

STORM KNIGHTS

SOCIAL AXIOM

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INTRODUCTION

When originally published, the TORC role-playing game included charts for the four axioms- Magic, Social, Spirit, and Tech. These charts covered the general path of

advancement for the axioms, but were incomplete. This is a revised and completed Social axiom.

SOCIAL AXIOM

"The Social axiom governs what sort of interactions are possible between living beings; the complexity of their social organizations and what ideas they may put into practice. It determines the ease with which information may be collected and disseminated and the equity and efficiency of social structures."

(The Revised and Expanded TORC Rulebook, pg. 141)


0- No social interaction between beings is possible; beings who reproduce by fission or similar methods live lives of complete solitude in the presence of all other beings. Living beings may feed on vegetables, but not on other living beings.

1- The concept of a living "other" becomes possible. Beings may communicate on a temporary, makeshift basis; no long

term understanding is possible. No permanent relationships or social units are possible.

Sexual reproduction first becomes possible. Carnivorous behavior, including hunting or stalking, becomes possible. Combat and murder possible.

2- Partnerships are possible on a long term basis. Such partnerships share an



idiosyncratic form of communication (a “language”) that is incomprehensible to others.

3- The only social unit is the nuclear family (parents and offspring only); rudimentary ceremonies for death of a family member develop. Language is possible, but not permanent records.

4- The extended family is possible. Verbal traditions are strong, ceremonial knowledge is passed down from generation to generation. Ceremonies for all important stages of life are developed.

The concept of personal property is possible. Painting and other forms of ornamentation and decoration are developed..

5- The tribe (multi-family groups) is possible, resources can be shared. Political organization is possible, but of very limited scope.

Pictographic writing such as hieroglyphics can be developed. Dramatic theater is possible, distinct from religious ceremonies and stories. Poetry is developed.

6- Villages and cooperative agricultural efforts are possible. Rulership by a “king” is possible but the range of his authority is limited. Social organization developed sufficiently to allow the existence of professional tradesmen. Semi-professional military and militia formed for common defense can exist.

The concept of land ownership is possible. Unfortunately, so is the concept of owning other intelligent beings. A combination sound/pictographic alphabet may be developed. Epic poetry and sporting events are possible.

7- The city-state, a network of villages and smaller cities ruled from one central city, usually with a monarch of some kind, can exist. Feudalism possible. Standing armies for conquest as well as defense may be raised.

Taxes are invented, as are arithmetic counting and administrative procedures for collecting taxes.

8- Collection of information is sufficiently centralized for the beginning of scholarship and science; libraries and institutions of learning may appear. Abstract or phonetic alphabets possible. Such institutions may be leveraged to increase the speed with which any axiom develops.

Money is invented. Laws are codified. Early forms of democracy are possible, but voting privileges are usually limited to a specific social group, membership in said group being defined based on wealth, heredity, education, lot, gender or other factors (including a combination of these factors).

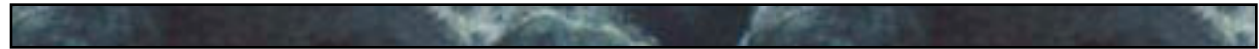
9- Social organization sufficiently robust as to assimilate conquered cultures rather than simply rule them. Societies may trade “cultural ideas” as well as hard goods. Credit and money lending established. Property is rented. Postal and news services are possible.

Governments and religions may institute large bureaucracies, allowing them to influence far greater numbers of people over a larger amount of territory than before.

10- Financial concepts develop rapidly. The idea of a company or royal monopoly, a non-family owned venture sponsored by several partners, is possible. Stock, commodities and financial exchanges possible. The concept of collateral is invented. Insurance policies are possible.

11- The nation-state is possible; while a city or province may rule a nation, the nation as a whole has some say and representation in forming policy. A federal system of government is possible.

12- Social structure developed enough to allow implementation of economic principles based on the concept of man as an “economic being.” Capitalism, social-



ism and communism possible.

13- Knowledge about how others think and behave is sufficient to allow for diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders; *hypnotism* and *psychology* skills possible.

Economic systems involving billions of consumers are possible.

