

# *Enough is enough !*

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Revised July 2015



# *Session 2*

## *Policies and motivations*

**In the first session we saw that the present system has disconcerting consequences:**

**1. Growing **discrepancies** between extravagance and misery are undermining any prospect of material adequacy for all, and social peace.**

**2. Our avarice is destroying the planet, thus the **future of our progeny** and countless other organisms.**

**Preliminary conclusion:**

**Should enough be deemed enough?**

**Quite definitely! Frugality has become imperative!**

**In the dominant free market system there is no political will to change. Change is only possible when human motivations change.**

**Capitalist liberalism prevents that from happening. Neo-classical economics reinforces the fatal trend rather than counter-acting it.**

# Outline

1. Can we formulate **responsible priorities** for the economic system, thus for economics?
2. Policies depend on collective **motivations**.
3. What is the impact of modernity on (African) **traditionalism**?
4. Modernity deliberately **dismantles** traditional values and restraints.

# **1. Responsible Policy Priorities**

**The order of priorities for a responsible economic system should be:**

- 1. The preservation of the **resource base** of the planet.**
- 2. A modest but healthy **livelihood for all**.**
- 3. **Equity** in the distribution of efforts and rewards.**
- 4. **Concern** for the weak and vulnerable.**
- 5. **Balanced** (material, social, spiritual) need satisfaction.**

## Actual **policy priorities**

The **economy** must grow.

**Capital** investment must grow.

Economic **output** must grow.

**Energy** supply must grow.

The **population** must grow.

**Income** must grow.

**Consumption** must grow.

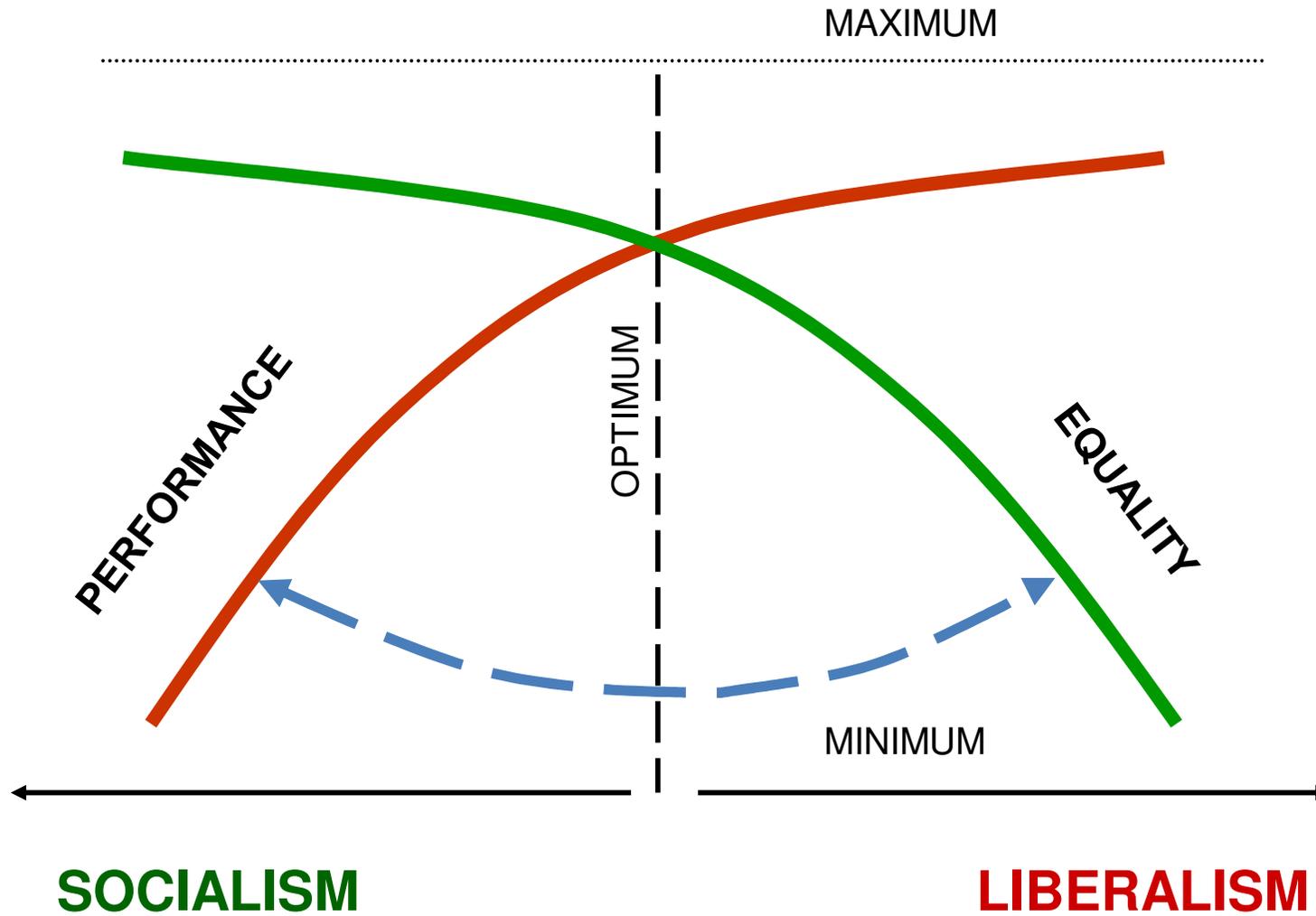
**What are the alternatives to the liberal-capitalist system?**

