involved hundreds of hours of lectures and seminars and extensive discussions with many of the senior managers.

My philosophy for managers has emerged out of a desire to develop a highly communicative philosophy of human flourishing for the benefit of people irrespective of their backgrounds. From my point of view, managers are human beings and should be approached as such. This means that in the context of my philosophical lecturing, managers are often part of a bigger group mostly consisting of non-managers.

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¹Groundbreaking works include those by Peter Koestenbaum in his *The Inner Side of Greatness* (originally published in 1991) and other writings and activities (Koestenbaum 2002, 2003, and Koestenbaum and Block 2001). The counseling and therapeutically oriented approaches as elaborated in works such as Marinoff (2002), Raabe (2001), and Schuster (1999) are also important for philosophy for managers, as is work on business ethics like MacLagan (1998).

Among my philosophical practices, the effort that I personally value most is a weeklong seminar on the philosophy of life, self-leadership and related themes held in Paphos, Cyprus, and called “the Paphos Seminar”. The seminar has run since 1995, with 29 seminars held by the end of 2007, and with over 2000 participants, managers and non-managers, many of them repeatedly.

My fundamental conception is that the benefits of philosophy for managers emerge from the “in-between” of philosophy and managerial life. They are applied in nature, involve transformative dimensions, require seamless integration to managers’ attitudes, perspectives, and actions, and should be judged on their merits in the actions and practices that result.

As I see it, philosophy for managers should benefit the manager in terms of:

1. Self-Leadership
2. Understanding Wholes
3. Activity in Complex Environments

The pedagogy of philosophy for managers, and the research supporting that pedagogy, should aim at increasing the manager’s skills and abilities in these three focus areas, in a way that can readily be translated into actions.

In Search of the Bigger Picture

On a general level, philosophy is the art of thinking and its chief instrument is reason. Philosophy for managers seeks to strengthen the art of thinking and the instrument of reason in managers.

My interpretation of philosophy is not of one clearly identifiable discipline with a single core. There is in philosophy “a mysterious flame” that defies scientific, once-and-for-all, objectifying characterisations.² Philosophy is therefore fundamentally multi-faceted and its borders are vague.

In reaching out to managers, philosophy activates a multidisciplinary and context-sensitive, connectivity-seeking and multi-methodological, multi-layered and polyphonic discourse. It seeks to operate across paradigms – often joyfully and outrageously – covering existentially, pragmatically and humanly fundamental aspects of the life of a manager with energy, excitement and a feel for the relevant.

If the instrument of change in philosophy is thinking, the goal of that change is an improved, enhanced, better life.³ Philosophy struggles to foster *the build-up of the good life*, indeed excellence in life, and that *through the realm of thinking* – using words, concepts, questions, challenges, reasonings, ideas, associations, comparisons, and other instruments of the verbal and conceptual dimensions. It searches the universally valid (in the sense of say PLATO’s rationalism or DESCARTES’ foundationalism, or scientism of a QUINE), while at the same time tuning in to the personal (SOCRATES, NIETZSCHE, POLANYI, SARTRE).

²I am here adopting a phrase from Colin McGinn, who in his forceful *The Mysterious Flame* (1999) argues that we can never “know” consciousness.

³For discussions pertaining to this conception of philosophy, see Hadot (2002), Nehamas (1998) and Shusterman (1997).

The majesty of philosophy incorporates the right, even the duty, to *study the bigger picture*⁴ – including the bigger picture of a small picture, a locality, that of an individual human being in the midst of her immediate context. In this endeavour to figure out the bigger picture, freedom looms large, reaching out if needed to staggering dimensions. Philosophy stops at nothing. It is ready to fly out to the limits of conceptual reason and beyond with imagination, relying on words. Unlike other sciences – assuming that philosophy is a science – philosophy does not waver even when facing the unknowable, the dimension of the speculative. The margins, the peripheral count and constitute a potential for a philosophy in search of the essential.

This perspective stresses philosophy for managers as a quest for the bigger picture, with sensitivity to the contextual and peripheral, in the service of the essential. The bigger picture could concern the overall structure of the market, or market economy, or patterns of innovation, or key prospects in the long run, or one’s personal work-life balance. Philosophy helps the manager in the challenge of figuring out what cannot be decided by facts and information. Philosophy for managers is an ally for the manager in the midst of “the elusive phenomena” (using the apt phrase of F. J. ROETHLISBERGER).⁵ Philosophy is a sparring partner for the manager in her mental and conceptual realm, a force that helps her to make better use of the “mysterious flame” within herself in the dimensions of her thinking and self-leadership. If “bad management theories are destroying good management practices”, as SUMANTRA GHOSHAL forcefully argues,⁶ it is up to the manager to challenge her mental models and implicit theories, and in that process a philosopher can make an invaluable contribution.

I perceive philosophy in terms of philosophers, and management in terms of managers. This means focusing upon human beings that are capable of reasoning and thinking with individuality, courage and insight, and who *operate* with ideas and *create* in a space that is conceptual and often qualitative, personal, and visionary. The point is to reinforce that dimension.

Philosophy has an immense contribution to make to managers in their dimension of thinking, particularly when the manager enters, as she increasingly

⁴“The study of philosophy is a voyage towards the larger generalities.” (Whitehead 1985, p. 10). The opening chapters of Whitehead’s work comprise some of the finest meta-level characterisations of philosophy that I know.

⁵Roethlisberger, in his autobiographical book *The Elusive Phenomena* (1977), describes how he was instrumental in getting “Organizational Behavior accepted as one of the formal areas of instruction and research at [Harvard Business] School” in the early 1960s. Roethlisberger’s reflections are entirely relevant today for a philosopher for managers. “I feel that the latent gist of my communication was to this effect: ‘Dear Mr. Manager, you dumb cluck, don’t you see what an important guy you are? Why don’t you ‘wise up’ to your distinctive competence and see that you have a higher function to perform than just making money and profits? . . .’” (p. 3) It is in the service of understanding of the manager’s “higher functions” that philosophy for manager can provide a major contribution.

⁶Ghoshal (2005) first quotes John Maynard Keynes’ famous words to the effect that “The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood”, and then nails down his own position: “Many of the worst excesses of recent management practices have their roots in a set of ideas that have emerged from business school academics over the last 30 years.” – Ghoshal’s article should be required reading for any class on Philosophy for Managers, along with Hayek’s Nobel speech (1974).

does, the realm of the unknown, the unclear and the unfolding. While much of current professional philosophy focuses upon the certain, philosophy for managers directs attention to contributing in the presence of the uncertain. More than knowledge-building, philosophy for managers is about the on-going vision-building and perspective-building.

