

CONFUCIAN HARMONY AND THE IDEA OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN MODERN SOCIETY¹

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Abstract: Youzi, Confucius' disciple, proposed the thought of "Harmony is Valued", which was also the value pursuit of Confucius. They interpreted the implication of "Harmony" from practicing the rules of propriety. "He" means "harmony". Mencius called the harmony between people "Support of the People", and he discussed the harmonious coexistence between the revolutionaries and the public from the perspective of "Benevolent Policy" and "Good Nature". Xunzi explained the institution, normalization and impartiality necessary for society from the aspect of "Harmony", which expanded the theoretical implication of "Harmony". Confucian thought of "Harmony is Valued" is also the embodiment of the ideology of "Advocating Fairness" and "Harmony Between Man and Nature", which contained the thought of the harmonious relationship between people and nature. Confucian thought of "Harmony is Valued" has achieved an innovative development in modern society, which complies with the idea of sustainable development. It is of great referential significance for rethinking the relation between people, the relation between human and nature, and the relation between economic development and natural environment etc.

Keywords: Confucian. "Harmony is Valued". Sustainable development.

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INTRODUCTION

“Harmony” is the most important link in Chinese ideology, and the Confucian interpretation of “harmony” is the best comprehension. Confucius and Youzi proposed that “Harmony is Valued”, while Mencius and Xunzi extended its meaning from the perspective of “Support of the People” and “Harmony Rite”, respectively. Confucianism’s exposition of “Harmony is Valued” embodies the importance of harmonious coexistence between people, and between people and everything. Academic researchers are mainly involved in the harmony view in traditional Chinese culture (WANG, 2019, p. 104), such as Confucianism and Sustainable Development (WANG, 2000, p. 65), Basic Features and Contemporary Values of the Traditional Confucian View of Harmony (XING, 2014, p. 30), Confucian Culture and Sustainable Development (YANG, 2006, p. 6), Ecological Ethical Implications of Confucian thought of Harmony of Heaven and Man (WANG, 2005, p. 26), Confucian Reflections on Sustainable Development Approaches (CUI, 2002, p. 89), Ecological Ethics and Sustainable Development in Traditional Chinese Culture (QU, 2008, p. 341), the connotation and practical significance of the Confucian thought “Harmony is Valued” (WANG, 2021, p. 1), climate governance and the sustainable development (FANG, 2021, p. 86), etc. There are few studies on the relationship between the Confucian thought “Harmony is Valued” and the concept of sustainable social development in academic circles. Therefore, the author writes this paper with the superficial piecemeal knowledge to explore the Confucian thought “Harmony is Valued” and the concept of sustainable development in modern society, in order to illustrate the internal logics and harmony between “Harmony is Valued” and sustainable development in modern society.

1 THE THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF CONFUCIAN THOUGHT OF “HARMONY IS VALUED”

“He” in Confucianism can be interpreted as “harmony.” It is the basic development goal between people and between people and everything, also the perfect development state of human society. Confucius and Youzi defined the meaning and framework of “Harmony”, while Mencius and Xunzi discussed the meaning of “Harmony” from the perspectives of “Benevolent Policy”, “Division” and “Righteousness”, which further deepens the idea of “Harmony is Valued”. In addition, “Harmony is Valued” is also the embodiment of the

Confucian theory “The Golden Mean” and “Neutrality”, which demonstrates the Confucian pursuit of “Harmony Between Man and Nature”.

2 “HARMONY” IS THE IMPORTANT PURPORT OF “HARMONY IS VALUED”

Youzi, Confucius’ disciple, once put forward the theoretical proposition that “Harmony is Valued” when discussing “the rules of propriety”.

Youzi said, “In practicing the rules of propriety, it is harmony that is valued. [...] This is where the ancient monarch’s method of governing the country is valuable. However, even if you do big or small things harmoniously, it won’t work sometimes. For the purpose of harmony, it is not feasible to control rite without rite.” (CONFUCIO, 2001, p. 5)

Therefore, how do we understand “Harmony”? In *Book of Rites by Ru Xing*, there is an argument that “[...] it is harmony that is valued in the rules of propriety.” As said in the Kong Yingda “[...] it is harmony that is valued in the rules of propriety”, propriety is based on the articles and people who use it. They are afraid of suffering from the difference between the noble and the humble, and people cannot be “harmonious” with no gap between them. If the Confucian scholars use it, the noble and courteous are polite and there is no gap, so “[...] it is harmony that is valued’.” (ZHENGXUAN, 2004, p. 1730). Kong expressed that the application of “rites” is to make people “harmonious” with no gap between them. Therefore, Kong Yingda understood that it is harmony that is valued in the rules of propriety” as the “Harmony” among the people (LE, 2020, p. 203).

