The Paradigmatic Failure Affecting Coaching Demand

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Abstract

This study explores the evolution of coaching demand through the lens of a paradigmatic failure, as a reflection of a cultural crisis characterizing post-modernity. The research draws upon Kuhn's theories on paradigms, Bourdieu's concept of habitus, and Husserl's exploration of cultural crisis to analyze how coaching addresses demands increasingly focused on values, meaning, and purpose. Paradigmatic failure is defined as the questioning of previously established normative and value systems, which can no longer effectively guide choices and actions in a rapidly transforming socio-cultural context. Through an analysis of Carli's dynamics of collusion and the "sad passions" described by Benasayag and Schmit, the study highlights how coachees' requests reflect cultural disorientation and the necessity for innovation. This approach highlights the role of coaching as an ethical and transformative tool, helping coachees pursue happiness and self-realization – understood as the realization of their true selves, through the creation of new meanings, unlocking both individual and collective potentialities.

Keywords: paradigmatic failure, cultural disorientation, Kuhn, Bourdieu, Husserl, Carli

Introduction

One of the fundamental factors in the evolution of coaching is represented by the demand expressed by our coachees. This demand changes over time, broadens, and becomes more complex. My hypothesis is that the demand related to third generation coaching reflects, on the one hand, the need to make life happier and, on the other hand, a crisis of meaning and purpose. On one side, the need for self-realization emerges, while on the other, there is a cultural disorientation regarding how to achieve it.

In general, ethical culture defines what happiness means and what the appropriate means to achieve it are. The basic units of ethical culture are paradigms. When paradigms are solid and deeply rooted, happiness comes from applying those paradigms. However, when paradigms enter into crisis, are questioned, or fail, the pursuit of happiness turns into a crisis of meaning and purpose. My hypothesis is that coaching demand reflects this paradigmatic crisis characteristic of post-modernity. Coaching, as a reflective space, can highlight failed paradigms and foster the creation of new ones.

To develop this research hypothesis, I referred to Kuhn's definition of a paradigm within the philosophy of science and to Bourdieu's concept of habitus. To analyze the effects of a cultural crisis, I drew from Husserl's reflections. Finally, to understand how this crisis is reflected in helping relationships, I used the contributions of Benasayag, Schmit (2004), and Carli (1993). Based on these studies, I have also reinterpreted my experience as a coach, linking the evolution of coaching demand with the failure of traditional paradigms and hypothesizing the coaching process as a laboratory for cultural innovation.

The evolution of coaching based on demand

Richard Stelter has masterfully analyzed the evolution of coaching in recent years, dividing it into three generations (Stelter, 2014). In my opinion, these changes reflect growing coaching demand and its qualitative evolution.

First generation coaching was founded on the primacy of goals and performance. The coaching agreement envisioned a transition from a problematic position (A) to a desirable goal (B). Coaching demand was based on the achievement of clearly defined objectives. In this approach, the coach worked with the coachee to develop clear, measurable, and attainable goals, as well as an action plan for planning and managing performance, using methods such as Goal Setting (Locke & Latham, 2002). This type of coaching was rooted in a maieutic relationship and focused on developing specific skills or solving concrete problems. The structure of the session was often very formal, and the questions (so-called Powerful Questions) were central and structured according to models like GROW (Goal, Reality, Options, Will) (Whitmore, 2009).

As coaching evolved, it began to address new demands and needs. Second generation coaching recognized the demand for personal and organizational development, with a greater focus on well-being. The theme of happiness and personal potentialities developed extensively. Coaching became a deep dialogue in which the coach helped the coachee explore their values, beliefs, and personal meanings, promoting greater self-awareness. Second generation coaching incorporated the influence of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive psychology helped to identify and strengthen factors that enhance well-being, personal satisfaction, happiness, positive emotions, engagement in meaningful activities, a sense of belonging, self-realization, optimism, and the use of character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The positive psychology approach established a new way of addressing coaching demands. Unlike first generation coaching, which focused on specific skills and objectives, second generation coaching also encouraged self-awareness through the exploration of often-overlooked positive qualities.