As in art, so in philosophy and in management, personal engagement is of the essence. Each manager needs to think her thoughts for herself. Philosophy for managers wants to enrich that ongoing process of constant renewal. The point is to engage the manager in dialogues of enrichment, renewal and uplift, in an effort to help her internal processes of understanding (GADAMER) as driven by the ideals of an *insights-rich life*. This dialogue – the process of mental building-up, the education of the mind (DEWEY, JAMES), edification (RICHARD RORTY)⁷ – is the true context of philosophy with respect to which philosophy for managers must find workable, fresh, operatively explosive methods, insights and actions to fit the demands of the situations to hand.

In Search of Style that Works

“The medium is the message” is one of the most often-quoted one-liners from a thinker at an academic institution in recent decades, yet it is not often brought into focus in philosophical discussions.⁸ Academic philosophy might enjoy its narrowed-down practices, but philosophy for managers must turn to the real world.

In the real world, and in a real-world philosophy, style is an integral part of the content. This is a world in which someone like MARSHALL MCLUHAN is very much a philosophical thinker. Unique, startling, hope-creating, questions-intensive, suggestive style in itself is a philosophical statement. There is no “view from nowhere” (as THOMAS NAGEL aptly put it),⁹ and the neutrality of methods and styles can only be declared by a philosopher who, disguising her meta-level choices, proclaims the omnipresence of an unbiased meta-level super-truth. Long live

⁷The work of Richard Rorty is fundamental in the challenge it sets for the dialogue between philosophy and non-philosophy. See Rorty (1979) and subsequent works. The important interviews gathered in Rorty (2006) are a key source of inspiration. Rorty is one of the few American philosophers to have realised the creative potential of the interview format. For another inspiring philosophical interview-book, see Rothenberg (1993), the timely book of conversations with Arne Næss.

⁸For a discussion of some McLuhanian themes and of philosophy as media philosophy, see Taylor and Saarinen (1994). Mike Sandbothe’s work on radically interventionist media philosophy breaks new ground for applied philosophy and is one of the most exciting openings in the arena. See Sandbothe (2005) and (2008). For a scholarly discussion of some of the key themes, see Sandbothe and Nagl (2005).

⁹Nagel’s writings are exemplary understandable and deep. For a manager, I think it will be useful to ponder on his position, according to which “Objectivity is a method of understanding. . . . Every objective advance creates a new conception of the world that includes oneself, and one’s former conception, within its scope; so it inevitably poses the problem of what to do with the older, more subjective view, and how to combine it with the new one. A succession of objective advances may take us to a new conception of reality that leaves the personal or merely human perspective further and further behind. But if what we want is to understand the whole world, we can’t forget about those subjective starting points indefinitely; we and our personal perspectives belong to the world.” (Nagel 1986, pp. 4–6)

the literary philosophical genius of a SCHOPENHAUER, Nietzsche or BERGSON,¹⁰ or, closer to us, the deep humanism and literary brilliance of ISAIAH BERLIN and GEORGE STEINER,¹¹ the witty eloquence of ALAIN DE BOTTON¹² or ANDRÉ COMTE-SPONVILLE¹³ or the delightfully outrageous PETER SLOTERDIJK¹⁴. There is no reason to look down on “scientific”, “formal” or scholarly philosophy, or the debates of academic philosophy, but the fact is, typically they fail to yield insight for a practising manager.¹⁵

Suppose we take *the urge to matter* as a cornerstone of effective action in philosophy. Suppose the point is to enrich the now-horizon of a practising manager with something that counts. Suppose we start with character – a manager’s own character.¹⁶

Socrates’ integrity does command managerial respect. In the aftermath of Socrates, surely the insights of Plato’s dialogues, EPICETETUS’ notebooks, those of MONTAIGNE, will yield insight to anyone that is willing to read. For a manager’s self-leadership and character-building, philosophical literature is indeed a treasure chest. Particularly valuable is the wealth of material provided by the Eastern

¹⁰In his polemical introduction to *The Future of Philosophy* (2004), Brian Leiter, while siding unashamedly with the academic tradition of philosophy in its Anglo-American form, still acknowledges that “Prototypical non-analytic figures, like Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, are far clearer (and more beautiful) writers than many of the dominant figures in Anglophone philosophy today” (Leiter 2004, p. 12).

¹¹Berlin’s writings yield to no-one in their depth and insight. See e.g. Berlin (1953, 1981, 2003), and the marvellously inspiring *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin* (Jahanbegloo, 1993). I rank George Steiner’s writings as some of the most uplifting philosophical discourse in our times. See e.g. Steiner (1997, 2003). I find Steiner’s emphasis of the significance of the oral dimension as fundamental to my own philosophical practice.

¹²As a writer and advocator of what I would call living philosophy, of the kind relevant for philosophy for managers, de Botton is a towering figure. See de Botton (1997, 2000, 2005, and 2006).

¹³See in particular Comte-Sponville (2001).

¹⁴Sloterdijk’s *Critique of the Cynical Reason* quickly became the best-selling philosophical prose work in Germany after the Second World War. In spite of its stylistic and intellectual brilliance, the book is routinely bypassed in academic discussions.

¹⁵This is not to blame a philosopher if she fails to inspire a manager. There are number of culturally enriching ways a philosopher, like any cultural worker, can contribute. My point is that contributing in ways relevant for philosophy for managers is one of the forms of enrichment we should acknowledge. Indeed, it is an arena that cries out for recognition in a world that desperately needs responsible, prudent and wise leadership. The Socratic call for a self-examining life *is* there in management and leadership. We should recognise this domain of contribution along with its special features in order to contribute more effectively. Personally I hail Charles Taylor’s *Sources of the Self* (1989) and *A Secular Age* (2007) as landmarks of brilliant synthetic philosophical thinking in our times. Yet the challenge remains, to make these works explosive as philosophy for managers.

¹⁶Notice works such as Peterson and Seligman (2004) that approach character strengths from a psychological perspective. It is clear that philosophy for managers that strives for relevance in a manager’s character building needs to enrich itself by empirical research such as reported in Peterson’s and Seligman’s monumental work. For some relevant managerial discussions, see Badaracco (1998) and Brownell (2006). A key philosophical work on virtue ethics for me is MacIntyre (1981).

traditions¹⁷. The challenge of philosophy for managers is to open that treasure chest and cut its diamonds for the context of today.

I am not value-free here, having left behind the ideal of neutralism. Certain choices have been made. I do not see how my lectures or seminars with managers would have been productive and rewarding without those choices. Philosophy for managers, or applied philosophy, is not value-free. Certain things count more than others because not everything will enhance the prospects of a good life. This in itself is hard to quantify, although undeniable. Where the possibility of human flourishing is taken seriously, as I think it should be in a positive philosophical practice targeted for relevance for managers, where the endeavour of positive psychology¹⁸ and positive organisational scholarship¹⁹ is taken into focus, there philosophical pedagogy and methodology should resonate not only with content, abstractions, and arguments. It should address tough questions of impact and usefulness.

