A Study on Human-Centered Management from The Perspective of Perennial Wisdom

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Introduction

This paper essentially deals with management, and human as its natural implication. In this study, we comparatively discuss two management approaches. While one approach only aims maximizing profit, "human-centered management" focuses on people and social good in its practices. Human-centered management can be defined as 'management that suits and relates to people'. The aim of human-centered management is to serve people. Considering humankind as resources and tools, the purpose of profit-oriented management is to maximize the profit of the enterprise. In human-centered management, human is not a tool, but an end in itself as a valuable/precious being.

This paper aims to present a proposal for the basic principles and values of human management based on perennial wisdom. The study primarily examines the question of "Who are we as human beings?", and in response, the place of human beings in the order of existence. We discuss being human and human features based on the position of human, and humans' purpose, ideals and their relation-

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ships with other beings. In the next section, we present the principles and values required by human-centered management based on the answer to the question "What is a human being?". Afterwards, we evaluate the meanings of these principles and values for businesses and stakeholders. In the last part, we make a general discussion and recommendations for research.

'Human' and The Place of 'Human' in The Ontological Order

The self-conception of human, the First-principle, and the universe conception determine the content of the paradigm. These ontological rules and principles shape all the systems and practices to be established and guide the stakeholders of the system in terms of approach and actions. The elements of the paradigm used in this study and their relationship with each other are shown in Figure 1.
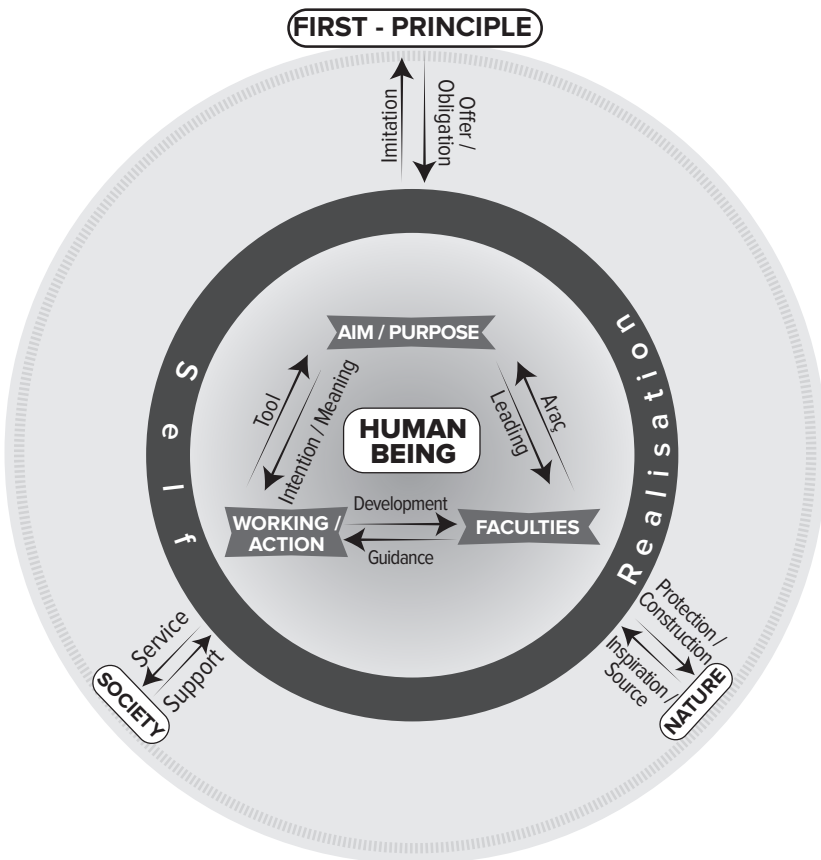

Figure 1: Human in Perennial Wisdom (Source: Authors' Own Work/Design.)

The Relationship of Human with The First Principle, Nature, and Human

According to perennial wisdom, the meaning of human's existence on earth is shaped by human's relationship with the First-principle. The creator created humans for a purpose and gave the universe to humans as a platform to realize this purpose. The power to act on nature also gives people the opportunity to use their features. It is important that worldly actions are not regarded as an end, but as a tool that serves the purpose of human beings. Every human being is holy thanks to the relation to the creator. According to this point of view, people see other humans not as rivals, but as companions who will support them. This point of view requires a more society-based approach that values sharing, cooperation, solidarity and achieving together.