## Two basic principles

1. Sharing **consumption** leads to dependency.  
When we share **production**, consumption looks after itself.
2. Production and consumption must remain within ecologically **sustainable levels**.

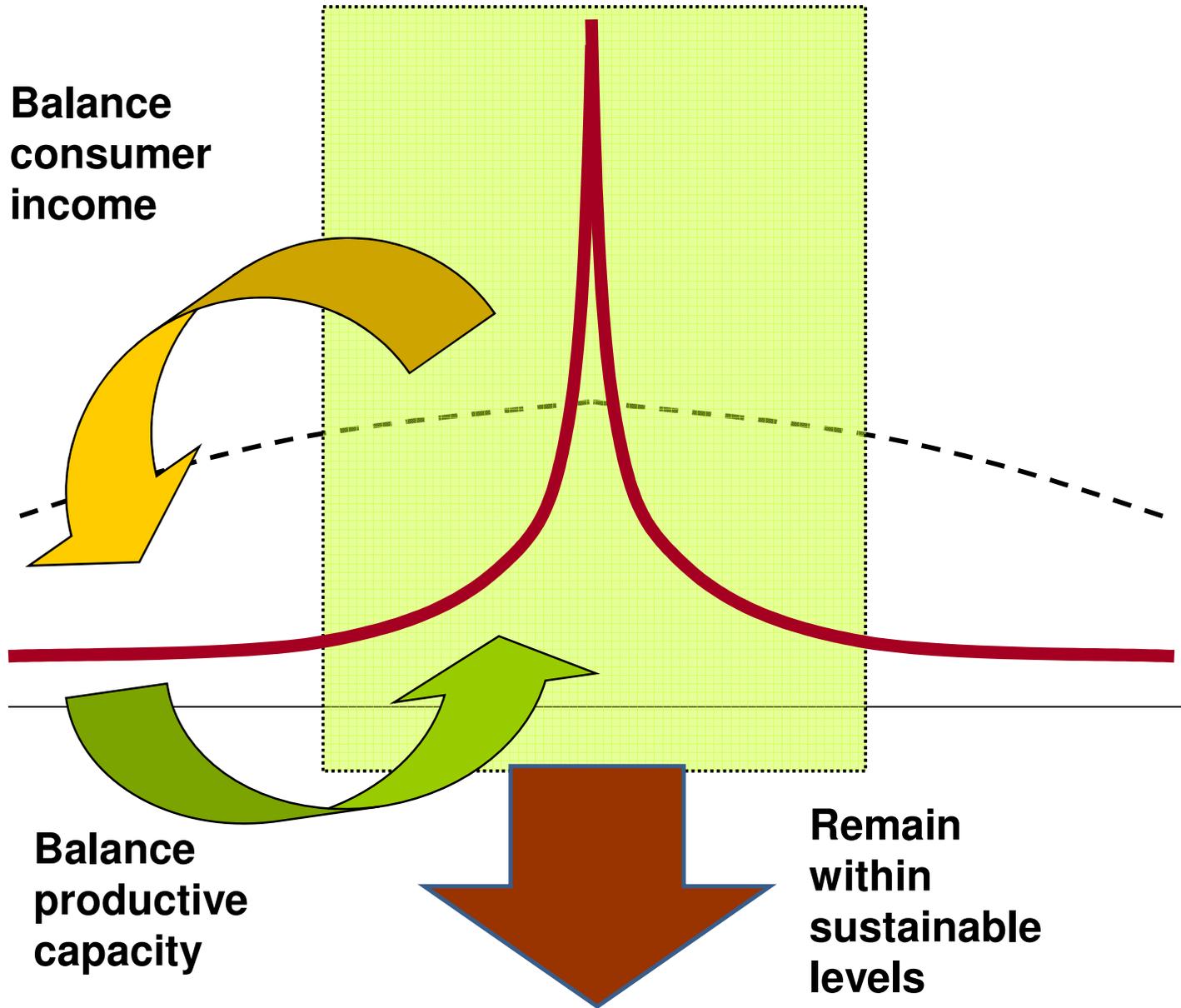
1. African **traditionalism** is not an option because, in spite of its great advantages, it stifles free initiative, inhibits the development of the gifts of all members of the community and arrests the poorest of the poor in their situation.
  
