

# "Harmonious Man" Hypothesis A Perspective of Sustainable Development

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OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development, Ontario International Development Agency, Canada

ISSN 1923-6654 (print) ISSN 1923-6662 (online)

Available at <http://www.ssrn.com/link/OIDA-Intl-Journal-Sustainable-Dev.html>

**Abstract:** The past human hypotheses characterized as maximization of human interest and efficiency since 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as Economic Man, Social Man and Self-actualized Man etc, on which management theory was established and greatly enhanced the development of economy as well as science and technology, but at the meantime, broke the harmony of nature that has been up rearing we humans and led ourselves into the dilemma of efficiency and crisis. Based on Chinese traditional culture and the harmony theory of Aristotle and Adam Smith, this paper proposed (1) a four-dimensioned "*Harmonious Man*" hypothesis that aimed at human sustainable living and development, which actively adjusts the balance between human needs and environmental permission in order to realize personal harmony, social harmony, cultural harmony and the harmony between man and nature. (2) The Doctrine of the Mean, Balance and Reciprocity as the way of Harmonious Man actualization.

**Keywords:** Harmonious Man, human hypothesis, sustainable development

## Introduction

**H**armonious Man hypothesis is the offspring of current era. Man and nature had been coexisted harmoniously for thousands of years till two centuries ago, especially after the application of Darwin's theory of *survival of the fittest* and *the market economy* characterized with individual profit maximization, the market behavior such as fierce competition and resource exploitation etc, which on one hand, brought human unprecedented wealth and material happiness and on the other hand, completely changed the track of human sustainable survival and development at a result of the world disaster as environment pollution, ecological deterioration, resource shortage, economic crisis, great gaps between the rich and the poor as well as the incessant conflicts among nations and countries, which compel the human to the edge of crisis.<sup>[1]</sup> There's no other way to rescue this world but we humans ourselves change our traditional thinking of anthropocentrism as well as the wrong idea of unilateral development of science and technology etc. and change the traditional style of blindfold production and luxurious consumption, and at the same time, establish sustainable development survival value and return to the harmonious coexistence between man and nature by actively pursuing the balance between human needs and environmental permission so as to actualize personal harmony, social harmony, cultural harmony and the harmony between man and nature.

Human hypothesis is the logic prerequisite of management and each step of management theory development always follows the further understanding of human nature. During the era of commodity economy, the "Instrumental Man", especially the "Economic Man" hypothesis featured by selfish and lazy etc. turned up in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and then the *scientific management theory* or *theory X* established; Based on "Self-actualization Man", *Y theory* or *behavioral scientific management theory* was developed; with the hypothesis of "Complex Man", *modern management theory* came into being. Furthermore, since 70<sup>th</sup> of last century, various human hypotheses such as the Target Man, Knowledge Man as well as Culture Man provided the logic base for Management by objectives, decision-making and cross-cultural management. It is a fact that the above hypotheses respectively disclosed different features of human nature and promoted management theory. However, while increasing individual value and management efficiency, the past human hypotheses also lead humans to the crisis of existence by simply focusing on part of human nature. Therefore, in a sustainable development perspective, we need a new human hypothesis that stand on the whole feature of human nature, focusing on man and society, man and the nature and man itself as well.

The significance of Harmonious Man hypothesis is not only a new understanding of man itself, but also a complete reformation of management concept. The past human hypotheses mostly focus on the side of Self-interest of human

nature. According to Adam Smith, self-interest and altruism (including kindness and sympathy) are two sides of human nature, the former is the instinct of human body and the latter is also the human instinct but controlled by consciousness.<sup>[2]</sup> They are unity of oppositeness. Therefore, the management theory based on self-interest human nature can never exceed the extent of individual interest maximization. Whether personal development or team power mobilization, or the utilization of natural and social resources all focus on efficiency and effectiveness of the individual or the single organization, while taking granted for the interest of others or the nature and the society. This is why the corporate social responsibility campaign is promoted in 1980s, in an attempt to make up the evil consequence under the one-sided management concept. However, this campaign is not as successful as expected. The reason lies in its paradoxical view of survival that the unlimited individual or single organization interest maximization must be at the cost of the others, the nature or the society. Thus, corporate social responsibility cannot be completely actualized without changing radically the management concept. At this point of view, the Harmonious Man hypothesis based on the harmony of man and the society, man and the nature as well as Man itself, is the rudimentary solution to change the traditional management view and actualize the sustainable development objective of both enterprises and the society. Therefore, the theoretical contribution of Harmonious Man hypothesis is to provide a logic prerequisite for sustainable development management theory.