Third generation coaching focuses on creating a space for (self-)reflection through a collaborative practice where the coach acts as a (self-)reflective partner with the coachee (Stelter, 2014a). At its core is the recognition of society's hypercomplexity, which increasingly complicates the personal progress of those who have clear goals or specific solutions in mind. This hypercomplexity, therefore, changes the nature of coaching demand; the dimensions of performance, goal elaboration, and the training of personal potentialities remain relevant. However, the issue of meaning and purpose, namely cultural change, takes center stage. Third generation coaching can be seen as an umbrella term for all forms of coaching approaches oriented toward values and meaning (including those previously discussed).

The goal of third generation coaching is to invite coachees to further explore their worldview, drawing their attention to what is most essential in their lives. Stelter's approach to third generation coaching includes reflective processes based on a collaborative-narrative practice (Stelter, 2014b).

Essential aspects of third generation coaching include the focus on values and the opportunity to construct new meanings.

Whereas the prevailing trend in the coaching industry originally combined performance and goals, third generation coaching now operates with a more complex and sustainable focus on values and identity work. Coach and coachee create something together: they generate meaning during the conversation within a "reflective space" where mental freedom and growth opportunities are experienced (Stelter, 2009).

But what determines the opportunity to explore new meanings? Meaning making is considered one of the main approaches to facilitating dialogue in coaching (Stelter, 2007). Meaning making is based on past experiences and future expectations, holistically integrating past and present experiences as well as ideas about what the future may hold. In Bruner's conception, human beings are not data-processing devices but interpret their environment, other people, and themselves based on their dynamic interaction with the surrounding world (Bruner, 1990). Meaning evolves through the interaction between action, perception, reflection, and communication.

But where does the need to work on meaning arise? What is the new motivational source that enables this new relationship? Is it an initiative proposed by coaching, or does it respond to profound needs posed by our coachees?

In my opinion, the motivation to work on meaning can be found in the *new coaching demand*.

Paradigms, personal habitus, and cultural changes

The dimensions of meaning and significance refer to the concept of cultural paradigm. A paradigm is a system of reference or a set of interconnected elements that shape a worldview or understanding of the world. Ethical culture is composed of paradigms. The term paradigm derives from the ancient Greek παράδειγμα (*parádeigma*), from παραδείκνυμι (*paradeíknumi*), meaning "to show, present, compare." The Greeks were the first to study paradigms (Aristotle, 1994; Plato, 2000). However, the term gained its most notable significance in the 20th century through Thomas Kuhn and his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Kuhn, 1962).

Thomas Kuhn argues that a paradigm is the disciplinary matrix shared by a community of scientists. A scientific community is based on a shared disciplinary matrix, and at the same time, the shared disciplinary matrix defines a community. A paradigm or disciplinary matrix is a theory or a set of theories that define a research tradition. Research involves the realization and utilization of paradigms to solve problems. The principles underlying a paradigm coordinate all research and decision-making processes. Scientists work within a given frame of reference, accepting the assumptions and models of the paradigm without questioning them. For Kuhn, there exists a "world" of meanings and implicit assumptions that make comprehension and interaction possible. The pursuit of objective truth in science, according to Kuhn, stems from *a priori* paradigms that guide analysis, experimentation, and the interpretation of results.

Kuhn revisited the concept of paradigm multiple times, defining it as a disciplinary matrix, a family of paradigms, a set of theoretical and symbolic models, or exemplary solutions to problems. The formation of paradigms is based on the consensus of the scientific community. Kuhn describes this consensus as an *implicit and shared agreement* on the significant problems

to address, the acceptable methods, and the valid interpretive models within a discipline. According to Kuhn, this consensus extends beyond specific theories to encompass a "disciplinary matrix" that includes fundamental beliefs, values, tools, and evaluation standards.

