



Humanistic Values from Academic Community **PERSPECTIVE**

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HUMANISTIC RENAISSANCE FOR GOOD

Leadership Lessons from Florence to Silicon Valley

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Abstract: Humanistic Renaissance for Good offers an analytical and critical review of the leadership values and eco-system dynamics of humanism during the Florentine Renaissance in the 14th and 17th century. It compares the innovative characteristics as well as shortcomings in relation to today's Silicon Valley examples of innovative companies and polymath leaders. Making an argument for humanistic values and multi-disciplinary studies, the study related innovation to pandemics and makes a case for educating future leaders with universal and innovation mindsets to make our communities and the world a better place.

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INTRODUCTION: YESTERDAY'S LESSONS FOR TOMORROW

The Italian Humanistic Renaissance during the 14th to 17th Century was a transformative and innovative period in Florence and Europe that continues to inspire us today. The Republic of

Florence became the epicenter of this cultural, scientific, artistic and educational transformation that transitioned from the dark period of the Middle Ages into the Modern Age. It was a fertile period whose conditions produced astonishing works of art, groundbreaking philosophical advancement in moral values and civic mindedness (Hankins, 2000). This period produced Renaissance polymaths who were deeply curious and shared a renewed mindset. They had the courage to challenge resisting forces, persistence to innovate, ability to create and discover treasures from the arts and sciences not just for themselves but for the greater good. The values of the Italian Renaissance extend beyond classical studies. Universities at that time, were beginning to offer not only classical studies but also practical careers and new scientific fields which would frame the discipline fields of today's academic world. The Renaissance valued the development of well-rounded individuals who were mastering several disciplines to contribute to society and exemplify those human-rediscovered values of Humanism (Baker, 2017; Baron, 1966).

Rediscovering the socio-economic and political contexts of the Renaissance is important to understanding and truly recognizing the values, courage and contributions of these native geniuses. Rediscovering the emergence and developments of the Renaissance can also be instrumental to comparing and evaluating the dynamics, values and contributions to today's innovative contexts such as Silicon Valley in California. Understanding the dynamics that valued and promoted geniuses such as Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Galileo can be helpful to recognize leadership values in Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk among others. Although a comparison between these two very different periods is challenging, we would like to better understand these factors to help signify the innovative and social transformational values of yesterday and today. Understanding the multidisciplinary aspects of both Renaissance and Silicon Valley innovative leaders will be helpful for today's universities and younger generation in their search to make a significant (and also positive) difference in the world.

The concurrent events of the Renaissance reflect the complexity of socio-economic and cultural-political dynamics that, to certain point, are not so different from today's world. A more attentive, contextual and leadership value review of the Renaissance helps us understand how universities balance and integrate education of technical competencies and skills with humanities values and mindsets. A more careful understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of Florentine Renaissance can give us not only an analytical but also critical perspective to recognize the values and shortcomings of Silicon Valley's innovative contexts. It should also encourage a conversation about the relationship between personal values and profit gain with values for the common good and civic responsibility. The values and scientific advancements that began during the Renaissance cannot be confined into technical careers without proper integration into humanities. At the same time, liberal arts studies need to be expanded more strategically and effectively integrated into professional, management and technical education of men and women for others – conscious and capable to make the world a better place.

FLORENTINE HUMANISTIC RENAISSANCE: CONTEXTS AND FACTORS OF ITS EMERGENCE

There are several elements that came together and contributed to the emergence of the Humanistic Renaissance in Florence. The catastrophic devastation from the Black Death, the

constant rivalry between the military powers of France and Spain trying to conquer different regions of the yet to be unified Italy, the business successes of Florence, Venice, Milan, Naples and Rome, the study of law which ignited the interest into classic antiquities, the role of guilds and republican systems of governance, the religious and philosophical thinking of that time, the banking systems and political dominance of the Medici family, the printing press which help make new ideas available to the masses, and the explorations and discoveries of new lands, products and cultures (Ruggiero, 2015; Hale, 1965).

The Renaissance began in and around Florence. Based on the rediscovery of humanity in its values and beauty from the Roman times, it attracted and promoted geniuses such as Filippo Brunelleschi, Leonardo Da Vinci, Niccolo Machiavelli, Michelangelo Buonarroti and Galileo Galilei among many others. These Renaissance leaders and polymath advanced tremendous innovations in the areas of architecture, engineering, medicine, mathematics, and the arts. These are some of the factors we would like to highlight in order to better understand the emergence and expansion of the Renaissance (Heilbrunn, 2002).