The Purpose and Ideals of Human

Purpose is the main element that gives meaning and direction to action. We can say that what humans seek on earth is "freedom" and "well-being and happiness" in the most general sense (Aristotle, 1976; Bauman, 2018; Dodurgalı, 1995; Özmen, 2014; Tusi, 2013). Discovering one's 'self' on earth and adapting one's nature to universal principles will lead to freedom. Humans naturally want to be happy. Paradoxically, an individual who cannot make others feel good, make them smile or contribute to the joy and happiness of humanity as a whole will not be happy. Contributing to the joy and happiness of humanity depends on one's capacity to serve people by tapping his/her potential.

Humans should pursue the following universal ideals: Unity, Goodness/Harmony, Beauty, Honesty/Truth (for example, Tusi, 2013 and İbn Miskeveyh, 2013). The potential of these four ideals to dominate life, or in other words, bringing these ideals to life depends on the individual's ability to properly use his/her faculties. Justice, wisdom, courage and temperance are the virtues that will guide these faculties, namely, spirit, mind, will, and heart (Tusi, 2013; İbn Miskevevh, 2013; Bauman, 2018). In the life of the individual, these faculties correspond to spiritual, mental, social and physical dimensions.

The Principles and Values of Perennial Wisdom on Human-Centered Management

Within the framework of the assumptions accepted as the basis of this study, the principles and values that are considered to be related to business management and that should guide human-centered management based on perennial wisdom

are as follows: *Purpose, respect for human dignity, protection of human well-being, justice and compassion, trust and worthiness, belief in afterlife, accountability, order and interdependence.*

Purpose

The main purpose of the human-centered management model is to create an environment that will ensure freedom and happiness, which are the two basic values and ultimate goals of human beings. If business owners and managers act in accordance with this purpose and the principles to be discussed below, they will be happy and free by virtue of being human, and they will more easily reach the commonly accepted goals such as profit, growth and business sustainability.

Respect for Human Dignity

Within the scope of this study, two basic issues will be discussed as the sources of human dignity. The first point is that human is ontologically bound to the creator. Accordingly, "*everyone is created as a being whose dignity/honor is protected by virtue of being human.*" (Düzgün, 2017: 53). The second issue about human dignity is related to human actions. The action-based dignity of humans is related to how an individual uses his free will as a being with spiritual and material characteristics. In this process, if people cannot build their own identity with their own choices, they will be imprisoned in social, historical, ethnic or cultural identities and become an object, rather than a subject (Düzgün, 2017: 55-56).

Protection of Human Well-Being

Linton and colleagues (2016: 12) found that well-being is grouped under six themes: mental, social, physical, spiritual, activities and functions, and personal conditions. The first four themes, namely the spiritual, mental, social and physical dimensions are clearly related to the four faculties of humans as outlined in perennial wisdom. For this reason, we can say that the achievement of one's purpose depends on the fulfillment of these four dimensions.

Justice and Compassion

Corporations can function in good nick with intermittent corrective interventions by the management and the fulfillment of the principle of justice. Justice was generally seen as "*the greatest virtue that requires giving everyone what they deserve and conducive to the dominance of the common good*" (Düzgün, 2021: 177). On the other hand, compassion that accompanies this virtue means approaching beings with

love, protecting and saving them from evil, and also helping and forgiving them in difficult situations. Justice and compassion, which are seemingly in opposition to each other, serve to reconstruct the disrupted order as 'restorative justice' when they are applied hand in hand.

Trust and Worthiness

Trust and worthiness are other principles that will enable the healthy functioning of a social structure that is established for a specific purpose. Unsafe work environments prevent people from bringing their personal characteristics freely and comfortably to the work environment. The concept of worthiness, on the other hand, refers to 'competence, being qualified and capable'. The placement of someone who does not have the necessary qualifications in any part of the system affects the entire system adversely, in accordance with the principle of interdependence.

Order and Interdependence

In perennial wisdom, the degree of order is measured by the integration and harmony of all its elements with each other. This order was called 'wholeness in multiplicity'. Although each part of the whole has its own characteristics and roles, all the parts constitute a harmonious whole with a purpose. In business management, various dilemmas are encountered that need to be balanced or evaluated on the spot. One of the most common dilemmas for managers is being people-oriented vs. task-oriented.