In addressing questions of influence, the philosopher for managers will have to choose her colours because not all causes are just. Personally I think that the philosopher for managers should not perceive herself as a coach for performance only but should opt for human flourishing, dignity, freedom and justice. She should be aware of the force of bad ideas, and of well-intended good ideas in bad hands, as well as of the temptations of power, vanity and influence along with human abilities in self-deception. She should, in short, study PAUL JOHNSON's disturbing *Intellectuals* and ANTHONY READ's equally alarming *The Devil's Disciplines*.²⁰ Not all influence is good influence, and yet we must try. The point of philosophy for managers is to generate influence for the sake of the good. There is no a priori conflict here. On the contrary, as the Nobel laureate EDMUND S. PHELPS has argued, in his vision for "good economy", "the humanist conception of the good life takes us a long way toward a justification for society's support of an entrepreneurial, innovative economy."²¹

¹⁷For Chinese classics, see Chan (1963); on Zen, see Watts (1957), Cleary (1989), Suzuki (1970); for a scholarly exposition of classical Indian thinking, see Radhakrishnan (1929). Hanh (1995) is a beautiful discussion of Buddha and Jesus, a book some of my senior executive friends have found particularly illuminating. Other books of the Eastern tradition with managerial relevance include Rinpoche (1992) and Dalai Lama and Goleman (2003). For an excellent elaboration of Buddhist ideas from a Western perspective, see Epstein (2001). Michiko Yusa's *Zen & philosophy: An intellectual biography of Nishida Kitaro* is a touching account of the life and thinking of perhaps the greatest of Japan's 20th century philosophers.

¹⁸Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), Snyder and Lopez (2002, 2007), Keyes and Haidt (2003).

¹⁹Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn (2003), Dutton and Ragins (2007).

²⁰The managerial challenges of Hitler's empire were tremendous. In late 1939, while touring the Jewish ghetto in Lodz, Poland, Goebbels "got out of his car to make a thorough inspection. 'Indescribable!' was his disgusted reaction. Echoing Hitler, he wrote in his diary: 'These are not human beings any more, they are animals. So this is not a humanitarian task, but a surgical one. One must operate, and radically. Otherwise, Europe will be destroyed by the Jewish sickness.'" (Read 2003, p. 612.)

²¹Phelps (2007). See also Phelps (1997). Phelps' perspectives fit particularly well with the overall ideas I am putting forward here. "I want to argue that the Aristotelian ethic – Aristotle on happiness, the pragmatists on problem-solving and capabilities, and the vitalists on adventure and exploration – played an *essential* part in a huge development in our economic history." (Phelps 2007, p. 16)

For me personally, it is particularly relevant to use philosophy to foster the manager's existential narrative and personal *story* (JEROME BRUNER²², HOWARD GARDNER²³). In the dimension of Self-Leadership, philosophy for managers should help the manager to reach towards the "Reflected Best Self"²⁴ and inspire her to develop her *life as a work of art* as well as the fostering of her *care of the self* (MICHEL FOUCAULT²⁵, PIERRE HADOT²⁶). And the point is, philosophy is rich in its resources to do that.

Philosophy for managers serves the cause of the good life, presents itself as a form of a life-enhancing positive philosophical practice, and amounts to an effort of the mind to reconnect through humanity with the fundamental struggles of another human being – a manager.

Philosophy for Managers as Philosophy of Life

For me, the core of philosophy for managers is the philosophy of life. It is here that the three areas of self-leadership, understanding wholes, and activity in complex environments are integrated and brought into focus. The philosophy for managers must have dynamic impact on all these three critically important arenas of the manager's life.

There are casualties. The first casualty is much of academic philosophy, along with intellectual brilliance for-its-own-sake²⁷. Academic philosophy in its various formats will not be of much use for philosophy for managers because it does not communicate with managers. Yet in the philosophy for managers the need to be understandable is imperative.

On the positive side, we can acknowledge style-intensive, verbally reforming and personal thinking *in philosophical spirit* as part of the vital canon of philosophy

²²Bruner is a tremendous psychological thinker whose work is fundamental to philosophy for managers. On the significance of the narrative, see in particular Bruner (1986, 1987, 2002).

²³See Gardner and Laskin (1995) for a study of the significance of stories for leadership.

²⁴Roberts et al. (2005).

²⁵In Foucault's extensive bulk of work, perhaps the single most informative text on this theme is his interview with Paul Rabinow and Hubert L. Dreyfus (published in *The Foucault Reader*). In that interview, Foucault states among other things that "What strikes me is the fact in our society, art has become something which is related only to objects and not to individuals, or to life. That art is something which is specialized or which is done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life?" (*The Foucault Reader*, p. 350). For some other important Foucault interviews, see Foucault (1980, 1996). Like Sartre before him, Foucault developed interviews brilliantly as a cultural form for expressing philosophical insights.

²⁶Hadot's *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (2002) is particularly powerful here. See also Hadot (1995).

²⁷I shall not enter in to the meta-philosophical discussion of the general merits and demerits of the institutionalization or academization of philosophy. Some of the valuable contributions in this area include Hamlyn's warmly-tuned (1992), Calhoun's critical (1997) as well as Collins' astonishing (1998). Suffice it to quote here Hamlyn who notes that "It is not entirely clear what the modern counterpart of Socrates in contemporary society would be, but there are few obvious attempts to fulfil such a role. The result is the accusation that philosophers occupy an ivory tower." (Hamlyn 1992, p. 162) "Above all. . . , non-philosophers often fail altogether to see the point of the subject." (p. 165).

for managers (for instance: EMERSON, THOREAU²⁸, BARTHES, KUNDERA²⁹). Certainly DOSTOEVSKY and TOLSTOY command primary attention as does SHAKESPEARE. The effort is one of *moral literacy*³⁰ and the renewal of speech and metaphors (in the sense of LAKOFF and JOHNSON³¹), the creation of a space for new words and concepts, is of course at the core of philosophy (as stressed by DELEUZE and GUATTARI³² and others) and it is clear that philosophy for managers cannot be content with the stingy discourse of academic philosophy only.³³ A personal way forward will involve personally inspiring discourse (as KIERKEGAARD in particular realised, along with Nietzsche, or with PASCAL). That is the personally tuned pathway of human dignity that the philosophy for managers points to, as encouraged by the ancient greats.

