
The Human Agenda: The Social Justice of Survival

Andrew Jonkers

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Abstract

A great labour crisis is building over the next several years arising from the interaction of productivity gains, social scale, and global growth limits: the human survival traits that have driven growth carry within them the seeds for social disintegration. We must work around more obvious dangers posed by human tendencies such as greed to address this growing structural concern.

While a decline in society due to mismanagement of greed would in fact ensure the survival of a species threatened by growth limits, do not expect a social order you would want to live in by modern standards. We are free to choose and design our own future. It will take fortitude to educate those parasitic cowards who have acquired too much financial and political control; but self-interest may well ensure they come along for the ride.

Fortunately there is a practical solution that should satisfy both the Good Samaritans and the Greedy amongst us. An argument is made to disregard abstract notions of equality as a basis for social justice: we should instead re-embrace the mercantile free market, but regulate it and our social rules according to the principle of altruism; this principle alone has demonstrable survival value for both a society and the individuals in it.

This cultural altruism, called “The Social Justice of Survival”, leads to a concept of human rights that is a natural and affordable consequence of a very practical model for society. Ironically, justice based on equality fails to deliver the same desirable outcomes simply because it ignores human nature.

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The Human Condition: Conflict between Altruism and Greed

Humanity has prospered due to our superior individual ability to reason out survival actions instilled in us by our genetic instincts. Social congregation improves individual survival because of the altruistic principle of mutual benefit.

At an individual level we survive by fighting or running away, and within a society we survive by helping each other or by being greedy. The altruism behind “helping each other” is the only survival instinct of these four that allows a society to prosper; the other instincts act to destroy society. Altruism alone allows us choice in how to survive; it has allowed us to move beyond Tennyson's “Nature, red in tooth and claw” not from any moral imperative (theistic or otherwise), but through an inherent humanism. It is therefore a vital principle that should underpin any sustainable society.

Examples of such altruistic survival policies are instinctively obvious. When faced by an attacking tiger, it makes sense both at a personal level and for the common good to face the threat as a group. For those of us lucky enough to have traffic systems, when we stop at a red light it makes sense both at a personal level and at a community level. We do not mind the social regulation because it is in accord with our individual survival instinct.

Once the benefit of such altruism is available to all it is a very short step for an individual to stand back a bit from the crowd attacking the tiger, or to dip his ladle in his neighbours grain store without compensation; individual survival benefits from having others do the hard work for you: Self preservation recognises altruistic gain as a valuable survival trait and then takes advantage of it.

Such greed is inherently parasitic and cowardly, but it is also part of our humanity; a valid individual survival strategy. Indeed, greed and altruism can co-exist where individuals co-operate to steal from others. It is insidious and inherent to our nature.

But greed has a fundamental limitation compared to the other survival instincts: it can only have value when altruism precedes it: You cannot steal anything until somebody else has at some point produced the goods through hard work. This is the inherent conflict between altruism and greed.

The inability of a dictator to relinquish control of a struggling society is a classic example of this principle in action. The greedy must be taught to be realistic in their demands: Greed may be tolerated up to a point, provided the beating heart of altruism remains strong. But is this negative feedback between greed and altruism inevitably destructive, or can it be controlled? Indeed, do we even have a choice?

There is no point denying our base instincts exist, will be acted upon, and can manifest to the good or the bad both within ourselves and towards others; and often simultaneously. There also seems little point denying that we are social creatures and therefore choose at times to curb our individual freedoms in order to live in some degree of harmony within a society.

The ability of one human to take advantage of another knows no bounds up to and including torture and murder. The ability of one human to help another knows no bounds up to and including sacrifice and death. We see both sides of the human story in acts of individual bravery and depravity and in times of natural disaster and conflict. At a societal level we consistently see both in action throughout history.

When a society is faced with threat we may fall to rioting and pillaging or we may come together for the common good. The fact that both responses occur means survival activities can be mediated by cultural values to follow one particular genetic survival imperative (altruism) over another (greed): We can

choose, and the choice is only available to us because of the existence of the genetic survival instinct of altruistic social congregation.

It is proposed that if rules of individual altruism are built into our governing structures they become ingrained both in our culture and in our personal behaviour, and that this has demonstrable survival value. This is what is meant by the "Social Justice of Survival."