14- Pluralism, the balancing of many factions within a government and society, is possible. More inhabitants of a nation are enfranchised. Vast bureaucracies may be spawned to handle the increased social complexity.

15- Pluralism on a trans-national scale is possible, balancing the needs and wants of nations against each other. The beginnings of a “global society” may take shape.

The study of social concepts becomes more sophisticated, in particular how they propagate. The concept of a meme (a cognitive or behavioral pattern that can be transmitted from one individual to another) becomes possible. The science of memetics (the study of memes and how they propagate) develops.

16- Supranational organizations with authority over nations possible, a “federal government” for nations. Such organizations may include any number of nations.

Economic systems encompassing tens of billions of individuals are possible.

Memetic science develops sophisticated techniques to influence public opinion (making marketing a science rather than an art). The behavior of large numbers of individuals can be influenced with greater success rate and greater precision. Political, commercial, or religious messages can be distributed easily and effectively.

17- Massive scale economies (with hundreds of billions of consumers) economies are possible, but subject to normal limitations, i.e. shortages, crash and boom cycles, and the like.

A comprehensive theory of linguistics

is possible which allows translating to become vastly easier. Trained individuals can translate between any language (even those previously unknown to them) with a few weeks of work. Dead or lost languages can be analyzed and interpreted.

Organizational techniques improve, including flexible and quick decision making processes. Bureaucracies can become less “bureaucratic”, implementing broad policy while maintaining situational flexibility.

18- Social sciences can predict the future behavior of masses of individuals with great precision. This ability is limited by the amount of information that can be ascertained about the population. Such predictions are usually reliable in the short term (within a few days), however long term predictions are much less reliable.


Advanced psychological techniques, based on the study of how the brain stores and processes information, become available. Procedures for detecting and diagnosing mental illnesses increase in utility and accuracy. Misdiagnosis are rare. Even incipient mental illness can be diagnosed (thus making the prediction of future occurrences possible).

19- Societal behavioral predictions increase in reliability. The behavior of a population over a few months or a year can be reliably predicted.

Sociological techniques improve; the diagnosis and treatment (or inducement) of cultural maladies is now possible by altering (or designing) memes. Such interventions require the use of social engineering (mass propaganda) techniques.

Knowledge of personal interactions improve; all social skills become more effective.

Psychological techniques improve greatly, surpassing psychoactive drugs in efficiency. Modifications to an individual's personality can be accomplished through



purely social techniques; such modifications cannot change an individual's basic personality, but can mitigate or eliminate neuroses and other mental conditions.

It now becomes possible for psychologists to reliably predict individual behavior. Such predictions are accurate for a few weeks, but decrease in reliability after that.

20- Economic systems can encompass and predict levels of production, distribution and sales for tens of billions of consumers. Such prediction allows the prevention of boom or bust cycles. Basic human needs (food, shelter, strictly necessary medical care) can be distributed for all consumers in the system (assuming sufficient supplies are available).

Economic systems are possible which can include effectively unlimited numbers of consumers; these economies are still inefficient when compared to smaller scale (tens or hundreds of billions of consumers) economies.

Linguistics improve enough to allow completely alien languages to be analyzed and understood.

Therapeutic techniques can greatly modify a personality, causing or curing even severe mental pathologies. Treatment of nearly all forms of mental illness is advanced enough that the vast majority are diagnosed and cured in early childhood.

"Mind sculpting" (temporary personality modification) is now available as an art form. This allows individuals to have their personality modified for recreational use.

21- Memetic engineering, designing cultures and societies from whole cloth, develops. Such artificial social structures can prove more efficient than "organic" cultures, balancing a large variety of mores, factions, and values. When properly designed, these societies are free from many of the inherent defects of hereditary cultures.

Psychological science can now predict individual behavior with a great deal of certainty. Such predictions can span months of time.

22- Economic systems can now encompass hundreds of billions of consumers, accurately predicting trends, production, distribution, and sales. Boom and bust cycles for such economies are now eliminated; basic human needs for all consumers can be supplied.