For Kuhn, when research outcomes or actions inspired by paradigms result in repeated and interconnected failures – anomalies that stubbornly and evidently disprove the paradigms – these anomalies become *exemplary cases* that challenge the paradigm. Anomalies arising from experiments and scientific practices highlight *paradigmatic failure*.

New paradigms, which underlie so-called scientific revolutions, do not derive from previous paradigms; rather, they represent a rupture. They replace old paradigms only when the scientific community reaches a new consensus about them. Typically, a generational shift is necessary for new paradigms to be affirmed. Kuhn controversially argues that paradigmatic shifts do not occur solely because they can explain previously inexplicable phenomena. It is insufficient for a paradigm to be *truer*. The paradigm must also be accepted by the scientific community to become the new foundation of its professional identity.

History is filled with paradigmatic revolutions, such as the concept of the Earth's centrality in the universe, its immobility relative to other planets, or its flatness. Paradigmatic shifts are a product of creativity. When paradigms change, people change the way they think, perceive things, decide, and act. Paradigms can also be described as personal dispositions that form a personal habitus, as defined by Bourdieu (2015).

Ethical culture, therefore, is a personal habitus composed of fundamental units we call paradigms. Following the studies of Kuhn and Bourdieu, we can define a paradigm as an intentional evaluative, value-driven conception from which action-oriented dispositions aimed at achieving specific goals derive.

Husserl highlighted paradigmatic changes as cultural changes and asserts that consciousness is a continuous becoming, an uninterrupted history composed of layered *formations of meaning* and dominated by teleology (Husserl, 1993).

The individual, then, is an "I" who constitutes history and is constituted by it. When we try to understand the historical-cultural moment in which we live, we are already a result of this moment. We interpret history based on what it allows us to perceive while simultaneously shaping history ourselves.

Everything within us is historical. We experience the world with our own eyes and through the lens of those who lived before us, who created ways of seeing, emotions, and values that now live within us. Implicit within us are acts far beyond the scope of our subjectivity, acts belonging to others whose faces we do not know but which co-function in our representation of the world, shaping how we view and feel about it (Costa, 2009).

De Monticelli (2018) writes that phenomenology is an ontology of the concrete, a tool for rigorously thinking about any aspect of our lives, our experiences (senses, emotions, feelings, desires, etc.), and our actions. To understand ourselves, our thoughts, and how we view the world, others, and the future, we need to understand a tradition that reaches us; it means becoming aware of our intrinsic historicity. This historical dimension must be uncovered, noted,

and intentionally disclosed. Understanding ourselves involves interrogating the layers that constitute us and thus elucidating history itself, its hidden and teleological meaning. It is less important to know which events occurred than to comprehend their meaning. At the same time, life is active, purpose-driven, and immersed in a historicity that influences it. Yet it is also capable of producing spiritual formations, creating culture within the unity of historicity. Thus, today's culture, as an ensemble of paradigmatic formations, represents the point where a tradition opens up to new possibilities. Historicity is rooted in human nature, a focal point where the entirety of past history condenses and holds possibilities in reserve for the future. Inventing new possibilities means discovering, unveiling, and bringing to light possibilities inherent in what has reached us (Costa, 2009).

Husserl (1976) starts from this methodological framework to analyze the crisis of his historical moment and its historical unity. Beyond the interpretation of the cause of the crisis (the loss of the Greek origins of European history), what stands out in Husserl's analysis is the extraordinary relevance of his thought. On the eve of World War II, Husserl (1976) argues that every aspect of life involves taking a position, and each position taken is subject to a duty, *to a jurisdiction on validity and invalidity*, according to norms that claim to be universally valid. As long as these norms remain unchallenged, unthreatened by skepticism and ridicule, life's sole concern is fulfilling these norms in practice. But when every norm is questioned, declared false based on experience, and emptied of its ideal validity, life loses its meaning. The most pressing problems for humanity are *the problems of the meaning and meaninglessness* of human existence as a whole (Husserl, 1936). A crisis arises when there is intellectual disorientation regarding how to act, what to base one's existence on, and how to live with others and other cultures. This crisis transforms into an unsustainable spiritual impoverishment (Husserl, 1989, 1999, 2007).