Belief in Afterlife and Accountability

Perennial wisdom accepts the continuity of the human soul. Life is not considered to be limited to a particular time and space. A person with this belief acts in the world by considering accountability. If this belief is rejected or ignored, only short-term interests will guide the behavior of the individual. This situation does not bring happiness to the individual, and also causes a destructive effect on his/her environment.

Human-centered Management Principles in Businesses

As can be seen in Figure 2, there are at least six elements in the human-centered management approach considered in terms of business: Entrepreneur, business, management, employee/people, job/task and stakeholders. We will discuss these elements in terms of their purpose, and the principles and values that guide them.

Entrepreneur

The entrepreneur is the founder, initiator, and the most basic element that provides the existence of the business. For many entrepreneurs, people are objectified as a resource and regarded as a tool that serves corporate ends. The most paradoxical aspect is that the entrepreneur becomes the servant of the business he/she has established. As a result, the entrepreneur who is ultimately a human being cannot be happy or achieve freedom despite having a great wealth. Therefore, it would be beneficial for the entrepreneur to review what the business means, whether it serves to realize his/her potential and whether the business he/she has established serves the society. It is crucial that entrepreneurs embrace a transpersonal mission in establishing and maintaining a business in accordance with the principles and values of human-centered management.

Business

In its simplest definition, a business is a structure established to produce products and services to meet the needs of people. According to this definition, business can be seen as a tool that ultimately serves the needs of society. Just like all the structures, tools and equipment built by people, the business should also serve to make people's lives easier. This perspective can be formulated as 'relationship first, trade second'. In the human-centered management approach, profit is seen as a tool to maintain the existence of the business, which is established to provide products/services to people in particular, and which aims to create added value for the society in general (Spitzeck, 2011). The business is a partnership that will serve employees, customers, suppliers and all the other stakeholders to live well (Morris, 2004: 164).

Leadership and Management

The purpose of management in business is to ensure that the company achieves its goals. The management should be concerned with two main areas in order to realize the objectives of the business: task and people. Prioritizing a single element will disrupt the balance.

Employees / Human

The aim of human-centered management is to establish a structure that takes into account the purpose of life on earth, in other words, the realization of oneself, regardless of the type of the social institution. In such a structure, the individual

will first of all feel valued and find meaning in his/her work. As a socio-technical institution, the business incorporates all the functions that will serve the well-being of the individual. When the entrepreneur sees the business as a tool that serves a greater purpose, this will naturally change the perspective of the employees. The entrepreneur will no longer consider employees as a tool/resource serving him/her, but as honorable individuals who take on different roles. In this regard, the entrepreneur will see the business as a "community" that serves the great purpose, where everyone realizes their individual goals.

In the business, the principle of trust is to believe in the potential of people. This belief allows appreciating other people rather than criticizing them. As suggested by the phenomenon called self-fulfilling prophecy, an individual who is convinced that he/she has a higher capacity and can do much better work have increased self-confidence and courage (Merton, 1948), thus the individual tries to do his/her best.

Job/Task

The mission of a business requires the execution of many interrelated tasks. The proper fulfillment of these roles depends on the competencies of the individuals who assume the roles. While the individual's compliance with the requirements of the job provides a flow experience, the compatibility between the job and the person's self provides a meaningful work experience (Scroggins, 2008).

