



Harmonia Manifesto

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12 THESES

for our actions in the 21st century

This manifesto wants to (re-)activate harmony as a principle of action. And to make it useful for everyone: for people, systems and institutions, for private, professional and social action of all kinds. Harmony results from a harmonious interaction of forces, in which all parts and the whole are positively reinforced. This is not only a physical phenomenon, it also applies to the forces that shape our actions. Harmony does not make us the same, but brings different things into resonance with each other.

Harmony is familiar to everyone in the West and presumably globally, but is rarely used systematically. Western thinking, on the other hand, is dominated by conclusiveness, separation, absolutism and target orientation. This one-sidedness has not only produced great achievements, but also great deficits such as inhumanity, excessive demands, powerlessness and destruction, especially in powerful systems such as politics, economics and science. Conclusiveness is behind almost all crises of our time.

The Manifesto does not question conclusiveness per se, but its supremacy as a principle of action. Conclusiveness thinks in conclusions, harmony in overall pictures, of which conclusiveness only draws individual lines. Harmony has the potential to expand our one-sided Western thinking and acting to a holistic approach, individually and institutionally, on a small and large scale. Harmony as a mindset is thus the key to shaping a prosperous global common future.

In detail:

Harmony as a rediscovered principle of action

THESIS 1: Harmonious action is (primordial) human.

The ability to act harmoniously is something we were born with. It is our basic equipment and therefore given to all people. Harmony is not simply intuition, but a principle that we more or less consciously recognize. Harmony is often supplanted by other cultural concepts, in the West especially by the logical and conclusive model that has been almost omnipresent since the Enlightenment. Yet this ability often survives in the private sphere. Acting in families, for example, is usually characterized by harmony, not by conclusiveness.

As a natural ability, harmonious action is a characteristic of life, presumably the principle behind all natural powers of self-organisation. Machines, on the other hand, will never be able to function harmoniously, because there is no underlying algorithm. Conclusive action can in principle be automated, harmonious action is an exclusively (primordial) human ability. It is therefore a matter of wisdom to train ourselves comprehensively in this ability and to leave conclusiveness as far as possible to the machines.



THESIS 2: Harmony is our natural approach to wholeness.

The eternal longing of mankind since time immemorial is the unity (with God, nature, the highest etc.), which is not accessible to us in our duality. The closest possible approach to humanity is wholeness. It is the more accessible to us, the more we try not to approach it in a modern way, but in a harmonious way. Harmony is not less, but rational in a different way than conclusiveness. Harmony is neither esoteric nor occult, but simply natural for everyone. For harmony is an echo of the whole, which does not omit parts in a reductionist way. It is the (only) form in which we are able to grasp the whole in principle, even if paler.

Harmonious action incorporates the influences of the environment as well as one's own will into a holistic, harmonious form of action. Harmony is the "knowledge" that something is "right" for the person(s). Harmony can arise more consciously or unconsciously depending on practice and ability and can include a different degree of influences. Harmony does not ask whether something is true/correct, but whether it is wise and helpful. Harmony does not pursue the illusion of objectivity, but is (inter-)subjective. Each person can act harmoniously in his or her individual way and colour, there are neither standards nor minimum thresholds.

THESIS 3: Harmony helps to master uncertainty.

Harmony, as a natural approach to wholeness, is designed to include everything important, not to overlook anything decisive. Harmony does not reduce the high level of uncertainty in our world (as a result of complexity, contradictions, change, unpredictability, speed), but simplifies the way we deal with it. It does not see it as a threat to be averted, but as a usable resource. Harmony as a principle of action means that we neither have to fear nor try to control uncertainty, but can master it.

Harmony thus provides a relatively high degree of certainty. However, it requires the actor to endure this relativity instead of resorting to reductionist approaches in the desire for supposed absolute certainty. It is a bit like walking: dynamic walking is considerably more stable than static standing, but it requires the risk of leaving the static stability of standing and mastering the dynamic process of walking. That is why we as humans learn this early on.

THESIS 4: Harmonious action is based on freedom in connectedness.