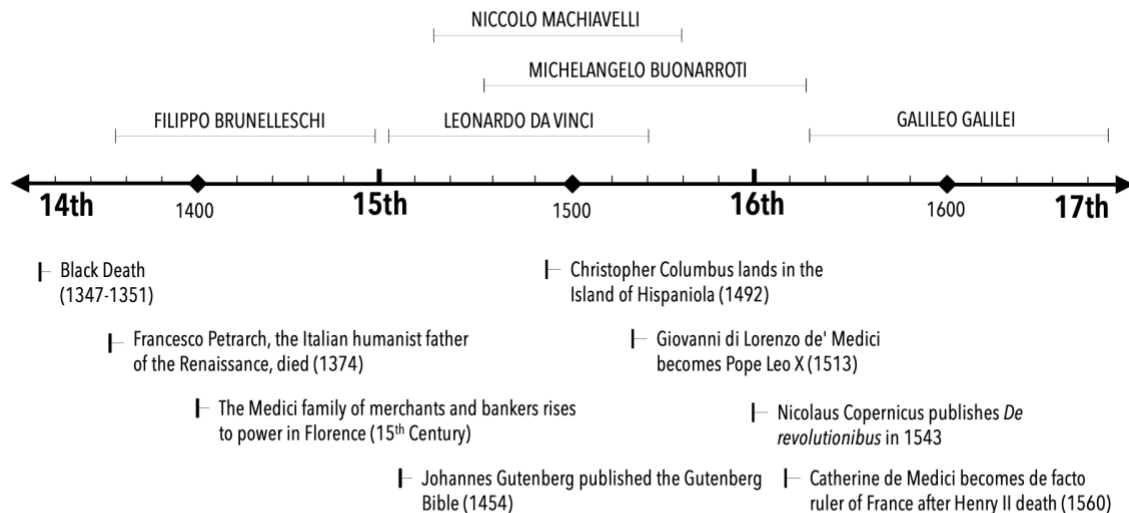


Figure 1: Florentine (Italian) Renaissance Timeline: Key Leaders and Events

First, the humanistic movement best describes the emergence of the Renaissance. The term *umanista* (humanist) was first used in fifteenth-century Italian academia as a term to describe those people who knew classic literature and the arts associated with it including grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy. The term *rinascita* (rebirth) was first used by Giorgio Vasari, an Italian painter, architect, writer, and historian, and most famous for his book *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, which is considered to be the foundation of art history writing. In it, Vasari describes the lives, values and accomplishments of

these multitalented artists, sculptures, poets, engineers, and architects including: Filippo Brunelleschi, Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo Buonarroti, among others. Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374), the father of humanism, describes this *rinascimento* (rebirth) for its human-centered values based on the rediscovery of classic Roman and Greek civic values. Through the vernacular writings of Dante Alighieri, Giovanni Boccaccio, and also the political philosophical writings of Niccolo di Bernardo dei Machiavelli, the paintings and sculptures of Michelangelo, the inventions of Leonardo da Vinci and the observations of Galileo Galilei we have inherited values and practices that are still present in today's academic institutions and debated in our public and political arenas.

Second, the age of explorations and discovery helps explain the expansion of commercialization and mixing of cultural values. The discoveries of main trade routes from the East and expanded from the early Venetian merchants and explorers like Marco Polo were early factors influencing the Renaissance. Merchants brought luxury goods including silk, spices and dyes from the Levante, the Byzantine Empire and Arab lands to the ports and doors of city-states like Genoa, Pisa, Venice, Milan and Florence. These cities drove economic prosperity to wider regions and pushed for more democratic forms of governance – the Republic – which then attracted innovative artists, craftsmen, talented polymaths, moral philosophers and skillful lawyers, politicians and diplomats. The Fourth Crusade ended up opening the route to the East by destroying the Byzantine Roman Empire, a commercial rival to Venice and Genoa. While the powers in the South of Italy and the papacy in Rome were not governed well, dependent on feudalistic political-economies, and subject to foreign domination, the Central and Northern Italian cities were able to maintain their autonomous governance and prosper through industrious commerce. They were importing whole, precious metals and grains from the North and silk, dyes and spices from the far East. These movements of people and goods also reintroduced classic manuscripts from the libraries of the ancient city of Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul, which had been founded as Byzantium) to the wonderment of many scholars. Renaissance scholar Renée Neu Watkins recognized these dynamics as fertile conditions for the merchants of Florence to prosper.

“Having accumulated profits by diversified trade, as well as by lending money to the papacy and collecting taxes for the church, Florentine merchants stood in the fifteenth century among the most prominent wealthy men of Italy. The range of their activity extended from Syria to England, from Sicily to the Netherlands. They imported the raw materials of a cloth-finishing and dye industry and employed large numbers of people in producing luxury goods for sale and export. At home the great merchants competed with each other to be the rulers of the city.” (Watkins, 1978, p. 7-8).

Third, the Black Death (*Mors Nigra*) which peaked in Europe from 1347 to 1351, was also a tragic contributing factor of the Renaissance. Known also as the Bubonic Plague it was one of the most devastating pandemics in human history, with an estimated 75 to 200 million deaths in Eurasia. The disease travelled to Europe via the Silk Road and commercial boats landing first in Crimea and then Sicily. At first citizens responded to the Black Death with popular superstitious beliefs of misfortune and religious interpretations of sin, later they accepted the more scientific understanding of the disease which led to the importance of personal hygiene and sanitary public spaces (Cohn, 2002). The tragedy of the Black Death inspired survivors to reconsider old ways of thinking and to question religious, social, economic, and political ideas. With the sudden shortage

of labor, the surviving workers generally found themselves with a higher standard of living than before the plague. With the Black Death reaching both saints and sinners, nobles and peasants, rich and poor people, urban and rural areas, the God-ordained assumptions were questioned. Scientific observations of the human cadaver – whose dissection was religiously forbidden and punishable – ultimately promoted advances in medicine and dissipated erroneous beliefs. Leonardo himself practiced human dissections in the basements of the University of Florence for his anatomical observations, until his colleague and friend Prof. Marcantonio della Torre, died of plague in 1511 (Da Vinci, Clayton, & Philo, 2012).

Fourth, the innovations of printed books provided the possibility of sharing ideas from the classics to the public. In 1464, the first book is printed in Italy. By the 1490s, a flood of small publications began circulating the Florentine Presses inspiring and influencing leaders and intellectuals of the Republic. Taking advantage of this new and improving technology, Giorgio Vasari publishes the *Lives of the Artists* illustrating the influence of the great artists of the Renaissance from Cimabue to Michelangelo (Vasari, Bondanella, & Bondanella, 2008). Google, Microsoft and other internet search engines are a 21st Century printing press reaching out all over the world.

