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A Brief Selection of the Intellectual Contributions of Ross R. Maxwell to Civilizational Studies

Compiled by Joseph Drew

Ross R. Maxwell was a man of immense intellectual gifts. Especially in his later years, many of these related to the theory of civilizations. His untimely death has silenced a prolific generator of incisive thoughts about this discipline.

Below I am quoting from him, tying together a number of the strands found in his addresses to the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations and in some papers he left behind.

Information Substrates and the Evolution of Evolution (1992)

This paper proposed a theory of the nature of information, and how new information types evolve, creating new stages in evolution. Information is seen as the pattern on or of a substrate. Thus, with writing on a blackboard, the information substrate is the contrast formed by the white chalk on the dark slate, while the pattern these marks form is the information itself.

The pattern-forming possibilities of each information substrate is unique. Emergence of a new type of substrate creates a new type of information.

This new information type provides a new realm of possibilities for evolution; the evolutionary process, therefore, has reached a new stage.

An example of the emergence of a new substrate on this planet was when multiple-celled organisms with specialized cells evolved. The information substrate is the specialized cells, and the information pattern is the forms these specialized cells take — sensory organs, brains, roots, flowers, and so forth. Some of the functions of these tissues and organs existed in a simple form at the single-cell organism level but some did not.

The paper identifies 22 information substrates or information realms, and two possible information substrates. The paper suggests a definition for complex systems.

Information theory to date has focused on the mathematics of communicating information, the relation of information and entropy, and information as abstract and transmutable. The substrate theory looks at the concrete, non-abstract aspects of information.

Two points, as information comes in different types:

1. Each type of information forms its own patterns and follows its own rules on how the substrate patterns can form.
2. When a new substrate forms, the initial patterns will be relatively simple compared to the more complex ones that eventually evolve. For the purposes of the theory, a complex system is defined as a system comprised of two or more interacting information substrates. For example, a living cell as we know it is a complex system combining the molecular system substrate of the cell wall and metabolism, plus the genetic code substrate.

Information substrates one and two form the basis for all the other information substrates. Whether they prove ultimately to be fundamental or not is an area of continual debate. Some theorize that information underlies the physical universe. The proposed information substrate theory is currently confined to life as we know it on the planet Earth.

(There follow 23 information substrates, some of which Maxwell comments upon and provides references to support the point. The substrates are listed, described, with a pattern and prerequisites stated, plus occasional comments.)

1. Cosmic or Space/Time-Matter/Energy
2. Atomic
3. Gravity Constrained Systems
4. Molecules
5. Molecular Systems
6. Genetic Code
7. Ecosystems
8. Social Systems
9. Multi-celled Organisms
10. Mind
11. Culture
12. Cognitive Sense of Self
13. Reusable Tools
14. Symbols
15. Physical Media
16. Civilization
17. Introspectable Consciousness
18. Power
19. Law
20. Money
21. Energy Matter
22. Computers
23. Music

[*Editor's Note:* In early papers given before the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations, Maxwell discussed #17, Introspectable Consciousness, at length. In this paper, he simply described that substrate as the ability of the mind to be aware of some of its inner workings, “inner dialogues and monologues” forming the pattern.

During his lectures on the topic, he referred to the pioneering work of Julian Jaynes of Princeton University, particularly his book entitled *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*. Among the fascinating discussions which occurred were debates about the comments of Jaynes at Cornell University: “For if consciousness is based on language, then it follows that only humans are conscious, and that we became so at some historical epoch after language was evolved.” Jaynes felt that we could discover in the earliest writings of mankind, such as the *Iliad*, “when this important invention of consciousness might have occurred.”

I, for one, am deeply grateful to Ross Maxwell for exposing and explaining this topic and its ramifications to me.]

