

Critical Comments Welcomed

REFLECTIONS ON... PARADIGMS

Based on a Paper Prepared for
The Environment Council of Alberta

by
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The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back. I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared to the gradual encroachment of ideas.

John M. Keynes
The General Theory of Employment Interest and Money
1936

PREFACE

In the spring of 1993, Square One Management Ltd. was contracted by the Environment Council of Alberta (ECA) to write a paper on the topic of environmental paradigms. This paper – *Reflections on... Paradigms* – is the result of this request.

We gratefully acknowledge that we have used material on which Square One Management Ltd. holds the copyright, including their model of culture, consciousness and action found in the Introduction, and material drawn from *The Post-Industrial Future Project Papers* and *Thinking About Sustainable Societies* found in the body of this text.

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A. WHY ALL THIS TALK ABOUT PARADIGMS?

We will begin by exploring the question, "Why talk about paradigms at all?". We do so for two reasons. First, there is no agreement on exactly what a paradigm is. Right from the beginning, some thirty years ago, those engaged in the conversation about paradigms have not been able to agree on exactly what they mean by a *paradigm*. Nevertheless, there is agreement that the conversation is important; that it should not just be abandoned. This being the case, it will be easier to grasp the nature of a paradigm if we understand why the whole conversation about paradigms has arisen; why anyone would want to talk about paradigms.

Our essential answer to the question, "Why talk about paradigms?", is this:

talk of paradigms is a way to increase the power of human understanding by getting under the surface of human life to consider the inherited and taken-for-granted sources of thought and action which underlie any given human culture or sub-culture.

Paradigm talk, then, seeks to lay bare and get at the roots of human action and the well-springs of human culture which are normally hidden from our everyday view.

The impulse behind paradigm talk is the same impulse that motivates scientists to shift their focus from data to patterns to theoretical frames of reference, or that motivates physicians to focus on syndromes and not just symptoms. In each of these cases, an understanding is sought which is deeper, more inclusive, more powerful, more conscious and hence, more reliable, than are the surface understandings of our immediate experience.

This motivation – achieving a deeper and more powerful understanding – can be seen in the emergence of paradigm talk in the philosophy of science in the 1960s. In 1962 Thomas Kuhn published his now famous PhD. thesis – *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. In it he is attempting to understand the evolution of science in a way that could account for both (a) the incremental nature of the vast majority of scientific discoveries – the work which enables one scientist to build on the work of those who have gone before – and (b) the apparently revolutionary nature of a limited number of scientific discoveries – those which turn a whole field of science in fundamentally new directions by radically altering the frame of reference of that area.

Kuhn called the former *normal science*, the latter *revolutionary science*. Normal science occurs within a taken-for-granted frame of reference, or paradigm, of a field. Revolutionary science changes the paradigm, or commonly accepted theoretical frame of reference, of the field. In short, a change in paradigm changes not merely *what* we think about a given area, but *how* we see it, experience it and think about it. Consider, for example, the commonly accepted distinction between urban and rural areas of a society. To understand the assertion that *rural need not be rural anymore* requires that we escape from the power of the way we have thought about the distinction between built-up areas and the countryside for

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well over 5,000 years. This task is not impossible, but is certainly not easy.

It is worth noting that paradigm talk is not the only way to get at and explore the depths of an aspect of human existence. In fact, in the 20th century, several related conversations have emerged, all of which have the intention of contributing to this goal. Consider the fields of literary criticism, comparative religion and women's studies. Each of these disciplines focus on the fact and language of the myths and metaphors which give structure to human consciousness. Consider also the fields of structural anthropology and the sociology of knowledge. These also focus on the formation and evolution of the structures of human experience. The interest in the structures of human consciousness in the philosophy of science has already been noted above. Some of the reasons why this interest in the depths of human experience has emerged in this century will be considered below in part C.

Before considering the nature of paradigms directly, it must be noticed that serious paradigm talk is necessarily rooted in the epistemological and ontological assumptions which are the foundations of any given culture or sub-culture. Ontology has to do with the sense of reality which a culture both assumes and expresses. Epistemology has to do with the nature of the process by which human beings come to know those aspects of reality which can be known by persons. The importance of these foundations will be considered in Section I.

We note these twin foundations of every human culture as a warning to the unwary. Just because paradigm talk is both important and now fashionable does not mean that it is an easy conversation to master or contribute to. Quite the reverse. Serious paradigm talk is one of the most difficult areas of the change game to master. Few persons who now talk about change actually have done so. It is worth a moment to reflect on the fact that little of the popular paradigm talk ever makes any reference to, or shows any familiarity with, the ontological and epistemological issues which underlie paradigm talk. This, at the least, should make one cautious.

