

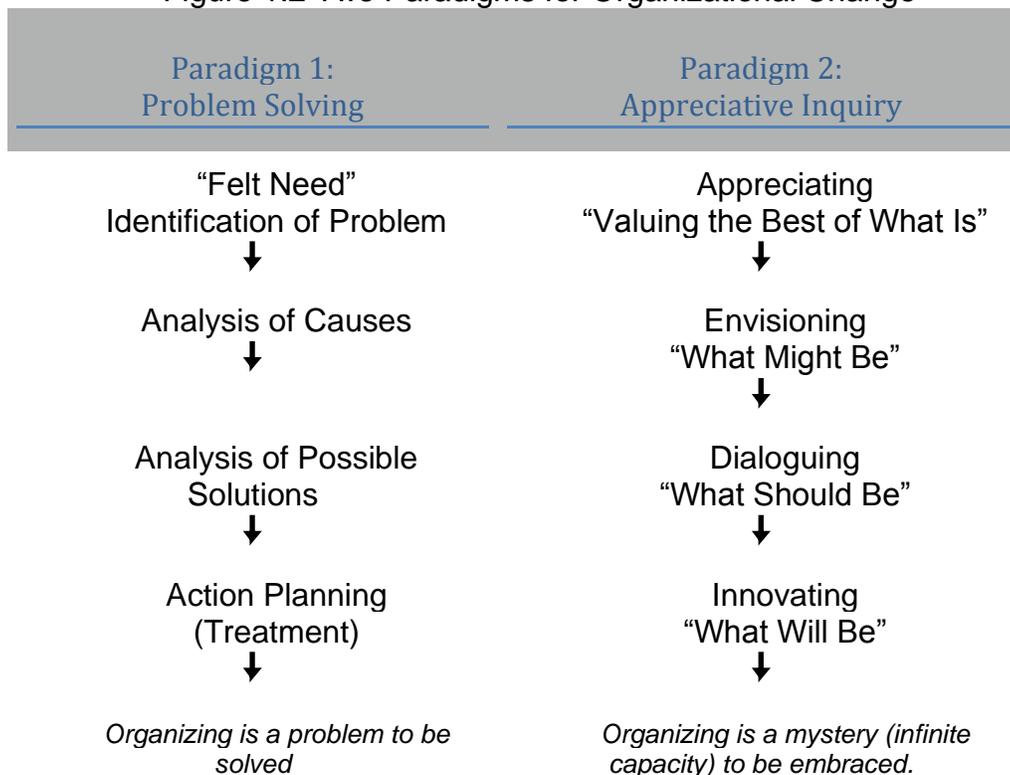
## BEYOND PROBLEM SOLVING TO AI

---

Since the 1930s, organizations have used a “deficit-based” approach to problem solving. It begins with seeking out the problem, the weak link in the system. Then, typically, there is a diagnosis, and alternative solutions are recommended. AI challenges this traditional paradigm with an “affirmative” approach, embracing an organization’s challenges in a positive light. AI offers an alternative -- to look for what is good in the organization, its success stories.

In **Figure 1.2**, Paradigm 1’s basic assumption is that an organization is a problem that needs to be solved. Paradigm 2’s basic assumption is that an organization is a mystery that should be embraced as a human center of infinite imagination, infinite capacity, and potential. The word *mystery* signifies, literally, a future that is unknowable and cannot be predicted. And this is true of organizations, because nobody really knows when or where the next creative insight will emerge that can shift everything or how a fresh combination of strengths will open to horizons never seen before. Paradigm 1 pictures organizations as broken-down machines in need of fixing; they are problems to be solved. Every analysis begins, therefore, with some variation of the same question: What is wrong? What are the problems? What are the causes?

Figure 1.2 Two Paradigms for Organizational Change



Paradigm 2 says something quite different. Organizations are not problems. Indeed, no organization was created as a problem. Organizations, if anything, are meant as solutions. But even more than that, organizations are not even singular solutions. They are creative centers of human relatedness, alive with emergent and unlimited capacity. Paradigm 2 is “life-centric.” It searches for everything that gives life to a living human system when it is most alive. It is creative and in a healthy relationship with its extended communities. AI is an approach to organizational change that is unique and refreshing. Observers of AI say that it is one of the greatest, yet largely unrecognized, models available to the OD field.