Historical Implications of Information

From the introduction, discussing his life:

Most important was Erich Jantsch's *The Self-Organizing Universe*, which explores the “evolution of evolution” — a deep challenge. Life evolves via a selection process, but how does the non-life part of the universe evolve? I began to explore what we now call big history. In the late 1980s I developed an information approach that seemed to work. Realizing that to convince others, I needed to explore in-depth one or more of the proposed information types, so I picked civilization as the first test. Since retiring in 2016, I have been deeply involved with an information approach to big history.

To define information and explore the big history implications, I expand upon Benjamin Schumacher's Information Theory Paradox.

On the one hand, information is physical. Whenever we communicate or record information, we make use of a physical medium, such as sound, light, radio waves, electric signals, or magnetic patterns. On the other hand, information is abstract. The messages carried by our physical signals are not identical to the signals themselves.

In this paper, I reverse the emphasis and focus not on abstract information being communicated or stored, but on the medium, the physical (matter and/or energy) aspects of information, which I call an information medium.

Physical mediums have a history of emerging at different times and locations, allowing us to develop a big history of information.

I propose here a definition of information: Information has two components: (1) a physical (matter and/or energy) medium and (2) the patterns and/or processes of this medium.

If you find a pattern and/or process, it must be connected with a physical medium, with a set of interacting mediums. So, the above definition significantly expands the domain of what normally would be considered “information.” Information theorists often view information as an abstract, something that can be communicated or stored. As in the information theory paradox, they may ignore or minimize the material or energy medium that supports the abstract information. Moreover, there is a tendency to view information as abstract or non-material, such as the common usage in English of information as knowledge, news, or facts.

However, the information medium definition, in contrast, allows not just the medium but also the patterns and processes to be made of matter and/or energy. An example of this more materialistic approach is that both the *medium* for atoms, the subatomic particles of protons, neutrons, and electrons, and the *patterns*, the different number of subatomic particles of each of the various chemical elements and isotopes, are all composed of material substance.

This medium provides the basic material building blocks of the universe. In this example, both the patterns/processes and associated mediums are fully physical. Nothing is abstract.

It is my intention to identify major information mediums from the origin of the Earth to the beginning of Homo sapiens.

Two Papers on The Ramifications of Perception:

I. Perceptual Object Model: A Gestalt Approach to A Sense of Self, Metaphors, Words and Thoughts in a “Virtual Mind Space: of Consciousness

This paper proposed a model of the brain/mind’s ability to perceptually isolate and bring into the foreground perceptual and mental phenomena.

First, the paper develops the Perceptual Object Model, which is based on an interpretation of classic experiments using conscious subjects. In the model, objects in the foregrounds of the perceptual field are always in relation to a background comprising the rest of the perceptual field.

The second section of the paper applies this Perceptual Object Model to construct four mental phenomena:

1. The psychosocial sense of self;
2. Metaphors, which extend our perceived reality;
3. Words, which combine sound with meaning; and
4. Thoughts existing in a conscious “thought realm” or “mind space.”

I propose that a perceptual object is an internal — to the mind — representation of an object, external to the mind that can be seen or touched. Examples of objects are a pencil, a chair, a car, and also an animal or a person. Such an external object has a wholeness or connectedness about it, a bounded entity. It has discrete boundaries. It moves or can be moved as a unit. It has continuity over time.

In the model, a perceptual object is a gestalt existing in the foreground of the mind. The Perceptual-Object-Creating Mechanism, able to separate and highlight foreground from background, can create new mental phenomena, such as the sense of self. Moreover, this perceptual mechanism can also operate on “material” already in the mind, thereby creating yet other mental entities, such as metaphors.

All perceptual objects retain the essential object-like characteristics of wholeness and separateness from a background. We can investigate different types of perceptual objects and entities as we develop the Perceptual Object Model and the model’s derivatives.

There are potential implications of this model for the development of the science of consciousness.

[Editor’s Note: In the paper, Maxwell explains that gestalts, a type of information medium, highlight perceived “wholes” in the foreground of the mind. The three major gestalt types, perceptual objects, symbols and sentences, all highlight certain sensory information, bringing it into the foreground of the mind while the rest recedes into the background.