### Literature Review

There are two tendencies on human nature study. One insists the opposition between man and nature based on the philosophical perspective of subject (human)-object (nature) dichotomy, and the human mission is to live their happy life by exploring, conquering and transforming nature. Thus, facing the current human crisis, their solution is to take the stop-gap measures such as by reducing carbon dioxide emissions to mitigate global warming; to reduce environmental pollution by implementing corporate social responsibility etc, and at a result, only addressing symptoms but not root causes, and yet greatly increasing the management cost. The other human nature study follows the philosophy of the unity of subject (human)-object (nature), considering that man and nature are interdependent, harmonious unification. Nature breeds humans by constantly offering materials to live under some certain conditions that humans must follow the natural law of respecting, protecting the nature and reasonably make use of natural resources. Therefore, facing the evil consequences of unilateral economic development, they are determined to tackle both the cause and the effect, by resuscitating the traditional human nature perspective and change the current human view of "egocentric" with pure "self-interest" to that of harmonious coexistence between man and nature. Under the prerequisite of maintaining the natural harmonious order, humans have to take their initiative to reach a win-win state with the nature. Based on the latter philosophy, many scholars put forward their new perspectives of human nature hypotheses.

### H-Man Hypothesis

Xiangqian Zhang (2005) proposed "H Man" assumption by synthesizing "Creative Man", "Virtue Man" and "Intelligent Man" hypotheses in current era of knowledge economy.<sup>[3]</sup> Based on the Chinese traditional moral culture, "H Man" assumption proposes that (1) human nature is a complex of good and evil; (2) the good and the evil within human nature are transformable; and (3) humans have unique characteristics differing from animals, such as creation, initiative and sociality etc. and it is just those characteristics that humans could distinguish the good and the evil, complete the transition between good and evil, and finally reach the ideal objective of individuals. H Man's behavior is influenced by its desire, emotion and social comparison etc, on which Zhang analyzed related management measures.

However, H Man assumption cannot be a complete human nature hypothesis, because it limits its eyes within the moral side of human nature, exactly to say within the part of moral emotion, for apart from moral emotion there are still the sense of truth and the sense of beauty. Therefore, some other scholars proposed Harmonious Man Hypothesis based on China reality of constructing the harmonious society.

### Harmonious Man Hypothesis in Social Harmony Perspective

Guiwu Song (2006) stated that Harmonious Man is the center of Harmonious society, including three parts of harmonious thinking, harmonious virtue and harmonious personality.<sup>[4]</sup> The basic principle to realize harmony is the symmetry, which means that limited supplies must be corresponding to limited demands, and unlimited supplies should pursue unlimited demands. He pointed out that the main disharmonious element that current people facing is the material wealth and spiritual poverty. Therefore, the critical solution to the problem is to implement the principle of symmetry: (1) Reasonably control human desire and restrict the material demands within a finite boundary; (2) Enrich the spiritual and cultural life, to pursue infinite spiritual enjoyment with infinite energy.

Zhikuai Li (2008)<sup>[5]</sup>, Shaoping Chen (2009)<sup>[6]</sup> and Yingsheng Xiao (2010)<sup>[7]</sup> gave *Harmonious Man* almost the same definition, referring to the harmonization and unification of various elements within humans, such as the harmony of thoughts, virtues and personality, the coordination of knowledge, emotion and behavior, the unification of human natural and social attributes etc. The Harmonious Man consists of personal harmony, interpersonal harmony, social harmony and the harmony between the man and the nature. It statically reveals as the human ideal state and dynamically appears as the coordinated development with the external world. Therefore, *Harmonious Man* has two prominent features: entirety and coordination. Entirety is the balanced state of every element within a person and Coordination is the harmonious state that the individual actively coordinate with the external environment as well as the elements within himself. From the value perspective, *Harmonious Man* emphasizes the united value of humanity, society and ecology, not only focuses on individual interest, but also concern for the interest of others, the society and the nature, and effectively keeps them in coordination.

