

Phronesis and Quiddity in Management: A School of Knowledge Approach

By Kase, Kimio, Cantón, C.G. and Nonaka, Ikujiro

Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. (The Nonaka Series on Knowledge and Innovation). 336 pages

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As we have witnessed the failures of extreme capitalistic managements – as represented by the Lehman Shock and the “Occupy Wall Street” movements – we have to find a way to go beyond the “management as a science” paradigm which led to these failures. Authors of this book proposed a shift to “management as an art” paradigm which stands on our belief, passion, courage, and wisdom derived from our daily practices.

The book “Phronesis and Quiddity in Management: A School of Knowledge Approach” is a new addition in the Nonaka Series on Knowledge and Innovation, but with a rather philosophical taste. Both the terms “phronesis” and “quiddity” are seldom used in the business management field (the term phronesis was “rediscovered” for management field by Professor Nonaka), and thus readers may find the title not so familiar. “Phronesis” was presented by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, and “quiddity” was presented by the Japanese Philosopher Toshihiko Izutsu. Again, these names may not sound familiar. This means, the authors’ bold challenge was not only to connect and synthesize these two philosophers, but also to bring them – together with other philosophers referred in this book – as a practical foundation of knowledge creation and innovation in business management. And the result is quite impressive.

The authors define that they address the excellence in judgment-making in this book. That is an essential capability needed by every leader in all levels of organization, be it the private or public, in this ever-changing world. The world should be viewed from the complexity theory that everything is related with everything and sensitive to the initial conditions. Judging right at the right timing will become important, and this involves seeing the reality as it is using all of your five senses and your subjectivity. Two concepts, phronesis

and quiddity, both stand on this view. Through each chapter, readers will be guided to these concepts, discussions, and conclusions.

Kimio Kase is Professor at International University of Japan, Japan, and at IESE Business School, University of Navarra, Spain. His back ground as both a practitioner and an academic must have influenced his views about our world. César Gonzalez-Cantón is Professor of Management at Universidad Complutense de Madrid (CUNEF), Spain. Ikujiro Nonaka is globally known as the founder and the guru of knowledge-creating theory. What they all share in common is the relentless pursuit for the essence of knowledge. For that, each of them brought in their interdisciplinary interests, including philosophy, history, sociology, and anthropology, to name a few. Through the collaboration of these three, new knowledge and new insights were co-created. The synthesis and the integration of diverse knowledge and views are beautifully articulated in this book.

To conclude, this book is a great guide for both the practitioners who are seeking what comes next to decision-making in the “management as a science” paradigm, as well as the researchers who are seeking the theoretical foundations of the “management as an art” paradigm. Two detailed case studies on Idemitsu Sazo, the founder of Idemitsu Kosan, and Kazuo Inamori, the founder of Kyocera who recently turned around the ailing Japan Airlines, will help practitioners to simulate their experiences to understand the concepts in the real situation. References in each chapter will help researchers to find relevant readings for their researches. This book may seem difficult, there are so many points the readers will find related and practical to their daily practices.