As to perceptual objects, the initial function of a visual gestalt, from an evolutionary point of view, is to detect objects, such as another animal, thus highlighting potential dangers and opportunities. He explains that researchers have identified eight visual gestalt laws that function by looking for “wholes.” He goes on to discuss perceptual objects, symbols and sentences, as well as information mediums.

As to information mediums, he says “This exploration of gestalts is part of a project to identify various types of information, in terms of the medium used.

In this approach, each piece of information has two components: the physical medium that supports the information, and the shape or pattern of this medium. For example, if you and I were talking together, the physical medium of communication would be the sounds we use to speak, and the pattern would be the words and inflections we use.”

Maxwell argues that symbols may have evolved out of the gestalt-creating system for objects. Symbolic language, he says, is an absolutely key step in the development of human intelligence. Citing the work of Stanley I. Greenspan and Stuart Shanker, *The First Idea: How Symbols, Language, and Intelligence Evolved from Our Primate Ancestors to Modern Humans*, he says that what gives meaning to symbols are emotions.

Finally, the article says that there are two actions that can be taken, from a gestalt point of view: (1) identify something as a whole and highlight it, and (2) recognize something as not a whole and recede it. A grammatical sentence is a whole, standing out in consciousness.

“What is not a whole, is the previous sentence. I propose that the gestalt system actively represses the previous sentence into the background. This cleans the slate for the syntactical components of the current sentence. The gestalt system’s function, on the one hand, is to repress into the background the previous sentence, and on the other hand, to highlight the meaning of the current sentence as a whole.”]

II. Gestalts as Information Mediums (2017)

This paper brings together some of Maxwell’s theories about information.

He writes:

An **information medium** is the physical aspect of a piece of information. For example, writing on a blackboard; the visual contrast between light chalk marks and dark blackboard is the physical medium. The written words are the information content.

A **gestalt** is a mental phenomenon that connects parts into a perceived whole, that is brought into the foreground of the mind. The paper proposes an evolutionary sequence for three gestalt types. At each step, a new type emerges, combining the new and old types of information into a new perceived whole. These processes operate out of awareness. The three mental phenomena in order of evolutionary emergence are:

1. Object recognition – Given its critical survival value, the gestalt object recognition capacity evolved deep in animal evolution.
2. Symbolic – Symbols (words and gestures) are created, I propose, by expanding the basic object-recognition gestalt to also include a *meaning*.
3. Sentences – A sentence is what I call an “action gestalt,” complete within itself.

The simplest one-word sentence involves an action such as a command, Sit!, or an exclamation, Oh! Importantly, the gestalt-creating mechanism highlights the current sentence, while dimming into the background the previous sentence.

From an information medium point of view, the three gestalt types — objects, symbols (words or gestures), and sentences are types of information mediums.

Information Mediums Part 2 – Civilization and Complexity

[Editor's Note: Although this paper reflects much of what was stated in the previous article, I think it succinctly reflects Maxwell's argument on the subject.]

Civilizations are inherently complex. Before civilization and the agricultural revolution, humans lived in small groups as generalists, with few if any full-time specialists. A core process for the making of a civilization is the transformation from people with generalist skills to people with full-time specialized occupations.

Interdependent individuals with full-time specialized occupations, plus the patterns and processes they form, are the medium out of which civilizations grow. This increasing specialization process is still ongoing today, both in the growing mega-cities filled with rural people looking for work, and with high technology creating new types of specialists.

Cities and states, key features of civilization, co-evolve with new types of specialist occupations. Specialists are inherently interdependent within the larger system. Such systems are most effective when the specialists cooperate. However, in order for people to fully cooperate, they need to trust each other.

The larger the population the greater the possible number and types of specialists. The natural reluctance to behave opportunistically tends to weaken with group size. On the other hand, the greater the possibility of opportunism. Moreover, the larger the population, the greater the chance that opportunism may not be detected.

