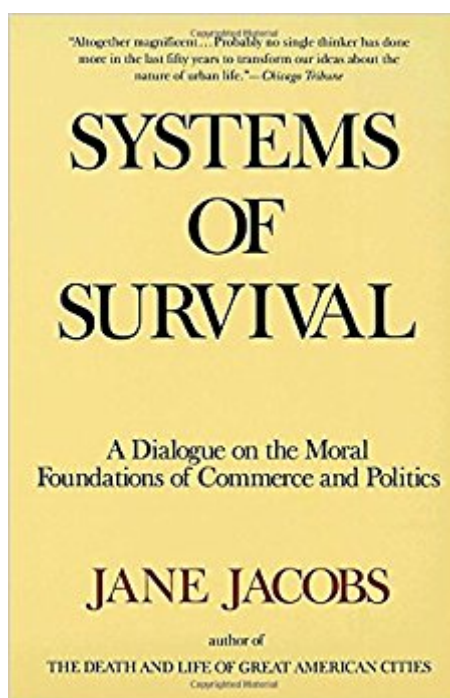


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Systems Of Survival: A Dialogue On The Moral Foundations Of Commerce And Politics



Synopsis

With intelligence and clarity of observation, the author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* addresses the moral values that underpin working life. In *Systems of Survival*, Jane Jacobs identifies two distinct moral syndromes—one governing commerce, the other, politics—and explores what happens when these two syndromes collide. She looks at business fraud and criminal enterprise, government's overextended subsidies to agriculture, and transit police who abuse the system they are supposed to enforce, and asks us to consider instances in which snobbery is a virtue and industry a vice. In this work of profound insight and elegance, Jacobs gives us a new way of seeing all our public transactions and encourages us towards the best use of our natural inclinations.

Book Information

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Vintage; Reprint edition (January 13, 1994)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0679748164

ISBN-13: 978-0679748168

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 31 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #328,659 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #134 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Social Theory](#) #596 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Political Economy](#) #643 in [Books > Business & Money > Business Culture > Ethics](#)

Customer Reviews

A sometimes provocative but simplistic discussion of morality in the form of a Platonic dialogue between a Manhattan publisher and his party guests. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

In her latest contribution to liberal theory, Jacobs (*Cities and the Wealth of Nations*, LJ 6/15/84) argues that modern societies utilize two distinctive moral systems—one being suited to the world of commerce, the other to the world of politics. Commercial morality is unsentimental, nonpartisan, and efficacious; political morality is personalistic, expansive, and vaguely altruistic. The problem is that

we don't always know which system of morality to employ in concrete situations. Furthermore, the wrong choice can have disastrous consequences. Unfortunately, Jacobs invents a rather wooden cast of characters who engage in a Socratic dialog that reproduces the author's perspective on the two fundamental types of morality. As a result, the book's credible philosophical message becomes obscured by the superficiality and hamfistedness of the characters' conversations. A few readers may find Jacobs's literary device helpful; most will find it distracting. Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 8/92.- Kent Worcester, Social Science Research Council, New YorkCopyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Insight into two different ethical systems and when each is appropriate and inappropriate. Also examines the problem of admixture between them. This explains much of what both sides of the political divide like and dislike about our political leaders, past and present.

Jane Jacobs was one of the most original and profound thinkers of the last hundred years, with the ability to prove conventional thought wrong on many subjects. Here she analyzes the shared ideas and values in western society, and discovers a major dichotomy in these systems of thought. The primary values that guide commerce and science contrast with those most important to institutions responsible for being "guardians"--government, courts, military, etc. This differentiation is both important and necessary, and keeping them separate is vital to effective performance within each institutional sphere. Whenever the two institutions and their values are combined in a single organization or operation, the result is corruption, often major.

Dark Age is better but this is a great book to do an audio on - I would love to see some business class do Youtubes on this with students playing each roll and then discussing it after wards! This is the way we can keep our economy from sinking to 3rd world and how Developing nations can rise above and succeed.

Those who believe in dualities, and those that don't. Very hearty food for thought. I am a little surprised that I don't see folks making the connection between the duality that Jacobs outlines here and the similar duality that is described in the book "Clash!: How to Thrive in a Multicultural World " by Markus and Conner. The way they describe something very similar is the clash between Independent and Interdependent cultures.

The amazing thing about reading Jane Jacobs is that she intuitively understands what she examines. She writes as a true intellectual - broadly finding relationships based upon diverse scholarship. The tone of this book was different than those read previously, but is similar to "The Nature of Economies." It is set up as a didactic dialogue of varied perspectives. The conversational tone is a little difficult to take seriously initially. However, all the observations are sensible, and Jacobs has a knack for presenting the theoretical with a solid basis of facts.

I read it annually, and give or lend copies to friends and casual acquaintances.

I have seldom read a more thought-provoking, stimulating, and fascinating book than this. The author uses two techniques that are particularly useful in conveying this rich material - Socratic dialog, and inductive reasoning. The wealth of examples and the detailed analysis are compelling, yet as a reader you feel free to disagree, to question, and to challenge the ideas being presented -- all good exercise for the mind. The book's thesis is discussed elsewhere. Suffice it to say I find that thesis highly persuasive, and I plan to put it to the test in coming months. I recommend this book highly.

The book is presented as a fictional debate between the characters as they sort through human value systems. The narrative is perhaps a bit long, but the articulation of the ultimate final distinct two value systems is worth it.

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