But most paradigm talk is not marked by caution. Many who now engage in it do so without much critical thinking or any formal training in any related discipline. As a result, much that is now said about paradigms, especially the paradigms of Western Industrial culture, is fluffy nonsense rather than well-formed, considered judgement. Even worse, for many persons paradigm talk has become akin to talk of politics and religion – everyone is thought to be entitled to his or her own opinions and all views are thought to have equal weight. These are not judgements which we either share or encourage. We note them only to warn the Council that, if it wishes to make a creative contribution to the paradigm talk of our society, then at least some of its staff will have to engage in some serious intellectual homework.

If so much paradigm talk is not helpful or well-grounded, the question, "Why do it all?" is legitimately raised. The short answer is that as we come to the end of the industrial age we are become self-critically aware of the deepest, unconsciously held patterns of our thinking, behaving and living. We are slowly becoming aware of the fact that the paradigms of our culture are changing and that as they change, so does our culture, and hence our future.

B. WHAT IS A PARADIGM?

The Oxford English Dictionary tells us that *paradigm* comes from a Greek root which means *pattern*. The OED then gives: "*paradigm* – a pattern, exemplar, example."

This definition reveals the fact that *paradigm* has a double focus. It has one eye on the depths of life and one eye on its surface. On the one hand *paradigm* can refer to a *deep, underlying pattern of thought, action or culture*. In this sense we can speak of the paradigm of Newtonian mechanics or the paradigm of male chauvinism. In either case we are pointing to the underlying, and almost always unconsciously held, patterns of thoughts, perceptions and actions which are defined as a Newtonian or a male sexist perspective. In this sense, paradigm talk is one way of identifying and exploring the underlying frames of reference which are assumed by a particular set of actions, thoughts or even of a whole culture.

On the other hand, *paradigm* can also refer to a *particular and easily seen action or arrangement which reveals or is an example of an underlying way of thinking*. So a falling apple or a gratuitous pat on the bottom can also be said to be paradigms of a Newtonian perspective, in the one case, or a male sexist perspective, in the other. The reason these obvious and specific actions are said to be paradigms is that they reveal and exemplify an underlying pattern (paradigm in the former, deeper sense). Such immediate actions or arrangements are said to be *paradigmatic* of the underlying pattern, or paradigm, in question.

Unfortunately, this double focus of paradigm is both useful and confusing. It is useful because it helps us to see the connection which exists between a way of thinking or seeing an aspect of life and a specific way of doing something. For example, the old arrangement of classrooms – straight rows of separate desks all of which faced the front – can now be recognized as paradigmatic of the quintessential underlying paradigm of Western Industrial culture and consciousness – that reality itself is made up of individual and separate pieces which for public purposes must be ordered by the human mind. This same underlying pattern, of ordering into rows things that are separate, can be seen in the downtown street patterns of Calgary and Edmonton, the *classroom* style of room set-up, and in the organization charts of most organizations, be they in the public, voluntary or private sectors.

But the insistence that the surface arrangements of life are, in fact, connected to the underlying patterns of culture and consciousness is also confusing, especially for those of us who have been formed within Western Industrial culture. One reason is that, as persons shaped by Industrial paradigms, we are inclined to see each aspect of life as separate and complete in itself. This means that we are inclined to resist, if not actually deny, the sense of connectedness which is presupposed by paradigm talk. This resistance, of course, is predicted by the paradigm of Western Industrial culture.

A second reason why we are confused by paradigm talk – that the surface of life is inherently connected to its depths – is that, as yet, there is no agreement about how deep one must go to reach what might be called *paradigm depth*. Some paradigm talk pushes only a little way under the surface of life, while other conversations about paradigms intend to push all the way to the bottom. Yet the quite different levels which seem to be intended by various uses of the term *paradigm* are seldom noticed or specified. The exact depth of the intended level of analysis is seldom made clear. Much paradigm talk proceeds as if any level – as long as it is under the surface – will do. If you listen carefully to virtually all paradigm talk you will see this to be true.