More than anything, philosophy calls out to managers to take their thinking seriously – much more so than what is required by the immediate professional challenges she may face. Philosophy for managers is inspiration for the manager to elaborate on *the voice and subtleties of her own thinking*. It is an invitation to think beyond the obvious and beyond the immediate task-list. Philosophy for managers is an act of empowerment through the realm of thinking, a celebration of that tremendous human endowment that easily gets narrowed down to tired patterns and short-sighted perspectives.

The radical aspect of philosophy for managers, from the point of view of academic philosophical practices, is the way it encounters the manager as an equal. Socrates on the square in the small town of Athens having a conversation with a war-hero, as opposed to a fellow-philosopher: this is the paradigm. The point here is to acknowledge what Socrates does *not* do. He does *not* dismiss his fellow-

²⁸Stanley Cavell stresses the significance of Emerson and Thoreau, “the most underrated philosophical minds . . . to have been produced in the United States” (Cavell 2004, pp. 12–13). All serious students of the philosophy for managers should explore Cavell’s “Introduction” to his characteristically original *Cities of Words* (2004) in which he outlines his view of “moral perfectionism”, philosophical analysis of “moments of crisis”, “of the sense of a demand that one’s life, hence one’s relation to the world, is to undergo change”, and of “claims for a way of life, for a transformation of one’s life” (pp. 13–14).

²⁹For the philosophy for managers Kundera’s emphasis on “the spirit of the novel” (Kundera 2005) concerning the specific, the unique, the individual, and the relational, is highly suggestive. It is often the abstractionism and non-contextualism of philosophy that renders philosophical theorizing useless for practising managers. My own practice is strongly focused on making philosophical reflection contextual and thus embedded in the manager’s life. My philosophical approach for managers is essentially a re-contextualization of philosophical practice in the realities of the manager. An excellent analysis of the pitfalls of decontextualized forms of thinking is to be found in the important work of Stolorow, Atwood, and Orange (2002).

³⁰Again I am using a phrase of McGinn’s. See his highly readable (1992).

³¹Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and subsequent works.

³²Deleuze and Guattari (1994): “The philosopher is the concept’s friend; he is potentiality of the concept. . . . philosophy is the discipline that involves *creating* concepts.” (p. 5)

³³In my own practice, I have chosen to dispense with academic jargon entirely. Instead, I employ words that many find colourful, associative, inspiring and (often) funny. The discourse might refer to “007 principles”, “non-rose-buying”, “the upscale register”, and to “systems of holding back”. The words I use are not presented as discipline-tight concepts with one from-above defined correct interpretation. They serve as a kind of musical or suggestive function in the currency of speech I struggle to develop. Individual expressions work in the service of the whole and at the same time help to constitute it. The whole operates as an intensive thinking-experiment in an unfolding living present. For a discussion of this kind of philosophical lecturing as a philosophical practice, see Saarinen and Slotte (2003).

Athenian on the basis that his issues are not “deep”, “serious” or “intellectual” enough. Socrates is not out there to find a fellow-expert of the eternal. Philosophy for managers picks up the Socratic call for *a dialogue with a non-philosopher in the living present*³⁴ with the intent of a mutually co-created going-forward. The aim is to increase the understanding of oneself, of the complexities of the situations, and the gestalts of the wholes in which one is operating.

The way I perceive it, philosophy concerns everyone and concerns itself with everyone. Philosophy is a concern – *an on-going concern to engage in* rather than a subject to be looked on and learned. This fundamental core objective of philosophy, its *open-door commitment to a dialogue*, is difficult to synchronise with the policies of power at the institution of the academia. Increasingly, since the Second World War and in the course of what MARK C. TAYLOR calls hyperspecialisation³⁵, the popular way out of this dilemma has been to give up *the ancient promise of philosophy* for the benefit of some intellectually intriguing but alienated-from-life (in the sense of young MARX, MARCUSE) super-symbol management studies as the true task of philosophy.³⁶ No doubt the motivation here is political and economic, an effort to appear respectable along with sciences and to present a “pretence of knowledge” (as F. A. VON HAYEK put it in his powerful Nobel lecture).³⁷ Yet the challenge is to maintain philosophy’s magnificent dialogic, life-enhancing undertone, to do justice to both its nobility³⁸ and commitment to the everyday. We will have to realise that reality is the true arena for us as philosophers, like for Socrates or for Sartre. There cannot be any significant philosophy for managers outside the realm of the real.

In philosophy for managers, thus conceived, even more important than new knowledge is therefore the activation of thought and personal insight for the implementation of action. It turns to people on *their* terms and from the point of view of a life in the mode of becoming.

³⁴Daniel N. Stern writes, with characteristic forcefulness, in his insightful study on the present moment, “It is remarkable how little we know about experience that is happening right now.” (Stern 2004, p. 3). Stern’s work articulates a perspective that is essential to appreciate for a philosopher for managers. The *tense* of philosophy for managers is indexed to the present, unlike in paradigmatic content philosophy that aims at eternal truths.

³⁵Mark C. Taylor, in his important *After God*, writes: “Though rarely acknowledged, the interpretative perspectives of many self-professed avant-garde critics actually reflect and reinforce many of the most conservative aspects of the contemporary research university, where hyperspecialization produces scholars whose critical vision remains limited.” (Taylor 2007, p. xv).

³⁶Shusterman’s *Practicing Philosophy* (1997) presents a powerful demonstration of the need for “extending the conception and practice of philosophy beyond the borders of professionalized academic establishment.” (p. xi). By a careful and scholarly rich discussion Shusterman presents the key aspects of “the philosophical life” particularly as illuminated by the writings and lives of Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Foucault.

³⁷Hayek (1974) was discussing economics, but the perspective applies with full force to academic philosophy. After stating that “as a profession we have made a mess of things”, Hayek explains: “It seems to me that this failure of the economists to guide policy more successfully is closely connected with their propensity to imitate as closely as possible the procedures of the brilliantly successful physical sciences – an attempt which in our field may lead to outright error.” “I want today to begin by explaining how some of the gravest errors of recent economic policy are a direct consequence of this scientific error.”

³⁸For me, that tone of nobility is magnificently exemplified in Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age* (2007), in the writings and interviews of the late Richard Rorty, and in those of Sir Isaiah Berlin.

Philosophy for Managers as a Living Act

I believe the key call in philosophy for managers is to re-engage with the vibrant possibilities of *the spoken, face-to-face language*.

This call is radical, given the dominance of the written word in academic philosophy. Yet I think it is absolutely critical for philosophy for managers to go beyond the written word. We should follow the steps of Socrates and proceed in the spirit of “School of Athens”, as depicted in RAPHAEL’s famous painting with that name (where no teaching, among the dozens of people, despite the presence of Plato and ARISTOTLE, seems to be taking place at all). Philosophy for managers should not yield to the temptations of the academic discourse that suggests the necessity of an abstractionist metaphilosophy along with the view that the whole of “meaning” in philosophy can be coded in written words.