Harmonious action is both free and connected. It does not exhaust itself either in negative freedom ("free from") or in a material freedom ("free to"), which objectively wants to dictate with which content it is to be exercised. Rather, freedom in connectedness subjectively determines the content of a free action by the fact that the relevant influences are perceived by the acting person(s) and are harmoniously taken into account. Connectedness increases with the degree to which persons are capable of genuine empathy, i.e. of including the perspectives of others at eye level in their own actions.

Freedom in connectedness respects the role of normative ethics as a framework for social coexistence, but acts independently of it. Since harmonious action considers its effects on the world, it rarely affects an ethically set framework. It opens up the space for action in a free and connected way, thus making an unfree, close-meshed, often excessive overregulation unnecessary. Freedom in connectedness is alien to goals and absolutizations typical of ethics and conclusive thinking (the good, the true, etc.). However, ideals can be important relative elements of harmonious action.



Concerns as orientation for action

THESIS 5: Concerns give orientation and strength to harmonious action.

Harmony brings the intention of the actor into harmony with the influences of the context, the concern brings the action "forward", gives it orientation and strength. Without concern, the search for harmony finds no support. It is like a chord in music: without a keynote, the key remains unclear, the harmony uncertain. In contrast, a clear keynote gives orientation, strength and security.

It is not without reason that efforts to include as many influences from the context as possible in an action are notoriously inefficient and paralysing. For as long as no other element is added, there is a danger that everything will go round in circles or become blocked. In order to prevent this, the ideology of modernity usually sets a goal or target towards which a "project" is directed. The stranger this goal or target is to the context, the more the conclusive pursuit of the goal must be forced, which in turn becomes impossible with high complexity and volatility. Concerns, on the other hand, keep harmonious action elegantly in flow.

THESIS 6: Concerns are perceived, not set.

Contrary to goals and other absolutized maxims, concerns are not set but perceived in a double sense. For concerns are already present in the context of every action: as latent tasks (that which has to be done), which can or cannot be taken up in free decision as (heart) concerns. For this purpose they must first of all be perceived (seen, felt, recognized) as "pending" at all. And in the second step they have to be perceived (taken, used, realized).

Both movements presuppose a certain degree of connectedness with the context. If this is lacking (separateness), the actor will not recognize or care about what is important. The concern can be perceived and look differently in each situation (subjectivity). After all, for the perception there is no must or should, only ability and will.

THESIS 7: Concerns make capable of action for the shaping of the world.

Concerns are the seed for neither suffering nor conquering the world, but rather creatively shaping it. In our insecure world, many people experience a feeling of powerlessness and excessive demands, to which they react with withdrawal (separation, frustration), anger or illness (paralysis, neuroses). They do not recognise what they need to do because they are looking for a conclusive model for action rather than a harmonious one. But conclusiveness - unlike harmony - is not creative.

In contrast, the harmonious model has everything to lead out of powerlessness and make us capable of action: orientation, strength, wholeness, natural access. This is not enough to have the problems of the world safely under control, to command them. But always enough to be able to tackle them, to master them (together) despite all the uncertainty. Instead of arguing about the "right" abstract maxims and forcing their realisation, harmonious action is oriented towards the (shared) concern and creatively seeks new ways in concrete terms, tries, learns and shapes.



THESIS 8: Shared concerns make cooperation in freedom successful.

Concerns can be pursued not only by one person, but also jointly by many, whether as an intersection of individual concerns or as a genuinely shared concern. No goals or guiding principles are specified and then all those involved sworn to pursue them. Rather, all participants act freely and independently in pursuit of the shared concern. Even if the pursuit of shared concerns is organized and agreed upon, it continues to be based on the freedom of the individual, in conjunction with the freedom of all others.

Conflicting individual interests are an obstacle to the joint pursuit of the concern. However, a common focus on a shared concern helps to find solutions to these conflicts. Ideally, these are even so-called WIN-WIN solutions, i.e. solutions that do not merely represent a compromise, but rather the greatest possible realisation of the individual needs involved. Just as in a chord the individual tones do not disappear, but even gain in strength through the resonance with the other tones, a shared concern causes a harmonization of opposing forces. This is a particular strength of the principle of harmony, which can be observed in every good mediation.

Effects of the harmonious principle of action in the world

THESIS 9: Harmony makes healthy.