Fifth, the republican system of governance in Florence prioritized the power of the economy, commerce and labor over military and nobility status. Although the system was still far from true meritocratic and democratic practices, it symbolically represented a small independent power capable of maintaining its independence and influence with the neighboring powerful kingdoms. Hence, the need for alternative forms of power balance such as diplomatic relations, alliances and marriages of states as suggested by Niccolo Machiavelli. The famous statue of Michelangelo's David, was commissioned as a symbol of the small but effective powers of the Republic against the Goliaths. The original location of David was symbolically placed at the entrance of *Palazzo della Signoria* (known today as *Palazzo Vecchio*), the *Comune* (common interests) represented by the Florentine Republic with the head facing South, toward the papacy powers of Rome. Florence was in constant battle between competing families seeking to gain control of the governance. The battles in Florence started during the 13th Century when the two major factions of the city, the *Ghibellines* (supporters of the noble rulers) and the *Guelphs* (the populist supporters of the Pope) began a war in 1216. The divisions between the elite and poorer classes in Florence were structured along the lines of the seven *Major Guilds* (bankers, judges, cloth-merchants, wool and silk merchants, furriers and physicians) against the *Popolo Minuto* (skilled laborers) later grouped into fourteen *Minor Guilds* (butchers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, stonemasons, saddlers, carpenters, bakers, etc.). The *Minor Guilds* had to pay high taxes with little to no representation in the *Signoria*. This led to the *Revolt of the Ciompi* (1378-1382) which saw the emergence of Salvestro de Medici, a cousin of Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, founder of the Medici dynasty (Kent, 2000).

Sixth, the power and influence of the Medici Family is key to understanding the emergence and evolution of the Renaissance from Florence to Rome, France and then all of Europe. The Bonsignori, the Bardis, the Peruzzi, the Acciaiuoli and the Medici were the main banking families in Florence who were in a constant struggle for political, ideological and economic dominance. The Medici family came to power in Florence first through the wool trade (their family crest has round balls symbolizing the wool guild) and later with the establishment of

the Medici Bank, which became the most prosperous and respected institution in Europe. Their advancements in the economic and political power were largely due to the expansion of the *Fiorino* currency throughout Europe. In today's Silicon Valley, the Medici family would be considered as venture capitalists, not just entrepreneurs. They owe their success to their early adoption and innovative systems of using standardized high valued coins like the Fiorino and the double-entry bookkeeping system for tracking credits and debits. They provided banking services to the Papacy and to most commercial enterprises in Europe. The Medici replaced the Albizzi family in the control of the political, economic and ideological powers of the city starting from the economic dominance of Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, later under the economic-political dominance of his son Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici. Cosimo was known to stroll around the city in a *lucco* a scarlet or black ankle length distinctive dress of a Florentine citizen. He listened to humbler guildsmen and followed his father's precept: "Never hold an opinion contrary to the will of the people." (Setton, 1970, p. 58). With Cosimo and Lorenzo de Medici, their practice of investment was different. They were not lending money as bankers. They supported artists and polymaths to make the city more beautiful and increase their prestige in front of other noble families and foreign kings. In other words, they increased their brand in world affairs while also seeking popular approval with charity services and beautiful public spaces in their city.

The economic-political and cultural dominance continued under Lorenzo de' Medici, also known as *Il Magnifico* (The Magnificent). Lorenzo realized the importance of balancing economic power with ideological and political powers. He is known to have said, "It's hard to be wealthy in Florence without political power" (Watkins, 1978, p. 151). Lorenzo is well-known for his patronage of Michelangelo as well as other artists who lived with him as family. Lorenzo was also instrumental in promoting humanist thinking through the discussions and writings of moral philosophers such as Marsilio Ficino, Poliziano, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Eventually and after the sudden death of Lorenzo in 1492 and the short life of the Republic under the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola, the Medici extended their influence in Rome and France. Giovanni de' Medici became Pope Leo X in 1513 his death and Giulio di Giuliano de' Medici became Pope Clement VII (1523-1534). Catherine de Medici, daughter of Lorenzo II de' Medici became queen of France by marriage to King Henry II (1547-1559) and later Marie de' Medici also became Queen of France as the second wife of King Henry IV of France and de facto ruler of France due to her husband's assassination in 1610 until her son became of age in 1617. This Florentine influence onto French culture is still visible today in the usage of the fleur-de-lis and its original connection to Florence.

The Medici dynasty both protected and prospered but also intimidated and dictated which alliances and plots to resist rival families and neighboring kingdoms for almost 200 years. Machiavelli's originally unpublished *Il Principe* (The Prince) offers prescriptive reflections on how to maintain control and sovereignty based on his professional experience and first-hand view of the power struggles between the Medici, Borgias, Savonarola, Papacy, French and Spanish forces and professional mercenaries (Donskis, 2011; Von Vacano, 2006). The powers of the Medici and governance systems of the Republic of Florence exhibited positive promises of democracy, innovation, and protection as well as negative consequences of dictatorship, control and domination. These ambiguities and shortcomings merit a further analysis on the eco-systems and shared values that generated prominent leaders and innovators in yesterday's Florence and today's Silicon Valley.

RENAISSANCE POLYMATH LEADERS: INNOVATIONS IN FLORENCE AND SILICON VALLEY

Florence, like Silicon Valley today, was attracting and generating an unprecedented number of talented people, innovators and entrepreneurs across various fields and disciplines. Its system of *patronage*, similarly to today's venture capitalists and angel investors, generated an unprecedented number of geniuses and innovations (Adam, 2004; Lytle & Orgel, 1981). We recognize these leaders as Renaissance men, 'universal people' - *homo universalis* (Latin) and *polymaths* (Greek) – noted for their expertise covering several subject areas to solve complex problems (Shor, 1970). *Homo universalis* is a notion linked to 'universal' multi-disciplinary knowledge and education (hence the word university).