2. The **Marxist** alternative has failed, because
  - (a) it misinterpreted the human motivations of both the 'proletariate' and the 'avantgarde'
  - (b) it was also based on the modern quest for human mastery, ownership and entitlement,
  - (c) it was a highly oppressive system.
  
3. The most promising contender is **social democracy**, as it was developed in Northern and Central Europe.

# POLICY TRADE-OFF



**Social democracy** (social market economy) is a capitalist system that tries to balance out the discrepancies between unequal economic partners by

1. Taxing the rich,
2. Supporting the poor to become competitive and
3. Building up the infrastructure



**Balance  
consumer  
income**

**Balance  
productive  
capacity**

**Remain  
within  
sustainable  
levels**

**Social democracy** (social market economy) was remarkably successful in Central and Northern Europe.

It eradicated poverty and yet was as competitive as its liberal-capitalist alternative.

However,

1. Avarice and **entitlement** began to destroy the spirit of responsibility and solidarity,
2. Growing affluence led to **overconsumption** and wastage.
3. The model of social equity was never applied **internationally**, where capitalist principles ruled supreme.

## ***A footnote:***

***Social grants*** = groups of people that are particularly vulnerable to the effects of absolute poverty are given a grant that is, ideally, sufficient for their healthy survival.

**Social grants are not the ideal way of dealing with the problem. They can lead to dependency and despondency.**

**Indeed! .... however,**

**If we want to indulge in a system that **prevents** vast sections of the population to work for themselves, we are obliged to **provide** them with the means for healthy survival.**

**Social grants hardly cover the bare necessities of life, but keep the poorest of the poor out of **desperation** and anti-social behaviour.**

**They can provide the trigger for **initiative** to emerge.**

## **2. Motivations**

**Being entrapped in the modern  
worldview**

It is **not impossible** to change direction if there is the political will to do so, e.g.

**1. Change the **cost** structure**

(e.g. fossil vs solar energy; technology vs labour)

**2. Change the social **power** structure**

(cartels, lobbies, corporations, unions)

**3. Enhance the peripheral **infrastructure****

(transport, communication, etc.)