Philosophy for managers takes seriously the fact that the best known philosopher of all time did not write a word. I think it is essential to recall that 2400 years after Socrates, LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN was a professor at the University of Cambridge, giving lecture after lecture without anybody knowing in advance what the subject of the lecture would be.

And those who attended HEIDEGGER’s lectures and seminars have insisted that an essential part of his philosophy was lost when reduced to the written form (although ingenious in its own right).³⁹ As *the currency of a thought* is lost, something essential of *the philosophical grandeur, energy and meaning* is also lost.⁴⁰

We should acknowledge the fact that there is a “where” and “how” in philosophy and in philosophy for managers, not only a “what”. I would go so far as to claim that the “where” and “how” are even more fundamental to the operation of the philosophy for managers than the “what”.

My own experience certainly points to the significance of context-creativity as opposed to content-delivery as the cornerstone of successful philosophy for managers. Whatever value there has been in my own efforts in philosophy for managers, they belong to that dimension that highlights *the event- and process-generating nature of a vibrant, life-enhancing philosophy*. Philosophy becomes something experienced, something subjectively attuning, something that shines through or glows, rather than something that sticks out as a clearly identifiable list of themes. The philosopher’s content-command becomes secondary, her handling of the interface with the manager, along with sensing the manager’s subtle movements of thought, become primary. This means that emotions and affects are not viewed as distractions, but embraced as allies. Body consciousness becomes critical as well.⁴¹

³⁹Steiner (1989), who refers to Löwith, Gadamer, and Arendt.

⁴⁰The concept of “energy” is not often discussed in connection of philosophy. One exception is Lévy in his impressive Sartre-book (2003). A representative paragraph: “In short, Sartre was the only one in his generation to invest his energies in all genres. He was the only one to occupy the territory, all the territory, available. He was the first, as he would say later, in a magnificent formula, to ‘write in so many languages that things pass from one language to another.’” (Lévy 2003, p. 46.)

⁴¹For a groundbreaking discussion of the “body consciousness”, see Shusterman (2008).

Methodologically and pedagogically, perhaps the most striking aspect of philosophy for managers comes out in the idea that philosophy for managers *should not try to teach managers philosophy*. The point is not to add new philosophy files to the manager's internal hard disk. The point is to make them re-connect with the philosophical contents they in most cases already have. Thus all the references in this article are of secondary value only, and do not represent what happens in my own philosophical practice with managers. Everything I refer to in this article is part of my own thinking but the point of my philosophy for managers is not to make the managers think like me but to make them think more like *them*.

I realise of course that academically a philosopher is conventionally perceived as surrounded by colleagues (on the one hand) and by counter-arguments (on the other) through which she is legitimised. The philosopher is thus constructed through the products of her own making, writings, teachings, theories, in short the objects to which she then reduces as a subject. But does not this object-perspective narrow down the philosophy of a philosopher and cut down some of the contributive possibilities of a *living* philosophy? Does it not make philosophy for managers languish, lose its potential to aspire? I believe it does.

The living thinker for the everyday, the philosopher for managers, should realise the fact that she is menaced by the threat of scholarly clichés, by expert-cultural buzzwords, by argumentative sophistry, by conventional and compartmentalised truths, even by intellectual brilliance and especially by reified practices that do not do justice to what the philosophical effort originally was all about.⁴² Reality that moves requires thinking that moves. The event of thinking must be *experienced*, like a symphony that only reaches its full glory in a live performance as witnessed on the spot. In the spirit of Socrates, Wittgenstein and Heidegger, we must prepare for the staggering possibility that in the philosophy for managers, and in thinking in the service of a philosophy-of-life, there resides hidden a dismissed legacy of fundamentally noble origin – *speech-based culture* – the powerhouse of human creativity, magic and uplift that demands a face-to-face interaction (LEVINAS⁴³) and a living presence in order to fulfil its promise.⁴⁴

⁴²Shusterman's (1997) discussion of Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Foucault is powerful on this theme and supports strongly the overall conception I am putting forward. "Dewey sharply chided his professional colleagues for shirking the duty of bringing philosophy to bear on 'the living struggles and issues of its own age and times,' confining its practice to old academic problems so as to 'maintain an immune monastic impeccability, without relevancy and bearing in the... contemporary present'. . . . Dewey insisted that it [philosophy] would recover its true worth (as a life-centered enterprise) only 'when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men'" (p. 20). Dewey's views are shared by Wittgenstein and Foucault, Shusterman argues, and he concludes: "In short, Wittgenstein's disrespect for mere academic philosophizing stems from a view he shared with Dewey and Foucault, that philosophy had a much more crucial, existential task: to help us lead better lives by bettering ourselves through self-knowledge, self-criticism, and self-mastery."

⁴³Particularly useful is the series of radio discussions between Levinas and Philippe Nemo published as *Ethics and Infinity* (1982).

⁴⁴In his insightful Introduction to Sun-Tzu, Roger T. Ames writes: "In contrast with the more static visual language of classical Greek thought typified by geometry, classical Chinese tends to favor a dynamic aural vocabulary, where wisdom is closely linked with communication – that keenness of hearing and those powers of oral persuasion that will enable one to encourage the most productive harmony out of relevant circumstances. Much of the key philosophic

Philosophy for Managers as a Performing Art

As a philosophical practitioner, I consider it fundamentally important that my work facilitates situations of significance for managers and people at large to engage in a *living present and a shared space for emergent, unfolding thinking and attentiveness*.

My main instrument is one of “lecture” which I conceive in terms of experience-as-lived-on-the-spot, a platform for inspiration, insight and personal attunement, and as a co-created space of intense, focused movement of thought. The key instrument is speech – philosophical talking and oratory that are designed to create the context for insights and personal thought-processing.

I do assume that when speaking about the grand themes of life, a philosopher’s talking and performance can *live* and be experienced as *alive*, in much the same sense in which aliveness is a key category in the theatre, dance or music. The speech of the philosopher, as a thought-process unfolding in front of an audience, is the invitation to personal creation. The philosopher’s challenge is to bring into existence a discursive and holistic art-work that makes the speech alive for whoever is present. In that thought- and experience-directed discursive practice, the philosopher’s personal credibility, intensity, and ability to radiate positive energy will play an essential role in co-constituting a platform of mental uplift for the participants to experience and engage in the flow (in the sense of CSIKSZENTMIHALYI⁴⁵) of her own thinking.

Philosophy for managers, at best, can be life-transforming. Yet that transformation is not to be depicted by the speaker, who only provides the context. The direction of the transformation is up to the manager to decide, through the mental processes made more intensive and rich by the facilitation of the philosopher-speaker.