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For many, *then*, *paradigm* is used as an arrow to point beneath the surface of life to an aspect of our lives which, heretofore, we have taken for granted. By this loose definition, any assumption we make or any unconscious habit of mind is called a paradigm. Consider that Joel Barker, in his popular video on paradigms, makes no distinction among what he calls our paradigms of playing cards, bicycle seats or cultural assumptions. In this loose sense *paradigm* is not much more useful than the assertion that any culture or sub-culture necessarily presupposes much about the world, and that we should be conscious of and careful about the assumptions we make. While true, this statement is not very helpful and certainly not worth the sense of discovery that often accompanies learning to use the term *paradigm*.

It is the case, of course, that every culture and sub-culture will make assumptions at every level of life. This follows from the fact that it is simply not possible to be explicit about every aspect of human life. It is also the case that persons who are raised within a particular culture or sub-culture will develop particular habits of head, heart and body of which they will not be conscious. This follows from the nature of a culture. By their nature, cultures and sub-cultures are intended to enable us to live by reliable behaviour without having to re-think every aspect of life each day. It is one thing to say with Socrates that "an unexamined life is not worth living"; it is quite another to assert that every aspect of life must be consciously rethought each day. While Socrates' dictum may contribute to wisdom, the latter surely would lead to madness. Put simply, when the scope of *paradigm* becomes so general that it covers every assumption and habit of mind in a culture, the term is no longer useful.

The imprecision inherent in the term *paradigm* has been present from the beginning. At the *Criticism and The Growth of Knowledge* symposium, in 1970, in Switzerland Margaret Masterman pointed out that Thomas Kuhn had used twenty-two different senses of *paradigm*.

One result of the loose use of the term is that there are now hundreds of schema which are labelled as paradigms of our culture, or some aspect of it. Seldom can such paradigms be compared and contrasted. One is sometimes able to see analogues and so gain insight, but one is seldom able to combine the paradigm work of two authors so that one can use author "X" to build directly on the work of author "Y".

In order to deal with the confusion which arises from not knowing how far under the surface any given discussion actually is, we at Square One Management Ltd. have developed a five-level model of the depths of human thought, action and culture. It is found on the next page as Figure 1 – **A Model of Consciousness, Culture and Action.**

We note several features of this model.

- It is only a model. Our map/model should not be confused with the territory.
- A culture or way of being on the planet includes all six levels. There is cognitive content at all six levels whether or not the people in the culture are aware of it. As a rule, the more stable or industrial a societal order is, the less likely the people within it will be explicitly aware of the content of the lower levels of their lives.
- The *logic* of any culture is indicated by the arrows. The logic moves from the bottom left to top right.

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That is, the mythology, cultural intentions, values, roles, strategies and operations of every culture both embody and reinforce the sense of reality on which the culture rests. Every culture must assure itself that the specific arrangements of its life and its rules of procedure are not merely accidental, but an accurate reflection of the true nature of reality itself.

- However, the lived experience of every culture is that each of the levels interact with and mutually influence the others. For example, the roles you play or even the principles you live by may be influenced by the amount of money in your pocket.

<u>LEVEL</u>	<u>FOCUS IS ON</u>	<u>RULES FOR DOING</u>	
1.	TACTICAL OPERATIONAL PROGRAMS	PROCEDURES RULES REGULATIONS	S O

2.	OP. GOALS	OP. PLANNING (STANDARDS) (MONITORING)	C I

3.	OBJECTIVES ROLES MANDATES	STRATEGIES POLICIES (CONSTANT STRATEGIES)	E T C

4.	SENSIBILITY CHARACTER CORP. CULTURE MISSION/PURPOSE	DIRECTIONS PRINCIPLES VALUES	Y U L T

5.	SENSE OF REALITY (BASE MAP)	MYTHIC VISION STORY WE ARE IN METAPHORS IMAGES	U R E

6.	THE FOREVER UNCONSCIOUS		

A Model of Consciousness, Culture and Action

Figure 1.

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- Change can take place at any level of the chart. But as a general rule, the further one moves down the chart the more profound the change, the longer it takes, the less control one has of it and the more one is personally involved. So one can easily change one's clothes (level #1). Changing the roles (level #3) one plays in a community is much more difficult. Consider moving from employed to unemployed, from single to married, from priest to lay person. Changing what one values (level #4) is even more difficult. But coming to terms with a new sense of reality and a new story of history – the story one sees oneself and one's culture to be in (level #5) – is hardest of all.
- Finally, note that the word *paradigm* is not found on the above chart. However, it is the next-to-the-bottom level (#5) of the chart that in our view is properly spoken of as the level of paradigms. It is at this level that the structure of a people's consciousness is formed; that their sensibility of life (level #4) is determined. It is also at this level that one encounters the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions of a culture. This is the deepest level at which that which has heretofore been unconscious begins to become conscious.

C. WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT PARADIGMS NOW?

This is a good question, particularly in light of the fact that for most of this millennium, let alone this century, we have done fairly well without such a conversation.

A clue to the answer can be found in the aphorism that *we focus on the future when the future goes out of focus*. Likewise with paradigms. We are saying that there is an inverse correlation between the depth of the confidence a culture has about its own essential adequacy for the future and the degree to which it gives explicit attention to its own foundations and paradigms. In short, paradigm talk is a sign of our nervousness about our own future.

In the late 20th century we are now nervous enough about the future of Western culture to focus on the underlying assumptions about reality, knowledge and humanity – the paradigms – which underlie Western culture. We are no longer sure, in a taken-for-granted way, that Western Culture as we have lived it will continue to serve us well. What lies behind the growth of paradigm talk in the last thirty years, then, is the growing doubt within Western culture about whether our way of life will be able to meet emerging requirements which the future now appears to hold for us. It is no accident that the growth of paradigm talk and the growth of talk about societal crisis and transformation map onto each other in time.

Consider the following.

- In 1962, when Thomas Kuhn published his thesis, paradigm talk was not common in any part of our society, neither on the streets nor in academia. Also, the '60s had not yet begun as a psychological experience, even for young people.
- By 1969 Alvin Toffler was working on *Future Shock*, Jay Forrester had published *The Limits to Growth*, both John and Robert Kennedy were dead, students had rioted in Tokyo, Berkeley, and Paris, SDS (Students For A Democratic Society) was celebrating its fifth birthday, the environmental movement was well underway and the modern women's movement was embryonic, as was the World Futures Society.

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- In 1970, when Lakatos organized the *Criticism and The Growth of Knowledge* symposium in Switzerland on Kuhn's thesis, the language of paradigms was not yet common in any field, including the philosophy of science. However, it was beginning to be used by a few persons in that field and by some early environmentalists and futurists. Also, in that year Canada created the Department of the Environment.
- Throughout the late 1970s, fewer than 5% of those attending conferences which were explicitly focussed on change had even heard of the concept of *paradigm*. Fewer than 2% felt at home with it. At many events not explicitly focussed on change NO persons admitted to understanding the concept of *paradigm*.
- Through most of the '70s and even into the 1980s one had to attend special events and national conferences to be able to engage in serious paradigm talk.
- In 1975, when Ruben Nelson undertook Canada's first formal research into paradigm change, the concept had to be explained to almost everyone who heard of the study. The first formal research in the USA was undertaken in the late '70s under the direction of Willis Harman by Peter Schwartz, Jay Ogilvy and Mark Markley.
- The use of the term paradigm in the title of papers, seminars and conferences grew exponentially in the 1980s. Roughly, the use doubled every three years. It is still doubling today. This can be seen by searching data bases of books and articles in the fields of business, the daily press, the environment or the humanities.
- In 1980, over 6,000 persons attended a futures conference in Toronto – the largest futures conference yet held anywhere. Marilyn Ferguson published *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, which became a best seller because of the phenomenon she was describing.
- The first world-wide conference devoted to paradigm change was held outside Boston in the summer of 1982. Its presenters included persons with formal training in physics, neurophysiology, spiritual practices, medicine, psychology and philosophy.
- By the end of the '80s, 30-40% of attendees at change-oriented events admitted to some degree of comfort with the concept. This percentage continues to grow. At some events today it is as high as 85%.
- In 1992, the Globe and Mail initiated its *The Change Page*, thereby belatedly recognizing what many had known for two decades or more--change is real, profound, disorienting and unavoidable.

In short, during this century our awareness of the reality of change at the deeper levels of our lives and culture has been growing. The pressures of change have slowly been driving our awareness of the depths of change down the chart found in Figure 1. Consider that:

- The distinction between tactics and strategy only clearly emerged in common use after the end of WWII.

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- The '60s and '70s saw the discovery of policy – level #3. One could not do a Ph.D. in Policy Studies before then.
- In the '80s and early '90s the action has been at level #4 with the discovery of the importance of mission, vision and corporate culture. Serious work at these levels could not be given away in the '60s and '70s. Today they are selling well.
- The fact of level #5 – the level of paradigms, and the changes occurring there – is just beginning to break into public awareness. It will be a hot level of the late 1990s and early 21st century as we discover the need to re-invent and re-engineer the way we live together on the planet.