**4. Empower the **peripheral** population**

(education, training, productive credit, etc.)

# **What prevents that from happening?**

**Collective goals and motivations determine the political will.**

**Motivations depend on collective interests.**

**And it is the interests of the most affluent that have the most traction.**

**Due to its evolutionary history, the human being is, by nature, **reproductively** fecund, **materially** insatiable and **possessive**. In traditional societies, this tendency was controlled in various ways.**

**Modernity progressively **dismantled** the prohibitions and inhibitions that kept the growth of collective avarice in check in traditional societies.**

The modern value system goes back to the **Enlightenment**, during which traditional authority progressively collapsed:

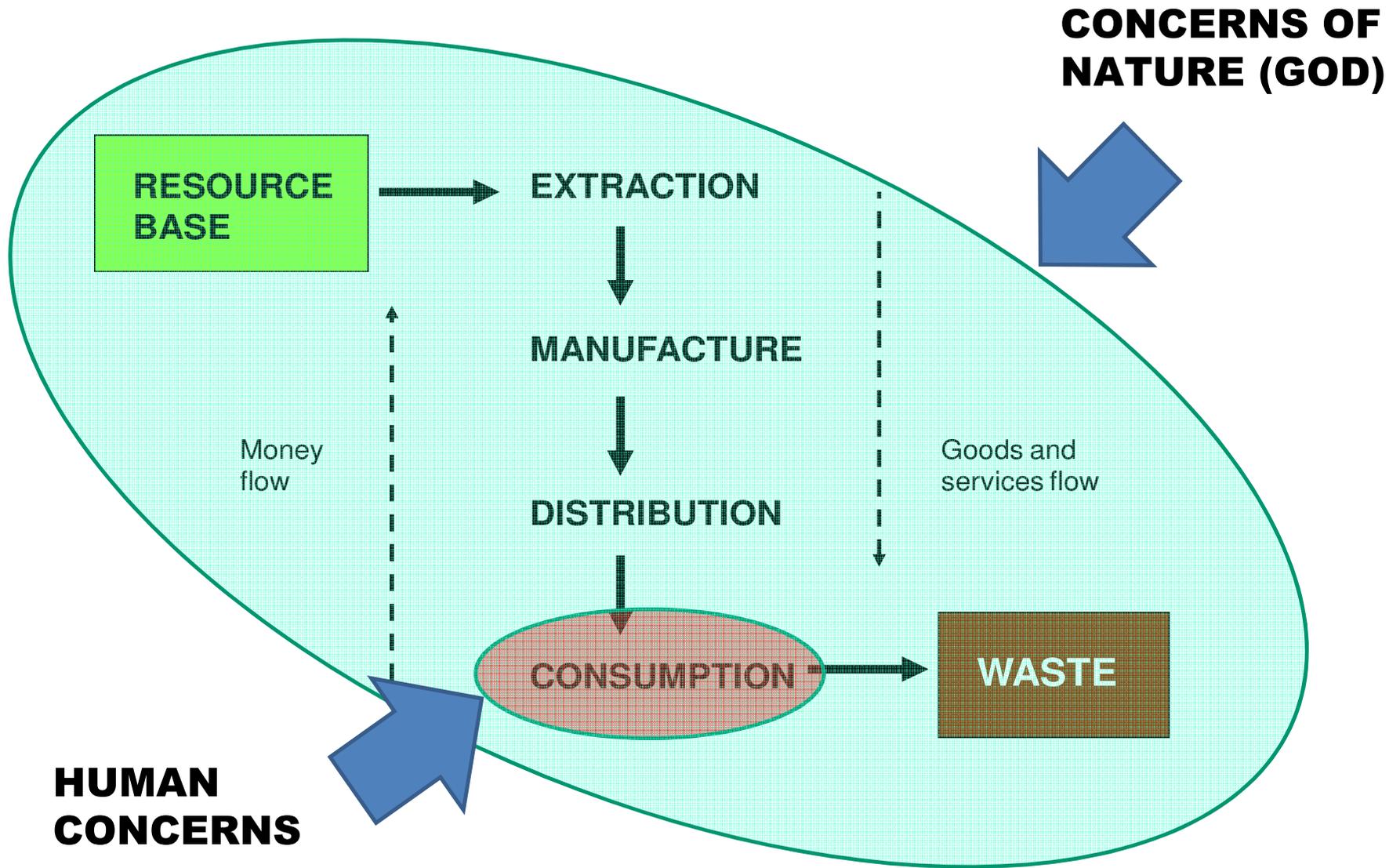
1. The rediscovery of classical **Roman/Greek culture** undermined the subdued atmosphere of the Middle Ages (Renaissance)
2. Journeys of **discovery**, scientific insight and technological innovations undermined the plausibility of Greek philosophy.
3. The emerging **middle class** undermined the authority of the feudal system.
4. The **Reformation** undermined the authority of the mighty Catholic church.
5. **Doctrinal conflicts** and devastating religious wars undermined the authority of the Bible, Christian doctrine and the concept of God.