In *Confucian Analects*, “Harmony” also exists (harmony, which means “no distinction between noble and inferior, and the respect and inferiority are dear to each other”). Confucius said, “Ran You! Gentlemen hate those who refuse to say that they would like to implement it, but make excuses.” Whether they are the feudal princes with a country or the senior officials with fiefs, they do not worry about not having much wealth, but just concerned about the uneven distribution of wealth; they do not worry about few people, but instability in the territory. If wealth is distributed even, poverty does not matter; if the territory is peaceful and united, you won’t feel that there are few people; if the territory is peaceful, the country will not be in danger. If these are completed, people from far away will not be convinced, so they will be entertained by penalties and civilized intercourses with kindheartedness

and justice, harmony and music. When coming, they must be relieved. Now, Ran You and Ji Lu, you two are helping the Ji Sun clan. People far away do not submit, but Ran You and Ji Lu can't make them submit; the country is divided but cannot maintain its stability and unity. Instead, it is planning to start fighting within the territory. "I am afraid that Ji Sun clan's worries are not in Zhuanyu, but in the interior of Lu State." (CONFUCIO, p. 143). Confucius' understanding of "Harmony" means that even if there is no difference between the rich and the poor, everyone will live in harmony and be "safe", which is the same as that in *Book of Rites · Ru Xing*. Youzi established the moral foundation with the filial piety and fraternal duty, "[...] which is similar with those of Confucius." Mencius commented that Youzi was as wise as Confucius. Therefore, Youzi's statement in practicing the rules of propriety can also be understood as Confucius' proposition.

"Harmony" refers to not only the symbiotic relationship between people and society, but also an ideal state where everything is coordinated and coexisted in harmony. Youzi discussed about "Rite" and "Harmony". "Rite" is an objective criterion for maintaining social order, which shows the code of conduction that should be observed between people in the society. It is a method of harmonious coexistence between monarchs and ministers, between people and among neighbours. Confucius said, "The monarch shall respond to the subordinates with rite, and the subordinates shall serve the monarch with loyalty." (CONFUCIO, 2001, p. 20). Confucius said,

Government decrees are applied to govern the folks and criminal laws to rectify them. The folks only seek to be free from crimes and punishments, but they have no sense of shame. Guiding the folks with morality and assimilating them with the rite system, the folks will not only feel ashamed, but also have consciousness of obedience. (CONFUCIO, 2001, p. 7).

Furthermore, the "Rite" shall be applied throughout people's life. Confucius said, "When your parents are alive, you shall serve them with rite. After your parents die, you shall bury them and worship them with rite." (CONFUCIO, 2001, p. 8). More importantly, "Rite" can motivate people's inner moral character. Confucius said, "Restraining yourself, and doing everything in accordance with the requirements of rite, this is the benevolence. Once it is completed, everything in the world will be attributed to benevolence." (CONFUCIO, 2001, p. 99). From the above discussion, it can be observed that "Rite" is embodied between people, and "The Function of Rite" lies

in “precious harmony”. Here, “Harmony” means that people should live in harmony with each other. In addition, “Benevolence” is the inner support of “Rite”, that is, the inner morality is the basis for the reasonable application of “Rite”. Confucius said, “How can a person practice rite without benevolence? How can a person play music without benevolence?” (CONFUCIO, 2001, p. 15). Therefore, “Harmony is Valued” is not only manifested as the external confusion and peace, but everyone in the society recognizes and accepts others.

3 “SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE” IS THE SOCIAL PURSUIT OF “HARMONY IS VALUED”

Mencius inherited Confucius and Youzi’s concepts of “Harmony” in interpersonal relationship with the internal identity. Compared with Confucius and Youzi, he paid more attention to the relationship between the rulers (monarchs) and the people, and made Confucius’ abstract exposition more concrete. Mencius discussed “Harmony” from politics and interpreted “Harmony” from the aspect of “Benevolent Policy”. Rulers shall improve their moral qualities, so as to manage society rationally and achieve social harmony, which is what Mencius called “Support of the People”.

Mencius said, the weather and season conducive to combat are not comparable to the geographical situation. The geographical situation is not comparable to the aspirations of the people and internal unity. The wall is not low, the moat is not shallow, the weapons and equipment are not inadequate, and the food supply is not insufficient. They abandoned the city and fled, which shows that the favourable terrain is not as good as the concerted efforts of people. With that being said, To make people settle down and not move to other places cannot rely on the boundary of territory, to consolidate national defense cannot rely on big mountains and rivers, and to awe the world cannot rely on the sharp weapons. The monarch who can implement the “Benevolent Policy” will have more people to help and support him. Otherwise, they will lose the support. If few people are loyal to him, the relatives will be traitors. If most of people support him, the whole world will obey him. On the condition that everyone in the world submits to him, he will assail the monarch whose relatives are opposed to betrayal. Therefore, the monarch will win all wars (MENCIUS, 1999, p. 65).