Jane Jacobs, particularly in her work *Systems of Survival: A Dialog of the Moral Foundations of Commerce and Politics*, explored the moral dimensions of the work world and discovered two antithetical sets of traits. One set is from the commercial world of trade, and the other set, following Plato, is for those she called Guardians, whose role is to defend and protect territory and society. She puzzled over these two lists, the virtues from the commercial world of trade and those from the Guardian-based society; she realized that they represented two fundamental systems of survival: to trade or to take.

To the moral dimensions of the two systems Jane Jacobs describes there is a third that may be added; it is associated with sharing, key to group survival in the hunting-gathering societies. The interactions between the three are important to understand complexity in civilizations.

Thus, I have extended the analysis of Jane Jacobs in three ways.

First, I have added *sharing* as a third system of traits basic to systems of survival. It has its own set of moral traits; back in the hunter-gatherer era, sharing was key to group survival. Interestingly, when I proposed adding sharing to her other two systems, in a telephone call, she said that in the modern world sharing is very weak, compared to the power of the market or the power of the state, so it can be effectively ignored, she argued.

Second, what is meant by cooperation changes in different contexts. So, instead of seeing cooperation as the master virtue common to all moral syndromes, I argue that what is meant by cooperation varies, and the three systems of survival provide three fundamentally different contexts:

1. Community involves ordinary, non-specialized (generalists) people, who as members of a community cooperate to maintain their community. This is the primary type of cooperation in nomadic hunter-gatherer bands, where maintaining a sharing community is essential for survival.
2. Trade involves economic specialists, those who cooperate to fulfill a trade agreement. Cooperation is two-way and reciprocal.
3. Hierarchy involves cooperation between specialized roles – superiors and subordinates. Cooperation is one-way, with subordinates cooperating with orders, rules, and procedures set by their superiors.

To me, the three types of cooperation are organized as distinct cooperative systems, each with its own supporting moral traits that enhance the trust people need to cooperate. These are Trade, Hierarchy, and Culture.

Conflicts exist between moral systems. Jacobs analyzes the differences between the moral traits of the systems and generates the Law of Intractable Systemic Corruption. What might be called a virtue in one moral system becomes a vice when applied in the other. A virtue implies an action, attitude or value that enhances trust, cooperation or effectiveness within a cooperative system, while a vice harms this system. So, in a trading cooperative system, it is a virtue to make a profitable trade. For the guardian, however, trading is inherently corrupting, leading to neglect of duty, for example, by taking a bribe. On the other hand, a guardian may at times need to use force to protect society from internal or external threat; a trader cannot use force, since he wants to establish trust.

Letter to Peter J. Taylor,
Author, *Extraordinary Cities: Millennia of Moral Syndromes,*
World Systems and City/State Relations

1. Your Chapter One on Jane Jacobs and her legacy is simply marvelous. Pulling from her works, you consolidate them into five areas that you and your team believe have direct relevance to confronting the existential threat of climate change: Knowledge building, Revising economics, History narrative, Perplexing politics, and Double nature.
2. (Page 2) It has been 60 years since Warren Weaver (1958) identified these three types of research problems. How is he viewed today? Has any consensus emerged that Weaver is right or has some type of modification been suggested? The latest approach seems to be Big Data, which addresses data from a statistical point of view. Medicine may very well be a disorganized complexity, and so a statistical Big Data approach may work. Will Big Data work for cities? The problem could be that Big Data people will feel confident that it will work for cities, and so repeat the misunderstandings that Jacobs fought. We will not know until it is tried.
3. (Page 3) As I see it, three methodological lessons are appropriate when exploring something new, which in Jacobs' case, is cities. The people who criticized her are those who think they understand cities. Process is used much more frequently by natural scientists than by social scientists. When exploring a new realm, grand generalizations have not been developed yet, so it is necessary to start inductively by following one's curiosity and by privileging small "unaverage" clues.
4. (Page 4) When I explained the two moral syndromes to a professor friend, he just laughed and laughed over the guardian traits, particularly "Exert prowess." It really hit home.
5. In *Dark Age Ahead* Jacobs refers to the failure of knowledge building. Since the purpose of your book is to address global warming, I suggest that this is a good spot to link education with the huge task ahead. It is my belief that the energy is available, especially with young people to tackle this problem, both in doing the thought work and the necessary physical work.
6. Jacobs was frustrated "with a Sociology dominated by deductive thinking." My question is, what would it take to make sociology a "science"? Is the current work on social networks leading anywhere?