The Florentine Renaissance was a cradle of polymath leaders. Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Niccolò Machiavelli and Galileo Galilei are some of the most well-known icons among the many artists, inventors, architects, poets and philosophers of the Renaissance. Leonardo is the quintessential Renaissance polymath for his endless curiosity, innovative studies, and discoveries and creations (Isaacson, 2018; Vasari, 2006; White, 2000). His interests included science, engineering, geology, astronomy, mathematics, anatomy, botany, architecture, cartography, painting, sculpting, music, literature, writing, and history. His multi-faceted talents as an inventor, artist and engineer matched his own personal life choices and values. Leonardo embodies not only the common human values obfuscated during the Middle Ages but appears also to represent a diversity in thinking and behaving that stretches humanistic thinking of the Renaissance. Michelangelo also exemplifies the multi-disciplinary values of *homo universalis* with his priceless artistic productions representing his ability in sculpting, painting, architecture, and poetry. Machiavelli, commonly associated with a conniving reputation from his famous book, *The Prince*, does not fully reflect his identity as a promoter of the republican form of governance, diplomatic relations, and citizen empowerment. He is considered the father of political philosophy and a pioneer for the field of diplomacy, international relations, and military strategy. His thinking demonstrates the conflicting forces between aspiring values for innovation, renewal, progress and realistic necessities of control, power, and force.

The *homo universalis* concept is also exemplified in Galileo Galilei's efforts to advance natural philosophy to help revolutionize the scientific method of inductive reasoning. These Renaissance leaders were polymath humanistic geniuses that rediscovered the importance of individual human character (*virtu*) beyond religious paradigms (*dogma*) and above fatalistic interpretations (*fortuna*). These Florentine Renaissance figures with their competitive-collaborative environments and 'disruptive' innovative actions have many things in common to today's leaders of Silicon Valley.

Like the Renaissance polymaths, the icons of Silicon Valley emerge from an eco-system of competition, collaboration, investments, technology, and universities. We know what Steve Jobs has been for Apple, Mark Zuckerberg for Facebook, Elon Musk for Tesla, and Larry Page and Sergey Brin for Google. Beyond these well-known leadership examples, Silicon Valley owes its notoriety to other transformative leaders such as Stanford University engineering professor Frederick Terman, considered by many to be the "Father of Silicon Valley" (Levey, 2004). These

are a few modern-day polymaths – leaders who have been able to master multiple sciences and integrated values to produce socially and globally impactful innovations. They have revolutionized how we work, communicate, socialize, and commute. They have created industries worth billions of dollars. Dr. Fred Terman was professor of Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard. He helped them to land their first clients and began their prototype productions in the HP Garage, nationally registered and celebrated by many as the birthplace of Silicon Valley (Gillmor, 2004).

Situated along the Northern California’s Bay Area, between the cities of San Jose and San Francisco, Silicon Valley owes its name to the use of silicon first used by William Shockley as an innovative component in integrated circuits (Laws, 2015). This component change revolutionized the semi-conductor industry creating companies such as Fairchild Semiconductor and then Intel. Senator Leland Stanford, Sr. who founded Stanford University in memory of his son, was a successful entrepreneur and statesman. Professor Terman’s career illustrates the beginning of Silicon Valley as a high-tech hub. After leading research at Harvard University on anti-radar research during World War II, professor Terman returned to Stanford in 1946 as the Dean of the Engineering School. He was determined to create an outstanding school and encouraged his students to stay in California to pursue their careers in engineering instead of graduating and heading to the East Coast. He emphasized mentorship and was generous with helping his students build their careers. He was also known for his ‘walking around’ leadership style encouraging managers to walk around and chat with employees in order to better understand their concerns. As part of the engineering school, he helped create the Stanford Industrial Park and leased it to electronic and other high technology companies on long-term leases. This was a profit-making venture for Stanford and it started to build a cluster of high-tech companies. Later new companies expanded to surrounding communities.