Only “Support of the People” can lead to “Benevolent Policy”. “At this time, a powerful country implements a benevolent policy, and the people are

happy as if they are rescued.” (MENCIUS, 1999, p. 46). The foundation of “Benevolent Policy” is “Good Nature”.

Mencius said,

As far as the temperament is concerned, you can be kind-hearted, which is what I call the goodness of human nature. As for some people who are unkind, it cannot be imputed to natural endowments. Everyone has the sense of sympathy, the sense of shame, devotion, and that of right and wrong. The sense of sympathy belongs to benevolence; the sense of shame belongs to righteousness; the sense of devotion belongs to rite; and the sense of right and wrong belong to wisdom. The benevolence, righteousness, rite and wisdom are not imposed on me by external factors, but inherent to me. I would not think about it at times, so there is no feeling. (MENCIUS, 1999, p. 171).

Mencius believes that “Goodness” is the inherent nature of human beings, that is, “Kindness” means “Good Nature”. On the basis of the theory of “Good Nature”, Mencius advocates the people-oriented concept, “for a nation, the people are the most important thing. The state comes second. The ruler is least important” (MENCIUS, 1999, p. 203). The ruler shall have inner goodness, restrain his own desires and ambitions, have his state and people in mind, and be committed to the well-being of the people. The people will also respect the ruler’s governance, achieving “Support of the People”. In the interaction between the ruling party and the people, the ruling party can guarantee the validity and authority of its power, thus protecting the rights of the people. People will fulfil their due obligations, which is the unity of “Support of the People” and “Benevolent Policy”.

4 “HARMONY RITE” IS THE SOCIAL NORM OF “HARMONY IS VALUED”

Same as Confucius and Mencius, Xunzi also regarded “Harmony” as a reasonable form of social development, but paid more attention to the role of “Rite” in “Harmony”, advocated “Harmony Etiquette” and acted in accordance with the “Rite” system.

With that being said,

If you are proficient in one of the principles, you can be proficient in the second; if you master the principles, you can use them for a long time; if you apply them in a broad way, you can comprehend

them by analogy; you can be at ease if you often think about them; you can prefer them if you follow and figure out them repeatedly; you can get benefits if you apply them to regulate the erotic feeling; you can apply them to achieve fame and glory; you can be in peace and harmony if you apply them to get along with everyone; and if you apply them to be alone, you can be happy. Nobleness can be the emperor and have the wealth of the whole world, which is people's common pursuit. But if you obey people's desires, then it is not allowable from the perspective of power and influence. It cannot be satisfied by materials. Therefore, the wise ancient emperors formulated rite and righteousness to distinguish them, so they have noble hierarchies, the difference between old and young, between cleverness and stupidity, ability and disability. Each of them bears their responsibility in his proper position, and they get salaries which match their status and work. This is the way to make people live in groups and in a coordinated way. (XUNKUANG, 1997, p. 13).

Xunzi advocated the thought of “Clarifying the Distinction between Gentle and Simple, Rich and Poor, Men and Women, Old and Young to Form Social Groups”.

If you leave a group to stay alone without relying on each other, you will be poor. If you live together without a position difference, you will compete. Poverty and fight are both disasters. To save and avoid disasters, there is nothing like clarifying the partition between gentle and simple, rich and poor, men and women, old and young to form social groups.” (XUNKUANG, 1997, p. 39).

“Division” refers to the social hierarchy, such as gentle and simple, old and young, rich and poor. Human beings form groups due to the social hierarchy, and it reflects the difference between humans and poultry, and highlights the particularity of human beings. The class distinctions of the society still need to be adjusted by “Rite”. It is no more important to distinguish the boundaries of various things than to determine a person's status. There is no more importance to determine a person's status than to follow the law and discipline rite, which is no more important than to follow the example of the wise emperor. (XUNKUANG, 1997, p. 16). Only with the adjustment of “Rite” can “people carry out their own affairs, and everyone has its own suit.” Through the role of “Rite and Righteousness”, the “Group” of “dividing” can be “harmonious”.