If our talk about paradigms reflects our growing uneasiness about the future of our culture, then the next question is, "Why have we become increasingly nervous about our future as a culture?" Again, several contributing factors should be noted.

1. Only in this century have large numbers of people travelled widely enough within cultures other than their own to have a first-hand experience of culture shock. Knowing in abstract that we share the planet with others is a very different thing from the experience of having one's world spun about which comes from actually living in a culture that is not one's own. This experience, rare even in 1960, is now common. In addition, at least in North American, men and women of other faiths and cultures are now our neighbours.
2. Remember that at the turn of the last century even abstract knowledge of others was rare. The 1906 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica contained no section on either Hinduism or Buddhism. Even the 1911 edition contained only short paragraphs. And only a handful of persons on the whole planet would then have even the faintest idea of the number of persons with whom he or she shared the planet. Today most of us in OECD countries know that the number today is 5.5 billion.
3. The idea that truth is not absolute and forever, but a function of a particular time and place, has been slowly gaining ground and power for almost two hundred years. It can be seen in the ideas of Bergson, Marx, Darwin, Freud, Einstein – to name but a few of the early giants of this way of thinking. By the last two decades of this century we have added ecology, women's studies, systems dynamics and chaos theory to the ideas of quantum mechanics, humanistic psychology, literary criticism, comparative religion and the philosophy of science which were developed during the 20th century. In every case the general drift has been towards an appreciation that life is in fact historic and time-bound. One result has been the growth of the co-relative view that such a life requires a reflexive and self-critical attitude. We note that these are two of the impulses required for high-quality paradigm work.
4. More recently, we have known the fear and excitement which comes from deep questioning of the fitness of our culture for the future. This thought can be seen especially with the discovery/invention of both the environmental movement and the modern women's movement in the 1970s. If anything, the questioning of the fitness of our culture is even more widespread today than it was twenty years ago. At the least, we now know that all of the easy oil has been found, all of the easy trees have been cut, all of the easy soil has been put to the plough, all of the easy water allocated, all of the easy

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money taxed and all of the easy jobs created. It causes one to pause and reflect, which is one aspect of the conversation about paradigms and paradigm change.

5. In the midst of all of the noise of the last twenty years an awesome thought has been slowly forming and gaining credence – Western Culture has no future as an industrial society. This idea – so strange in the mid '60s – strengthened through the '70s and '80s, and will, we predict, become the official position of many governments and major corporations by the year 2000. It is already appearing with increasing frequency as a legitimate point of view. Consider, for example, the fact of the *Post-Industrial Future Project* sponsored by fourteen public, private and voluntary sector organizations in the late '80s, Peter Drucker's new book, *Post-Capitalistic Society* and this quote from the Premier's Commission on Future Health Care for Albertans, "*Clearly, we must recognize that we are shifting from the classic industrial way of living into a post-industrial society which is information-packed, knowledge-driven and global in scope.*"

D. PARADIGMS AND CULTURES

There is one additional major point to consider before we move on to consider the environmental paradigms in play in the late 20th century – the relationship of paradigms to cultures.

Those familiar with common uses of the term *paradigm* today will recognize that it is often used as if paradigms are personal, rather than cultural, creations and possessions. One hears such sentences as, "That's your paradigm, but mine is different.", and the context makes clear that it is assumed that each of us can, and do, have our own paradigms. This usage is so common that, for many, it hardly merits comment.

We do so for two reasons.

First and foremost, the assumption is simply wrong. Paradigms belong to cultures and sub-cultures, not to individual persons. We will consider why this is so in a moment. Second, the way one approaches and thinks about paradigms hangs on one's understanding of the question: "Can paradigms be created and maintained by individuals or only by groups?" So this question must be answered in order for us to proceed and succeed.

First, we will consider the methodological implications of the case that paradigms can be created and maintained by individual persons. If this is the case, then the proper way to explore alternative paradigms of any given subject matter would be to do so in segments, abstractly and a-historically. That is, proper methodology would allow us to set out and compare various paradigms of a particular aspect of life, e.g. the environment, all by themselves. We could do this quite apart from any consideration of any other aspect of life, e.g. science or spirituality. And we could do this without worrying too much about whether any group of persons, past or present, have in fact come to hold and live by the paradigm in question. In other words, if a paradigm of a particular aspect of life can be thought, it must be considered as a candidate for analysis, and this apart from the question of whether or not any group in actual history have lived or could actually live by it.