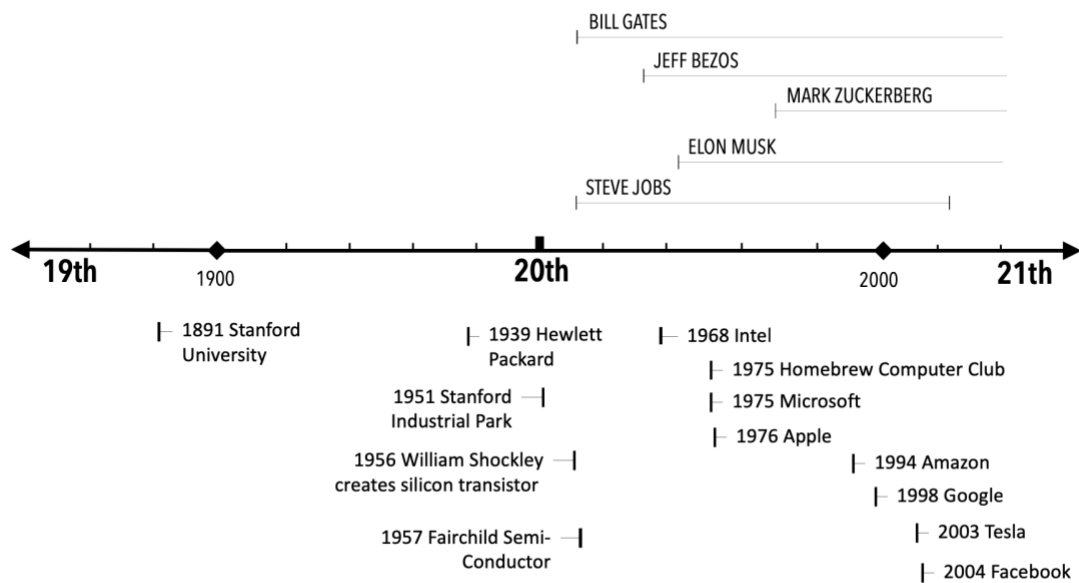


Figure 2: Silicon Valley (West Coast) Timeline: Key Leaders and Events

DECODING HUMANISM: COMPARING FLORENCE TO SILICON VALLEY

What can we learn from the innovation dynamics of the Florentine Renaissance that reflects and perhaps can inspire today's innovative practices? Eric Weiner (2016) published an article in the Harvard Business Review comparing the Renaissance Florence to Silicon Valley and concluded that Florence was a better model for innovation. He describes how cities the world over are seeking to launch innovation hubs and are using Silicon Valley as a model for their plans. Weiner argues that they are using the wrong model as Silicon Valley is too young to learn lessons from. Planners should, instead, try to model the "remarkable genius cluster" found in Renaissance period Florence. "The Italian city-state produced an explosion of great art and brilliant ideas, the likes of which the world has not seen before or since. Florence offers lessons as relevant and valuable today as they were 500 years ago. Here are a few of them" (p. 2). Expanding on these observations, we offer a few critical perspectives on the humane values for the common good inspired at the time of Florence and Italian Renaissance and possibly replicated in today's Silicon Valley entrepreneurship eco-system.

- 1) **Innovation mindset:** The Renaissance produced geniuses because it encouraged and appreciated a renewed and innovative mindset. Leonardo did not simply accept the common belief that the soul and emotions were inside the human body, he wanted to find out it through scientific observations. Explorers such as Christopher Columbus and Ferdinand Magellan not only disproved the Middle Age concept that the earth was flat but they also proved the technical capacity and courage to advance the Age of Discovery and circumnavigate the globe. Polymaths such as Galileo Galilei challenged the Roman Inquisition defending the Bible's version of an earth-centered worldview with scientific observations and an evidence-based inductive thinking - *eppur si muove* (Hawking, 2003, pp. 396-397). These innovative mindsets of the Renaissance could be recognized in today's visionaries such as Steve Jobs for the personal computer, Elon Musk for the electric car, and Mark Zuckerberg for social networking.
- 2) **Open networks for talented workforce:** The Florentine Renaissance was also due to its integrated approach for migration, commerce, diplomacy, and artistic exchange (Prajda, 2018). Florence had secure but open borders to attract the necessary human, financial, and natural resources for the expansion of its innovative systems. These movements of talents did not affect only the elites of the few geniuses but the masses of *Popolo Minuto*, the low skilled laborers that were crucial to the production, commercialization and sustainability activities of the Republic of Florence (Cohn, 2013). Immigrants and their children have helped found the most highly valued tech companies in Silicon Valley such as Apple, Alphabet (Google), Facebook, Oracle, Nvidia, PayPal, and Ebay (Molla, 2018). The San Francisco Bay Area – is the most dynamic, and yet controversial, context of in and out migration due to its attraction of talents and development and the unaffordable housing for most non-high-tech people of Silicon Valley companies and enterprises. Yet, circulation of talents both high-tech, service industries and throughout an ever-expanding global

network is essential for sustaining the eco-system of innovation (Saxenian, 2002). In spite of the recent emergence of nationalistic, closed-borders and anti-immigrant policies, numerous studies have shown that achieving prosperity needs entrepreneurial resources to be open and borderless (Schoolland, 2018).

- 3) Talent needs investors and support:** The Medici Family of Florence, especially, Lorenzo the Magnificent, supported, nurtured and educated talented artists, thinkers and craftsmen. Florentines were known for their frugality, even the Medici family. But they welcomed and encouraged talent even inviting talented artists into their home as family. Patronage was a way to discover and support talent for social mobility based on merits and not status. Michelangelo exemplifies this kind of empowered talent. Lorenzo de Medico saw in this pupil the talent that brought us the genius of Michelangelo. Today's Silicon Valley entrepreneurship the search for talent is vivid among venture capitalists but what about the search for talents and innovations for the common good? There is a need to follow the same idea and have cities, programs and individuals sponsor new talent not as an act of charity but as an investment for the common good. Patronage is not just about investing for financial returns. It implies also philanthropic values for social impact and public benefit. The patronage lessons of the Renaissance should help us to think about the importance of impact investing in Silicon Valley and beyond.
- 4) Mentorship and leadership development matter:** During the Renaissance young artists apprenticed for long periods of time with master artists. They took low level jobs and took the time to master their craft with more experienced practitioners. Leonardo spent a decade in Andrea del Verrocchio's workshop starting on the bottom sweeping floors and slowly working his way up to painting portions of the master's work. Apprenticeship was common during the Renaissance but so was competition. Today's Silicon Valley's competitive environment is also characterized by startup trainings, co-working solutions and investment pitches but is mentorship really happening? The long-term relationships between mentor and mentee are meaningful and significant to the young professionals not only for their technical success but also for their value-based leadership developments. College drop-outs are common among young entrepreneurs. But education is more than training and mentorship is essential to it. Mentors are essential to help young professionals to not only become geniuses but also world leaders for the common good. At his iPad2 presentation Steve Jobs is known for saying, "It is in Apple's DNA that technology alone is not enough—it's technology married to liberal arts, married with humanities, that yields us the results that makes our hearts sing." (Lehrer, 2011).
- 5) Potential and hard work are more important than experience:** Michelangelo was not the safest choice for Pope Julius II to choose to paint the Sistine Chapel's ceiling. Michelangelo had a reputation as a sculpture, not a painter. However, he was also known as an innovator and implementer of new techniques and perspectives and a very hard worker. His reputation was more about his character and potential than his list of achievements at that point. He was given a very difficult task with the hope that he would be original and innovative in his approach. Today we tend to hire people with proven backgrounds and job performances. Thankfully, Silicon Valley is also an experimental ground for emerging talents. Weiner suggests we need to take more risks on talented and

innovative people. The pope acted like an angel investor in this case. He took a risk on the possible failure, but he also had faith in the enormous potential of his art.