According to human-centered management, work is a tool through which the employee can perform his/her art and creativity. Being able to use one's own characteristics in work will both improve and satisfy the individual and provide him/her with the opportunity to experience freedom. Therefore, we can say that two basic issues are critical for the employees to get a sense of meaning from the work: (a) The opportunities and the environment of the person for using his/her existing potential and self-realization, (b) The belief that the product or service to which he contributes produces benefits for other people.
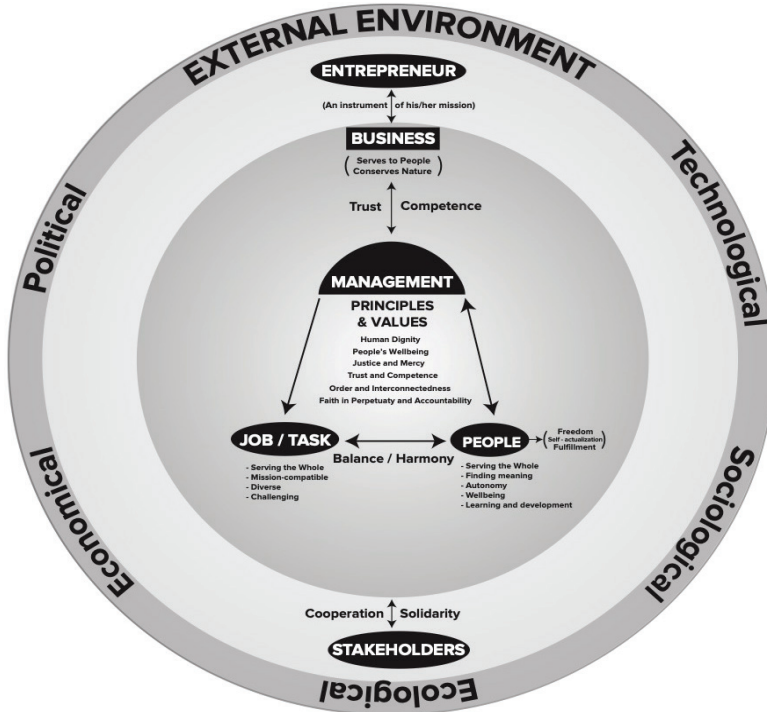
Figure 2: The Principles of Human-Centered Management in Business
(Source: Authors' Own Work/Design)

Stakeholders

Businesses interact directly with stakeholders, suppliers, investors, customers, government agencies and competitors in their immediate environments. An ideally functioning society and economy depends on the fact that all of the specified stakeholders are in place and that each stakeholder fulfills his/her role properly. In human-centered management, the business should establish a relationship based on winning and sharing together by considering mutual cooperation with the stakeholders in terms of the rights and benefits of every one of them.

Discussion and Suggestions for Future Research

While positivism and capitalism have prevailed for the last two centuries, the devastating effects of these paradigms on the economy and business world have become more visible in all areas of life in recent years. For the last ten years, human-centered management has been proposed as an alternative to profit-oriented man-

agement and various studies have been conducted on the subject (see Amann and Stachowicz-Stanusch (2013), Bal (2017), Pirson (2017)). Pirson (2017) discussed human-centered management within the scope of human dignity and well-being. In addition, some authors discussed the human-centered management approach in terms of beliefs (Niedenführ, 2021; Teehankee & Sevilla, 2020; Frémeaux & Michelson, 2017; Pava, 2020; Maspero, 2020).

The aim of this conceptual study is to reveal the principles and values that will enable business management to be more humane according to perennial wisdom. This paper is important as it serves as an introduction to further research and development in these areas. The unique aspect of our study is that we take perennial wisdom as a source in determining the principles and values of human-centered management. First of all, we define the position and role of 'human' in the order of beings in terms of perennial wisdom. According to this definition, humans are in a very critical position between the Creator and nature. The main purpose of humans in this position is to reach freedom and well-being by realizing their potential. In order to reach these goals, humans should be guided by the following universal ideals: *Unity, Goodness/ Harmony, Beauty, Honesty/Truth*. A person's ability to bring these ideals to life depends on his ability to properly use his faculties, specifically, *spirit, mind, will, and heart*. The virtues that will guide these faculties are *justice, wisdom, courage and temperance*.

From this viewpoint, considering the purpose of the entrepreneur as a human being renders the entrepreneurial activity a tool of the transpersonal mission instead of seeing it only for profit. The most critical factor in the application of human-centered management in business is how the entrepreneur views the business. We conclude that the entrepreneur has an important role in applying and maintaining the principles and values of human-centered management, as he/she is the founder of the business and has a critical authority. Finally, the principles that were discussed in isolation in other studies are examined in this study by considering all the dimensions of management. These principles are; *human dignity, the pursuit of human well-being, justice and mercy, trust and worthiness, order and interdependence, and belief in afterlife and accountability*.

There is a need for studies on the implications of the proposed basic principles and values in daily life and ways of implementation. In addition, handbooks should be prepared on how each principle is related to company policies and procedures, and how to apply them in daily business life. Field studies to be conducted in businesses that implement certain elements of the human-centered management approach would also provide guidelines for other businesses.

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