Harmony strengthens the whole person and his or her ability to perceive and shape holistically. For those who act, meaning is created when they establish a contact between what is important and what they take up as their (heart's) concern. This makes their actions more meaningful for themselves and thus makes them more satisfied and self-effective. For their actions thus become a holistic expression of themselves. Conclusiveness, on the other hand, has the tendency to divide people (into work and private, into functionaries and consumers), to incapacitate and alienate them, even to reduce them to (bad) automatons.

People get healthy as powerful, creative, holistically mature actors of free cooperative action. They do not fit into incapacitating, dysfunctional organisational structures, whether in business, society or politics. Systems also get healthy if they are multilayered rather than reduced to a dominant modus operandi. Harmony is the key to placing the human being as a whole at the centre of social systems and organisations. The better people are able to live their concerns in systems and institutions, the more powerful the recovery through harmonious action becomes.

THESIS 10: Thesis 10: Harmony prevents excesses.

Harmonious action carries with it the correction of one-sided effects; conclusiveness produces one-sidedness which must be corrected. If a goal or objective is (efficiently) forced in the first step without regard to the consequences, the collateral damage must be repaired in a second step. This is considered cheaper as long as the enormous resilience and self-healing powers of man and nature help, but works less and less the more excessive the first step is. Thus, the conclusive modus operandi of capitalism, for example, first optimizes productivity, but then has to establish counter-systems (e.g. social and health care systems, environmental protection) in order to at least partially absorb the devastating consequences.

Harmony, on the other hand, enables change without collapse and creates stability instead of fragility. Harmony thinks about the consequences for the context and seeks less destructive approaches, which are often more redundant in the short term but more efficient in the long term. This applies to individual actions as well as to systems and institutions. Harmonious action becomes all the more effective the more it is possible to transfer harmony into the functioning of systems and institutions, thus making them more sustainable and humane.



THESIS 11: Harmony organizes self-interest as common welfare.

Harmony takes us out of the reflex of looking selfishly at our individual interests because it directs our gaze to the (common) context. Even if contexts and concerns look slightly different for each of us, they overlap more and more in a world that is growing together. If the combined power of the concerns is directed towards the common good, harmonious action in the long run cannot help but strengthen the common welfare. This does not exclude the productive driving forces of competition and innovation, but ties them back to the common welfare as a shared concern.

A harmonious economic system could organize all relevant forces in freedom as resources for the common welfare. For harmony makes us perceive abundance instead of lack. And use it optimally: Functioning markets are more than cleverly organised egoism, they are harmonious self-organisation. Perhaps we will soon be living in a world in which the free and harmonious actions of all bring about the good of all.

THESIS 12: Harmony organizes freedom as peace.

If the actions of many people are oriented towards shared concerns and the principle of harmony is applied, the result is more togetherness rather than opposition. Because harmonious action of many causes cooperation instead of confrontation. It supports creative participation in a variety of social forms that serve everyone; there is little room for destructive egoism. Conflicts do not arise in the first place or - instead of escalating - become productively usable to find new, better solutions.

Since harmony is ultimately the basis of alternative conflict resolution and the great principle behind WIN-WIN solutions, it can only be conducive to peace in the long run, on a small and large scale. And the more the banal struggle in scarceness gives way to creative cooperation in abundance, the more harmony will lead to peace in freedom. Perhaps we will soon be living in a world in which it is taken for granted that conflicts can be productively transformed into joint peaceful solutions through shared concerns.

Prospects:

This manifesto wants to make a contribution to the great development that is already underway: the development towards more harmony as a principle of action for shaping our world. To this end, it attempts to work out the underlying principles of harmony and orientation by concerns and to support a corresponding change in the mindset individually, but also on a systemic and institutional level.

The manifesto wants to encourage people not to suffer the future, but to shape it actively and creatively. And in doing so, to tie in with the roots of our very own abilities, instead of getting caught up in habitual cultural hypnosis. To do this, people do not have to change or develop, but only continue to find themselves. And thus necessarily also to their world. And the interaction of both.

The harmonious action of freedom in connectedness is the concern of the Manifesto and its authors. We invite everyone to support this concern: by distributing this Manifesto and by trying out, developing and living its ideas.

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