- 6) **Hardship and disaster create renewal and opportunities.** The Black Death decimated Florence including its rigid social structure. Weiner observes that out of this unspeakable destruction flowed new ideas, creativity and new artistic expressions. Instead of trying to recreate the past, we should, instead create something entirely new. The events of the Fourth Crusade destroyed the Eastern Roman Empire and Constantinople, but the migrants that came to Italy and brought with them the books of the classics contributed to the intellectual curiosity of the Humanism in the Renaissance. While the infections of the Black Death travelled from the East, so did the scientific explanations and observations.
- 7) **Embrace risks and challenging the status quo:** The Medici family took the risk to invest in Florence during the difficult times of the Black Death. They also invested in risky businesses in Europe, with many of these turning out to be failed ventures. Leonardo's studies of cadavers when such a practice was illegal at that time. He took considerable risk in the name of advancing his knowledge of the human body for his art. Galileo was almost put to death for his heliocentric theory. Today, our younger generations of entrepreneurs should embrace entrepreneurship fiascos without quitting, but learning from one's failures. Every startup's aspiration to disrupt the established order needs to embrace the need to balance innovation with sound business practices, responsible management, and ecosystem assessments (Henry, 2018; Startup Genome, 2018).
- 8) **Small group discourse:** The Medici's used their Boboli Gardens to host discussions about the classic antiquities. Machiavelli wrote his plays and read them to his circle of friends in the garden. Providing a shared space to think aloud helps artists flesh out their ideas. Reminiscing about the collegiality of the Homebrew Computer Club, Apple cofounder Steve Wozniak wrote, "Without computer clubs there would probably be no Apple computers." (Wozniak, 1984).
- 9) **Listen to the people:** Cosimo de Medici followed his father's precept: "Never hold an opinion contrary to the will of the people" (Shor, 1970 p. 58). The Medici family empire declined when they stopped interacting with their community and started living insulated lives out of reach of their fellow Florentines. Similarly, Professor Terman in Silicon Valley expressed a "walking around" leadership style also to be connected to people and support innovation.
- 10) **Encourage moral thinking:** Beside its utopian thinking, Girolamo Savonarola was a reminder for our moral call as human beings. He arrived to denounce Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia) for his corrupt powers and called him "the anti-Christ". A. C. "Mike" Markkula, Jr., cofounder of Apple addressed the question of ethical decision making of Silicon Valley. He observed that ethical agnosticism was pervasive and decided to invest in moral development through his financial support and leadership at Santa Clara University's Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (Santa Clara, 2007).

Similar to the Medici family during the Renaissance, innovation and investments can be powerful forces for renewal but power and control can also be destructive. There is a brewing “Tech-Lash” against Silicon Valley’s data banking, business monopolies, and user privacy practices (Howe, 2018). The limited and cost of housing is displacing many, including nonprofits and startups (Economist, 2018). Other challenges are facing the tech industry. Uber was denied permit to operate in Europe. Google was hit with a record fine for abusing its market power. Facebook faces a lawsuit from Germany’s Federal Cartel Office. The whole tech industry faces mounting criticism for the amount of screen time children and teens use and the correlated increase in anxiety, depression and suicide. As for the Renaissance, many innovations did not prevent persistent poverty, persistent feudalism, family rivalry, power struggles, and women’s discrimination. Currently, Silicon Valley is facing growing pressure for governmental regulation (Economist, 2017). The European Court of Justice rejected the Uber self-classification as “ridesharing” platform and deemed it as a transportation-services company naming it for-profit business model quite different than “sharing.” It is the beginning of the end of myths that has characterized Silicon Valley such as “the Myth of the Garage” as an easy way to start a company. The Myth of Free, such as “our products are free, just give us your data.” and the Myth of Constant Disruption (competition is just a click away!)” (Newman, 2018). High tech innovation is growing and leads to a promising future. However, its humane course and trajectory would require a good foundation in shared values along proper regulations to preserve and protect for the common good.

Just like the women who remained invisible during the Renaissance innovation circles, Silicon Valley companies continue to struggle to include gender and diversity in leadership positions. History repeats itself with these innovative eco-systems and the continuation of sexist and discriminatory practices (Barbieri, 2018). Emily Chang (2018) describes the systemic gender discrimination in Silicon Valley as *Brotopia* - meaning that it is incomparably harder for a woman to change the world or make their own rules than for a man. In 1977, Joan Kelly wrote an essay addressing the role of women in the Renaissance. Did women have a Renaissance? Were women totally excluded from the innovations of Renaissance? In spite half a century of queens, men still ruled and dominated the Renaissance. The feudal and Middle Ages practices of arranged marriages, household servitude, or cloister celibacy persisted in cultural and structural gender relations of female dependency and male domination (Kelly- Gadol, 1977; Hull, 1996). The humanistic values rediscovered during the Renaissance inspired a transformation in sexual relations and views of the human bodies in the arts (Kalof & Bynum, 2014). Yet, these were not radical transformations but only new rays of inclusivity that still struggle to shine in today’s history. Silicon Valley, in spite of its reputation for innovation and change still struggles to implement true inclusive practices. The transformative directions represented by the 2017 #MeToo movement and California Governor Jerry Brown’s bill requiring California corporate boards to include women, appear to be positive developments for a more inclusive future. But, these promising directions will not produce much unless they are combined with a critical reexamination of cultural, corporate and societal values and conducts that too often consider masculine (aggressive-competitive) traits of power, strengths and leadership over more feminine (kind-collaborative) traits. In other words, achieving more inclusive leadership practices in Silicon Valley and beyond would require a reexamination of humanistic values as core elements for measuring our performance, success and progress in our societies.

