

# Contents

## Preface — VII

### Chapter 1

#### ‘Soft’ Skills: A Trend, a Gap, an Opportunity — 1

- The Trend and the Gap: Demand for Soft Skills is Large and Growing — 1
- The Value of Soft Skills: Why Do They Matter? — 2
  - Model 1: The Vertical Organization of Work Requires Social Skills for Conveying Critical Information — 2
  - Model 2: The *Horizontal* Organization of Work Requires Convex Combinations of Hard and Soft Skills in Any Group or Team — 3
- The Challenge: We Cannot Act Upon That Which We Cannot See — 4
- The Opportunity: Soft Skills, Hardened — 14

### Chapter 2

#### What Are Those Skills We Call ‘Soft’? — 16

- What ‘Hard’ Disciplines Can Teach Us About Soft Skills — 17
- Rescuing the Phenomenon From Theories and Theorists: Turning Suggestive Descriptions to Skill Descriptors — 19
- The Communicative Act: The Hard Core of Soft Skills — 22
- Austin on How to Do Things With Words — 23
- Grice on Making Sense of Communicative Acts in Order to Make Them Make Sense — 24
- Searle on Making Successful Speech Acts — 25
- Lewis on Keeping Scores in Conversations in Order to Make Conversations Count — 26
- Apel on the Intransigent Ethics of Dialogue — 26
- Promising – In Public, With Witnesses, Follow-ups and Mishaps — 28
- Asserting — 34
- Apologizing — 34
- Thanking — 35
- Reprimanding — 36
- Forgiving or Absolving — 36
- Justifying — 36
- Explaining — 37
- Inquiring, Querying or Questioning — 38
- Responding — 38
- Requesting — 39

Communicative Virtuosity and Communicative Perversity: Communicative Acts in Whispering Galleries, Rumor Mills and the Social Media Machine — 39
Human, All Too Human – And, Uniquely So – But, Why? — 41
The Nature and Value of Soft Skills: A ‘Big’ Model — 44

## **Chapter 3**

### **How Do We Measure and Evaluate Soft Skills? — 47**

The Message and the Messenger — 47
Message: Intelligible? — 47
Message: Relevant? — 48
Message: Informative? — 49
Message: Efficient? — 49
Message: Auditable? — 50
Message: Persuasive? — 51
Message: Justified? — 51
Message: Valid? — 52
Messenger: Intelligible? — 54
Messenger: Fluent? — 55
Messenger: Coherent? — 55
Messenger: Consistent? — 56
Messenger: Sincere? — 56
Messenger: Competent? — 56
Messenger: Trustworthy? — 57
Messenger: Responsive? — 57
Distributedness and Interactivity: How Rubrics Can Generate Objective Assessments from Subjective Appraisals — 59
De-Noising and De-Biasing via More Sophisticated Polls — 60
Truth-Pumping: Interactive Evaluations and Truth Serums — 62
‘Meetings’: Soft Skill Appraisal in Groups and Teams — 64
The Sincerity-Transparency-Authenticity-Validity Nexus — 67
The Effectiveness-Efficiency-Actionability Nexus — 69
The Inclusiveness-Co-operativeness-Psychological-Safety Nexus — 70
Inter-subjective Agreement and Meaningful Assessment in the Absence of Incontrovertibly Objective Measures — 72

## **Chapter 4**

### **How Do We Develop Soft Skills? — 74**

Feedback: Essential Lever and Missing Link — 74
Learning to Learn From Machines That Learn — 75
Feedback for Humans: The Case of Complex Skills — 75
The Right Feedback for the Right Purpose at the Right Time: <i>How to Feed Back</i> — 78

<b>The Soft Skill Feedback-Based Learning Scenario — 86</b>
<b>Configuring the Environment: Pre-Text, Con-Text, Text and Sub-Text — 87</b>
The Interactive Nature of the Communication Environment — 91
<b>The Circle of Awareness: A Multi-Channel Model for Helping Learners See Themselves — 95</b>
<b>What Should Feedback Feed Back? Using Machines to Help People Become Better at Being Human — 109</b>
<b>Why We Need Humans in the Feedback Loop — 126</b>

## **Chapter 5**

<b>The Communicative Skill Development Lab: A Solution Concept for Higher Education — 129</b>
The Challenge of Large Language Models to Assessment — 132
Missing and Counter-productive Feedback Patterns in Higher Learning — 139
The Soft Skill Development Lab: Re-designing the ‘Higher Learning’ Activity Set — 141
Objections – Addressed — 143
Expanding the Personalized Feedback Fabric — 149
Focus on Coding: LLM-Based Coding Assistants, Mentors and Coaches — 156
Focus on STEM: LLMs and LSM-Based Learning, Feedback and Evaluation Agents — 159
Focus on Social Sciences: LLMs and LSMs as Learning, Feedback and Evaluation Agents — 160

## **Chapter 6**

<b>The ‘Soft-Talent Machine’: A Solution Concept for Organizations — 168</b>
How, When and Where Communicative Skill Matters in Organizations — 169
Re-Engineering the Selection Machine — 182
An Aside: Re-Engineering the Behavioral Interview — 186
Re-Designing the Development Engine: The Personal Coaching Cloud — 188
The Personal Coaching Cloud and the <i>Transparentocracy</i> — 189
Helping Executives Learn the Skills That Cannot be Taught — 190
Using Machines to Help People Become Better at Being Human — 191

## **References — 195**

## **Bibliography: Additional References Consulted — 201**

## **Index — 215**