## Disillusion with **authority** led to the quest for personal **autonomy** and entitlement:

- **Think** for yourself (rationalism)
- **See** for yourself (empiricism - science)
- **Find out** what works (pragmatism - technology)
- Pursue your **own interests** (commerce - liberal economy)
- Enjoy **your life** (hedonism - consumerism)
  
- Relate to your personal **Saviour** (pietism)
- Assert your personal **dignity** (human rights)
- Have a say in your **government** (democracy)
- Claim **gender** equality (female emancipation)
- Let the **youth** find its own way (anti-authoritarian education)

1. With authority rejected and selfishness unleashed, modernity became geared to the creation of **personal wealth** as supreme value.
2. Wherever wealth is 'created', it goes at the **expense** of other humans or the natural world (The law of entropy).
3. Human **self-interests** are blinkered.

They concentrate on human **consumption** irrespective of the costs for the natural world and future generations.



Modern humans began to colonise the earth some 100 000 years ago. Wherever they went their arrival had devastating effects on other creatures.

“*Homo sapiens* became the first species to stop living inside local ecosystems. All other species, including our ancestral hominid ancestors, exist as semi-isolated populations playing specific roles in local ecosystems.

All other native plant species are now classified as “weeds” — and all but a few domesticated species of animals are now considered as ‘pests’.”

In modernity human beings claim  
**mastery** over,  
**ownership** of, and  
**entitlement** to the benefits of their life  
world.

All of reality has become a **quarry to be mined**  
for personal aggrandisement, profit and  
pleasure – including one's own body.

**Neo-classical economics** underpins and legitimates this quest.

**Some symptoms:**

1. It defines the 'economic human being' (the *homo oeconomicus*) as a **profit-** and **pleasure maximiser**.
2. The pursuit of self-interest is deemed '**rational behaviour**'.

*By implication*, concern for the interests of others and the well-being of the whole (called altruism) is deemed **irrational**.

### 3. Only what can be **bought and sold** is relevant for the economic system.

“The Gross Domestic Product measures everything except that which makes life worthwhile . . . What isn’t bought or sold—housework or caring for your own children, for example—doesn’t figure . . . hurricanes and floods push up GDP because the reconstruction gets factored in as new spending. Countries with more prisons look better than those with fewer . . .”

(Christopher Dickey)

### 4. Prostitution is an **‘industry’**.

**Gambling is an ‘industry,’ offering ‘products.’**

**Raising children is **not** an industry!**

5. In the fields of **investment**, production and distribution, meticulous **cost-benefit analyses** are conducted.

In the field of **consumption** we tend to ‘splash it out’, indulging in unnecessary expenditure and accumulating under-utilised possessions.

6. Consumer extravagance is widely depicted in the media as ‘**the good life**’, setting unsustainable standards for the poor. (Example: Newsweek).

