

Knowledge Management Abstract

This thesis faces the problem of a **new emergent theory of knowledge**, which reflects the coming out, within the economic studies, of such a discipline as the “knowledge management”.

The everyday experience of firms and corporations, in fact, has accented the need to treat and evaluate not only the “explicit” knowledge, such as that one usually filed and stored into paper documents or databases, but also, and primarily, the so called “tacit” knowledge, that is usually hidden and unsaid, but still used by every worker to perform his daily activities and reach his goals.

The concept of *tacit* knowledge has its roots in the philosophy of Michael Polanyi, a former scientist who, in the sixties, theorized and gave importance to the “personal” and “individual” aspects of every single piece of knowledge we deal with. The idea of knowledge that emerges from his works, therefore, is in strong opposition to any claim of universality, since the way we address things, he says, is always dependent by who we are, namely by our specific medium in referring to the world, the body.

A similar conclusion is reached by two other chilean philosophers and biologists, H. Maturana and F. Varela, who actually went further than Polanyi, with the statement that human knowledge and human actions, eventually, are totally equivalent. The result of their researches, thus, attacks the cartesian and modern ideal of an “objective” science: there’s not anymore a universal and abstract knowledge, beyond time and thus beyond the single subject, capable of comprehending the incidental happenings of human experience, but a knowledge rooted in the human dimension, in our unique way of being and living in this world. Therefore, again, a *subjective* knowledge.

Talking about objectivity and subjectivity leads us straight to the wide fields of philosophy: the scientific and philosophical roots of a practical discipline such as the Knowledge Management, in fact, can be seen as part of that broader movement of thought, within the contemporary philosophy, which rejects the old mind-body dualism, theorized in the modern era by Cartesius, towards a more comprehensive and less rigid theory of knowledge. If this is the scenery, philosophers may have a major role in the new “knowledge society”, apart from keeping track, theoretically, of the new needs and insights emerging from the practical fields, and from suggesting new directions of actions or reflections on what is done.

In fact, since the “art” of managing knowledge, as the two japanese authors, Nonaka and Takeuchi, explain, basically consists in the ability of **transcending oppositions**, philosophers appear to be well equipped for this task: they are used to see things always in an interconnected manner, and not to treat concepts separately or to leave a thought still, but to let them move, change and fade, as if this movement were their necessary breath.

Nonaka and Takeuchi say that the western culture is deeply affected by dychotomies, that must be overcome in order to create a fertile “knowledge spiral”. A *dychotomy* is a rigid way of looking at reality, because it leaves things separated and makes them unable to communicate, as it happens, for example, in the classic mind-body dychotomy. Instead, through this transcending ability, it is possible to gain a newer and wider approach to problems, an approach that, inside business companies, recognizes knowledge as an asset necessarily and continuously changing from an explicit dimension to a tacit one (and viceversa).

The working layout, the organizational process thus created is called the **knowledge spiral**: through preventing knowledge from being stucked in only a specific form, it produces an incremented ability in developing new ideas, in sharing the existing ones and in saving the old ones.

This need to transcend appears also to be a contemporanely need of the western philosophy: a need to find an alternative to the rigid hegelian logic, since to transcend is not to synthetize. This latter philosophy, in fact, deals with dychotomies and oppositions, but relies on the superior and unifying synthesis as a way to calm, and shut down, the struggle. Going beyond Hegel, to trascend doesn’t mean to overcome and contain, but to recognize and valorize the structural differences, to let the opposites live separately but together, by the mean of a “re-dislocation”, temporal and spatial. This “re-dislocation” reflects a need not only theoretical or logical, but first of all practical, emergent in this complex and multicultural society.