Metalinguistics becomes possible. This discipline combines the knowledge of a wide variety of languages to allow the quick and easy translation between them. These techniques are available to all who speak the meta-language. Newly encountered languages can be interpreted within a few minutes of encountering them. Only a small sample of the original language need be present for translation to be possible.


"Waking hypnosis" is possible, including compelling individual behavior. Such techniques require no other tools than social interaction.

23- Economic advances enable the elimination of cyclical growth cycles for unlimited scale economies; basic needs can be supplied universally (if sufficient supplies are available).

Social techniques are developed which can detect lies with nearly 100% accuracy. Individual delusions or mistaken beliefs are not detected (as the subject believes them to be true).

It is now possible to create and implant a wholly artificial personalities in an individual, permanently erasing all traces of their original personality.

24- Group propaganda techniques reach their apex. Artificial memes can effectively "reprogram" an individual's personality, memories, or perceptions. These memes replicate and disseminate through social interaction (a true social disease).



Mental inoculation against such memes are possible, including the creation of “counter-memes”. Memetic engineering allows the control of a large populace with a great deal of certainty. When used in warfare, it can be a subtle and dangerous weapon.

Such memes require this axiom to create, but can be spread through normal social interaction (possible at a Social of 3 or greater). This makes memetic warfare particularly devastating against civilizations with a lower Social axiom, as they cannot inoculate themselves against the effects of the memes.

The possible psychological effects of memes vary greatly, including invoking insanities, reprogramming prejudices, and erasing or implanting memories. Of course, the reverse is also possible. At this axiom level, memetic engineering must be relatively specific, with each meme invoking only one effect.

The behavior of whole populations can be predicted for years in advance.

25- Memetic engineering increases in utility, with one meme being capable of a broad range of effects. Single-purpose memes are more efficient (and easier to design) however.

A universal language can be developed which includes all conceivable concepts. These concepts can be expressed with exceeding exactness. Perfect control of language can be achieved. All communication using this language is specific- senders can compose messages which exactly encapsulate their desired message. This language cannot be used to imply false statements; inaccurate parsing (including misunderstanding or misstatements) is impossible (but deliberate lying is still possible).

26- Ratiocination methods develop which allow individuals to function as perfectly rational observers, without personal biases clouding their perceptions. Such

methods require extensive training to be utilized. Individuals can isolate and understand perceptual information without mental filters, either emotional or informational. Ego, pride, prejudice, and biases can be overcome.

Standard rights of all individuals and rights of the group may be accepted. A high degree of individual responsibility and the responsibility of the group is fostered. Methods for conflict resolution are established which are efficient and nondestructive.

Social structures are advanced enough to incorporate factions and societies of a completely alien nature.

27- Ratiocination methods become more effective for less effort. Mental and emotional perceptual filters may be overcome with little or no training.

A “government for all” which tolerates and enhances any cultural or psychological outlook is possible, allowing a high degree of equity and justice. Decision making processes are able to reach solutions that please everyone.

Social structures become highly flexible. Decision making functions are decentralized. Social organizations become a matter of ad hoc interaction between citizens. Such organizations spontaneously form to deal with a given situation or challenge and last as long as necessary. Leadership is delegated on a temporary basis, with the most capable individual becoming an impermanent leader.

These reflexive groups prove more efficient than older bureaucracies and organizations. All social institutions (including the military, government, and courts) are reorganized around these principles.

28- Anti-social behavior (“evil”) is identified and contained. Social memes develop which are highly resistant to evil, allowing society members moral freedom not possible when evil is a philosophy



given equal, or superior, value to good.

29- Understanding of the nature of good and evil is innate in all people. Evil actions are contradictory and instinctively

avoided by nearly everyone.

30- A more perfect society than humanity can even envision.

DESIGN NOTES

Of the four axioms, Social is the most changed. The axiom has been expanded between 0 and 2 (what was 2 is now 3). This allows a more gradual growth from “no interaction” to “families.”

The axiom scale has been compressed from 2-22 (now 3-16). A federal government for nations, for example, is now Axiom 16. This gave me plenty of room to experiment with galactic social structures, massive scale economies, and future social forms.