Fire and water have breath without life, vegetation has a life without perception, and animals have perception without morality and justice, why can people combine themselves into the social group? There are hierarchies and status due to morality and justice. Therefore, if a person's status is determined in accordance with morality and justice, people can be harmonious and coordinated; if they are harmonious and coordinated, they can be united; if they are united, the strength will be great; if the strength is great, they will be strong; if they are strong, and they can be defeat foreign powers. In this way, it is possible to live in the house securely. People can successively arrange the four seasons and manage everything well, so that the world can get benefits. It is derived from status and morality. People can't live without social groups, but when they are integrated into a social group without the restriction of hierarchies and status, they are compete. Once the competition occurs, turmoil will take place and people will have different hearts, which will weaken the strength. If the strength is weak, the foreign objects will not be defeated. Hence, people cannot live in the house securely, which indicates that people cannot abandon the rite and righteousness for a moment. If the principles for organizing the social group are proper, all things on earth can get the proper arrangements that it requires, the six domestic animals can grow well, and all living organisms can live well. If the feeding is proper, the six domestic animals can be prosperous; if felling and planting the trees are proper, vegetation can breed abundantly; if policies and decrees are proper, ordinary people can be unified and the people with virtue and talent can perform their abilities (XUNKUANG, 1997, p. 35).

Compared with Confucius and Mencius, Xunzi emphasized the role of "Rite" to "Harmony". "Righteousness" is the basis of "Rite", the righteousness is pursued in accordance with the rite, and then the righteousness is gained. (XUNKUANG, 1997, p. 127). "Rite" is to punish behaviours that violate the system and words that do not comply with people's duties. "From the higher authorities to the lower subordinates, [...] everyone is introspective, and handles their status carefully." They "establish and seek the common interests of the people to get rid of the common scourge of the people". "Rite" is institutional and normative. Only through the impartiality of the "Rite" system can the state machinery be able to govern and the society develop in a harmonious way. Only by taking "Rite" as the ruler's policy of governing the country can the virtuous and talented people perform and populace can live and work in peace and contentment to remedy the shortcomings of "Running

the Country according to Law”. “Harmony with ethics” is established with the social norm of “Harmony is Valued”.

5 “HARMONY BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE” IS AN IMPORTANT WAY TO ACHIEVE “HARMONY”

Chengzi said:

Position is the proper allocation. Everything in the world has its proper position, and it can be settled steadily if the proper solution is found. Everything in the world must have its place. Everything be settled appropriately otherwise confusion can be caused if it is inappropriate. The reason why saints stabilize the world is not to make rules for things, but to allow them to develop in its own way. The first step is to “find the proper position,” and finally reach the realm of “[...] the country is prosperous and the people are at peace”. Only when each party plays its role and finds the correct position, can they finally develop an integral accord (CHENG, 2003, p. 96).

How to achieve “Harmony”? Confucianism proposed the concept of “Neutrality”, that is, “as long as we strive to achieve “Neutrality” and make them in their places, everything will develop in an orderly way. (KONGYU, 1992, p. 22). There is a special explanation of “Fairness” and “Harmony” in the “Doctrine of the Mean” that people are always in a rational and fair state, which is called “Fairness”. They perform harmony with “Fairness” and rite. “Neutrality” is the essence of “the Golden Mean” advocated by Confucius, which embodies the Confucian idea of “Harmony between man and nature”.

The “nature” in the Confucian “Harmony between man and nature” is the natural world, the origin of all livings on earth. “Man” is a part of the natural world. “Water vapor rises and falls to the heavens and the earth, the breeding and nurturing of all things are pure, men and women are intermingled, and many human beings are born”. The premise of “harmony between man and nature” is to revere nature, that is, people must observe and follow the laws of nature during their life and production. In *Yizhuan Xiang*, “[...] people should learn the principles of nature and earth, and apply practical and appropriate principles to guide their lives.” It is also said that the regular patterns of nature are objective and not shifted by human will. There should be a sense of reverence for nature, and people should follow the law of nature and protect nature. The method of “harmony between man and

nature” is to apply nature’s power in a scientific and reasonable way. Mencius (1999, p. 35) said that,

[...] if military corvee does not hinder the season of agricultural production, the food will not be eaten; if the fine fishing nets are not allowed to fish in deep ponds, the fish and turtles will not be eaten; if the trees are cut down in the mountains according to a certain season, the wood will be inexhaustible.

Xunzi stated in Tianlun, the laws of nature will never change. It does not exist for Yao or perish for Jie. It is auspicious to adapt with measures leading to stability, and it is dangerous to adapt to it with measures that lead to confusion. As Mencius and Xunzi said, although the laws of nature are constant, people can take advantage of nature with correct methods and measures based on the regular patterns to bring the development of society and the improvement of people’s living standards. In addition, the Confucianism of the Song Dynasty also put forward that “all people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions”. We shall treat nature as the compatriots. This is another important judgment of Confucianism on protecting the environment and Harmony Between Man and Nature.