Husserl's reflections, therefore, focus on the concept of crisis, which we can define as *a cultural crisis: a crisis with enormous consequences for the meaning and significance of individual, relational, and community life.* It is a crisis that lacks alternative points of reference beyond those that each individual manages to create, realize, and verify in their life.

The meaning and significance of life pertain to the realm of ethics, understood as a philosophy guiding the identification and pursuit of the good that makes life worth living. Ethics enables choices and actions to achieve the good that leads to *eudaimonia* (Aristotle, 2011).

My hypothesis is that today's coaching demands are rooted in a paradigmatic failure reflecting the cultural crisis Husserl identified on the eve of World War II, which has intensified in post-modernity, becoming an internalized personal crisis. From a phenomenological perspective, this failure involves questioning the validity of established ethical paradigms that constitute our personal, relational, and organizational habitus.

The changing demand in helping relationships

As evidence of this hypothesis, we can observe how demand has also changed in the realm of helping relationships. Reflecting on the experience within psychological and psychiatric counseling services in France, Benasayag and Schmit (2004) argue that the nature of client demand has drastically evolved over time. Those seeking psychological or psychiatric help are individuals whose suffering does not originate from clear psychological issues but instead

reflects a pervasive sadness and a persistent sense of insecurity and precariousness. Contemporary psychological distress is not rooted in individual psychological problems but is instead caused by the socio-cultural contexts in which individuals live their lives. The authors suggest that collective and structural factors fuel "sad passions" (a term inspired by Spinoza), such as fear, anxiety, and helplessness, which then manifest in requests for psychological support. Every individual crisis and, in particular, every adolescent crisis, must today be viewed within the context of the crisis across Western society, which no longer presents a future as a promise but instead as a threat. The singularly defined personal distress is added to by the burden of a historical context carried by each adolescent that, in their everyday reality, appears threatening, precarious, and devoid of certainties – a weight of anguish and anxiety that must not be ignored but instead heard and understood as a triggering element for critical episodes that might otherwise be inexplicable. *The crises we address today occur – this being the novelty – in a society that is, in itself, in crisis.*

According to the authors, the distress of today's adolescents must therefore be traced back to its historical characterization, manifested in specific traits that distinguish it from those of other eras. Hence the need arises to change *the lens* through which adolescent distress is examined.

Renzo Carli is an Italian psychologist and psychoanalyst, renowned for his contributions to the development of clinical psychology and his innovative work in applying psychoanalysis to organizations and society. An emeritus professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Rome "La Sapienza," and co-founder of the *Rivista di Psicologia Clinica* and *Psicologia della Salute*, Carli has dedicated his career to studying psychic and relational dynamics in clinical, social, and organizational contexts, with a particular focus on the "psychology of demand." This discipline explores the motivations, requests, and expectations of individuals seeking psychological help, emphasizing the relationship between those requesting help and those offering it.

His research analyzes the problems posed by clients of psychologists working in various social and healthcare services, as well as in diverse settings: support, educational intervention, school psychology, workplace, sports, prison, and military. According to Carli, requests for help are not necessarily psychotherapy requests attributable to a psychopathological classification. Carli writes:

> The problems posed by clients are often framed within the categories of social, familial, and organizational life: conflicts, misunderstandings, disappointments at work or school, difficulties in managing social groups or organizational components, the need for adaptation and structural and cultural changes (...), problems that fall within the relational, social, and organizational domains. It is a varied and differentiated area of problems, which cannot be exemplified here in its broad range, let alone classified using any categorical framework. (Carli, 1993, p. 19)

Central to Carli's construct of demand analysis is the concept of collusion, which he identifies as a core element of intersubjective dynamics. For Carli, the set of affective relationships and their organizational structure, within which each individual lives their experience, is characterized by a series of shared symbolic-affective categories that constitute local cultures. Carli (1993) refers to collusion as the set of affective symbolizations evoked in the

various participants of a social relationship by the context. He writes, "The context (i.e., the relationships lived in familial, school, relational, workplace contexts, etc.) evokes collusion, but this, in turn, can dynamically influence and orient the social relationship" (Carli, 1993, p. 14). Carli also discusses *collusive phenomenology*, which involves sharing based on a "natural attitude" of shared cognitive and affective paradigms that form local cultures.