Personally I enjoy relatively large lecture settings (one hundred participants) because the multitude serves an amplifying function. The thinking-experience of each is intensified by the experience of others undergoing their own intensive thinking-experiences, creating a kind of a “ripple effect” through emotional contagion in the lecture setting.⁴⁶ People play their thought instruments in the company of others, resulting in an internally experienced concert of thoughts. The philosopher-speaker serves as the conductor of that concert.

In this approach, the philosopher is not a lonely thinker who informs others of her findings. She does not operate from above. Rather, the philosopher is conceived as a subtle and vital connectivity-builder for people in the fundamental experience

vocabulary suggests etymologically that the sage orchestrates communal harmony as a virtuoso in communicative action.” (Ames 1993, p. 55.) This point highlights one of the ways in which philosophy for managers will benefit from the Chinese path of doing philosophy.

⁴⁵Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and subsequent writings. For a review of the flow-related research, see Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2002).

⁴⁶For a study of the Ripple Effect based on empirical findings, see Barsade (2002). The emerging field of emotions and group emotions is highly relevant for the kind of philosophy for managers I am advocating here. For one thing, as Barsade observes, “there are some important differences between emotional and cognitive contagion”. (p.645). Academic philosophers, as experts of ideas, naturally focus on the latter. But I think we should look more closely the former sort of contagion in our efforts to develop workable philosophy for managers.

of thinking-together while each entertains intensively her own thoughts. In other words, a philosopher is an intermediary (LUCE IRIGARAY⁴⁷) who highlights the intangible but vital in-between (BUBER). *Communicative subtlety and creativity* and *inspirational abundance* are cornerstones of philosophy for managers which adopts the role of conducting communally created aspiring concerts of thoughts. Improvisational skills become critical,⁴⁸ as does her sensitivity to the hints of the audience, personal rapport, and her intuition to guide actions in the performance in productive and spontaneous ways. Along with classics of philosophy, the philosopher for managers will gain inspiration for her work from the practices and experiences of performing artists, along with meta-level writings that conceptualise that arena of human expression.⁴⁹

Thus conceived, philosophy becomes thinking-on-the-spot and a courageous, humble, and spirited effort to unleash the manager's thinking. The philosopher for managers is essentially, not an informer of philosophical themes or contents, but a fellow-thinker who strengthens the internal philosopher-thinker within each manager. As in performing arts such as theatre or music, so in philosophy, the present moment becomes the platform for the creative magic to take place. The philosopher for managers should be a master lecturer, master communicator, master connector, master inspirer – a master interpreter of the subtleties of the human heart and creator of memorable moments. A Socratic midwife with performative brilliance as a key competence of that midwifery. The point is not to deliver content *a* but to make people live through their own experience and thinking – because “working in philosophy”, as Wittgenstein once put it, “is really more a working on oneself [die Arbeit an Einem selbst]. On one's own interpretation. On one's way of seeing things.”⁵⁰

It should be clear by now that in my view, *philosophy does not reduce to the management of its contents*. Philosophy for managers is not a delivery channel for particular themes. The contents are important but there is more *that is even more important*. Philosophy that is charged for dialogue and for significance to managers' lives seeks resonance and vibrations with energising, life-enhancing productivity. In the field of organised thinking, philosophy aims to be – and should be – a *dissipative structure* (PRIGOGINE⁵¹) that creates mental maelstroms.

Philosopher as a *performing artist*? Yes. Socrates and Wittgenstein pulled off

⁴⁷My personal favourite among Irigaray's corpus is Irigaray (2004).

⁴⁸For a useful discussion of improvisation in organisational settings, see Weick (1998). Weick makes much use of Berliner's (1994) authoritative study of improvisation in jazz. Improvisational metaphors are highly useful in the kind of live philosophy I am here advocating. Another illuminating perspective on performative philosophy is provided by Bradford P. Keeney's (1990) work on “improvisational therapy”. Keeney argues for an approach in therapy that is in many ways analogous to what I am here proposing for philosophy: “Imagine psychotherapy being contextualized in an academy of performing arts as a discipline comfortably related to theatre, music, dance, and the rhetorical arts. . . . The most dramatic shift imaginable in the field of psychotherapy is to free it from the tight embrace of medicalism and scientism and connect it to the creative wellsprings of the arts.” (p. 1)

⁴⁹Some of my own favourites: Auslander (2008), Berliner (1994), Bernstein (1976), Bogart (2001), Bowen (2003), Brendl (2002), Gordon (2006), McCartney (1998), Weston (1996). An excellent book to start with is Godlovitch's *Musical performance: A philosophical study* (1998).

⁵⁰Wittgenstein (1980, p. 16e).

⁵¹Prigogine (1996) and Kondepudi and Prigogine (1998).

this role with dazzling results. Philosophy must live, not stagnate in its own truth – a view that becomes dramatised in the letter Sartre wrote to decline his Nobel Prize for literature.⁵² But, as the living philosopher takes distance from contents and *in abstracto* disciplinary measures, up comes the horizon of implementation. From an academic and scholarly viewpoint, this is followed by a threatening and perhaps bizarre-looking emergence of the impermanent, the uncertain, the non-epistemic, the sensitive, the intuitively-grasped, the personal, the style-bound⁵³, non-discursive⁵⁴, and even non-represented.⁵⁵ No longer able to rely on clear and distinct ideas or on what can be grounded on knowledge, rejecting mind as a mirror of nature (Rorty), the philosopher for managers finds herself in the midst of a highly personal and moral task. The philosopher is challenged to unleash her vitality and effectiveness in service of ideals she believes in, losing universality perhaps but regaining life – re-establishing a living connection to philosophy as depicted in DAVID’s magnificent painting of the death of Socrates, a connection to the upscale-as-approached-through-passion. The moral imperatives of philosophy are back.

This means that philosophy for managers, a form of dignity-charged philosophy, should be uncompromising in its courage to speak in qualitative and everyday terms. We need to start to use proudly expressions such as “life”, “uplift”, “flourishing”, “energy”, “love”, “emotion”, “humanity”. Indeed, philosophy for managers and applied philosophy in general must talk about life with the intention of making life *live* – it must create more life, more flourishing life. It must initiate and inspire thinking that is immersed through and through by the *sense of life* (in the sense articulated most forcefully by CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER in his groundbreaking work⁵⁶). Here, phenomenological instincts – and the recognition of emotional truths – feed my view that the movement of thinking needed in philosophy for managers cannot be cut off from the non-rational, non-verbal, tacit and implicit dimensions of our human endowment (as emphasised e.g. by the

⁵²“The writer must refuse to let himself be transformed by institutions, even if these are of the most honorable kind, as is the case here.” For a description of the dramatic and also humorous incidents surrounding Sartre’s decision, see Cohen-Solal (1987, pp. 444–449).

