

Preface to 'Management & Philosophy'

The Dutch Association for Management (NIVE) organized a conference on 17th November 1988 in Rotterdam on the theme "Management & Philosophy". Chairman was S.J. Doorman, professor of philosophy at Delft Technical University. Some 350 delegates attended and 8 papers were delivered at this event. This special issue of "Human Systems Management" contains most of these papers.

The Editors of *Human Systems Management* have decided to provide a forum for philosophers' view of management because it is most unlikely that any other journal would. HSM's commitment to broader contexts of history and evolution, integration rather than specialization, systems instead of narrow "techniques", knowledge, globalization and business ecosystems – all this makes inputs from philosophy indispensable.

Most management systems thinkers and practitioners are going through an intense phase of philosophical reflection. They do not necessarily need to rely on philosophy as a specialized logical discipline or technique, but the nature of their reflections is certainly philosophical. Although philosophers always reflected on knowledge as a depository of wisdom, managers need deeper understanding of *knowledge as a productive force*. Although philosophers have dealt with culture, managers need deeper understanding of *business ecosystems and business ecology*. In short, nobody will and can do our "philosophizing" for us.

Yet, being exposed to leading philosophers' view of management can help our own philosophical reflections to become more self-confident, more streamlined and perhaps even bolder. The very limits and shortcomings of philosophers' view of business enterprise and management provide the necessary encouragement for the more assertive

thinking in the areas of *human systems management*.

HSM Editors do not wish to hold philosophers' thinking as something to be "imported," accepted, or adopted, they want to illustrate the increasing importance of *managers' own* philosophical reflection in the era of knowledge and human integration. There are strong signals that so called management "theories" (which are neither theories nor deal with management) are finally starting to abandon their narrow, disciplinary, specialized and reductionistic bias and preference. Instead, the notions of self-reference, human systems, self-production, multidimensionality, self-management, self-organization, ecosystems and knowledge production are starting to permeate not only the modern management systems practice, but also into the academic literature itself.

It is truly unexpected joy to read philosophers' reflections on management and HSM readers are grateful for the rare opportunity. Perhaps, one day in the future, philosophers will be able to derive similar joy from reading *managers' reflections upon philosophy*. Both groups are (or should be) concerned with *humans* and *human* circumstance – an important concern, perhaps even more important than the simple rules of mathematics, formalism of logic, spins of electrons or the speed of light.

We are grateful to the organizers and the speakers for their co-operation in producing this collection of interesting articles. Our special thanks go to Dr. Frits Schipper of the Vrije Universiteit and to Mr. Aernoud Witteveen of Bussum.

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