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On the other hand, if paradigms necessarily belong to cultures and sub-cultures, then such a segmented, abstract and a-historical methodology will not do. If paradigms are necessarily corporate, then we must be attentive in our methodology to the actual ways in which persons have lived together in history. To do otherwise may be fun, but such efforts should be classed as science fiction or utopian dreaming, but not as paradigm analysis.

In our view, paradigms are necessarily corporate, holistic and historical. This means that paradigms belong to life as lived by actual cultures and sub-cultures or by life as can come to be lived by actual cultures and sub-cultures. This means that the proper unit of analysis is the paradigm of a people, not that of individual persons. This means that the paradigm of any particular area of life must be seen as the result of their wider paradigms of life. Put simply, in our view, one must contrast the environmental paradigms of significantly different cultures or sub-cultures. This is the path we have chosen to follow.

This is not the place to argue this matter further, if for no other reason than to do so would take another paper of similar size. We only note the methodological importance of this issue and commend it to the Council for conscious deliberation and choice. It is truly a watershed issue and will determine much about the type of paradigm work to which the Council commits itself.

E. WHAT CAN WE NOW SAY ABOUT PARADIGMS?

It may be useful to summarize what we can now safely say about paradigms, paradigm talk and paradigm change.

1. Until now the fact of the emergence of paradigm talk, ultimately, has been more significant than the cognitive content of the conversations about paradigms. First, paradigm talk signals our growing awareness of the depth of the changes now taking place within and among us. It is dawning on us that ours is a time of profound, long-term cultural change and not just a time of more improvements to the world as we have known it. Second, the very popularity of the term in our own day suggests that the awareness of this type of change is slowly taking hold among us. Third, if we had to, we could carry on the conversation about the changes in our foundational frames of reference without any reference to paradigms or paradigm change, *per se*.
2. The impulse behind the emergence of paradigm talk is essentially a constructive, sense-making impulse – the desire to understand what it is that is happening in this increasingly confusing moment of history and to do so with sufficient power to be able to provide reliable guidance for effective action. This impulse is to be affirmed.
3. Today *paradigm* is used with a common intent – to get under the skin of human action, consciousness and culture. It is not yet used with a common meaning. But, it may safely be thought of as meaning *the patterns of consciousness and living which define a given way of being in the world because of the frames of reference through which we experience it*.
4. Nevertheless, the concept of *paradigm* is not now, nor has it ever been, well-formed and precise. It

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can best be seen as a probe into the murky depths of human life, rather than as an exact instrument to measure what we find there.

5. As commonly used, *paradigm* is intended to draw our attention in a somewhat coherent way to the fact that apparently unrelated social phenomena are, in fact, significantly related. The concept encourages us to push beneath the surface to deeper levels of understanding at which the connections among apparently disparate data can be clearly seen and grasped.
6. The concept of paradigm is necessarily a social concept. Paradigms cannot be sustained by a single individual. Paradigms entail the fact that one shares the planet with other persons who are organized into cultures and sub-cultures. Properly, then, we should speak of the paradigm which a given group of people have of a given area of life. We should not speak of your paradigm and my paradigm as if each one of us can create and sustain a way of experiencing life by ourselves.
7. The concept is useful because it reminds us that the concepts, metaphors and logics of a people are not merely tools which the mind can choose to use or lay aside; that they are not merely aids to thinking. They are rather the very means by which we perceive and experience. Different cultural paradigms do not produce different interpretations of the same data and the same experience. Rather, different cultural paradigms produce different experiences by means of which different peoples become conscious.
8. The conversation of paradigms and paradigm change has arisen because we are now more fully aware than at any time in human history of the very real differences which exist between cultures as lived experience. The cultures and experiences of others now offer alternatives to our own inherited industrial ways of being in the world.
9. Talk of paradigm change within our own culture is also an indicator of our growing awareness that our own inherited paradigms of life are almost exhausted and that we have no future as an industrial culture. For the first time in one thousand years we face the challenges of articulating a fundamentally different paradigm of life from the one to which, unconsciously, we have been giving voice. We also face the challenge of learning to embody our new insights into the reality of our daily living. Included in the scope of this task, of course, is the development of a new understanding of what we now know as the natural world and the place of the human within it. This last thought brings us to the central work of Square One Management Ltd. – enabling those with whom we work to learn to see, think and live by and through new, post-industrial, life-giving paradigms.