7. Public responsibility for the most vulnerable is called (by the ‘Tea Party’) a ‘**nanny state**’.

All this demonstrates that we are motivated by **self-interest** and **pleasure**, rather than responsible stewardship.

The trend towards material gullibility powerfully **escalated** during the last few decades.

“During the second half of the last century one was still busy with solid and fair commercial practices in the interest of both the enterprise and the customer, but since the turn of the millenium this has changed.

Now the neo-liberal profit motive has come to dominate many board rooms. Higher returns, more expansion, higher bonuses. Whether co-workers at basic levels fall out of the race, or consumers become dissatisfied, is of secondary importance. The main consideration is that the bottom line impresses, that investors are delighted and that performance on the stock exchange rises.”

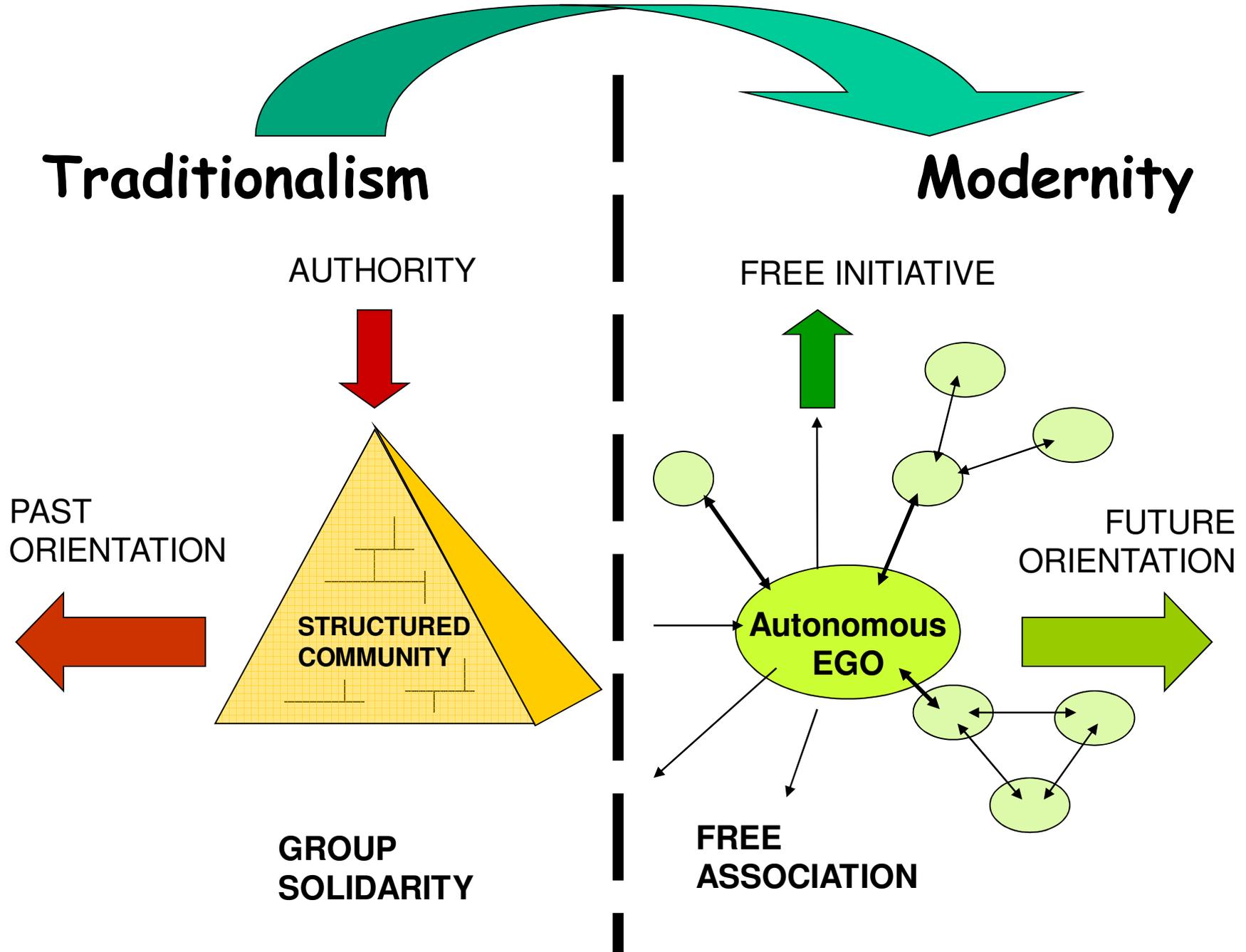
David Gerginov

### **3. The impact of modernity on traditionalism**

**Modernity** has become the **dominant** culture because of its superiority in terms of

knowledge,  
efficiency,  
productivity,  
wealth creation,  
need satisfaction  
political power  
military power

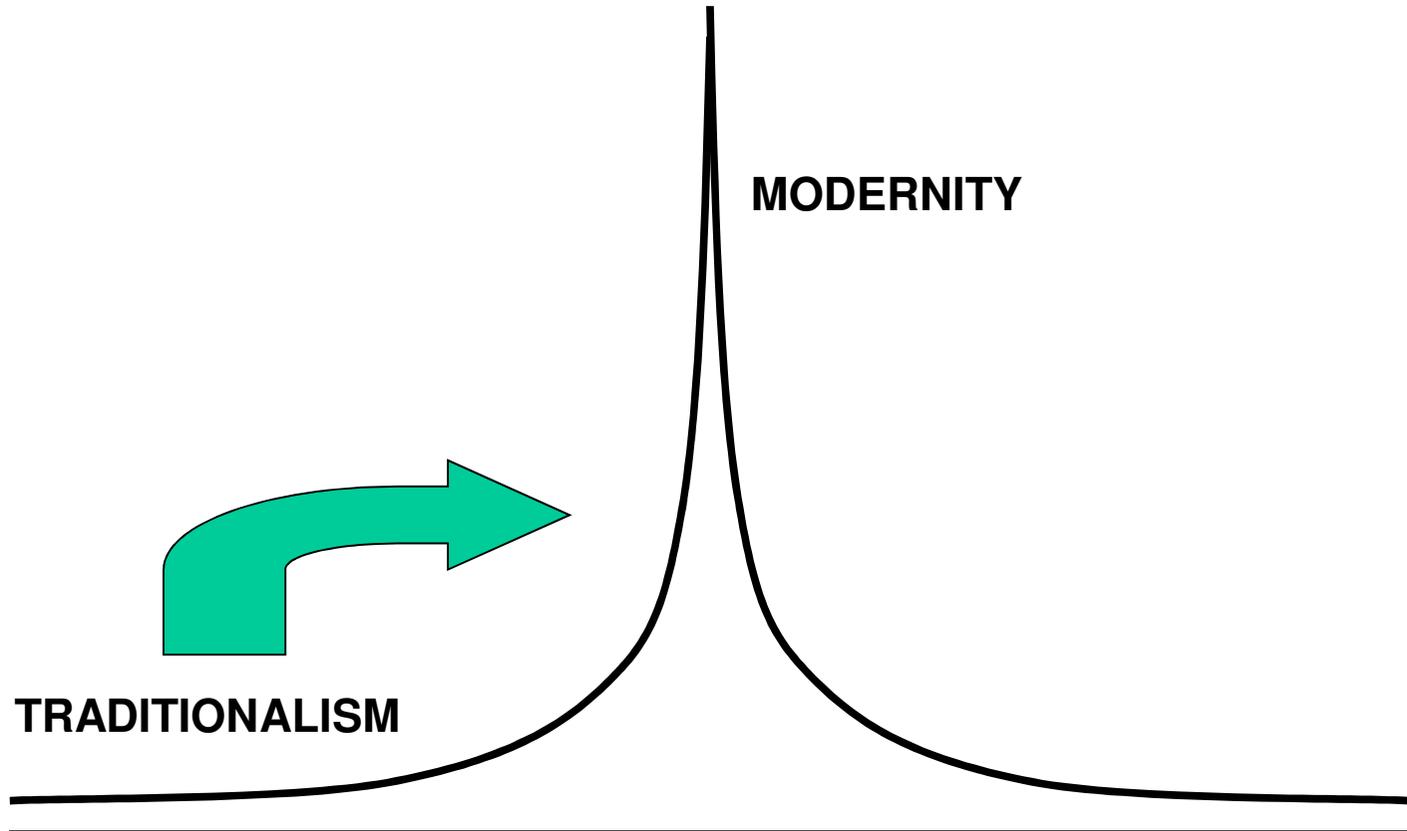
**Traditional cultures cannot compete with modernity and are being marginalised.**



