

Paul Trask's introduction to "The Paradigm Shift Dilemma," by Nelson Hultberg

I discovered this article in the Liberty Crier, to which I am a subscriber (<http://libertycrier.com>). Its thrust is political & economic. But the principles discussed are universal. Nelson Hultberg puts his finger squarely on a cluster of human dynamics which are all intertwined — egotism, integrity, honesty and the ability to change one's mind about important matters. This kind of change is popularly referred to as a Paradigm Shift, as Mr. Hultberg will explain.

Indeed, I have observed this cluster of dynamics in play in virtually every facet of human endeavor. But I have been particularly attentive to it in spiritual matters. And that's the reason I am providing a copy of this article. All too often, people cease being "seekers of truth," but rather "seekers of support for their previous convictions." We occasionally make fun of this dynamic with the familiar line, "I've already made my mind up – don't confuse me with the facts!"

At a certain point in life many people seem to develop mental and spiritual "rigor mortise" as it were. They lose the ability to think clearly and accurately about significant issues – even in the face of important new information. They instead spend their energy defending or justifying their thoughts or actions of an earlier day and time.

Now that you've read this short introduction, perhaps you, too, will be attentive to this inclination in yourself and others.

I hope you find this article informative and thought provoking. Perhaps it will even lead to a Paradigm Shift!

The Paradigm Shift Dilemma

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Paradigms are mega-systems of thought that explain certain realms of reality so as to shift mankind toward new visions. For example, mercantilism, Lockean limited government, species evolution, Pasteurian medicine, quantum physics, Keynesian economics, and welfare-state politics are paradigms that developed in their respective fields over the past several centuries. History is a continual process of shifting toward new paradigms in which the established thought of society is dramatically altered.



Paradigm shifts can be either positive or negative. When positive, these shifts are the manifestations of truth's discovery and a better way of life. But in bringing about a better way of life, they also create a powerful dilemma for those who find themselves on the wrong side of the shift.

The dilemma is this: Those whose views are being corrected resist the correction quite vigorously because of that human foible we call ego. People do not like to admit that they have lived the bulk of their adult lives subscribing to a serious intellectual error. Thus when a great ideological correction begins, for example, in the field of political-economy, they resort to sophistry in order to defend the older way of looking at things that they have supported for most of their lives. This is because 95 percent of humans, who are past 40 years of age, are no longer seekers of truth; they are seekers of “support for their previous convictions.” This is what makes them feel content in life. Truth, therefore, takes a back seat to protecting their egos and the convictions they have held for several decades.

Egoism of the Intellectuals

This egoistic flaw in human nature doesn't just afflict the general public. It also afflicts that body of humans called “intellectuals.” Human nature is such that it compels many scholars to also fight against challenges refuting their accustomed way of thinking. Scientists, who have spent years of their lives in support of a certain paradigm, will forsake all the pledges of objectivity that comprise their creed to vehemently fight against a new paradigm that clearly presents a more rational perspective. Truth, the most highly prized goal of all, is forsaken to protect personal egos and previous convictions. This flaw exists in layman and intellect alike.

A good example of how this flaw stifles social progress was the predicament of the communists in the Soviet Union throughout most of their twentieth century reign. By 1950, history's verdict was in. State socialism was a morbid, tyrannical, and unworkable philosophy of social organization. It decimated the human spirit. It was living death. Yet the intellectual authorities of the communist bloc shut their eyes to these unwelcome facts of reality and marched imperviously on for four more decades shoring up their sham with lies, sophistries, and doctored statistics.

Today's liberal welfare-statists have also succumbed to this flaw. Especially if they are past 40 years of age, they are finding it very difficult (in light of Washington's present Keynesian debt insanity) to admit they have committed decades of their lives to a false ideology based upon dangerous irrationality. Consequently most of them are doing what the communists did. They are closing the windows of their minds and continuing to fight for their welfare-state vision of politics despite the fact that its flawed paradigm is breaking down all around us.

Welfare-statists are choosing, not truth and progress, but support for creatures like Obama. Yet they insist they are promoting the American ideal as this malefactor of a President heaps the monstrosities of government regimented healthcare, amnesty for 12 million illegals, and Orwellian gun control upon us. These statisticians are confronted with the “paradigm shift dilemma,” and their egos are driving them into forsaking the truth so as to cling to the illusion that they have not been wrong in supporting massive government programs and Keynesian economics throughout their adult years.

The Integrity to Change

This is one of the tragic facets of human nature. Only a handful of humans ever have the strength of will and integrity to change fundamentally flawed beliefs if they are long-standing. One such sterling human who did have that strength was the woman who brought me into this world, my mother, Charlotte. She was a devoted FDR fan and big government liberal for 35 years after graduation from college. My father was a staunch conservative, so you can imagine the scintillating conversations we often had at the dinner table while I was growing up.

At the age of 28, I came across the writings of Ludwig von Mises, Henry Hazlitt, and Ayn Rand in defense of the free-market and the libertarian political-economic view. I had always instinctively been in support of such a view, but had no strong ideological or theoretical grasp of it. But now I did, and when I came home from California to Indiana that Christmas, I naturally had to explain such a view to my mother who had always engaged in spirited intellectual discussions with me throughout my educational years.