Where such a principle exists, a culture will come together in time of adversity and survive. The recent floods in Australia and the response to the earthquake off Japan provide good examples of this. Where mutual benefit does not govern social principles, the society will disintegrate in the pursuit of individual self preservation; it becomes every person against the next. The situations in some African and Middle Eastern nations provide excellent current examples of this.

The situation is not always as clear cut. Examples such as the flooding of New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina demonstrate a cultural divide where the principle of mutual benefit is a guiding principle for some, but not for others. We do indeed have choices.

The very success of altruism promoting growth in a society creates a niche that individual self preservation can take advantage of. Greed becomes good. Corruption and fundamentalist subjugation gain merit to improve individual survival; We tolerate theft in our society both because it is inherent in our nature but also because the advantage of altruistic benefit is of such a degree that society still grows faster than it would otherwise.

This tolerance of greed is facilitated by a seemingly idiotic human propensity to follow rules and believe in ideological philosophies regardless of merit, often right up to the point they subjugate or kill us. This crowd stupidity in fact ensures we can rub along together for altruistic gain without undue conflict; but it can be taken outrageous advantage of by the parasitic cowards who choose greed and subjugation over altruistic benefit. It is the primary mechanism by which corrupt dictators, indeed any ruling elite, rise to power.

But a parasite that overwhelms the host can cause its own destruction; this is evolution in action.

Altruism as a Core Cultural Value: The Social Justice of Survival

Some things are built into our genetics; we survive individually on our instincts, and when we congregate we improve our survival due to the altruistic gain deriving from mutual benefit. Our intellect and reason have developed to best meet the demands of these instincts. Reason is the process by which we act while instinct provides the motivation to act. And thus we survive.

When society is small in scale (communities of around 100 individuals), individual altruism is sufficient to maintain social integrity. This is because greedy individuals that inevitably arise cannot take control of such a society because it is not sufficiently large for such an attempt to go unnoticed by the other community members; appropriate action to manage the greed during times of adversity is taken.

But once a society grows beyond the size of community it becomes susceptible to complete control by the greedy for three reasons: there are now enough clever greedy individuals who will co-operate in their endeavour, the rest of the society is so busy trying to prosper they simply do not have the time nor mandate to deal with the problem, and the social scale is such that most individuals are not even aware of the problem until it is too late.

To promote long term social stability, altruism must therefore also be embedded as a core cultural norm; the altruism must be tempered by the notion that any individual's social transactions should ensure mutual benefit, but provided also they do not act against the common good.

This concept defines the "Social Justice of Survival."

Extending altruism to encompass the common good requires a conscious community cultural choice. It is not an inevitable choice, but once taken, is one of those principles which you literally instinctively recognise as being of value both at a personal and social scale (like stopping at a red light). By contrast, we do not instinctively recognise social justice based on principles of equality.

For example allowing people to smoke and drink, while ensuring consumers still pay for the social cost of their actions works by this altruistic principle where other policies such as prohibition or rampant commercial denial of harm have not. Altruism must also be tempered by pragmatism. If a rule does not accord with individual desire, the social duty will be shirked. If it acts against the common good, survivability gained from socialisation will be compromised.

A society with true longevity may be one where the individual freedoms that the majority of citizens agree to curb, coincide with those that the governing body of that society choose to restrict; and this has demonstrable survival value due to altruistic gain.

No social system with competing individuals can be or indeed needs to be perfect or equal for all: the greed imperative within us to take advantage of altruism all but guarantees imperfection. It is sufficient though that both parties to any social transaction mostly feel better after it than before it, and that any such transaction does not deny benefit to the common good; those parties may be individuals or governments. This is not simply a moral or theistic wish for us to be good to each other but is a profound requirement arising from our base survival instincts.

Evolution of Society: The Rise and Fall of Empire

When a large society is not faced with a threat or growth limit, the realistic outcome of our survival instincts is that greed will propagate to the point where a greed based elite will rise to control the financial and political structures of that society.

The very success of a productive society predicated on altruism allows a corrupt minority of individuals within society to improve their survival strategy by taking advantage of others through mechanisms of coercion and manipulation. It is not overly concerning in the sense that this is normal human behaviour.

While a society is not growth limited or otherwise threatened, these strategies can dominate the power base of a society and be incredibly successful especially when the market place is manipulated to this end. The system only breaks down when the famine strikes or altruism is compromised to the point where the extorted finally choose collectively not to co-operate; altruistic benefit is not accruing sufficiently quickly to compensate the victims of greed!