⁵³In his *Mastering the Art of Performance*, Stewart Gordon writes: “. . . the ability to turn in a successful performance stubbornly resists codification, and to some extent remains a mercurial art. After decades of study and research, the components that make up successful performance remain elusive, differing not only from individual to individual but also from circumstance to circumstance.” (Gordon 2006, p. 7).

⁵⁴See Shusterman (1997) for an illuminating discussion of the non-discursive. As part of his creative effort to break new grounds for philosophy, Shusterman observes that “to philosophy’s image as an essentially linguistic discipline devoted to pure *logos*, the nondiscursive somatic dimension of life poses a challenge.” (p. 31). It is clear that any adequately working philosophy for managers will have to account for this critically important dimension in which much of my own practical work among managers have taken place.

⁵⁵Rorty has analysed powerfully the over-excitement of Western philosophy on representations. According to the view that he rejects, “philosophy’s central concern is to be a general theory of representation” (Rorty 1979, p. 3). I completely agree with Rorty that we should look for philosophy beyond representations. Indeed the kind of approach described here will be possible only if we step beyond a representationalist view of doing philosophy. For a discussion of Rorty along these lines, see my (forthcoming).

⁵⁶See in particular Alexander’s superbly impressive four-volume *The Nature of Order* series (2002–2004) and also Alexander (forthcoming 2008) as well as his Schumacher lecture (Alexander 2004b).

BOSTON CHANGE PROCESS STUDY GROUP⁵⁷). On the contrary, living applied philosophy for the everyday should be developed *systems-intelligently* – with an acute eye and heightened sensitivity to the holistic and relations-intensive aspects of the situation at hand, and to the hidden potentials of the context as a humanly-tuned system.⁵⁸ We must acknowledge emotions as allies to our philosophical acumen. In a living philosophical encounter the manager should feel real feelings and think real thoughts, living with those thoughts with more sensitivity, subtlety and force because of the accompanying emotions and because of the inspiration provided by the philosopher.⁵⁹

As it becomes focused on applications, eager to communicate and hungry for life, the philosophy for managers challenges the Platonistic and abstractions-and-contents -excited tradition of the philosophical institution for the benefit of a *situational contextualism*. The focus will be on philosophy *that works* (in the spirit of PEIRCE, James, Dewey). The resulting philosophy for managers concerns itself with the situational, with the everydayish, with what is taking place in the managers' lives – with an engineer-like interest in improvement.

Do what works, fix what doesn't; figure out the most relevant whole that should work – these three basic aspirations of the creative managerial mindset provide operational guidelines for what I perceive as philosophy for managers. Philosophy's ancient promise of a good life must be combined with an improvement-oriented, responsible and process-aware approach that is hopeful, enthusiastic and eager to contribute.

Recall KANT's invitation to leave behind the "self-incurred immaturity" and his spirited call to step forward and engage in a *public use of one's reason*.⁶⁰ The philosopher's battle cry is for everyone to join the cumulative and mutually

⁵⁷Lyons-Ruth et al. (1998), Lyons-Ruth (1999, 2000), Stern et al. (1998), Boston Change Process Study Group (2002, 2005, 2007, forthcoming), Nahum (2000), Stern (2004).

⁵⁸"By Systems Intelligence (SI) we mean intelligent behaviour in the context of complex systems involving interaction and feedback. A subject acting with systems intelligence engages successfully and productively with the holistic feedback mechanisms of her environment. She perceives herself as part of a whole, the influence of the whole upon herself as well as her own influence upon the whole. By observing her own interdependence in the feedback intensive environment, she is able to act intelligently." (Saarinen and Hämäläinen 2004, p.10). See also Hämäläinen and Saarinen (2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, forthcoming), Luoma et al. (forthcoming). The systems perspective relates philosophy for managers with the tradition of holism. For an excellent discussion of holism and systems thinking applied to the managerial situation, see Jackson (2003, 2006).

⁵⁹For useful discussions of emotions, see Damasio (1999), Brief and Weiss (2002), Amabile et al. (2005), Barsade (2002), Barsade and Gibson (2007), Nussbaum (2001), Goleman (1995, 2006), and Knuuttila (2004).

⁶⁰Kant's essays "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" and "The Contest of Faculties" are among the all time greatest essays of generally understandable philosophy. Had academic philosophy taken them as paradigms, how much better the world would be. Foucault's essay "Kant on Enlightenment and Revolution" is also important here. It starts with the words, "Kant's essay 'What is Enlightenment?' seems to me to introduce a new type of question into the field of philosophical reflexion (sic)." Foucault then continues, stressing a point critically relevant for my own concerns in philosophy: "The question which seems to me to appear for the first time in this text by Kant is the question of the present, of the contemporary moment. What is happening today? What is happening now?" (Foucault 1986). Among contemporary philosophers, Foucault's call is particularly impressively picked up by Mark C. Taylor (2007) and Charles Taylor (2007).

inspiring dance of reason, dialogue, and the sharing of positive spirals upwards. Movements of thought, in plural but connected, uplifted by moments of meeting, charged with emotional energy (RANDALL COLLINS⁶¹), in the process of creating together better life and an bergsonian *élan vital* through a mutually co-regulated system of flourishing – such is the space of philosophy.

This means that when all is said and done, the anchor of philosophy is the *ideal of freedom*. Humanity involves the responsibility to think for oneself and to operate from within but with sensitivity for the whole. This call for freedom, inherent in the philosophical attitude, is ethical and political, personal and essential (as stressed out by PICO, Kant, JOHN STUART MILL, Sartre, POPPER, Isaiah Berlin, and so many of the truly great).

Where the imperatives of renewal, growth and innovation are taken as fundamental, the space of possibilities that relate to freedom becomes a necessity.

Search for the Relevant

In the struggle between rigour and relevance, philosophy stands proudly side-by-side with the search for the meaningful, the significant and what truly counts. In other words, philosophy for managers proceeds to those dangerous battlefields where benefits are seldom immediate but where the questions of legacy, destiny and dignity will be decided. The task of the philosophy for managers is to highlight that choice forever, the choice that haunts us always, from within, from without, from the past and from the future: how are we to live *better lives right now*? Methods and theories come and go, but the relevance of relevance prevails. This emphasis on relevance is the cornerstone that the philosophy for managers must acknowledge from the start.

