The word paradigm in present usage means the model constructed by our unconscious and conscious mind which we use to understand and explain the world. Our paradigm incorporates all of our basic assumptions about the nature of reality. It is our worldview; it’s the lens through which we look at the world and it colors everything we see.

This paradigm-lens is itself created and formed partly from our education and partly from the primal feelings living at the deepest levels of our heart and mind. Primal feelings are shared by all human beings, each of us having our own particular mix depending on our individual constitution and experience and on the culture in which we live. Most important in this inner mix of primal, basic feelings toward life and the world is whether love or fear rules.

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In ancient times the ruling paradigm was based on love for the world. Today our ruling scientific paradigm is based on fear of the world. At a deep unconscious level—but just below the surface in medicine—we live today in a fear-based paradigm. Because of this underlying fear, science and medicine assume that we must control and master Nature in order to survive. This new paradigm that is now struggling to be born challenges us to develop the courage and selflessness to master and change ourselves in order to survive.

The ruling paradigm of a culture determines the kind of knowledge on which governments are based, the kind of knowledge on which the education of children and the pursuit of science are based; in short the kind of knowledge on which enlightened civilization is based.

If we could ask a well-educated citizen of ancient times what kind of knowledge should form the basis of an enlightened civilization, the answer most certainly would be, “Well, of course, knowledge of the gods and of their will.”

The ruling paradigm shared by the peoples of the ancient world was god-centered and spirit-centered. But all that changed because human consciousness is in constant evolution and the human heart and mind never stand still. Paradigms are like living things which grow, reach maturity, and then become old, overripe, and prone to illness and decay. By the 1500s, the ancient spirit-centered ruling paradigm in Europe had become entrenched in the powerful authority of the church and had grown old and corrupt, no longer able to keep up with changing, evolving human consciousness.

Then came a mighty paradigm shift, as western science was brought to birth by Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton. The human mind and senses gradually lost their capacity to experience spirit as a concrete reality. After Galileo, the physical matter of the universe assumed ever-growing importance for the mind, and for science. To understand the deep inner reality of matter became the quest of science, eventually leading to the unsettling conclusion by modern physics that the basis of all matter was after all nonmaterial: energy. Things were coming full circle, as our western paradigm, having shifted from spirit-based to matter-based, then shifted to energy-based in the 20th century.
The birth of western science was also the birth of a freer and more individualized human thinking. Galileo was a pioneer fighting for the freedom to think about reality in a way that respected no outer authority but respected only the truth as he saw it. He stood for the inviolable right of the scientist to follow one's own conscience, free from outside pressure. This fresh, young, scientific paradigm represented by Galileo matured over the next few centuries. It became well-established and institutionalized, and now has become entrenched and very powerful. Now the free spirits in science are again having a hard time. Their freedom to call it as they see it is again being curtailed; their academic freedom is threatened. And of course, today it is not the church which threatens freedom of thought in science, it is the system that institutionalized science has become which stifles individual freedom and creativity. Most Americans today believe that a scientist is free to pursue the truth as she or he sees it, free from any influence whatsoever. This is sadly not the case.

History is repeating itself. The corruption, immorality and tyranny of the church that fueled the Reformation in the 16th century are now happening in institutionalized and commercialized science and medicine. These are symptoms of a terminal illness in a paradigm that has already made its greatest contributions to the evolution of humanity, and is now too old and inflexible to adapt to the changing consciousness of the 21st century.

It is human nature to resist change and to fear loss of control and a loss of security. But a paradigm that must limit human freedom of thought in order to preserve its influence is not healthy, and in fact is dying, and needs to be honored and laid to rest. If change is to occur from the top down, then the day must come when it is the rule, rather than the exception, that leading scientists love truth, and their freedom to pursue the truth, more than they fear the loss of their position and their material security.

When a paradigm dies, all of its gifts which have stood the test of time are honored, taken up, and given fresh new life by the infant paradigm which succeeds it, just as in successive generations of human beings. Paradigm shifts are deaths and births unfolding a greater evolution.

We are at a crossroads, and the forces of change are moving in two opposing and irreconcilable directions. We have a choice between actively working for the birth of a more human-centered paradigm, or standing by while the present dying paradigm in biology and medicine further expands its world domination. Today’s institutionalized and commercialized biology and medicine will apply its knowledge of the underlying mechanisms of physical reality to create a
megatechnology with ever-increasing power over the forces of nature, both in the environment and in the human being. Science will develop the 200 or so vaccines now in the pipeline, and will also increasingly develop and apply genetic engineering, gene therapy, cloning and a host of other things.

It’s often said that you can’t stop progress, you can’t put the Genie back in the bottle. That’s true. It would be going backwards in human evolution to try to put the Genie back in the bottle. But the real point is, we need to have the awakened moral discernment to reexamine our concept of progress and to understand just what kind of Genie we are dealing with, and we need to learn to master that Genie and not be its slave. We’ll never learn that until we develop the courage to stop fearing the world and to change our paradigm.

Change is inevitable, but the kind of change that comes about can also happen from the bottom up. We ordinary people can make change happen if we have the values and vision, and the courage to be activists for that vision and those values. A new more human-centered paradigm in biology and medicine will be based on an ecological consciousness, affirming that we humans are intimately interconnected with and interdependent with all of creation. In the new paradigm, the freedom of thought of the individual scientist, the individual physician, and the individual client/patient will be held sacred and will be honored.

The basic assumption and attitude of the new paradigm will no longer be that we must control and dominate nature in order to survive, but instead that we must, with great humility and respect, seek to understand the life forces embodied in nature and in ourselves, so that we might support and sustain them. The new paradigm will see the big picture—that the life and health of humanity will depend on our understanding of, and our caring for, life in all its manifestations.

I am reminded of some lines by the poet-playwright Christopher Fry, from his play A Sleep of Prisoners. “Thank God our time is now when wrong comes up to face us everywhere, never to leave us until we take the longest stride of soul we ever took.” Even the title of the play alone describes our modern consciousness very well.

If humanity is to evolve in the direction of greater health and freedom, and if we are to avoid destroying ourselves and the world, then our new paradigm must be one that puts the human spirit at the center of medicine and of science.
Medical Science

Present Paradigm

Matter-based

Illness is the enemy of health

Consciousness plays little or no role in health or illness

Only the physical brain can produce consciousness

Illness and healing follow physical laws only

Vaccines strengthen the immune system to ward off disease

New Paradigm
Spirit- and life-based

Illness is often a step toward regaining health

Consciousness plays a predominant role in health and illness

The brain does not produce consciousness, but only mirrors it

Other laws cooperate with physical laws to influence illness and healing

Vaccines restrict the immune system from producing acute inflammation, resulting instead in more chronic
The Paradigm Shift in Medicine and Science

Written by Philip Incao, MD
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