The resource rich environment present through most of human history has encouraged many governing ideological principles predicated on this trait of greed; capitalism, communism, monarchy, institutionalised religion, subjugation, exploitation, anarchy and simple majority democracy to name a few. Whole empires have been based on combinations thereof but they are almost always run by a greed based elite and are pre-disposed to one degree or other to fail when faced with growth limits.

When productive altruism is at risk of destruction, the strategy of greed should be abandoned: The fatal flaw in large modern societies is that social systems cannot respond quickly enough to implement this change before catastrophe results. A rather boring problem in social logistics becomes the source of misery for all. In short, the parasite often does not see the sign that it has compromised altruism just that bit too much in time to save itself or its host by abandoning greed as a survival strategy.

These types of greed based society either die from within because demand entirely consumes supply to the point where the social structures required to distribute critical supplies are not viable; or by internal revolt of a subjugated class, or alternatively they are conquered from without by a society with more or better resources or strategies, either directly through warfare or through immigration from the poorer society to the stronger.

It is proposed that without proper logistical management of both growth limits and greed in society, and a cultural understanding of the altruistic survival imperative, the long term survival rate of any large society is zero. But in a resource rich environment, failure may not occur for hundreds of years.

Origins of the Mercantile Free Market: Productivity Gain and Survival

Humans are social creatures with individual desires. Consistent trends throughout human history include growth, urbanisation and productivity gain. Interestingly urbanisation seems to promote altruistic productivity gains to the order of 15% for every doubling of community size. It is not surprising at all that we are rapidly heading to a global community, but we must recognise the structural risks inherent in this strategy.

We used to be hunter-gatherers, and each and every one of us was occupied full time scrabbling for survival. We reasoned out that by division of labour in a society, we could farm crops and animals and defend against predators, freeing up labour through the resulting productivity gains which could then be employed in delivering better ways to survive (labour saving tools, weapons, etc.)

Thus the free market of mercantile trade was born; altruism is the survival instinct, productivity gain is the survival strategy it empowers, and market growth is its inevitable indicator of success; lack of growth, that of its failure. No other mechanism tried throughout history has been found to be a better social survival strategy. The agricultural, industrial and information revolutions due to evidence based science are a direct consequence of our ability to reason out this survival strategy.

It is interesting to note that this altruistic free market principle actively promotes competition; to be a better hunter, to be a better farmer, and so on. This type of competition promotes the pursuit of individual excellence. In contrast, competitions based on notions of equality do not focus on excellence, but rather in just being better than the rest; the fulcrum of equality guarantees it; every winner above the equality “average” by definition requires a loser below it.

Altruistic competition raises the whole bell curve of humanity by focusing on achieving your best through innovation and reason. Competition of equality means you just have to outperform the average. Winners are resented for being above average and winning can always be achieved by reducing the average! “Don’t worry, we are doing better than the rest” is almost a guarantee of future failure.

Surely then we monkey with the essence of the altruistic free market principle at our peril; it is a core survival strategy. But why does the free market work so well?

Market based mercantile trade produces productivity gains that cause growth. Productivity gains always displace labour but this labour is taken up in the formation of new businesses that invent better ways of doing things; productivity gains are required to free up labour to be allocated for further growth. Growth (survival) is fundamentally linked to innovations that improve productivity.

It is only the subsequent success of this trading strategy when combined with our innate social tendency to “get along” with our fellows that allowed this true free market concept to be butchered by greedy elites to work just as well for non-mutual benefit: This may be accepted when society is not threatened by growth limits because altruism is so compelling that the majority still do better than going it alone.

Societies with a tendency to develop free market principles not regulated by altruism tend to have whole generations living under subjugation to the few; once subjugated it is very hard for those under the heel to change the system before it self-destructs, and often those doing the subjugation would rather see the society destroyed than first change their lifestyle; nobody can think of the tragedy ahead because they are all focused on short term survival.

America is in great peril of succumbing to this very problem. The capitalist notion of the market is in fact based on an explicitly butchered and untenable view of the free market. The modern stock market is the socially acceptable embodiment of this notion in the very fabric of society. Most of the people can indeed be fooled all of the time. It was successful purely because of the resource rich environment American society found itself in; everyone could be greedy and get away with it.