This means that each cosm has a different Social axiom rating, using these new axiom charts. Under the old system, Core Earth’s Social was 21, now it is 15. This represents the exact same level of social development, measured on a new benchmark.

One thing I did not include in this axiom write-up was psionics. In this author’s opinion, psionics is not a function of the Social axiom. Many common psionics-heavy genres have a low Social axiom, and telepathic abilities are no more Socially oriented than certain *divination magic* spells. At some point in the future, I will finish my design of a new psionics system, including a Psychic axiom.

Future Societies

The high Social axiom (16+) was the most interesting part. Building on what was previously there, I included vast and powerful advances in learning, psychology, propaganda, “psycho-history”, and the scientific concept of memes.

At higher Social axioms, psychology


becomes an exact science, more or less. Social interaction becomes a more effective means of detecting and curing psychological disorders than medicines or surgery. At even higher levels, personalities can be modified through social interaction. Mindsculpting, cosmetic surgery for your personality, becomes a popular art form.

These advances in psychology allow many effects. Happiness can be exactly described and measured. Sources of unhappiness can be diagnosed and cures implemented. The intimate knowledge of the human mind allows, at a high enough level, the precise and provable definition of Good and Evil.

Psychological advances lead to understanding of the links between biology and psychology. How the brain operates at a mental and physical level is explored and integrated. Highly effective methods of learning become possible.

Advances in propaganda and psychology lead to the development of the science of memes. A meme is a mental concept, such as “the divine right of kings” or “freedom of speech.” Memes propagate between human minds in a manner similar to peer-to-peer file-sharing programs, or computer viruses.

Research into memes allows scientists to develop memetic engineering—the science of creating and controlling memes. Memes can be analyzed, designed, and propagated efficiently. This leads to whole new avenues of advertising and propaganda. Dictatorships can more effectively propagandize the masses with memetic



techniques. Memetic warfare, the wholesale destruction of a society through memetic techniques, becomes possible.

Understanding of the human mind leads to the ability to predict human economic and social activities. Economies can be organized more efficiently, as economics becomes a predictive science. The concept of a future history becomes possible, although predictive abilities function mainly for large populations, not individuals.

Interpersonal interactions improve with a rising Social axiom. Characters from high Social societies are better able to taunt, charm, and intimidate than their peers from lower Social cosms.

Societies grow through a process of cultural accretion, analogous to how sandstone forms. A high enough Social axiom allows cultural engineers to control the growth and development of a society (through sophisticated memetic engineering techniques). Wholly new cultures can be devised, which exceed the capabilities of organic cultures.

The study of mental and physical structures of the mind leads to the science of metalinguistics. All languages are described in terms of specific instances of a larger linguistic theory. This allows the development of rapid translation of new languages, as well as the eventual development of a perfectly efficient language.

At the apex of the axiom, societies have passed beyond the concepts of permanent organizations. Instead, social organizations become arbitrarily complex. They form in response to a stimulus and disband quickly. Since pride and ego have been set aside, and people know the psychology and capabilities of each other, everyone can recognize the best possible leader(s) and team member(s) and act accordingly.

At a mid-to high Social axiom, cultural

engineers design institutions. In high Social societies, the institutions organically arise from the interaction of living beings. This form of society has been described as anarcho-dictatorialism.

This type of society does not eliminate centralized decision making processes. This society could become totally centralized, when it is necessary, and only then. When it is not necessary, authority devolves to other individuals. In this society, authority and power is a perfectly liquid asset- it flows to where it is needed, when it is needed.

In theory, this society could be completely decentralized, with no leaders, no structure, and no organizations. In practice, the everyday life ensures that there are many small crises (floods, families, getting a car out of a ditch) that will provoke the spontaneous formation of a team.

Sources and Inspiration

The shape of future societies is well-trod ground in the science fiction genre. Various authors have all predicted how future societies will develop, but none in as organized a fashion as I have tried to produce here.

***Starship Troopers*, by Robert Heinlein-** Though decried as a paean to fascism, the concept of a rigorous and scientific method of analyzing and solving moral and ethical dilemmas was useful.

Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri- This game constructed a path for future societies, including Social and Technological advances. I borrowed the term "ethical calculus" (as a name for the science of morals) from this game. Though I did not adopt any of their future society models, SMAC is an excellent example of game design that is similar in concept and execution to the TORG axioms.

The "Foundation" series, by Isaac Asi-

mov- Obviously, the concept of psychohistory began here. Although I did not follow Asimov's formulations exactly, this concept was helpful in unifying the economic and scientific advances of the axiom.

Snow Crash, by Neal Stephenson- Stephenson's Babel virus was the original inspiration for my inclusion of memes. Although his theories of language and "hacking" minds were not followed, his was a unique vision that inspired my original memetic engineering designs.

The "Stainless Steel Rat" series, by Harry Harrison- Harrison developed a future society in which nearly all mental diseases were caught and cured in infancy.

That proved too good a concept not to "borrow." In addition, individuals could be completely cured of psychological defects, and could have their personalities reprogrammed. That, too, went into my mental bin for use in this axiom.

As far as I am aware, the concept of an arbitrarily organized society is entirely mine, as is the terms and concepts of mindsculpting and metalinguistics. In addition, the current organization of the high Social ranges (16+) is entirely the work of this author- so you can feel free to blame him if it offends your particular religion, political beliefs, or philosophical predilections.

CONVERSION

Because the axiom chart has been altered, conversion notes are necessary. The following charts allows gamemasters to convert Social axiom ratings from the old axiom to the new axiom. It lists two values, a literal conversion, which maintains the old Social rating as much as possible, and a "suggested" rating, which modifies the Social axiom of the cosm to take certain realities into account.

In many cases, the Social ratings listed in the official TORG material were way off from what the given cosm should have. I have taken these errors into account when deciding on the suggested axiom values.

For instance, under the recommended conversion, the Social of the Cyberpapcy is left untouched, while the suggested Cyberpapal Social is much lower, but is more in line with what the cosm should have.

Also remember that, even if the relative Social advancement is unchanged, lower numbers are to be expected in most cases, such as with Aysle and the Living Land. These cosms have the exact same Social development as in TORG, but the scale has changed. An 18 on the old chart is only a

COSM	ORIGINAL	LITERAL	SUGGESTED
Aysle	18	13	112
Core Earth	21	15	15
Cyberpapacy	18	13	103
Land Below	8	7	7
Living Land	7	6	6
Nile Empire	20	14	14
Nippon Tech	22	16	164
Orrorsh	20	14	135
Space Gods	27	-	246
Tharkold	20/12/11	14/9/8 ¹	14/9/8
Tz'Ravok	18	13	67

13 on the new chart.

¹ The Law of Ferocity restricts social interactions. War is supported with a full 14, economic activity reduced to an 8, and other social interactions function at a 9.

²Aysle's medieval world view is better reflected with an 11. Neither the birth of psychology nor Adam Smith's economic



theories are appropriate for the reality.

³The Cyberpapacy does not live up to its full Social rating, it is more medieval than Aysle. A 10 is far more appropriate to the cosm than a 13.

⁴Even though the axiom benchmark is the same, this Social axiom gives a Social of 22 new abilities with regards to propaganda and advertising. Kanawa now has even more power than before.

⁵Orrorsh has a Victorian social order. A 13 is more appropriate than a 14. A 14 is turn of the 20th century, from 1900 to 1945. A 13 better represents the 1800's.

⁶The Space Gods Social is a complete shot in the dark. The new Social chart is

so different, in the upper limits, as to preclude any definitive answer. Given the effects of 24, however, it seems the best rating for that reality. Gamemasters should be prepared, however, because the new abilities of the Space Gods, with respect to shaping culture and predicting behavior, will make them very powerful indeed, even without gravitic ray guns.

⁷The "official" Social axiom of Tz'Ravok is ludicrous. It correlates with the global age of imperialism and the birth of psychology. Tz'Ravok is a tribal culture, slightly more advanced than the Living Land. The city-states of the Land Below are more civilized than the followers of Ravok. Either 6 or 7 is appropriate, although I prefer a 6.

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Original Mythos and Game Design: Greg Gorden

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