### **“Harmonious Man” Hypothesis in Ecological Perspective**

Jean Sun (2004)<sup>[8]</sup> proposed “*Ecological Harmonious Man*” hypothesis as “For the purpose of body-soul harmony and the individual happy life, the ecological harmonious man pursues the harmonious development of his needs structure, including the natural organic harmony between man and nature, man and man, and man itself, the covariant harmony of environmental adaptability and the harmony with goodness of reasonable value. This definition has two characteristics comparing with the traditional human hypothesis: First, it emphasizes the combination and interaction between the objectivity of management and science and the subjectivity of human experience and emotionality in order to reach a realm of harmony but not sameness and actualize a management mechanism with transparent reward and punishment, with clear rights and liabilities, and with vigorous competition and cooperation. Second, it exceeds the one-sided thinking of traditional human nature hypothesis that overlooked the interdependency between man and nature while emphasizing the environment influential effect to the organization.

Whether *H Man* hypothesis or the *Harmonious Man*, or *Ecological Harmonious Man* hypothesis are both a significant approach toward current social and natural issues and depicted a harmony picture, including personal harmony, social harmony and the harmony between man and nature. However, the common limitation of the above hypotheses is to emphasize the external effect in creating the harmonious man while overlooking the human internal desire for harmony, especially neglecting that the purpose of *Harmonious Man* hypothesis is to target at the sustainable living of mankind. Therefore, harmonious man hypothesis should not stay on the “what” and “why” level, instead, we need to go further into “how” level and disclose the way of how to realize the *Harmonious Man* hypothesis.

### **Harmonious Man Hypotheses in a Sustainable Perspective**

#### **Theoretical Background**

Wanxian Li (2010)<sup>[9]</sup> stated that Harmonious Man Hypothesis is a value of harmony based on the goal of sustainable development, including personal harmony, social harmony, cultural harmony and the harmony between man and nature, which can be traced in the ancient philosophy. Cross-cultural study indicates that Chinese traditional culture is the only culture that lasted thousands of years without changing its origin. The basic reason is its unique feature of the Three Teachings in-one, which Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism share the same views on substantial issues, such as human virtue, self-cultivation and ideal personality etc. while each of them focuses on the particular feature of human nature. Confucius takes "benevolence" as the core of its theory, through the ethics and behavior norms clearly defined the relationship between people and people, people and things etc. and provided the theoretical framework for social harmony; Daoism worships the nature, emphasizing that any human development should follow the law of nature and teaches people how to keep harmonious coexistence with nature; Buddhism is a Kindness and benevolence oriented theory, such as generation circle and reciprocation between the good and the evil etc. It provides people a theoretical base for mental and spiritual harmony. The three teachings altogether constructed a perfect picture of personal harmony, social harmony and the harmony between man and nature. It is because of their complete explanation of human nature that makes it possible for the Chinese continuous existence and development on the land of China. Furthermore, the other unique feature of this culture is that all the three teachings emphasize the behavior principle of being friendly toward neighbors and kind to others, which shaped the harmonious behavior of the people from different minorities and nationalities. Therefore, the purpose of harmonious Man hypothesis is to disclose this personality feature of harmony, the highly unification of the interest of individuals and the public, the man and the nature as well as the present and the future.

### The Implication of Harmonious Man

In terms of Chinese traditional culture and the reality of the constant cultural and beneficial conflicts in present world, we define the *Harmonious Man* as those who targeted at human sustainable development, actively adjust himself to keep the balance of individual demands and environmental permission in order to reach the state of personal harmony, social harmony, cultural harmony and the harmony between man and nature. <sup>[10]</sup> This definition indicates the following implications:

(1) The final objective of Harmonious Man hypothesis is the human sustainable development in a way of the harmonious coexistence and mutual benefit between man and nature.

(2) As the standing point of Personal harmony, the Harmonious Man would actively adjust his personal needs to fit the environmental requirements for the balance between physical and mental, material and spiritual, selfish and selfless demands etc.

(3) The Harmonious Man has four dimensions:

- Personal harmony: refers to the coordination and compatibility of individual's body and soul. It is the premise of the individual's health and development.
- Social harmony: refers to the coordination and compatibility between the individual and the others as well as the society. It's essential for social existence.
- Cultural harmony: refers to the harmonious state of seeking for common ground while reserving difference between different cultures, as well as mutual encouragement and mutual development between nationalities and/or countries.
- The harmony between man and nature: refers to the idea and behavior of mutual respect, mutual interdependence and harmonious coexistence between man and nature.