It is quite amusing to study the stupidity resulting from treating capital as a commodity (capitalism); there is a rapidly growing disconnect between the financial and economic systems. In every modern stock transaction one or both of the brokers must by definition be giving bad advice; this matters little to them since they get commission rain or shine, and in any case have a well published list of plausible excuses to choose from.

A stock is either value for money (the seller is the loser), or not value (the buyer is loser), or in the rare case of "correct" value, both the buyer and seller are losing by broker commission (churning). And all this is before corruption and greed in brokerages is even considered! Interestingly, just like casinos, it never appears to be the people running the stock trades that lose.

What is worse though is that none of the parties are promoting the innovative mercantile trade which is so essential to the true free market. The capitalisation to develop the company came from the initial share offer. Any subsequent share transactions simply move around numbers to the benefit of some, and the direct cost to others; win/lose rather than altruistic win/win.

This is not to say that notions of communal ownership (communism) are any better at achieving growth and stability in society. A transaction where the benefit created by productive endeavour is arbitrarily taken away and given to other parties is one sided and by definition not altruistic. Subscribing to this bizarre notion that sharing is inherently fair is a fundamental failure of all equality based principles of justice. The road to hell is indeed paved with good intentions.

The compromise position of altruism does not prevent the acquisition of wealth, indeed it encourages acquisition of wealth and status; provided it is tempered by innovation and hard work where both the sellers and the buyers actually benefit from the conduct of the business and this also does not act against the common good of a majority of citizens.

The very best of our corrupt leaders actually recognise this principle and run their social policy in accord: jobs for the boys, but in the end, those boys had better deliver real outcomes. In Australia, recent history has provided examples of both the very best of corrupt leaders, and the very worst of fair go do-gooders with the finest intentions but no ability to deliver.

Societies whose financial markets treat cash as commodity rather than a direct reflection of economic value in mercantile trade, and who deny that the free market was ever invented for and by proponents of altruistic benefit to maximise survival and growth, have within them a quintessential expression of parasitic greed that will eventually kill them stone cold dead when faced with a serious growth limit.

Productivity gain from a free market regulated only by altruistic principle is essential to our survival as a society in which the majority of people would wish to live.

Dysfunction in Modern Markets: Capital vs Mercantile Imperatives

Productivity gains are being used by the modern day robber barons to maintain and increase profits. This would have to rank as the most stupid suicidal act that capitalists have ever committed.

For sure a 168 hour working week will kill the last capitalist and with his dying gasp, he (yes almost certainly a he) will speak to a room empty of love but no doubt full of sycophants, and say: "I have it all. I have won". He will be cremated with his wealth to avoid taxes and that will be the end of capitalism.

And yet the concentration of wealth is not of itself a bad thing, provided it is acquired by altruistic mercantile trades, and proper support is given to labour unavoidably displaced by productivity gains (the common good). The principles at work on Wall Street however bear no relation to any of these requirements; wealth is acquired at the expense of others. Greed remains good.

This use of productivity gain to concentrate wealth and profit by greed, which is explicit in the action of the modern stock market, is doomed to fail in a growth limited society. Somewhat ironically, the greed profit in this circumstance can only be maintained by market regulation and this type of regulation will ultimately result in catastrophic failure of the market.

It is a classic catch 22. Under a growth limit, if a business wishes to maintain price while costs fall through productivity gains, one or more of the following will happen:

- a) Another business will enter the market that is satisfied with the lower non greed based profit margins and take market share, and thus reduce commodity price over time.
- b) Tax rates will rise to support the unutilised displaced labour of the productivity gain and therefore deny excess profit.
- c) Tax rates will not rise and the social revolution from displaced labour will effectively nationalise the business.
- d) The market will go into recession because of reduced demand from people who cannot afford to pay.

The rise of the budget airline business model is a classic example of a type a) response. Modern Greece is an excellent example of a type d) response, Egypt a good example of a type c) response, while the most successful democracies choose a type b) response.

In all cases this presents a serious problem for the greed elite, and the answer to their plight in modern times is regulation. It is no coincidence that the chief executive boys club garners its wealth in the deliberately murky waters of before tax profit.

The historical saviour of greedy business is market expansion (population growth), but in the modern context this no longer helps: New population is surplus, unemployable, has no spending power, and goes directly to the displaced labour market. Youth unemployment being higher than general unemployment is a prime indicator that such serious problems are at hand.