The originality of Carli's contribution, which is of particular interest here, lies in the *concept of collusion failure*.

The model I intend to propose here is founded on the dynamics of collusive processes and the failure of collusion as a problematic dimension that justifies and motivates the request for intervention and simultaneously as a problem reproduced within the relationship established with the demand. (Carli, 1993, p. 21).

The request for help arises from the failure of collusive processes previously solidified within a specific social relationship. Specifically, this failure of collusion is experienced but not reflected upon, as it is part of a natural, unconscious attitude. As a result, it is enacted, obstructing the achievement of objectives, becoming an obstacle to problem-solving, and generating conflicts.

The paradigmatic failure at the root of coaching demand

A paradigm can be defined as a fundamental unit of ethical culture (whether individual, relational, or communal) that guides choices, actions, and purposes. A paradigm is composed of:

1. an evaluative or value-based conception (e.g., the unity of the family is good);

2. a normative or behavioral consequence (e.g., one must ensure protection and security for the family);

3. a purpose (e.g., having children).

Every paradigm influences how we perceive and interpret reality. In coaching sessions, the paradigms of interest are those related to the ethical culture of the individual or group. Ethical culture is the set of paradigms that guide life according to the values of goodness, truth, justice and beauty. In the ethical domain, paradigms are models which are both theoretical (assessing and influencing perception) and prescriptive (determining behaviors and purposes).

My hypothesis is that today's coaching demands are fundamentally rooted in a paradigmatic failure that reflects a phase of cultural crisis involving purposes, norms, values, and established beliefs, as Husserl described on the eve of World War II.

In phenomenological terms, paradigmatic failure entails questioning the validity of a paradigm. Paradigms fail, revealing themselves as invalid, when they are proven erroneous in light of lived experience and subsequent reflection, for example, when values and norms no longer align with the intended purpose, when evaluations and values change, or when the context shifts.

Failed cultural paradigms can pertain to any aspect of social life and partly reflect the cultural crisis that has become the crisis of post-modernity (Giddens, 1991). Paradigmatic failure can involve general cultural fields (e.g., the concept of family, the meaning of school, the motivation to work, sexual orientation, etc.), local cultural fields (e.g., relationships within an organized entity, an entrepreneur's vision, the relationship between school and its context), relational fields (e.g., couples relationships, parent-child dynamics, leader-follower interactions), and individual fields (e.g., life projects, vocations, self-esteem, etc.). In coaching processes, paradigms concern major themes such as the models of adaptation and self-realization, sexual orientation and gender identity, child education, family, couples relationships, love and friendship, professional orientation, client-market focus, motivation and leadership, the role of education, the meaning of school, the doctor-patient relationship, the authority of roles, life projects, and personal identity. There is no aspect of social or relational life that is not characterized by paradigmatic elements that no longer prove valid, that is, by a cultural crisis of once-shared paradigms, now revealed as a crisis of meaning in the self-determination of one's life. Geertz (1998) states that humans are animals caught in webs of meaning they themselves have spun. Coaching demand reflects a network of meanings that is flawed or, worse, stifles any hope for development.

Much like the scientist described by Kuhn, who is highly skilled, competent, and rigorous yet unable to prove a truth due to an inadequate paradigm and repeated anomalies (think of the Earth's immobility or flatness), a coaching client does not lack competence to solve a problem but faces paradigmatic obstacles they have yet to recognize. *These obstacles manifest in unsolvable problems and a disorientation that clouds the selection of objectives to pursue.*

"My goal is to have a goal!" This is how a client of mine introduced their coaching request several years ago. At the time, it was disorienting for me. I was part of first generation coaching, which focused on a clear-cut coaching demand: "Coach, This is my goal – help me achieve it."