“Harmony between man and nature” is an ideal state where everything is coordinated and harmonious coexistence. It is the polybasic unity and the path to achieve “Harmony”. The idea of “harmony between man and nature” embodies the eco-environment protection consciousness of following the regular patterns, protecting the environment, saving resources, and keeping the Harmony Between Man and Nature, which is of great significance and value to establish a harmonious and stable relationship between man and nature in modern society.

6 THE INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF CONFUCIAN THOUGHT OF “HARMONY IS VALUED” IN MODERN SOCIETY

The Confucian thought of “Harmony is Valued” has gradually applied from family and society to nature. The continuous prevalence of “Harmony” complies with the law of development in modern society. In general, the evolution of social practice from the “Support of the People” to “Harmonious Order”, the transformation of ecological order from “Harmony Between Man and Nature” to “Harmony Between Man and Nature”, and the

economic purpose extension from “Everlasting Development” to “Sustainable Development” are the continuation and innovative development of Confucian thought of “Harmony is Valued” in modern society.

7 THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL PRACTICE FROM “SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE” TO “HARMONIOUS ORDER”

The Confucian thought of “Support of the People” tends to emphasize the group including family, clan and industry, etc. It emphasizes the individual contribution to the group welfare. When personal interests conflict with group interests, the former shall obey the group. However, the group is composed of individuals and the benefit of all members comes before that of the individual, which forms a sharp contrast to the west that highlights the individual and values personality. Simultaneously, Confucian culture emphasizes coordination and stability. If conflicts occur among the members or groups, they would coordinate and solve the problems by themselves. The Confucian culture tries to suppress confrontation and conflicts in a certain range, and strives to solve the problems peacefully, which forms the harmonious social relations in contemporary Chinese society.

It can be seen from “opportunities vouchsafed by heaven are less important than terrestrial advantages, which in turn are less important than the unity among people” that, Confucianism highlights the interpersonal relationship. Generally, the core of Confucian culture is to adjust relationships with embodiment of benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom and trust. The Confucian thought of “Harmony is Valued”, which has been inherited to now, indicates the strong contribution spirit, the self-identity to the country and internal sense of responsibilities. Confucian culture has aided China’s efficiency and growth rate, as well as its modernity. Undoubtedly, there are many factors that affect China’s development including excellent management, relatively peaceful international environment and advanced technical conditions, etc. However, the social harmony and stability are the decisive factors. From the aspect of historical inheritance, “Harmonious Order” is the continuation of Confucian thought of “Support of the People”. If there is no inheritance, it is likely that China will embark on another path of development.

8 TRANSITION OF THE ECOLOGICAL ORDER FROM “HARMONY BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE” TO “HARMONY BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE”

“Harmony Between Man and Nature” of the Confucianism is proposed under the background of agricultural civilization. It stresses that the nature is the foundation for humans, and human and nature shall be harmoniously unified. With the development of science and technology, the agricultural civilization gradually loses its original glory and is replaced by the industrial civilization. Unlike the agricultural civilization’s submission to nature, the ability of humans to understand and transform nature has been greatly improved, and the ecological order in the traditional agricultural civilization era has also been transformed during the industrial civilization.

The ecological order is the combination of natural order and social order. Natural order plays a critical role in the agriculture civilization and determines human production and living. In the industrial civilization, with the sharp increase of population and rapid development of science and technology, the ability of humans to understand and transform nature has been enhanced significantly. Regarding the ecological order, the proportion of natural order and social order has also changed and the former one has lost its leading role. There is more interaction between humans and nature, and the social order has an increasing impact on the development of ecological order. Under such a transitional process, the productivity level is improved with the development of science and technology and the change of social demand, thoughts and ideas. In particular, with the constant development of the nature, humans put forward the slogan that “People Will Conquer Nature”. The admiration and awe of humans regarding nature have been weakened, and environmental damage and resource waste are becoming more and more serious.

During the change, in terms of ecological order, president Xi Jinping draws wisdom from Chinese Confucianism. He applies the thought of “Harmony Between Man and Nature” in the modern society according to China’s actual conditions. He creatively puts forward the concept of “Harmony Between Man and Nature”, according to the characteristics of Chinese modern society. Based on traditional agriculture civilization, the thought of “Harmony Between Man and Nature” explores the relationship between man and nature and it describes that man and nature are united. It reflects the simple worship of humans on nature. On the basis of fully affirming that man and nature are in an organic whole, the concept introduces the new mode between man and nature which is harmonious coexistence and development.