The use of productivity gains to increase profit can now only be maintained by regulation and protection. And this is exactly why the greedy elite occasionally "give in" to regulate the market. And they take the proponents of fairness along with them; because surely more market regulation must make it fairer. Saying it is so does not make it so; the devil is in the detail.

The Australian insurance industry is one classic case (of many) where regulation in the name of fairness is used to enshrine the easy acquisition of greed based profits. First we have strict liability laws to protect the weak. Then we require businesses to carry insurance against this liability to protect consumers. Then we require insurance regulation to guarantee compliance of insurance payouts (so businesses no longer self insure).

Lo and behold we now have a protected insurance industry and the perfect stage set for greed profits to be extracted. This is because the extreme regulatory compliance acts to prevent new entrants wishing to supply a quality service at reduced price from doing so: all in the undeniable name of fairness. This is an example of equality principles delivering a non-equitable outcome.

Unfair profits are increasingly being built in by regulation (in the name of making the market fair!) The stock market is increasingly reliant on unfair profits to increase capital value, when in fact maintaining capital value (per unit commodity) goes entirely against market history. A profit margin that causes an increase in commodity price is a good definition of an “unfair profit”

Throughout human history commodity prices have fallen and become more affordable because the cost reductions due to productivity gains are passed on by a truly free mercantile market as price reductions; this has ensured our survival and directly delivered growth.

This is exactly the mechanism by which benefit is derived from altruistic endeavour and it does not deny the profit motive; only the excessive profit motive. When commodity prices rise in the medium term, it is always indicative of a serious systemic problem.

Since the modern stock market is predicated on increasing capital value, it is in the long term doomed to fail; it has not done so to date only because of continued population growth, lack of growth limits, and an increasing reliance on unfair profits, paid for by productivity gains; all of which are unsustainable in our medium term future.

The perpetual existence of inflation which acts to reduce capital value is the only stabilising factor in this corrupted market and a core indicator of unsustainable non-altruistic practices under growth limitations. Inflation is also the mechanism by which greed based wealth is extracted from the hard working altruists without the need for any explicit financial “theft”. It is theft by stealth.

But in this one sided financial market, deflation is explicitly designed to lead to an inevitable self destructive recessive economic spiral, so proponents of equality are taught by the greed elite to accept that inflation is a good thing since a drop of interest rates to near zero guarantees serious financial collapse of this structure and misery for those at the bottom of the heap. The recent sub-prime mortgage crash resulted directly from this low inflation, low interest rate scenario in America.

The “Open Source” movement is an increasingly important and vital social rejoinder by those of an altruistic mind to these corrupted financial market practices. It is gaining currency because it focuses on gain by distributed benefit at reduced price, rather than focused profit from reduced cost.

Productivity gains must be used to reduce prices, and therefore reduce the capital value per unit commodity in a steady controlled manner else they become unaffordable and recession with the feedback of economic destruction that results is unavoidable.

Free Market Imperatives for Taxation and Social Security

Unutilised displaced labour is an insidious but nonetheless very important structural threat to the large free market altruistic society. It provoked the writing of this essay. This threat is a modern phenomenon that has not been seriously encountered to date in human history: The intersection of very large technology driven productivity gains, increased scale of society, and global growth limits is about to make it a very serious problem indeed.

The problem is this: When growth limits are reached, productivity gains still displace labour as usual, but now this labour is surplus to requirements; it cannot be employed for further growth because of the growth limit. But the market place requires consumers to prevent recession, and surplus labour has no innate ability to consume since it has no means of acquiring social capital.

This problem is quite separate from threats due to lack of availability of essential resources which can cause a collapse even when mercantile free trade is not unduly compromised by greed and unilateral benefit. However in this circumstance pulling together in the common good is more vital than ever.

A free market facing a growth limit carries within it the seeds of its own destruction. It is in grave danger of being a victim of its own successful productivity gains: This surplus labour does not choose to be idle; it is forced to it by circumstance.

There are only four options available to unutilised displaced labour:

- 1) Starve and die,
- 2) Overthrow existing social order,
- 3) Social isolation (Reform around an internalised black market economy),
- 4) Allow state support through a social security system.

For these citizens in such a society it is either death or government assistance: they cannot realistically fend for themselves because the resources they need to do so are already allocated. Attempts to overthrow existing social order are usually met by overwhelming military force in the guise of police action to protect society from terrorist acts.