HUMANISTIC VALUES: COMPETING FORCES FOR COMMON GOOD EDUCATION

Renaissance Florence was not free from injustice, inequality and discriminatory practices and more than five hundred years later we still face these problems today. Our actions are not immune from principles and practices that are contrary to the human rights, stakeholders, social responsibility, sustainability and common good values. Successful business practices and disruptive innovative pursuits do not excuse us from our shared responsibilities for making our communities and society better, sustainable and inclusive. The Renaissance geniuses showed the importance of freeing our mindsets and processes to make new realities possible. Their works also speak about long-term values such as intellectual curiosity, beauty, inspiration, integrity, and quality. They used their talents beyond self-interest. They aspired to make their contributions something useful for their cities, governments, patrons and fellow citizens. Today's academia has the responsibility to help educate the mindsets and skills of future leaders with the capacity to integrate common good values into practices.

However, values, principles and practices for the common good are not often effectively or strategically integrated into education. This is probably reflective of today's differing values regarding personal versus collective benefits. Leaders, organizations and institutions strive for idealistic values like liberty, participation, opportunities and well-being of society. But they often struggle to practice these values and principles for competing forces generating situations of exclusion, threats, misery and tyranny. While tyranny common in Renaissance and appears to be an exaggeration in the 21st Century, there are many examples of leaders seeking absolute powers, of companies seeking monopolies and of states and institutions pursuing hegemonic dominance. The tensions between these tendencies were vivid during the Renaissance and are observable in today's leadership, corporate and societal priorities. Figure 3 illustrates these tensions between the related but competing values, principles and effects across diverse capitals and tendencies. These trajectories are present in the societal evolution of both yesterday and today. They represent trajectories and tensions toward either a more humane society versus the temptation of establishing hegemonic practices in the financial-economic sphere, the political-military sphere, the social-community sphere, and the environmental-health sphere. The results and practices at the personal, organizational and systemic levels will derive from the education and development of humanistic principles, values and mindsets. Innovation for disruption sake will not be enough to achieve a better future for all. It will need to be oriented and tested by its impact and benefits in society. Its progress and prosperity in our communities. Its promotion of diversity with inclusion in our workforces and leadership circles.

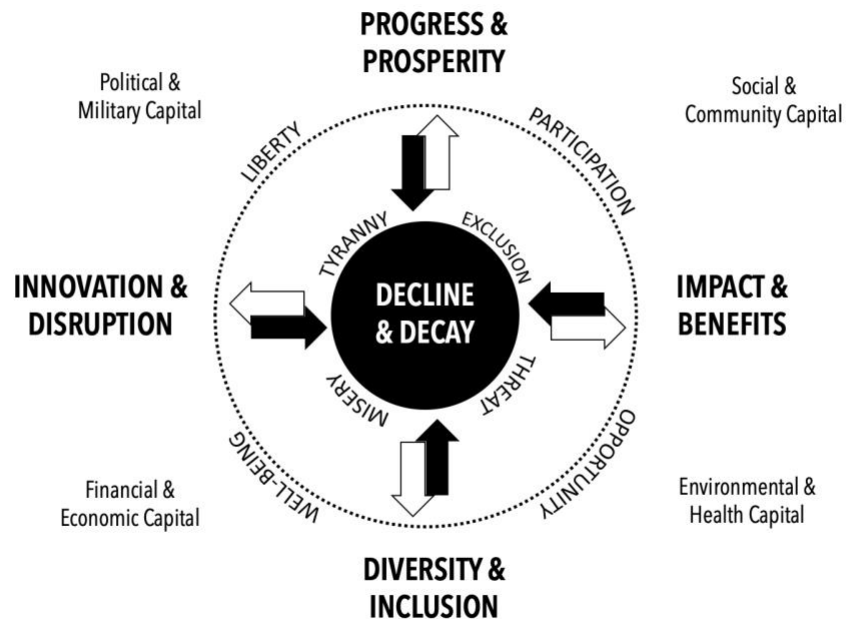


Figure 3: Renaissance Competing Forces: Humanism and Hegemony

Leadership development is key to achieving equilibrium between these competing forces. Both formal and professional education through academic and other educational means have a crucial responsibility to achieving the sustainable and prosperous future for all. Although academia has become more specialized and academics are trained and rewarded for their laser-focused research, the complexity of today's problems require innovators who think 'outside the box'. Like today's Silicon Valley leaders that emerge often outside formal university trainings and degrees, Renaissance leaders were also interested in creating new spaces for thinking and creating beyond the existing paradigms. Yet, their leadership emerged from a period characterized by renewed mindsets coupled with skilled commercial dynamics, republican systems of governance, and patronage investments in talented individuals. In spite of the pressures from the papacy and Catholicism, the Florentine Renaissance promoted philosophical thinking beyond the rigid religious thinking of the church and advanced today's field of moral and ethical discernment. The innovative thinking of Silicon Valley intellectual spaces, California and American universities, are today part of a highly generative eco-system for innovation, entrepreneurship, and investments (Piscione, 2013). Yet, they also need to be integrated into ethical thinking for moral accountability of tech firms and of innovative enterprises (Swisher, 2018).