9 ECONOMIC PURPOSE EXTENSION FROM “EVERLASTING DEVELOPMENT” TO “SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”

The reason that Confucian “Harmony” is consistent with the concept of “Sustainable Development” is that “Harmony” can reach “Sustainable Development”.

Harmony can generate everything, but the identity cannot be sustainable. The coordination and balance for different items lead to the harmony so it can be developed to unify everything. If the items in the same category are added, it remains nothing after using it up, so the deceased emperor mixes metal, wood, water and fire to generate everything. (ZUOQIUMING, 1997, p. 119).

It means that “Harmony” is the mechanism to create all things, and “Identity” has no sustainable development. Xunzi explains the connection between the resources and development with “Ceaseless” and “Surplus Grain”.

In view of the system of governance,

[...] when plants are flourishing, axes are not allowed in the forest to protect those new lives and enable them further growth. When the fishes are reproducing, fishnets are not allowed in the lake to protect their new lives and enable them further growth. Humans shall seize the appropriate opportunities, i.e., plow in spring, plant in summer, harvest in autumn and store in winter, for a golden harvest. Fishing shall be forbidden during a specific period for abundant aquatic products and the realization of common prosperity. Lumbering shall be allowed during a appropriate period for a wild profusion of vegetation and adequate wood. (XUNKUANG, 1997, p. 36).

In the above contents, Xunzi put forward the unique ecological protection values in *Xunzi: Governor System*. The first aspect is the protective measures in accordance with material conditions. “The growth of all creatures depended on harmony.” (XUNKUANG, 1997, p. 78). That is to say, all things follow natural laws, so ecology shall be protected “[...] in accordance with material conditions.” The second aspect is the close connection of sustainability between resource and economic development. The purpose for natural resource protection is to “[...] protect their new lives and enable them further growth” and “[...] a wild profusion of vegetation and adequate wood.” The ecological sustainability is the premise of the sustainable development of economy. It

contributes to the continuance development of human beings. In terms of protecting the ecological sustainability, Xunzi discusses the establishment of a sustainable system, i.e., The “System of the Divine Governor”.

In modern times, humans have gradually realized that the main problems for sustainable economic development is human beings cannot surpass the capacity of resources and environment for economic advancement. Confucianism realizes the irreversibility of natural resources earlier and put forward a series of measures to protect environment. The scholars continually pay more attention on environmental protection in order to produce economic welfare.

In 2015, President Xi mentioned in the annual meeting of Boao Forum for Asia that, China should adhere to the concept of green development and adopt the green development mode, making resource saving and environment friendliness the mainstream way of production and life, as well as placing the same emphasis on environment protection and economic and social development. In the past, China’s economic development has been characterized by high consumption and high pollution. President Xi proposes the concept of “economic new normal”. He points out that economic development could be slowed down appropriately, and the development mode shall be transferred to guarantee the development quality. China shall implement the green development for economic benefit. President Xi stresses that “lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets”, “the environmental protection and economic income shall be organically combined” and “we shall pay more emphasis on the lucid waters and lush mountains”. It reflects that in the development of modern society, China has succeeded and developed the traditional idea of “Everlasting Development” – the “Sustainable Development”, which emphasizes the “Harmony Between Man and Nature”.

10 REFERENCE VALUE OF “HARMONY IS VALUED” ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN SOCIETY

In 1987, the world commission on environment and development led by Norwegian Prime Minister Mrs. Brundtland officially released the report with the title of *Our Common Future*. The report defines sustainable development as “the concept that meets the needs of common men, and does not damage the development of future generations”. It is the core idea of sustainable development agreed by the international community that “the

economic development shall be established on ecological sustainability, social justice and people's active participation in their own development decisions". It pursues the realization of environmental conservation with satisfaction of various human needs and individual development which shall not damage the survival and development of the further generations. It pays special attention to the ecological rationality of human activities, and emphasizes that economic activities are beneficial to resources and environment. In other words, the sustainable and stable development of economy-environment-society system shall be the common pursuit of human beings. The Confucian thought of "Harmony is Valued" is reflected in "Support of the People", "Harmony Rite" and "Harmony Between Man and Nature", which emphasizes the harmony between man and man, and between man and nature, contributing to the constant development of the society. The core is similar with "sustainable development" in modern society. It has the profound significance in establishing the universal ethics of human beings, improving the living environment, solving conflicts between social groups and realizing the sustainable development of economy, society and environment.

