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## Cultural Maturity Part II: Cultural Maturity and Today's Environmental Imperative

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The [Institute for Creative Development](#) is a Seattle-based think tank and center for advanced leadership training that addresses critical challenges facing the species. Its primary focus is the maturity of thought and action that will be needed to effectively address future human questions. Environmental issues have always been a central concern.

Our work provides big-picture perspective for understanding what addressing environmental issues wisely will require of us. The concept of Cultural Maturity, a notion at the center of the Institute's work, proposes that doing so will require ways of thinking and acting that are new to us as a species. It goes on to examine just what those new ways of thinking and acting entail.

[Last week](#), I excerpted a piece from the [Cultural Maturity Blog](#) that introduces the concept of Cultural Maturity. The piece in its entirety can be found [here](#). This week, I turn briefly to the particular new skills and capacities that the concept argues will be needed for the specific task of confronting new environmental realities.

### Cultural Maturity and Today's Environmental Imperative

The concept of Cultural Maturity, a collective "growing up" as a species, has critical implications for bringing to bear the wisdom that environmental concerns increasingly demand of us. Here, I provide a handful of examples:

**Foresight:** As the MAHB's work beautifully articulates, foresight—and of a particularly creative and courageous sort—will be essential if we are to make good decisions. But it is important to

June 7, 2016

appreciate that the kind of foresight we are talking about is new. We have all had classes on the past, on history, but very few people are experienced in looking to the future. A recognition of the importance of creative foresight—and the ability to engage effectively in it—come part and parcel with Cultural Maturity's changes. (See [The Seven Questions on Which Our Future Most Depends](#) for an overview).

***Appreciating the Power of Limits:*** Environmental sustainability requires acknowledging the fact of real limits. And recognizing that environmental limits are inescapable is only a first step. Ultimately we need to appreciate how working creatively with limits is life affirming—how it makes us more not less. The kind of narrative we are accustomed to is heroic. It defines success in terms of defeating limits. Appreciating the power of limits requires a new, more mature kind of cultural narrative. (See [Climate Change and Culture's Big Picture](#) for an example).

***The Need for New Kinds of Systemic Perspectives:*** The Scientific/Industrial Age brought ways of thinking that served us greatly in their time. But for the challenges ahead, at the least our thinking needs to be more systemic, this in the sense of better taking into account everything involved. And that is just a start. Ultimately we need systemic perspectives able to directly address the dynamism of living systems—a task at which the engineering models of times past necessarily fail. (See [Creative Systems Theory—An Introductory Overview](#))

***Helping Us Be Attentive to Conceptual Traps:*** As with any kind of advocacy, environmental advocacy can be vulnerable to conceptual traps. Effectiveness requires knowing how to recognize them. The concept of Cultural Maturity includes a nuanced set of tools for helping people recognize when their thinking may lack the needed systemic sophistication. (See [Compare and Contrast](#)).

The concept of Cultural Maturity describes how the same change processes that generate today's loss of past absolutes also create the potential for new, more mature ways of thinking and being in the world. Cultural Maturity provides essential direction as we navigate the confusing and daunting times in which we find ourselves.

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The Cultural Maturity Blog can be found at [culturalmaturityblog.net](http://culturalmaturityblog.net) the MAHB also features an RSS feed of the blog [here](#). The main ICD website can be found at [creativesystems.org](http://creativesystems.org). My two most recent books each specifically address culturally mature perspective and what it asks of us. [Hope and the Future](#) is a short book (130 pages) designed to introduce the concept of Cultural Maturity. [Cultural Maturity: A Guidebook for the Future](#) is a much longer work (630 pages) for those interested in developing the new leadership capacities that addressing challenges ahead will require of us.

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*MAHB-UTS Blogs are a joint venture between the University of Technology Sydney and the Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere. Questions should be directed to [joan@mahbonline.org](mailto:joan@mahbonline.org)*

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