7. (Page 7) For Jacobs there is no process of “modernization” or “transition from feudalism to capitalism.” As I see it, these narratives convert an adjective, “modern”, into a verb, “modernize”, with which they can create a narrative.
8. (Page 8) I suggest a fourth organizational precept to plantation productivity: Consolidation.

For example, let us say that there is good soil and climate to grow peanuts, and the farmers in this region own their own land. These farmers need a buyer — someone able to consolidate all the farmers’ crop to deliver a boatload to the ultimate users. This consolidator may extend credit off season, or on bad years, and bit by bit the consolidator may eventually convert the farmers into sharecroppers.

A current example of a plantation system is Uber. Ten years ago, in San Francisco there were only taxicabs and limousines, with a few taxi pickup locations, hailing a cab on the street, or radio dispatching. Today anyone can use a smartphone app to order an Uber driver, know the Uber driver’s rating, and when the Uber car will arrive, so the trip can be followed via a smart phone. Uber computers and algorithms do the *consolidating* work, matching requests with drivers – something a driver alone could not do. Uber gets 20 percent of the fare, claims that drivers are independent contractors, and so does not have to pay for workman’s compensation, sick leave, or vacation time. Moreover, the Uber drivers have to furnish a car, keep it clean, and pay for fuel.

9. (Page 11) About Jacobs and “pragmatic politics”: Yes, Yes, Yes. Her promotion of markets is not neo-liberal market fundamentalism but recognition that entrepreneurs create new work. That eases poverty. She opposed value added taxes because they favor large corporations with long supply chains.
10. (Page 13. I am puzzled about what Jacobs meant by exchange. Please elaborate on how trade and exchange differ.

**The Sharing Community Moral Syndrome: From Pre-Civilization to the Neo-Conservative Versus Progressive Cultural Split
ISCSC meeting at the University of Saint Thomas, Minnesota, 2005**

The sharing community moral syndrome is a set of moral traits associated with developing and maintaining a community. It is one of three such moral syndromes that have been identified. The other two are sets of moral traits associated with either developing and maintaining trading relationships, or with protecting society and territory.

In this paper I will first describe the nature of moral syndromes. Second, I will describe three historic transformations in the first of the moral syndromes to emerge – the sharing community moral syndrome.

The initial development of moral syndromes, with the transformation from social primates to a human moral system, is followed by the origin of civilization and the common ambivalence to unequal power and wealth. Transformations in civilizations based on ideals grow out of the sharing community moral syndrome. In the modern world, key ideals that grow out of the sharing community moral syndrome include democracy and the idea that everyone is equal before the law. Ethics relates to this syndrome, as well, and we can apply moral syndrome analysis to the cultural battle in the United States initiated by the Neo-Conservatives.

There follow a set of slides that explain the points. They are titled:

- Importance of Cooperation for Humans
- Cooperation Needs Trust
- The Sharing Community Moral Syndrome
- Self-organizing Sharing and the Mutual Aid Moral Syndrome
Long-term feedback mechanisms determine whether the community survives or not, while Short-term feedback mechanism involves a sense of harmony. Sharing fosters community enhancement and trust in the group.
- Prior to Civilization: Social Group; Ecosystems and Group Defense.
- Moral Syndrome Relationships – the Origin of Civilizations
- Patriarchal Moral Syndrome
Civilization sharing group reduced to family/household/clan
Patrilineal – Maintain the family name via male descent
Control of sex, to ensure that all offspring are “legitimate”
Male domination and control of women and children
Patriarch the authority
Love of power (a symbolic immortality scheme – Ernest Becker)
- Self-Organizing Commercial Moral Syndrome (Jane Jacobs, *Systems of Survival*)
Long-term feedback mechanism – Survival of an economic organization
Short-term feedback mechanism – Whether a trade occurs or not
- Self-Organizing Guardian Moral Syndrome
Virtues that support the Guardians who protect territory and society
Long-term feedback mechanism – whether society survives or not
Short-term feedback mechanism – enhance the guardian hierarchy’s external status and the internal status system
- Moral Syndrome Relationships in Civilization
Sharing Community Moral Syndrome
Commercial Moral Syndrome
Guardian Moral Syndrome