Since then, I have observed that at least 80% of individual coaching requests no longer stem from a specific goal to be achieved, but rather from a problem to be solved – such as an anomaly within a particular paradigm (see Kuhn). A prominent example of this, which has developed over time, can be found in career orientation within career coaching. Career orientation involves adolescents who are unsure how to direct their career choices, students struggling with their university studies and dissatisfied with their academic path, and adults who are deeply dissatisfied with their work.

Simplifying in terms of first generation coaching, coaching demand was centered on improving performance to secure a job with good remuneration and career prospects, or to achieve goals related to work performance. In second generation coaching, performance was supplemented by the opportunity to develop specific personal potentialities in order to live a more fulfilling work life.

Today, coaching demand regarding career orientation has taken on a very different meaning. Requests for coaching stem from the crisis of a paradigm which has dominated since the 1960s and which I myself have experienced (my first degree was in economics; my last in philosophy). This paradigm suggested choosing a career and educational path based on salary

and job prospects (Becker, 1964). In short, it was a paradigm based on adaptation to the offerings of the socio-economic context.

In the field of teen coaching in particular, I have observed that those adolescents I have worked with have not been motivated by job opportunities or financial rewards; they have not been driven by extrinsic factors. However, schools in Italy do not offer a guidance framework based on potential vocations. Instead, they focus on the skills demonstrated during a pupil's academic journey. As a result, the evaluation of performance is often confused with the evaluation of potential. When this evaluation fails to take passions, interests, and curiosity into account, it can lead to demotivation, confusion, and a decline in self-esteem.

The paradigm shift, observed over more than twenty years of professional experience, represents a transition from an approach focused on adapting to the context to one centered on self-realization. This is not simply about changing perspectives, but transforming one's overall approach to professional self-determination. In the field of career orientation, this means exploring potential vocations. A vocation can arise from a passion for a particular field, such as mechanics, agri-food, therapy, or communication, or from a deep commitment to an ideal aimed at improving the world around us. However, vocations arise from both introspection and experience. It can be essential to gain real-world experience through workshops, courses, and internships to acquire both knowledge and self-awareness. This involves discovering both where one excels and where one finds engagement and interest. Skills and interests do not always align.

When a vocation emerges, it can become the foundation for developing projects, setting goals, and creating action plans. The resulting effects I have observed amongst adolescents include a renewed enthusiasm for learning, increased self-esteem, and greater life satisfaction.

The same process occurs when university students realize that they find their chosen course of study unfulfilling. In Italy, 16.1% of students encounter difficulties with the decision they have made. Among those who attend university after high school (74.7%), 6.8% drop out in the first year, and 9.3% switch faculties or degree programs (Almadiploma, 2024, p. 48). As a result of working to explore their vocations, around 70% of those students I have coached either changed faculties or found new meaning in their academic journeys. None of them discontinued their studies.

For adults seeking coaching due to job dissatisfaction, the issues no longer relate to salary or career conditions. The meaning and significance of their work have become even more important. The discovery of one's vocation is not limited to adolescents; it can occur at any stage of life and serve as the foundation for a learning journey and a project geared towards change. Many of the coachees I have worked with radically changed their careers precisely because the adaptation paradigm proved inadequate, and the need to achieve self-realization through vocations, interests, and meaning became increasingly urgent.

The process from adaptation to vocation does not only take place in coaching journeys. It can happen spontaneously. For example, when training professional coaches, I have observed that the decision to pursue this profession often arises from a vocation for the work itself and dissatisfaction with prior career choices. This vocation is grounded in the love, passion, and

meaning found in coaching. Coaching itself arises from a profound paradigmatic shift: that of focusing on potentialities rather than deficiencies.

To summarize, as can be seen in Table 1 below, the demand for third generation coaching cannot be addressed using the first and second generation coaching paradigms. In fact, it stems directly from the crisis of these paradigms and requires the development of new paradigms, which will emerge from the coaching relationship.