The **misery** of the periphery and the **lure** of centre lead to

rapid **urbanisation** and the **modernisation** of the world-view of a population on the move.

**The push of rural poverty and the pull of urban prosperity leads to rapid and chaotic urbanisation**



Some people who enter into the modern economy carry their sense of **community and responsibility** with them into the new reality.

However, some are **so uprooted** that they lose their traditional values, constraints and inhibitions.

Then they may become **more brutally self-centred** than the modernists bargained for.

## **4. Modernity deliberately undermines traditional value systems**

**Is selfishness not inbred into  
the human psyche?**

**Indeed it is!**

## **Brain science** on 'original sin':

Selfishness is programmed into the '**reptile brain**' of all living creatures. Without it they could not survive.

Emotions are located in the **limbic** system, and equally important.

Guided mainly by **instincts**, animals generally do not harm themselves and others beyond strict necessities.

But humans are 'condemned to be free'.  
Selfishness is meant to be controlled by the rational faculties of our '**pre-frontal cortex**'.

What is given out as 'natural' is in fact the **sabotage** of human nature.

Millennia of collective experience have lead to **social** imperatives and restraints, based on **spiritual** convictions, values and norms, that guide us in life.

**Modernity deliberately and successfully **demolishes** these traditional mindsets for the sake of profit and pleasure.**

**Don't do it!** has changed to **'Just do it!'**

**In modern secular societies faith has become a **private pastime** that is tolerated as long as it does not interfere in areas of life that really matter.**

The **entertainment** and **advertising** industries bombard us with an incessant stream of images and arguments that make us **dissatisfied** with what we have.

They **undermine** all social constraints and moral inhibitions and **glamorise** profit and pleasure.

They induce us to 'crave things that do not **satisfy**, buy things we do not **need** with money we do not **have**.'

## The destruction of traditional values and institutions exacts a heavy price!

The impact of **modernity**, (exacerbated by **apartheid** policies, such as migrant labour and influx control), has led to the large scale destruction of the **African family**.

According to the SAIRR **only 33%** of all South African children live with **both their parents** (Whites 83%), **39%** live only with their **mothers**. The other 28%?

Boys that grow up without **male role models**, never experience **regular work** and do not know what to do with their **youthful energies** are the material for criminality.

In sum, our collective motivations have been **severely distorted** for the sake of profit and pleasure.

Our modern culture **militates** against responsibility, sufficiency and contentment.

The **consequences** in social, economic and ecological terms are catastrophic.

Must we wait until the **most powerful** decision-makers in society change their minds?

No, democracy places on us the **obligation** to become part of the political process.

Policy changes can only work on the basis of changed **motivations** among a **critical mass** of the population.

Such changes usually come about through devastating **crises**, but then some people must have developed alternatives.

# Summary of the argument

1. Responsible policy **priorities** are self-evident but not followed in the modern system.
2. Policies depend on collective **motivations**, which in modernity have been severely distorted.
3. In the modern environment, (African) **traditionalism** cannot compete and is increasingly being abandoned.
4. Modernity deliberately **dismantles** traditional values and restraints.
5. We must begin to develop a 'counterculture' so that **alternatives** are available when crises hit.