11 "LOVE FOR FAMILY MEMBERS" AND "SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE"

The Confucian ideal of "Harmony" is based on the continuous improvement of personal moral cultivation, so the Confucianism attaches great importance to the harmony of human body and mind. Based on the law of human nature theoretically, the harmony of human body and mind emphasizes the perfection of human morality. This concept advocates that morality should be internalized through self-cultivation. Meanwhile, moral rationality should be used to restrict perceptual desires of humans, so as to realize the harmony of human body and mind. Further, it associates self-development with the future and destiny of state. On such basis, those relevant theories are formed. For example, "self cultivation leads to happiness". At modern times, a number problems in social morality are emerging. Materialism and indulgence have cause moral bankrupt. Such impact on individuals is directly reflected on the distorted values, unsound personality, and deviate concept. Confucian concept of "Harmony is Valued" pays attention on the physical and mental harmony, emphasizes the spiritual pursuit of "self-cultivation as the foundation" and transcends material limitations. It adheres the philosophies of "[...] not changing one's happiness in a predicament" (CONFUCIO, 2001, p. 44), "[...] seeing gains and thinking righteousness (CONFUCIO, 2001,

p. 168)", and "cultivating the noble spirit." (MENCIUS, 1999, p. 49). It is of great significance to solve modern mental problems including selfishness, befuddlement, exhaustion, and depersonalization.

The key for a harmonious society and socially sustainable development is to coordinate the relationship between man and society. In terms of interpersonal relationships, Confucianism stresses the true morality and puts forward some valuable principles. For instance, the concept of "love for family members and others" emphasizes that interpersonal relationships shall be built on the basis of natural affection. Confucianism also attaches importance to the principle of "honesty". There will be no harmonious exchanges and communications among humans without integrity and honesty.

In terms of the relationship between human and society, the concept of "Harmony is Valued" advocates that "[...] were it to benefit my country, I would lay down my life." (ZUOQIUMING, 2006, p. 245) with the value orientation of holism. According to this, the whole interest comes first. Although the "harmony" at that time is associated with autocratic monarch, it is still of great significance for reference in promoting social cohesion and ethnic unity, and inheriting the traditional culture of overall consciousness, service awareness and dedication spirit. Meanwhile, "Harmony" and "Rite" are inseparable. "Harmony is Valued thee most in practicing the rules of propriety." (CONFUCIO, 2001, p. 5). "Rite" advocates the harmonious coexistence for mutual peace between different classes. It is the guiding principle of "[...] making the country stable in the long-term for all men and benefiting future generations." (ZUOQIUMING, 2006, p. 11). The concept contributes to adjusting the social relation, enhancing social morality, alleviating social contradictions, and maintaining social order.

12 "SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE" AND "LOVE FOR THINGS" PROTECT THE NATURAL RESOURCES AND MAINTAIN THE SUSTAINABLE USE

The Confucian idea of "Harmony" is based on cognitive philosophies including origins of all things, unity of life essence, and integration of human beings and living environment. The ultimate aim of harmony between man and nature is to achieve love for all things. Its benevolent care for lives is of great guiding significance on abandoning the human centrism, maintaining biodiversity, eliminating the ecological crisis, building an ecological civilization, and promoting sustainable economic and social development.

According to the Confucian thought of “Love of Common Men and All Things”, men are closely connected to nature. “Love for People” and “cherishing of things” are unified. Exploitation of natural resources must ensure the fairness and sustainability of utilization and development for a long-term prosperity. “If martial war does not hinder agricultural production, the crops will not be affected. If the fine fishing nets are not allowed in deep ponds, the fisheries will not be affected. If lumbering is time-bounded to a certain season, the woods will be inexhaustible.” (MENCIUS, 1999, p. 4). It is a matter of knowing when to take the chance. Humans shall obey the law of nature with limited access to resources (“not to miss the farming season”, “access to the forest”). Spring is the season for all things to grow. It is stated in ancient times that no haunting nor lumbering is allowed in spring. The second aspect is to “acquire it in order” and “acquire it in moderation”. The land is the source of everything, and shall be protected. “Land is bionergy for all.” (XUNKUANG, 1997, p. 79). There are laws of seasonal rotation on different lands which may vary in the fertility. Thus, different farming ways and categories shall be considered for sustainable uses of natural resources. In addition, non-discretionary implementation in obtaining the resources should not be allowed. It is of great importance to ensure the sustainable production of resources.

In general, the sustainable development of economy and society must be supported by environment sustainability. With the rapid development of productive forces and advancements of science and technology, humans exploit nature, resources, environment, and ecology. When exploring the new mode of the “Harmony Between Man and Nature”, it is urgent to promote the ideas including “Love of Ordinary People and All Things” and “Reverence for lives” advocated by the Confucian school. Such philosophy may play a long-term guiding role in the protection of natural environment and the conservation of endangered species.

