

# A WORKBOOK AND ONLINE COMMUNITY for Co-CREATING OUR SUSTAINABILITY ETHIC

## Section IV - Mapping the Territory Chapter 2 - Archetypes for Sustainability

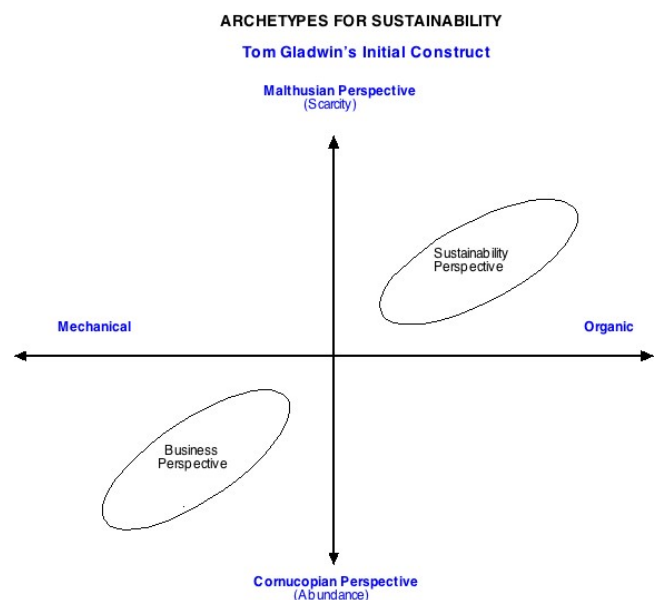
Archetypes are useful for gaining insight into the "nature" of the underlying problem and for offering a basic structure or foundation upon which a model can be further developed and constructed.

William Braun  
'The System Archetypes', p.1

### Are there 'pictures worth a thousand words' to help us ground our thinking and actions to better understand and participate in sustainability?

In the autumn of 2001, an organization called Sustainable Northwest hosted a conference in Portland, Oregon. Our local Organizational Learning Center-Northwest co-sponsored a workshop in which Dr. Tom Gladwin from the University of Michigan presented his work on 'Applying Systems Thinking to Sustainability.' In part, he asked us to answer thirty questions, always indicating a preference between two choices. Dr. Gladwin developed a 2 X 2 matrix, an 'x' and 'y' axis, into which our class results could be mapped. The questions were designed to discern whether our primary thought process was 'Mechanical' or 'Organic' (the x-axis), and whether our primary world-view was 'Scarcity' or 'Abundance' (the y-axis). Dr. Gladwin assigned both an 'x' and 'y' value of either '+1' or '-1' to each question. Each of us added up our scores and he essentially did a scatter graph that had almost all of us in the upper right hand quadrant. He called this the 'Sustainability Perspective.'

or machines, and are frightened by the scarcity created by overpopulation and technological destruction. While the sustainability perspective lives in the upper-right quadrant, most business groups land in the lower-left quadrant, tending to look through a mechanical lens, believing that the Earth is ours to take from as we see fit.



Dr. Gladwin has concluded over time that different sorts of people consistently favor different quadrants. He told us that 'sustainability' folks, like us, are almost always attracted to things alive rather than to technology

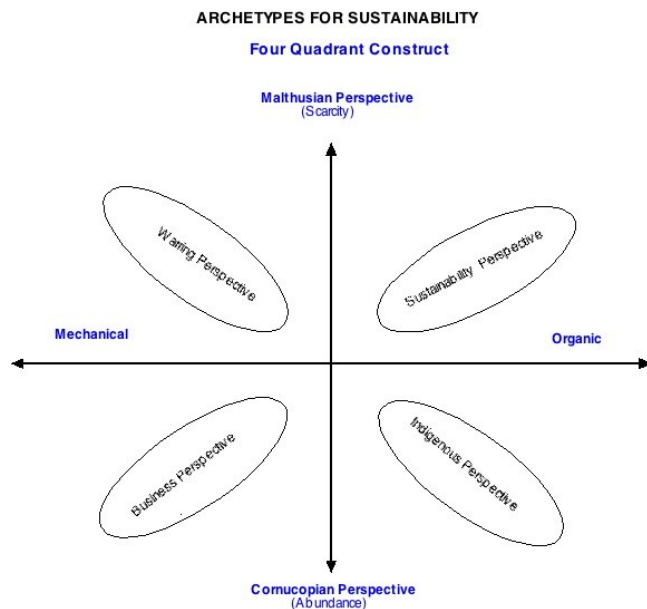
**I told him that I thought the lower-right ... represent the 'Indigenous Perspective;' and that the upper-left ... are the 'Warring Factions.'**

Dr. Gladwin's work was very thought-provoking, and I went home with two significant questions:

1. Is 'Sustainability' really the domain of the

- upper-right quadrant? and
2. What do the upper-left and lower-right quadrants represent?

It seemed to me that the construct was incomplete, so I asked Dr. Gladwin the next day if he'd thought about what the upper-left and lower right-quadrants represented. He said he hadn't, and asked me what I thought. I told him that I thought the lower-right - those people who think organically and discern the world as always providing - represent the 'Indigenous Perspective;' and that the upper-left - those who perceive the world through a lens of scarcity and think in terms of mechanical solutions - are the 'Warring Factions.' I had a name for each quadrant. Four archetypes were now defined.



Adding the two new archetypes to Dr. Gladwin's systems approach presents us with more conditions that impact our move toward sustainability. Here are two initial observations that serve as the basis for many of the thoughts in the following chapters and next section of the book:

1. While many of us intellectually and emotionally abhor the 'Warring Factions,' this has been a dominant behavior and exercise of power in recent centuries, including recent U.S. policies and activities.
2. Our enchantment with Indigenous stories seems to have limited influence on our own: Why? I believe it's because, particularly in the U.S., we have subordinated Indigenous peoples and traditions -- thus rendering them powerless in the way that we insist that power be defined. When we discern power through their lens of communal life, we realize that there is a wisdom that is paramount if we are to re-achieve sustainability -- the wisdom of valuing all life.

The first question above, "Is 'Sustainability' really the domain of the upper-right quadrant?" will be addressed in the next chapter.

## Reflection

As you read this chapter and particularly got in touch with the two constructs, what thoughts and questions arose for you?

- What insight do the four archetypes lend into the work to be done?
- Can you place yourself in one or more of the quadrants, and would you like to shift to be more or less of a particular quadrant?
- How might the need to re-achieve sustainability help peoples from different archetypes develop appreciation for each other and find synergy in their work?