One of the most pressing challenges in a manager's practical affairs and leadership is due to the intense lack of clarity and multi-dimensional ambiguity of the current and foreseeable environments of life. We are surrounded by complexity, of which we ourselves are composed. The manager's actions and activities have far-reaching consequences she knows little of, effects pointing forwards in troubling, sometimes horrendous ways. The linear and non-linear effects and side-effects can destroy what we love most, but they can also reveal opportunities for dramatically productive interventions. Systems built by humans together with systems of nature amount to a web of complexity that calls for a constant need to re-evaluate and re-direct one's thinking in the service of more life-enhancing, self-adjusting, sensitive, and responsible mental models and modes of life (as argued so lucidly by MURRAY GELL-MANN, PETER SENGE, and others⁶²). As the Nobel laureate Murray Gell-Mann put it, "the task of integration is insufficiently respected".⁶³

⁶¹Collins (2004).

⁶²Senge (1990), Senge et al. (1994), Senge et al. (2006). See also Scharmer (2007) for an impressive account of "Leading from the future as it emerges". Complexity research has given rise to important contributions on the leadership arena including Stacey (2003), Griffin (2002), Hazy et al. (2008), Fredrickson and Losada (2005). For a spirited philosophical discussion of complexity, see Taylor (2001).

⁶³Arguing for the need to celebrate the "vital contribution of those who dare to take what I call 'a crude look at the whole'" (p. xiv), Gell-Mann writes: "People must therefore get

What is desperately needed are more sustainable, systemically well-founded and long-term responsible ways of thinking and acting.⁶⁴ What is demanded are mindful (in the sense of ELLEN LANGER⁶⁵) and sensemaking (in the sense of KARL WEICK)⁶⁶ life skills in rapidly changing and complex environments that hide the current destructive practices. Here I think philosophy could and should help. Philosophy for managers, as a sort of systems and operations research and practice, should raise high the objective of mindfulness and sensemaking on its agenda. What was philosophy originally, anyway, if not sensemaking and about helping people become more mindful? The call is to life-directed metaskills, clusters of skills, of the ancient origin, of a *life that examines itself*. It is a desire to link the concrete, experienced, mundane, action-based everyday life and organisational life with dialogical, imaginative, responsible, qualitatively-tuned, philosophical thinking. It is called for because of the necessities and possibilities of the manager's life, because of survival and success in the unsettled, stormy actualities and contingencies in the life that she lives, *come what may*.

The meta-skills of life-management and self-leadership must rise from within the manager in accordance with the uncompromising human laws of mental growth. That progress can be strengthened, nurtured, enriched and invigorated through intellectual and philosophical methods. These methods are application-excited, multidisciplinary and multi-skilled in nature, finding their roots in us as unique human individuals with a superbly rich endowment of skills and potential capabilities. We are born as individuals but delivered into the hands of others, into the midst of others. Through inter-subjectivity we are to become mysteriously complicated systems, with something in the centre, a special Chosen One. Alongside the cognitive resources of that Chosen One there are implicit, process-intelligent, non-verbal, relationships-sensitive and emotion-based intuitions and sensitivities, which recent research in various sciences has subjected to fruitful examination⁶⁷ and which applied philosophy and philosophy for managers must utilise.

Therefore, philosophy for managers means supplementing the safe havens of pure intellectualism in favour of the unfamiliar power fields that are torn and moulded by innumerable forces high and low. This encourages – and forces – thinking to take action, all the way from results of science and scholarship to conceptual speculations and poetry, rationally and instinctively, on the wings

away from the idea that serious work is restricted to beating to death a well-defined problem in a narrow discipline, while broadly integrative thinking is relegated to cocktail parties. In academic life, in bureaucracies, and elsewhere, the task of integration is insufficiently respected.” (Gell-Mann 1995, p. 346).

⁶⁴For a recent discussion of some of the issues involved, see Moser and Dilling (2007). This book is exemplary in its bringing together researchers and practitioners from various disciplines and backgrounds to articulate the barriers and mental models that hinder the communication of climate change and prevent facilitating the social change called out by it.

⁶⁵Langer (1989), Langer and Moldoveanu (2000); notice also Langer's more recent *On Becoming an Artist* (2005).

⁶⁶See Weick (1995) and other works; an authentic thinker and original mind, Weick is a leading figure in the field of organisational behaviour, and a key source for any serious philosophy for managers.

⁶⁷Some key works here include Hobson (2002), Siegel (1999, 2007), Beebe and Lachmann (2002), Fogel et al. (2008), Baumeister et al. (2001), Lyubomirsky et al. (2005), Cozolino (2006), and Goleman (2006).

of imagination and with an awareness of an ethical upscale and a drive for the Good, while utilising sensitivities, interconnectivity in a never-ending *searching for possibilities*.

In the context of philosophy for managers, the human, life-philosophical, self-leadership-tuned and insight-for-each -seeking endeavours of an applied philosophy can naturally be examined utilising the *terminology and discourse of systems* – using concepts and words already familiar to managers as students of instrumental rationality but extending their perspectives from the artificial, constructed and from the objectively manageable towards life itself. It means calling attention to *living with systems* including even those systems which are beyond the rational eye, beyond all information given and represent a reality for which “all models are wrong” (in the words of the systems scientist JOHN D. STERMAN)⁶⁸. And yet, the manager must act. We must all act, because reality does not wait, that system is in full swing – as a situation, as a work environment, as a supervisor-worker-relationship, as the fusion after a merger, as a product development process, as an undoing of a knot in a customer relationship, as an ongoing negotiation, as a challenge in parenting, as a tug-of-war in a marriage. Life does not wait, and the challenge is to live it better, improving the act on the spur of the moment. Life as a system involves connections to and from, it involves micro and macro phenomena, with flows and holistic effects with different intuitive and counterintuitive characteristics in surface structure and inner structure, all pulsating their own message. The challenge to the manager is to live intelligently, wisely, productively, with prudence and with courage, with fairness and with significance but above all as a part of systems that do not allow for a time-freeze and for a perspective from without. This calls for systems intelligence, for a life philosophy that constantly updates that intelligence, endowment within ourselves and in tune with what is emerging around us, in order to strengthen and nurture ourselves towards a better life and toward a more responsibly, fairly functioning society.

Alongside brilliant systems models the manager needs practical abilities to operate in life’s various systems even in the absence of any models. This is the life-philosophical, situational, vitally important and humanly intensive subject matter of the philosophy for managers and the context where I have tried to work myself.

⁶⁸Sterman (2002). See also Sterman (1994) and his magnum opus Sterman (2000). Systems modeling is an important cognitive skill for managers, yet one should observe the outspoken observations of Ackoff (2006) on “why few managers adopt systems thinking”. The systems intelligence approach that Raimo P. Hämmäläinen and I have advocated seeks to overcome the cognitivist and objectival biases of mainstream of systems thinking. See the papers referred to in fn. 58 and especially Hämmäläinen and Saarinen (forthcoming).

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