- Moral Syndrome Relationships: Origin of Civilizations
- Progressives and Sharing Moral Syndrome

Civilization, Cooperation, Trust and the Multiple Moral Systems Model ISCSC, Paris, 2006

This paper is dedicated to Jane Jacobs (1916-2006), a genius observer of human affairs who believing only what she saw directly, bypassed conventional and learned wisdom, and thus uncovered an original and profound understanding of moral systems.

There is evidence that civilizations have multiple moral systems. Expanding on Jane Jacobs' pioneering observations in *Systems of Survival*, I have developed a model of interacting moral systems.

The model starts with cooperative systems, which provide survival and competitive advantages. Cooperation is enhanced by trust, and trust is enhanced by moral traits (attitudes and behaviors) supportive of trust, plus avoidance of those traits detrimental to trust. There are at least three fundamental human cooperative systems — community, trade, and hierarchy — each with its own self-organizing moral system. Each moral system has a unique set of moral traits, leading to Jacobs' *Law of Intractable Systemic Corruption*, where a “virtue” in one moral system can become a “vice” in another.

In civilization, the three moral systems exist in a symbiotic relationship. Each is needed and attempts by one to do the work of another results in inefficiencies and/or corruption. Interactions between, and combinations of, the three moral systems lead to cultural transformations and civilizational shifts.

I propose that the first moral system self-organized deep in pre-history before civilization, when humans lived in smallish groups. This Sharing Community Moral System's function is to create, enhance and maintain a community. Its traits include avoiding strife, sharing, harmony, consensus, equality, fairness, and a strong-in-group / out-group sense.

Only in civilization do the Commercial Moral System (enhancing trade) and the hierarchical Guarding Moral System (protecting society and territory) emerge as fulltime phenomena. Guardian systems, I propose, include both social hierarchies of superiors and subordinates and moral hierarchies of ideals. I further propose that the Guardian ideals are abstractions of Sharing Community Moral System traits.

Examples of emerging new ideals creating cultural shifts include democracy, majority rule, and the recent ideal of transparency.

A set of 21 exhibits (presented at the Paris meeting) explain how civilization, cooperation and trust fall within the Multiple Moral Systems model. They are as follows:

- Model of Moral Systems. Moral traits are attitudes, values or behaviors that should be emulated because they support trust and cooperation or should be avoided because they are destructive of trust and cooperation. Moral systems are sets of moral traits that work together in support of cooperative systems.
- Many scholars have abandoned the word “moral”, because different cultures and subcultures have different claims as to what is moral. One consequence of this: abandoning the word “moral” to religious and ideological zealots.
- Cooperative Systems: civilizations have at least three of them. They are trade, hierarchy, and community.
- Multiple Moral Systems. With at least three cooperative systems, there are at least three associated moral systems. Jane Jacobs, in her book *Systems of Survival: A Dialog on the Moral Foundations for Commerce and Politics* (New York: Random House, 1992), identified the Commercial Moral System and the Guardian Moral System. We may add another, which builds and maintains communities: the Sharing Community Moral System.
- Explanation: Jacobs has shown us how personal virtues valued in the world of work (responsibility, compassion, courage) may be contrasted to work world virtues that exist among different occupations (cooperation, the master virtue; moderation, mercy, faith, patience).
- However, there are work world virtues that differ, due to the Law of Intractable Systemic Corruption, with virtues becoming vices. A table of moral traits is presented.
(Here, it is noted, the thirty moral traits listed and divided into Guardian Virtues and Commercial Virtues were reordered into sets of opposites as a result of a telephone conversation with Jane Jacobs on June 4, 1996.)
- Moral systems self-organize as traits to be emulated and are identified through positive feedback; destructive traits are avoided through identification with negative feedback. “Moral systems have independently self-organized many times and in many places, so there are differences in detail between moral systems in different cultures and civilizations.”
- Exhibit 8 addresses the self-organizing Sharing Community Moral Syndrome, which rests upon both long-term feedback mechanisms (whether the community survives or not) and short-term feedback mechanisms, employed for a sense of harmony, which connect to community enhancement. It is noted that extant hunting and gathering societies are strongly egalitarian. Eight principles are presented that work to maintain the community.

