

“There’s a New World Coming:” The Paradigm Change of Our Times

About 500 years ago, Western culture began undergoing a fundamental change from a hierarchical medieval paradigm to what we call modernity. Although there was a period of resistance and backlash, all major social institutions began to radically change—science, technology, politics, economics, law, education, the arts, and religion.

The major themes of the modern era include individual autonomy (including individual rights, freedoms and expression), reason and objectivity, secularism (the separation of faith from politics, education, economics, and knowledge), and human progress through the exercise of reason and individual freedom. Today, we can see these once-noble and successful tenets of modernity living out their logical conclusions, pitting self-interest against the common interest and putting the human race on a collision course with the limits of our planet to sustain us. If human civilization and the other species we share the planet with are to survive and thrive, another fundamental cultural shift will be necessary.

Signs of an emerging new paradigm are evident in virtually all the spheres of our contemporary society. Below are some of the characteristics of it that we see. We invite you to reflect on your own experience of this shift and how it calls you to participate.

It is suggested that you read the chart from left to right, as each item on the left corresponds with the one on the right.

Fading paradigm	Emerging paradigm
<p>The individual is autonomous and independent, with free will and inalienable individual rights.</p> <p>The universe is made up of things that can be understood by analyzing their constituent parts.</p> <p>Things are static entities.</p> <p>Humans are nature’s crowning achievement. Nature serves as resources to meet humans’ needs.</p> <p>The human challenge is to conquer nature.</p> <p>Evolution created the human species.</p> <p>The body is a vehicle for the head, which is the seat of consciousness and intelligence.</p> <p>The more knowledge we gain, the less ignorant we will be. Reality is ultimately knowable through objective reason.</p> <p>Objective information, analytical reasoning and goal-oriented strategizing are usually the best guides for productive action.</p>	<p>The individual is a part of an interdependent system (e.g. family, organization, culture, ecosystem), with responsibilities to these systems.</p> <p>All things are integral parts of a whole (holon), and can only be understood in relationship to the holons of which they are an integral part.</p> <p>Everything is in motion and is part of a dynamic evolutionary process. Everything is related to everything.</p> <p>Humans are part of the planet’s ecosystem and are interdependent with it. What affects the ecosystem affects its humans.</p> <p>The human challenge is to live in sustainable harmony with nature.</p> <p>The human species is now the major driver of planetary evolution.</p> <p>The body is a dynamic energy system with several seats of consciousness and a multi-faceted intelligence.</p> <p>The more knowledge we gain, the more we realize we don’t know. Reality is ultimately unknowable through reason, and detached objectivity is an illusion.</p> <p>Shared wisdom that draws on intuition, multi-level awareness and creativity is usually the best guide for productive action.</p>

<p>Politicians lead the people. Ineffective leaders should be replaced with effective ones (“throw the bums out”).</p> <p>Social change comes from individuals and groups struggling against the status quo.</p> <p>Responsible citizenship means patriotic loyalty to one’s country (“my country right or wrong”).</p> <p>Peace is achieved by overcoming and controlling the enemy with force.</p> <p>Your worth is your personal wealth.</p> <p>The economy does best when each entity pursues its own self-interest and maximizes its own bottom line.</p> <p>A business’ mission is to increase its bottom line.</p> <p>We are defined by our differences (race, party, religion, etc.)</p> <p>God is a transcendent spiritual being whose domain is heaven but who occasionally intervenes in the material world. Or God is an outdated relic of primitive superstitions.</p> <p>Living in faith and hope means believing in the truth of one’s religion’s teachings and trusting in the power and mercy of a transcendent God. Professing the right beliefs and holding to and defending the right truths determine the soul’s ultimate destiny.</p>	<p>Politicians follow and reflect social change (“we’re the ones we’ve been waiting for”).</p> <p>Social change comes from cohesive collective energy that articulates and embodies a higher level of consciousness than the status quo.</p> <p>Responsible citizenship is global, and means advocating for humanity and the planet (“think globally, act locally”).</p> <p>Peace is achieved by creating systems that are just and by making interdependence more advantageous than domination.</p> <p>Your worth is your contribution to the common good.</p> <p>The economy does best when each entity contributes to the collective good and maximizes the triple bottom line--people, planet and profit.</p> <p>We are defined by our interrelatedness—“One earth, one future.”</p> <p>God is the ground of being, or an integral, guiding force in all processes. God is in each of us, and if we go deeply enough within, we find a transpersonal essence that connects us with all humanity and all reality.</p> <p>Living in faith and hope means expanding awareness, resonance and response-ability in relation to the whole world, and acting in the world with higher levels of awareness, harmony and integration—as have the Buddha, Jesus, and other great spiritual teachers, both ancient and contemporary.</p>
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How do you see a new paradigm emerging? What are ways you can embody it in your life, relationships, spirituality, and engagement with the world?

Created by Whole New World (edited by David Inglis)