These citizens can no longer abdicate from their society because unlike in all past history there is nowhere left to go to that is not already "owned" by someone else. The irony that ownership of any land historically derives from our forebears walking on to a piece of land and saying "I own it" seems lost in the Schadenfreude of ownership.

The fact that surplus displaced labour is what we increasingly see today is a prime indicator that we are reaching the limits of labour growth and are seeing the start of labour conflicts produced by the intersection of productivity gain, social scale, and growth limits.

In Australia today a typical new mine employs far fewer people than it would have even a decade ago; it is only the sheer number of new mines being started that is preventing reduction in labour in this growth industry. It is an inevitable trend that this prime growth industry will continue to grow but with overall labour reductions in the future. This is after all what productivity gains mean, and productivity gain is a tried and true human survival strategy.

Where do you see a future for the tens of thousands of supermarket check-out staff and factory workers that will be displaced by automation in the next few years? At a social level this displacement is really

only effective if it directly leads to price reductions in goods, but this is by no means a certainty in the modern financial system.

And for the redundant labour, any job that they may have potential to be trained to do is also in the process of being automated out of existence by the inexorable action of productivity gain. These are the people which after ten years un-employability we are currently taught to call dole bludgers. It is not their fault, and if society ignores them or unjustly blames them, then revolution, or heaven forbid, market recession, is inevitable.

The free market for very altruistic reasons must take great care in a growth limited environment to ensure the displaced labour remain consumers in that market; if they ignore this fact the market will go into recession because of oversupply to a declining consumer base.

Paul Keating had it exactly right when he called the Australian 1990's recession "The recession we had to have". We had to have it because we collectively ignored the survivalist insight that a free market should facilitate altruism rather than greed in order to be successful in the long term.

A social security system funded by an associated taxation policy is then an essential part of the free market facing limits as this is the only reasonable mechanism capable of keeping surplus displaced labour as consumers in the marketplace.

Financial market capitalists abhor paying this social cost, seeing it as an evil blight limiting market expression. In fact capitalists actually abhor paying this social cost because it is an evil blight on their own naked expression of greed. But they turn a blind eye at their very literal peril; the guillotine blade can be ordered on the internet for next to nothing.

The existence of taxation and a social security system is necessary but not sufficient; these systems must be managed properly for altruistic benefit and have the same scope as the free market otherwise unutilised labour will inevitably be displaced towards the taxation and social security system that can least afford it.

The European Union and the case of Greece is a perfect example of this problem in action today. Productivity gains in the free market of the Euro zone have displaced labour, but this displacement has been concentrated in some countries more than others. Productivity gains have inevitably reached a very critical stage where this displaced labour cannot be taken up in new innovative businesses; it is genuinely surplus to requirements.

Growth in the labour market is simply not possible to the degree needed so these citizens need to be maintained under a social security system in order to remain consumers in the free market. The bailouts given to Greece in fact have nothing to do with fiscal or government reform; they are an ad-hoc social security system given in the absence of a Euro-wide system. The greed and corruption and debt crisis involved make the situation worse but are not in fact fundamental to the problem.

Greece has no easy way out of this dilemma because there is no reasonable future prospect of work for this displaced labour force; the productivity gains in the rest of the Union that led to this situation will ensure they can never catch up. If Greeks flee their own country in search of work they will simply create a tsunami of unemployable displaced labour that circulates around Europe leaving economic devastation of national social security policies in its wake.

If, as is likely, handouts do not continue, the EU has only two options: Greece withdraws and restructures around its own internal market, or the EU takes the next step in Union: a common taxation and social security system matched to the extent of the EU free trade zone. The most likely outcome will be the failure of the EU within the next five years because agreement on a common taxation and social security system could not be reached.

The parallels between the EU free trade zone and its lack of common tax and social security policy, and that of the global trade between nations and a lack of commonality in national taxation and social policy systems, are explicit and unavoidable. While China, India and Brazil in the short term at least have their own internal markets to fall back on, America is not in such a good position.

America's problem is this: productivity gains within its own economy have displaced its own labour force and this labour force is increasingly surplus to requirements. The jobs have been exported to China, but the people who had been doing those jobs remain in America, increasingly dependent on an un-fundable social security and education system. The solution needs very careful management indeed. China will offer to help in its own self interest, but America may be too proud to respond.

No market, internal or external is ultimately immune from this problem: Survival requires growth, the market provides growth, growth encounter limits, and limits threaten the market.