13 STRIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BASED ON “HARMONY BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE”

Confucianism focuses on the sustainable development from all aspects of mutual connection and interaction between human and nature. According to *Doctrine of the Mean*, “[...] the law from heaven is called nature and following nature is called Tao.” Mencius suggests that “[...] following nature,

humans will know their own instincts, so as to understand the heavenly principle.” It is the method to understand human and nature from the aspect of “Harmony Between Man and Nature”. From the aspect of Confucian school, human, nature, society, and universe are fitted in with nature law. The thinking of the Confucian school on the sustainable development is based on the understanding of human, nature, society and universe. Its essence is to emphasize the holistic and comprehensive thinking of the coordinated development. Meanwhile, the Confucian school seeks for overall harmony and unity from various differences. It is stated in *Doctrine of the Mean* that “Mean is the most important fundamental in the universe while harmony is the universal laws for all things. Once the golden mean is achieved, heaven and earth will be in correct positions and all things will be in the right order.” All things should follow the principle of “Mean” to achieve the harmony of the whole system.

The traditional view of development starts from human self-interest and takes the rule of humans dominating nature as its basic demand. There is an obvious tendency of anthropocentrism. While “Harmony Between Man and Nature” neither comes from the utilitarianism nor associates with anthropocentrism. It equates man with nature and does not simply regard nature as the resource for social survival and development of human beings. This idea stresses benevolent love and moral duties to nature. From the aspect of “Harmony Between Man and Nature”, economic recession and ecological disaster shall be avoided in seeking comprehensive and sustainable development under modern society. Human needs for nature shall be controlled in the lowest limit.

On this basis, the legislative work on resource and environment shall be further improved, and the protection efforts for ecology and resources shall be strengthened. At the national ecological environment protection conference, President Xi stresses that the strictest system and laws shall be adopted to protect the ecological environment. Institutional innovations and implementations are highly needed in promoting the ecological civilization construction in the new era, and a strict legal system would be the untouchable bottom line. Besides, it is imperative to popularize the social education consistent with the environmental protection law, to advocate the values of moderate consumption and economy, and to guarantee the reasonable utilization of natural resources.

CONCLUSION

The Confucian thought of “Harmony is Valued” is rich in contents and plays an important role in the formation of Chinese values, lifestyle, national psychology and spirit. It contains the thought on the harmonious relationship between man and all things, and is closely connected to the sustainable development in modern society. According to the traditional view of development, the economic growth is the only indicator of development, which has caused a series of ecological and environmental problems. President Xi Jinping states that the peace deficit, development deficit and governance deficit are serious challenges for all mankind. Development is the key to solve all problems, and the foundation to eliminate the three major deficits. “Sustainable development meets the maximum interests and becomes the best entry point of cooperation”, which is the “golden key” to solve the global issues. It is essential to combine both economic development and natural environment protection in the new development mode. Life wisdom is contained in the thoughts of the Confucian sages. The premise of scientific and reasonable relationship between men, society, and nature is to understand and master those Confucian philosophies including moral principle of “Love for Family Members and Support of the People” in the “Harmony is Valued”, development idea of “Sustainable Development”, and ecological thought of “Harmony Between Man and Nature”. This is the only route to realize the harmonious and sustainable development of human society.

REN, F.; WANG, J.; LV, W. Harmonia confuciana e a ideia de desenvolvimento sustentável na sociedade moderna. *Trans/Form/Ação*, Marília, v. 45, p. 37-58, 2022. Edição Especial 2.

Resumo: Youzi, discípulo de Confúcio, propôs o pensamento de “harmonia tem preço”, que também era a busca de valor de Confúcio. Eles interpretaram a implicação de “Harmonia” de praticar as regras de propriedade. “Ele” significa “harmonia”. Mencius chamou a harmonia entre as pessoas de “Apoio do Povo” e discutiu a convivência harmoniosa entre os revolucionários e o público na perspectiva da “Política Benevolente” e da “Boa Natureza”. Xunzi explicou a instituição, normalização e imparcialidade necessária para a sociedade, sob o aspecto da “Harmonia”, que ampliou a implicação teórica da “Harmonia”. O pensamento confucionista de “harmonia tem preço” é também a personificação da ideologia de “Defender o Justo” e “Unidade do Céu e do Homem”, que continha o pensamento da relação harmoniosa entre as pessoas e o universo. O pensamento confucionista de “A harmonia tem um preço” alcançou um desenvolvimento inovador, na sociedade moderna, que está de acordo com

a ideia de desenvolvimento sustentável. É de grande significado referencial para repensar a relação interpessoal, a relação entre o homem e a natureza, a relação entre o desenvolvimento econômico e o ambiente natural etc.

Palavras-chave: Confucionista. “A harmonia tem um preço”. Desenvolvimento sustentável.

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