(4) The four dimensions have structural characteristics of unity and compatibility. Unity means that the four dimensions are a united whole of the personality of harmony.

Any one of them missing or unilateral development will break the balance of the personality system; and compatibility means that the four dimensions reveal the mutual relationship of both independence and interdependence or acceptance. The Pyramid of Figure 1 shows clearly the relationship among the four dimensions of Harmonious Man personality: on the bottom of the Pyramid ( $\triangle ABC$ ) is personal harmony, representing the starting point of the personality of harmony and the foundations for the other three harmonies which are respectively locates on each side of the pyramid,  $\triangle BCD$  for social harmony,  $\triangle ABD$  for cultural harmony and  $\triangle ADC$  for the harmony between man and nature.

The pyramid structure of the harmony system is a whole, with the broken line separating from each other, which means the boundary between the dimensions are relative and interdependent one another. For instance, in an international point of view, without culture harmony, there will be no peace in the world and the other three harmonies will be decreased and vice versa. The final objective of Harmonious Man hypothesis is to return nature, to realize the harmonious state of coexistence and mutual development between man and nature. And yet, this is the most difficult project for mankind, because it needs the humans to give up the concept of anthropocentrism and the

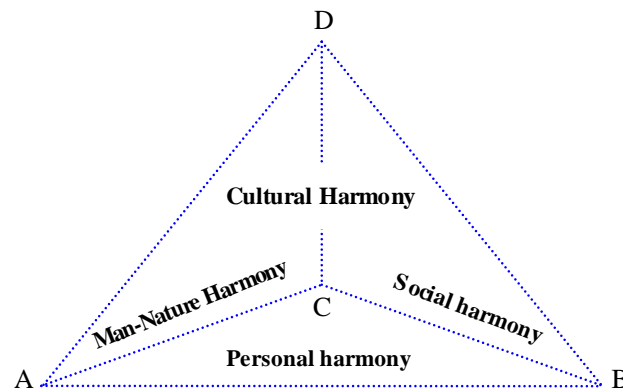


Figure 1 The Dimensions of Harmonious Man

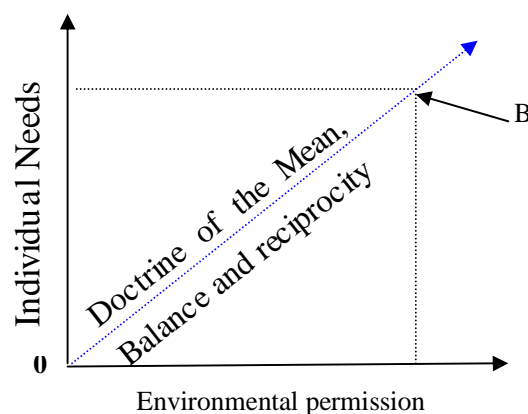
related habitual behaviors such as consuming nature and endless exploiting natural resources etc, which held by humans for hundreds of years.

### The Actualization of Harmonious Man Hypothesis

As for the way to actualize the Harmonious Man Hypothesis, Wanxian Li (2011) stated that the ancient thinkers all emphasized the doctrine of the mean, balance and reciprocity in spite of their various terms and explanations about harmony. <sup>[11]</sup>As early as 1772 B.C. ancient Babylon already had the term of *reciprocity* in the Code of Hammurabi, <sup>[12]</sup> which has been held as the Golden Rule by all religions for thousands of years; The Chinese ancestor of Daoism (570 B.C.) proposed the concept of the harmony between man and nature and also the concept of Wuwei (let things take their own course) as the way to harmony; <sup>[13]</sup> Skamania, the founder of Buddhism (565 B.C.) proposed the term *Middle way* as the principle of keeping harmony<sup>[14]</sup>; The Confucius (550 B.C.) , the founder of Confucianism coined the term of “ Doctrine of the Mean” meaning harmony but not sameness, and telling people never to go extremes; <sup>[15]</sup> Aristotle (384 B.C.) proposed a more concrete formula of both the Mean in mathematics and that in social life by which one could reach the ideal beauty/harmonious state<sup>[16]</sup>; Adam Smith (1723-1790) wrote two great books in his life: “*Wealth of Nations*” and “the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*” in an attempt to bring about the world harmony. The former takes self-interest as the human nature and the latter targeted at altruism, the other side of human nature. These two books showed clearly the way to material wealth and spritual values. However, the people read them separately and even make use of it immediately after reading the first book, and at a result of leading to the present conflicts between man and nature. <sup>[17]</sup>