Building on Stelter's work, I believe that third generation coaching must address inadequate paradigms that can hinder, or can create or radicalize problems related to the comprehensive development of the individual in terms of self-realization. *This is not merely a question of developing new perspectives or narratives, but one of creating new cultural paradigms.* The task of the coach and the client is to identify the paradigmatic failure within the focus proposed by the client, share it, and train the client's creativity to find and establish a new paradigm, experiment with it, and test it in practice. A new paradigm is useful insofar as it interprets reality in a new way, provides fresh insights for analysis and decision-making, and unlocks stagnation or malaise. *Most importantly, a new paradigm liberates and develops repressed potentialities, transforming problems into developmental goals.*

	First generation	**Second generation**	**Third generation**
Coaching demand	"Coach, help me find a job or earn more money."	"Coach, help me find a job or earn more money using my potentialities."	"Coach, I want to find a job that is fulfilling, but I am unsure which one."
Paradigm	Adaptation to the socio-economic context	Adaptation to the context using potentialities	Self-realization through vocation

Table 1: Coaching paradigms by generation with coaching demands

The coaching process, therefore, serves as a guide for reflection on paradigms – firstly on feelings and values, then on that which is good, and consequently on the conception of self and of others.

Conclusions

Ethics can be seen as a structured system of paradigms that incorporate values, norms, and purposes. From this perspective, ethics is not an abstract entity distinct from paradigms but rather the result of the combination of multiple ethical paradigms, which are structured around:

- Values: Signifiers of that which is considered important or desirable (e.g., honesty, justice, respect).

- Norms: Behavioral rules that regulate actions to achieve those values (e.g., "do not lie" to preserve honesty).

- Purposes: Moral objectives that guide human behavior (e.g., promoting the common good, reducing suffering).

Thus, paradigms are not general invalidating beliefs or mental schemas passively internalized from the socio-cultural context. They are profoundly personal dispositions which, although connected to general or local cultural fields, can only be discerned through individual dialogue and a coaching process that explores the client's personal history, values, and aspirations. A person's set of paradigms shapes their mental and emotional representations, that is, their way of being in the world in order to achieve the form of happiness they believe can be attained.

In the coaching experience, paradigms that reveal themselves as invalid are not unconscious but latent. They have been assumed and embodied as self-evident and are part of what Husserl (1913–1928) described as the natural attitude.

The coaching process, therefore, serves to suspend these paradigms through *epoché,* setting them aside and making them the subject of reflection and transformation as part of the self-realization process.

Each paradigm is subjective, arbitrary, and creative. It is never an absolute truth and makes no totalitarian claims, yet it constitutes a pillar of individual, relational, or local culture, emerging through comparisons, negotiations, and shared agreements. Paradigms are assumed, chosen, and created. They can be subject to transformation and self-transformation, to transcendence and improvement. They are not immutable laws but flexible and possibility-driven coordinates. At the individual level, paradigms are the ways in which thought is organized, represented, and brought into action, systematically aligned with cultural terms. They are modifiable only when they become part of the demand for change posed at the beginning of a coaching process.

In ethical terms, a paradigm is therefore composed of value evaluations, behavioral norms, and purposes. Values are chosen based on the happiness and self-realization of the individual requesting coaching. They change over time according to individual choices and cultural contexts. For example, in the traditional anthropocentric paradigm, good was defined as that which benefits humanity. Environmental ethics challenged this paradigm, proposing a new ecocentric paradigm that includes the good of the ecosystem.

If we accept the idea that ethics is composed of paradigms, then the relationship with the values of goodness, truth and justice is rooted in specific paradigmatic configurations. Each paradigm defines these values according to its internal logic, but it is the sum and interaction of these paradigms that give ethics its overall character. This approach allows ethics to be viewed not as a monolithic entity but as a dynamic and complex mosaic, and the coaching process becomes a laboratory for cultural development and innovation.

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