The Future of the Mercantile Free Market: A Social Utopia

The very success of the free market is initially at least predicated on the existence of a resource rich environment. The free market in a resource rich environment does not guarantee a just society. The free market may be successful and grow, and it may be done justly through trade merchants where everyone gains from every transaction, but trade can also exploit as is easily demonstrated by the historic empire building aspirations of many nations funded largely by exploitation of ignorant and oppressed colonies.

The problem with the free market is not one of lacking social obligation but a rather more practical one: the mercantile free market no longer exists in an environment of unlimited growth, and this leads to fundamental structural problems in the free market expression. Altruism based regulation of the market becomes essential to its survival; in the resource rich past it was optional.

Because it is so near in our future (perhaps complete within 100 years), only a minimal extrapolation is required to see the inevitable consequence of productivity gain: All labour is eventually displaced and becomes unemployable. Businesses become fully automated and as a result the price of goods (capital per unit commodity) goes to zero: Unemployed consumers now have no capital with which to purchase goods. This is ok: the businesses have no need of the capital because they are self-maintaining.

If managed properly the future free market dissolves peacefully into a rather utopian consumer vision where the market really is “free” of capital requirements. This comes with a very important proviso: The remaining natural essential resource limits that cannot be overcome by automation must not be exceeded (i.e. are sustainable). If this is the case, then the resulting type of society will have longevity and survival value and can move on to a new set of what they consider important social agendas.

The ultimate irony of the true free market is that provision of labour was essential to its existence, and yet the productivity gains inherent in the growth of a free market act to remove that labour from the market, and cause capitalisation to shrink once growth limits are reached.

The current danger is that most of our modern business models are predicated on, and utilise, a resource rich environment and see no need to change to a growth limited altruistic mode of expression. Human greed and lack of foresight will almost guarantee that a free market moving into fundamental growth limits will fail catastrophically rather than manage itself out of crisis.

Understanding and foresight is the key to managing this dilemma, and this essay is an attempt to promote that process.

A Definition of “Common Good” in Society

The principle of the social justice of survival defines any policy of altruistic benefit in a context of common good and it has significant survival merit. But what majority defines the common good?

Significant minorities that challenge social norms tend to run at around 10-15% give or take, whether it is left handed people, the gay community, infidelity, or just general antisocial behaviour. Why 15%?: Anything less and such “narrow monoculture” societies find it difficult to adapt and grow to changing circumstances; any more threatens an irreconcilable split in social cohesion. So a maximum figure for a common good majority is 85% of the citizens, otherwise no social contract at all can be agreed on.

A simple majority of 50% is chosen in modern democracies but in fact this figure is demonstrably too low: it takes no account of the social inequalities inherent in any society. The believers in equality are being comprehensively hood-winked by the more pragmatic political realists, who happily agree that 50% majority is a recipe for equality because they know it is anything but. This acceptance of 50% is a rather impressive case of the failure of the equality ideology to deliver an equitable outcome.

Consider the typical modern two party democratic political systems, each party having two factions, all roughly equally split. A faction representing 51% of a party can set policy, and if the party governs on a 51% power base, these policies can be made law. A minority representing little more than 25% of the population can drive through policies potentially against the benefit of 75% of the population.

The 25% figure is much worse in practice because usually a special interest group controls a party faction by attracting passive “yes” members who are given in return special privileges. It is thus routinely achievable for a 5% minority elite interest to gain control of the policy settings of 95% of the population in a modern well run democratic nation based on 50% majority rule.

How compromised are the 49% of the party who voted against the policy in the party room but who turn around and vote for it in parliament? “Don’t worry. Be happy” sing these donkeys to the beat of the lash of the party whip driving them onwards to the carrot of a safe pre-selection. They are assured the party vote is the heart of democracy; this parliament thing is just a sideshow. The opposite of a parliamentary conscience vote is indeed an unconscionable vote.

The “common good” majority therefore lies somewhat above 50% and below 85% of the population; a figure of 70% seems reasonable. Laws should be passed where the issue at hand attracts more than 70% of the popular vote. Vested interests of course will argue that this would make it very difficult to implement any new law. This is a very good thing. Modern polling shows that only issues that become very important to a society trend above 60%, and will rise above 70% only when a sensible evidence based solution based on technical merit is actually proposed as policy.