I spent about an hour one evening after dinner with her divulging my discovery of this wonderful philosophy of freedom that so powerfully refuted the idea of Keynesian economics and liberal welfare-statism. My mother listened intently, but with considerable distress because she had never heard such arguments before, which were opposed to not just the level of state welfarism, but to the concept itself. I could see the wheels of her mind churning as I explained how FDR had ruined the country because, as Ayn Rand shows, he destroyed the concept of "individual rights." He created all sorts of "false rights" granted by government that destroyed our "real rights" derived from the laws of Nature. After further discussion of Mises and Hazlitt and their refutations of Keynesian economics, I could see that the lecture needed to end. I had no desire to cause distress in the genteel mind of my mother whom I loved dearly. We, thus, went on to other subjects and had a wonderful Christmas holiday. I went back to California after New Years and thought no more about it.

The next Christmas I naturally returned to our family gathering for the holidays. One night after dinner, I was sitting in the front room, and Mom came in and sat down beside me on the couch. She looked me square in the face and said, "You know, I'm going to have to admit that you are right. FDR did screw up the country, and we are going to be a long time fixing it."

I was astounded. What possibly could have happened in the course of just one year to allow her to accept such a major revision in her political-philosophical convictions? It certainly couldn't have been our brief one-hour discussion the previous Christmas. What happened, I learned, was that she had approached an old family friend of ours at church, Benjamin Rogge, who was the Dean of Wabash College there in Crawfordsville, Indiana. She told him of my interest in the libertarian political-economic philosophy, and asked if he would recommend some books to read on the subject. Rogge, being a libertarian, was delighted, of course, and told her to read the beginning books of Mises and Hazlitt, and also to read what is one of the most powerful statements on individual rights in the twentieth century, Ayn Rand's essay on "Man's Rights" in the Appendix of *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*.

In the ensuing days, my mother and I went on to discuss why, if one stood for freedom and individual rights, one had to oppose the FDR welfare-state. A return to the Founders' vision was demanded. And one had to pay more than lip service to such a goal; one had to back it up with votes and allegiance. Her acceptance of this did not come immediately, but in correspondence over the next couple of months, she came to accept that it was either-or. One had to stand for a society of individual rights and laissez-faire capitalism, or a society of special privileges and socialism. To advocate a mixture was immoral, for it violated our fellow man's rights. In order to be morally legitimate, welfare had to be voluntary. Government had to be drastically reduced. Here was a woman who had been a lifelong, big government liberal, and yet at the age of 57, she was capable of changing her fundamental beliefs on monumental issues. Unfortunately I did not get the chance to thoroughly delve into all this with her, for she died the next year.

Why this sea change came about, though, is because my mother was one of the handful of humans on this earth who, after the age of 40, still possess the integrity to seek the truth rather than just "support for one's previous convictions." A remarkable woman; America needs more of her kind. Truth is what is important, not the conjuring up of sophistic answers to defend irrational political views so as to protect fragile egos, which is what drives today's liberals.

Rights vs. Privileges

We can have a government that protects our rights, or a government that violates our rights so as to convey special privileges to various factions of society. But we can't have both, which is what the welfare-state is all about. It is an attempt to have a government that violates our fundamental rights, yet is committed to protecting our fundamental rights. This kind of ideological legerdemain is what liberalism is all about.

Why liberals have gotten away with this sort of flimflam over the past 70 years is because FDR's Brain Trust sold the country on the economic fallacies of Keynes. In addition they declared the people to have a "right" to government's conveyance of privileges. But there can be no such thing as a "right" to welfare services, corporate and banking subsidies, affirmative action quotas to minorities, etc. as FDR and his progeny have

claimed since 1932. These are not “rights”; they are “special privileges” that violate our rights in order to be implemented.

For example, the privilege of subsidies to low income earners, farmers, and banks necessitates the confiscation of other people’s income via progressive taxation, which destroys their right to their property. Conveyance of affirmative action quotas to minority groups necessitates the destruction of other people’s right to free association. And so on for every privilege conveyed to the various factions of society by welfare-state politicians in Washington. They all destroy other people’s rights to property, association, trade, or equality under the law.

Thus liberalism, by its nature, must evolve into a dictatorial society because it allows people’s rights to be voted away in pursuit of special privileges. It has been doing so ever since 1913 when the income tax and the Federal Reserve were brought into being as a means to increase government growth and usher in Marx’s vision of collectivism. Once you allow citizens to vote themselves “special privileges” at the expense of other people’s income (which is what progressive taxation does), then the rest is only a matter of time. The people will decide to take more and more from others and produce less and less on their own.

This is the great flaw of liberalism. It was a fraud from the beginning under Woodrow Wilson because it took the policies of “fabian socialism” that sprang up in the latter nineteenth century and sold them to America in the twentieth century as the wave of the future. This allowed Keynes and FDR to smuggle a continual violation of rights into the American concept of governing. When FDR’s progeny adopted the concept of a “living Constitution” to be rewritten by judicial oligarchs on the Supreme Court, the collectivist conquest of America was finalized. We were no longer a free country.

Liberalism has fooled an awfully lot of people into believing that it is on the right side of morality and political legitimacy. NOT SO! You can put a dress and lipstick on a pig, but you still have a pig. You can dress up the ideology of liberalism with all kinds of sophistry, but you still have the tyranny of socialism. It’s just the “velvet glove kind” that the fabians espoused rather than the “iron fist kind” of the communists. This is the hideous legacy of liberalism: it is socialism through the back door.

What America needs is more seekers of truth like my mother – more people of intellectual integrity who, once the above political flimflam is explained to them, have the courage to alter their convictions so as to be on the right side of truth’s paradigm shift. The political paradigm in America must be changed in a major way. Our citizens must come to realize that the liberal welfare-state is deranged and despotic. If such a paradigm shift is to happen, however, it will require our men and women of the mind to be willing to face the truth and suppress their egos’ drive to never be found wrong on life’s big questions. Liberalism is wrong, wholly, heinously wrong, and we need citizens who are capable of accepting it.