The Renaissance dynamics and leadership examples highlighted in this study not only mastered various disciplines to solve complex and important problems at that time, they also contributed to the common good. Machiavelli emphasizes the common good in order to reiterate his belief that it is through the *bene comune* (common good) that the greatness of a society can be achieved (Bielskis, 2011). The striving toward principle-based humane values was important for many Renaissance leaders. However, the rediscovery of common good virtues is not only to protect, preserve and conserve but to enter into a dynamic for mental, physical and social

revolutions for shared innovation, prosperity, benefits and inclusion. As Hale (1965) observes, “Wealth, however, cannot buy culture, it can only buy its works. Culture is nourished by money, but its nucleus is a wider exposure to learning.” (p. 15).

The innovations of the Renaissance, like the dynamic entrepreneurship of Silicon Valley cannot sustain itself without an eco-system that includes legal guarantees of rights and responsibilities, opportunities for accessing capitals and advancing one’s status beyond restrictions such as race, gender and citizenship. The spread and influence of the Renaissance throughout Europe was possible not just because of a few idealistic visionaries and geniuses but thanks to the embedding systems and norms that promoted and rewarded innovation and entrepreneurship. At the time of the Renaissance these cultural and systemic shifts came through law and the notion of civic humanism. Leonardo Bruni Aretino (1370-1444), one of the most erudite young humanists, defined the Renaissance of the Republic of Florence as ‘civic humanism’ in relation to values such as property, family, and civic responsibility. Florentine humanists shared an ethic that called for self-made (entrepreneurs) business, political actors actively participating in the society and world affairs (Watkins, 1978).

CONCLUSION: THE HUMANISTIC CORE OF EDUCATION

These reflections on the contributions, contexts and geniuses of the Renaissance have offered a few insights and frameworks for understanding this complex and multifaceted period that continues to inspire today’s practices in Silicon Valley and beyond. The humanistic values, leaders and innovators of the Renaissance are inspiring and exceptional. But to think that the Renaissance was a radical departure from the ‘dark’ tendencies of the Middle Ages is a myth. In the same way, Silicon Valley innovative practices are not separated from other dysfunctionalities of our capitalistic systems and unequal socio-economic interactions. The Renaissance polymaths and ‘universal’ leaders were visionaries who discovered the values of the classics and rediscovered the beauty of humankind and nature. They left us astonishing achievements in scholarship, literature, architecture, sculpture, painting, science, medicine, politics and in many other fields opening the doors to modern advances. Yet, they also left us with numerous indicators of their frustrations with backward thinking leaders, dogmatic inquisitors who resisted change and squashed innovation, and with an uneducated population too easily manipulated by opportunistic leaders and false prophets. The Renaissance showed the light at the end of the tunnel, but the struggle between progress and decline, liberty and tyranny, participation and exclusion, well-being and misery continued throughout this and the following periods to our contemporary time. Hale (1965) writes:

“Human nature does not change much. Men have always liked food and warmth, raised families, felt happier when the sun shone than when it rained, wanted peace and fought wars, created delicate works of art and committed violent crimes. Yet there have been periods of history when men thought that the lives they lived and the ideas they held made their age strikingly different from the one before it. Of all such ages the Italian Renaissance is perhaps the most famous. The men of the Renaissance thought of their time as one in which mankind changed fundamentally” (p. 11).

Financial investments and legitimization of talents and opportunities were a challenge during the Renaissance and continue to be today. The Renaissance found a solution to these challenges through the system of patronage. Patronage, like philanthropy and investing today (should) reflect core ethical questions as to the equity and inequality in our society and the role and responsibilities that our public institutions have toward providing access and opportunities regardless of family status or connection. They ultimately challenge us to revisit our civil rights and duties while avoiding corrupt and elitist exclusive privileges. As Leonardo Bruni (Aretino) and his circle of Florentine humanistic thinkers articulated, “the theory that access to public honors should be based on natural talents, honesty, and commitment to serve the commonwealth, without attention to status, family, and connections (Lytle & Orgel, 1981, p. 49). Niccolo Machiavelli and his friend and critic Francesco Guicciardini similarly argued that “corruption and virtue operated in dialectical tension with one another, forming a cyclical history of decay and regeneration. The tendency to think of corruption primarily as the invasion of the public domain by private interests was clearly emerging in Florentine thought” (Lytle & Orgel, 1981, p. 49).

These comparative reflections on the innovations (and the shortcomings) in the Renaissance and Silicon Valley should inspire efforts of leadership for good. They should also inspire the creation of a 21st Century innovative eco-systems where social and sustainable values integration should be the norm, not the exception. Therefore, integrating humanity, sustainability and social responsibility into business and management education should no longer be optional, but the core message of the degree. In addition, a multi-disciplinary perspective promotes the development of polymaths and social-global leaders. The educational perspectives that could emerge from integrating values and perspectives from diverse fields can also provide solutions to address current issues and avoid repeating shortcomings such as sexism in the workplace. The perspectives and experiences of other industries (e.g. the medical field) could provide proven solutions and strategies for addressing patriarchal and privileged exclusion as in the high-tech field. Current and future students for entrepreneurship and innovation should not have to choose between educational careers to either make money or have a social impact. The integration of humanity mindsets with technical skills should become a core priority in our schools and programs. Scientific advancements and technological innovations will surely be part of our future. If directed toward addressing the most pressing problems of our common humanity and planet, they can be very hopeful. But the education of men and women for others, with global mindsets and multidisciplinary competencies (*homo universalis*) will be necessary to achieve a possible, inclusive and sustainable common future for all.

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