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The sustainability problem is described as a process of recurrent destabilization of societal value orientations or worldviews. These worldviews represent both value orientations with respect to 'quality of life' and mental maps about the surrounding world. The many different worldviews which shape society appear to be part of an overall integral worldview which can be deduced from societal enquiries and from the experiences of history and philosophy over many centuries. This integral worldview is defined by the vertical contrast between idealism and materialism and the horizontal contrast between uniformity and diversity. Due to a number of societal and psychological centrifugal...

Highlights: □ Sustainability problems result from recurrent destabilization, overshoot and collapse of societal value orientations. □ To be sustainable, society and societal governance should maintain balance between the essential human orientations on material versus immaterial, and between individualist-diversity and collectivist-uniformity driven values. These two pairs of opposing value orientations constitute the integral worldview. □ Sustainability is lost as soon as value orientations become too much one-sided and lose mutual cohesion; value orientation then shifts outside the circular domain of values which constitute both the integral worldview and 'human dignity'. □ Sustainability policies should be directed to the recognition and timely compensation of destabilizing, centrifugal mechanisms. These mechanisms are known and to a large extent predictable. They polarize the public debate, reinforce one-sidedness, turn worldviews into their perverted extremes and result in catastrophes as so often happened in the past

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