Therefore, harmony is the permanent topic of human existence and sustainable development. <sup>[18]</sup> The basic principle to actualize harmony could be the Doctrine of the mean, balance and reciprocity. The mean is the criterion to distinguish the inner and the outer, the upper and the lower, as well as the state of polarization, whose basic implication is never to be biased, to a proper extent, to be just perfect, appropriate to the occasion. Just as the Confucius says, “A pleasure which would cost one nothing, fatigue without complaining, not corrupt, poised but not arrogant, majestic without being fierce, joyous but not indecent, mournful but not distressing.”<sup>[19]</sup> Balance refers to diversity but not sameness, a state of Contradictory balance with the Combination of different elements, in short, Unity in diversity. Balance is considered as a harmonious and unitizing state when many different or opposite elements interacting each other, by way of phasing out with mercy, being both opposite and complementary. Reciprocity is considered as both the starting point and terminal point, for the former it’s a behavior criterion and for the latter, it’s a result of win-win state.

Figure 2 shows the way to actualize the Harmonious Man through the *Doctrine of the Mean, Balance and Reciprocity*. The ordinate indicates the Individual Needs, including the physical and the mental, and the abscissa indicates the Environmental Permission/Requirements, including the identification and acceptance of the other people, the society, the nature and the other cultures. The balance line starting from the interacting point “0” shows the standard balance between individual needs and environmental permission. In terms of the different needs among



**Figure 2**  
**The actualization of Harmonious Man**

people and the various requirements of the environment, there're many points distributed on the balance line and point "B" is one of them. For example, the actualization of personal harmony is the balance and harmony of the body and soul. One's belief and value is the decisive factor for the balance of the individual. The Doctrine of the Mean, Balance and Reciprocity is the mechanism of balance actualization. One's willpower is the guarantee for personal harmony. In terms of the Characteristics of individual endless desires and the limitation of environmental permissions, the individual's imbalance of both the physical and the mental will always exists.

Therefore, the way to actualize balance is to satisfy the reasonable desires and to control unreasonable ones. According to Adam Smith in his book *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, when selfishness and selflessness are in contradiction, the *Impartial Spectator* (a virtual one that Adams invented)<sup>[20]</sup> in one's heart will appear to adjust them under the guidance of one's beliefs and values as well as the related principles, and the individual will make a balanced decision between selfishness and selflessness and finally reach his/her personal harmony.

Therefore, the Golden Mean, Balance and Reciprocity are the universal principle toward harmony. The actualization of the other dimensions of the Harmonious Man is the same as personal harmony above. For social harmony, the principle could be *Diversity but not Sameness*; For cultural harmony we have to follow the principle of *seeking common ground while reserving differences*; For the harmony between man and nature, we should hold the idea of *Mutual Respect, Mutual Exchange and Mutual Benefits*.

### Conclusions and limitations

This paper concludes (1) the relationship among the four dimensions of Harmonious Man hypothesis can be called the unity of opposites, which means the four dimensions are relatively differentiated. In fact, any one dimension is dependent, interacted and sometimes overlapped among another. For instance, personal harmony is the base for other harmonies, however, human itself is part of the nature, the society and the culture, and so all the dimensions are interrelated to one another. The four dimensions integrated together to form a complete value system of the Harmonious Man. In this sense, it is also a person of all-round development in the perspective of the harmonious world and the human sustainable development. (2) The word harmony in the Harmonious Man is reflected as an ideal static state, and dynamically it reflected as coordinated development between one and his external world. Therefore, harmony is temporary and relative, and disharmony is constant and absolute, and the Harmonious Man is the process of increasingly development from disharmony to harmony, and then from the new disharmony to the new harmony.

This paper aims to give a conceptual picture of the Harmonious Man and its actualization. Although it tries to make it a clear description and detailed explanation, it still remains a theoretical one. Therefore, the suggestion for future study of the Harmonious Man is to do more empirical demonstration and especially in a cross-cultural perspective so as to make it well adapted and widely accepted. In one word, this paper expects to throw away a brick in order to get a gem for the upmost goal of human sustainable existence.

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