CoBoTics for a Robotized world – 5 home truths for human success in an algorithmic world

Conquest of the last frontier is an often used cliché to depict hitherto unimaginable new discoveries. In the world of machine learning and algorithmic automation, this phrase loses its significance and sting. As computer programs acquire capabilities to solve more complex problems with a pace and efficiency that would have been hard to imagine – the world enabled by machine learning and BoT propulsion is getting ready for the next phase of Darwinian evolution. And true to its Victorian origins, humans and machines will need to evolve together to succeed and only the fittest will survive to succeed.

Here are five survival tips for the new "humBoT" civilization dawning upon us:

1. CoBoTics or the art of complementary co-existence with BoTs (and by definition all elements of intelligent automation) is likely to become a key human skill for survival. Automation is likely to invariably take away many jobs – but is also expected to create new roles that do not exist today. The management of a BoT farm or imbibing emotional intelligence to a software program will demand newer skills and create new waves of job creation. It pays not to bemoan the job losses – but to appreciate the unique opportunities coming up and start training one's mind to make most of the new skills.

2. Careers are not expected to be created by practicing a set of well-honed skills over a life time. The digital world is likely to seek "cartographic careers" – where the map of career will move across longitudes of diverse skills. Some of the foundational skills that academics and upbringing imparts to everyone will forever be relevant. But a legal professional in a digital world needs to know how to get best from the latest machine learning program, just as a finance professional needs to be adept at controlling risks in a Blockchain denominated transaction. Careers are likely to be built in horizons of 3-5 years, where the new normal will be not a career switch, but a skill refresh. Those that are willing to invest in ceaseless learning and adaptation will acquire the skills to be continually relevant and successful.

3. Everyone will be expected to be a technologist in the new normal world. Appreciation of the power of technology as THE enabler for the digital world – and initiative to rewire the human mind to embrace technology at every step – is likely to become the norm and not the exception. The profession of medical science is realizing this as digital solutions to advance clinical trials and use of big data analytics for disease detection are gradually acquiring mainstream status. There is a "digital kundalini" in each of us that is awaiting the spark to awaken – success will come to those who take the effort to find their digital bearings through self-help and experimentation. Being digital is the first step towards becoming successful in a digital world.

4. We need to be comfortable to swim in a deluge of data. The interconnected world of smart sensors and social media will mean that large volumes of information from disparate sources will suddenly be made available for us to synthesize and make sense of. Intelligence will be ambidextrous – left brain and right brain will need to work in unison to take advantage of this tsunami of knowledge. Training our mind and psyche to absorb multi-dimensional information and the ability to leverage the power of information will be a skill with no alternatives in the digital world.

5. Human emotions and cognitive skills are expected to command supreme premium in an algorithmic world. Despite many frontiers collapsing in the powers of software to perform complex “tasks”, aggregation of many such tasks may still not be capable to automate the sense of “accomplishment”. The human instincts of intuition led judgement and emotional balancing acts will remain forever the cutting edge skills in the human-machine collaboration eco-system. Encouraging emotional intelligence and garnishing cognitive judgement from early on in life – will equip Homo sapiens with the best tools to withstand and prosper in these times when old skills become irrelevant, old attitudes become inconsequential and old orders change forever. Knowing that softwares will eventually be more “intelligent” than humans, but humans will always be more “sophisticated” than softwares – will hold the key to developing minds and routines to stay human and develop the right brain powers.

Much as it may be depicted as a battle between programs and human sensitivities, the Industry 4.0 is and will remain a game of habitual collaborative progression. Over millennia, humans have outsmarted every adversity to reach this stage, the algorithmic world will require the same tenacity and adaptability to cohabitate with exponential technologies and architect a path of congenial coexistence.