- Virtues that protect and enhance trade, which appear as part of the Self-Organizing Commercial Moral Syndrome, are divided into long-term feedback mechanisms (whether an economic organization survives) and short-term feedback mechanisms (whether a trade occurs or not). It is noted that one aspect is the need to innovate: be open to inventiveness and to what is novel, and exhibit the ability to dissent for the sake of the task.
- By contrast, the Self-Organizing Guardian Moral System relies on virtues that support hierarchical organizations that protect territory and society. Eleven long-term feedback mechanisms, determining whether society survives or not, are contrasted with six short-term feedback mechanisms, which enhance the status of the guardian hierarchy.
- A moral system periodization is proposed: before civilization, during pre-history, the dominant moral system was the Sharing Community. With civilization comes the Guardian and the Trading moral systems.
- What are the contours of the split from the Sharing Community moral system into Guardian and Commercial moral systems? The use of hierarchical organizations such as armies and police; the development of merchants from outside ethnic groups (Chinese, Indians, Lebanese, Jews in various parts of the world) because the strong sharing ethos within traditional villages would ruin a merchant from the local group; and the assumption of the high moral ground by guardians, priests, and the concomitant low ranking of the merchant class.
- A table in Exhibit 13 compares and contrasts over sixty aspects of behavior manifested by the Guardian, Sharing Community, and Commercial moral systems.
- The benefits of the commercial moral system are presented. The argument is made that democracy emerges only in commercial cultures, where individual initiative is valued, not in hierarchical cultures. Further, science emerges in commercial cultures where honesty is valued.
- In Exhibit 15 the moral systems are seen as being in a symbiotic relationship. Thus, both community and traders need guardians for protection and attempts by one to do the work of another fail, as seen in the Soviet Union (where there are no incentives for the hard work required for a productive economy) and the Mafia (the leadership constitute parasites, using force to achieve their goals).
- Interestingly, ideals are revealed in Exhibit 16 to be inherently hierarchical. An ideal is something that is striven for, such as interracial harmony. To see the world through the lens of ideals is to approach the world from a Guardian point of view. To build a community requires achieving consensus, which may require the blending of ideals, but intentionally formed communities may become hierarchical cults.
- Two conjectures are then posed. First, Guardian ideals derive from Sharing Community moral traits and, second, a new ideal can re-invigorate a civilization. Such ideals have included interracial harmony, equality before the law, and democracy with fair elections.

- The universalization of an egalitarian ethos arose during the Axial Age. For universal religions (Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam) individuals were seen as equals, and for non-universal ones (Hinduism, Confucianism, Judaism) all people were equally “within the system.”
- The Trading and Sharing Communities have interacted over time. Four examples are examined: ancient Mesopotamia; Banking; the Chinese Guanxi system; and Western Business.
- How do we uncover the moral systems presented in this analysis? There are empirical procedures, four of which are presented in Exhibit 20.
- Finally, the hunter gatherer societies are shown to be immortal; the group lives on when an individual dies. “I suggest that with the development of civilization the group itself, as an immortality project, lives on with families and clan structures. In particular, I propose that by or before the Axial Age in most early civilizations, patriarchalism had emerged.” Aspects of the patriarchal moral system, six in all, are laid out.