The problem with a 70% majority lies in the difficulty of repealing all the minority interest laws that currently litter our books. Also the 70% rule still enables a majority to completely subjugate a minority as the bipartisan decision to revoke the racial discrimination act for the recent intervention in aboriginal Australian affairs demonstrates to our shame. Equality is simply not part of our humanity.

It is proposed therefore that a 40% minority agreement is sufficient to repeal a law. Only socially just law in the altruistic sense can survive in this 70/40 environment, regardless of party interests: this should serve us well as a definition of the common good. It is inherently conservative in nature, while allowing rapid change when needed in a crisis.

The Rise and Rise of the Human Agenda: The Social Justice of Survival

A society based on the principle of the social justice of survival is defined by policies where individual human desires are in accord with altruistic (mutual) benefit that does not act against the common good; injustice arises where they do not. It has good survival merit because it is based on the proven genetic survival traits that are built into each and every one of us.

The free market regulated by this altruistic sense of justice is the best expression of this survival mechanism. Growth occurs through productivity gains. When the growth is limited then the free market must for altruistic benefit support taxes and social security to maintain the unutilised displaced labour in the market place as consumers.

When labour productivity gains are extrapolated to their natural limit, the free market capital must devalue to zero as the supply of essential goods and services to maintain society become fully automated. But before we trash the financial market, viewing it quite rightly as an evil greedy capitalist plot, we should remember the altruistic mercantile free market economy that feeds it is essential to our very survival; no other system has done better over the course of history.

The solution then is not to castigate the financial market for its faults and flaws, but rather to recognise, plan and control the decline of capital per unit commodity. This need not have a traumatic or undesirable outcome even for those who have benefited most from such a structure.

The key principles behind a solution are based on our core historic survival traits:

- 1) Enshrine the principle of altruism as the constitutional basis of society. Encourage transactions of mutual benefit provided they do not deny benefit to the common good. The basis of common law is to punish parties that fail this test and reward those that do.
- 2) Social policy should lend equal weight to individual desire and the common good. This is the only way individual altruism can be extended to that of an ingrained cultural practice.
- 3) Embrace the free market of mercantile trade, and only regulate it by the constitutional requirements in 1) above.
- 4) Adjust the taxation system to ensure productivity gains are used primarily to reduce price per unit commodity. A global society must have commonly agreed scope of trade, tax and social security and therefore a de-facto common currency, and de-facto global citizenship.
- 5) Direct the might of the great technological revolutions towards freeing ourselves of known essential resource limitations where possible. The modern internet based social revolutions now allow open crowd sourcing of both financing and innovation.
- 6) Where essential resource limits are unavoidable, manage our society to be sustainable within those limits through a policy of education. We must accept the existence of limits in order to survive and engineer our way past these limits.
- 7) Direct the might of the age of reason to completely automate essential goods and services. This utopian consumer vision logically follows from a direct extrapolation of the labour productivity gains inspired by the free market economy. The market is finally free.

The change in South Africa at the end of Apartheid is a wonderful but rare case where the principle of altruistic benefit in a free market economy in large part held sway: common sense and smart thinking people with a coherent vision for the future of society finally held sway. It could do so only because of the altruistic will of the parties involved, and because the change could be afforded by the free market

productivity gains that generated the value to implement the changes. It is important to note that any sense of equality or fair play had minimal causative value in this process.

There are some signs that China, India and Brazil are increasingly becoming aligned with these altruistic principles; recent economic success follows in part from this, but alas more so from the way its trading partners refuse to follow these principles. The recent tragic circumstance in Libya is a classic case where this principle did not hold sway; that of greed was used as a proxy. Unfortunately this latter example is all too common in history. We do indeed have choice.

The future is obvious; we may co-operate, and use the free market productivity gains of the technological revolutions to pay for the transition to embed altruism at the heart of our culture; or we can fight tooth and nail to cling to other social principles that will virtually guarantee a sordid squabble of greedy self preservation to the ultimate detriment of everyone. I may now live in squalor, but don't worry; I am doing better than the rest! Greed versus Altruism: Your choice.

The intersection of productivity gains, social scale and growth limits, and the labour crisis it is causing, is upon us right now. We have a few short years at worst, and a few decades at most, to mend our ways, stand up against greed, and do the best possible thing both for humanity and for ourselves: To survive and prosper using the humanist principle of "The Social Justice of Survival."