

Images of the Intrapersonal Organization: Soul Making at Work

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In this paper, the authors use archetypal theory to explore the relationship between personal and organizational development and the role of tacit knowledge and active imagination in such development. The authors claim that organizational change occurs within each person as well as at the more frequently studied levels of small group and large system; and that individuals and their relationship with work and the organization as experienced develop concurrently. The authors' position is illustrated through a case taken from a larger qualitative study using methods of data collection and analysis rooted in an interpretive framework.

The postmodern organization calls us to perceive, appreciate, and even cherish variety, difference, heterogeneity, and conflict. Multitudes of images and voices exist in each organization. Each person embodies many voices, perspectives, stances, emotions, ego states, and ways of understanding. Grounded in the body, formed by experience, and shaped by perception, this multiplicity challenges us to see, hear, and feel who we and others are as we work together. An archetypal, transpersonal framework, which goes beyond postmodernism to embrace the spiritual aspects of the person, can support such awareness.

In this paper, we use an archetypal perspective to explore the relationship between personal and organizational development and the role of tacit knowledge and active imagination in such development. We claim that organizational change occurs within each person as well as at the more frequently studied levels of dyad, small group, and large system; and that the person and his or her relationship with work and the organization as experienced develop concurrently. Such organizational change happens when an individual becomes aware of knowledge about the organization that was previously unconscious, integrates this learning, and so

modifies the perceptual screen through which information about the organization is filtered. We illustrate our assertions through a case taken from a larger qualitative study using methods of data collection and analysis rooted in an archetypal transpersonal paradigm.

First, we define the terms from archetypal psychology that we will use in our case study. We then review the organizational literature regarding spirituality and archetypal theory in the workplace. We describe the qualitative methodology used and portray the case that we have chosen to illustrate our claims, with the analysis based on an archetypal framework.

Terms from Archetypal Theory

In this section, we define the terms from archetypal theory that we use in the following case analysis.

Jungian psychologists understand *soul* as the human process that connects the pleasures and pains of material existence with that which transcends them, allowing people to find meaning. Soul is midway between understanding and unconsciousness. Its instrument is the imagination. The soul integrates spirit and matter and prevents them from polarizing (Moore, 1992, p. 232). *Soul making* is the work that

holds and bears the tension between opposites, creating spaces for the transcendent function.

The *transcendent function* is the symbol-making action of the psyche that reconciles and integrates conscious and unconscious material (Moore, 1992; Hollwitz, 1992; Olson, 1990). In 1916, Jung (in Read, Fordham, Adler, & McGuire, 1953–1979) described the ground of the transcendent function as not only intellectual knowing but also a way of understanding through experience.

Individuation is the process of development and maturation through which a person integrates and binds aspects of the inner and outer lives to the core of being. When an individual realizes, recognizes, or remembers those aspects of the self that have been lost, overlooked, denounced, silenced, or hidden in shadow; and listens to their stories, heeds their desires, or meets their needs, that person changes and individuates (Hillman, 1983). The ego broadens and deepens through individuation.

Active imagination is a process that was developed by Jung and elaborated by Proffo (1975) and Hillman (1983). When it is applied, a person becomes aware of, listens to, and learns from the various aspects of the self. It supports the process of individuation. Active imagination is entered into in a variety of ways. For example, active imagination is used when a person remembers and pays attention to a dream and heeds its message. In another use of active imagination, Jung (1965) drew and asked his patients to draw mandalas, squared circles that represent the whole self. Moore (1992) and Hillman (1983) proposed using the imagination to attend to the meaning of the body's pain, symptoms, and disease. Proffo (1975) suggested a journal writing method in which an aspect of one's life is imagined as a person with whom one engages in dialogue.

As it is used in this paper, *dialogue* is the symbolic interaction that happens between people when they name their experience in a relationship of mutuality, reciprocity, and co-inquiry (Hazen, 1987). This means that each person perceives the self and the other as able to change, learn, and teach the other in the relationship. Further, each recognizes that a rich understanding of a situation includes the perceptions of each person in the situation, not only one's own. Although Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, and Smith (1994) and Isaacs (1999) have portrayed a model of dialogue that is popular among organizational development practi-

tioners and managers, emphasizing dialogue as a large-group phenomenon that occurs in stages with specified behaviors in relationship, the accent in this paper is on dialogue as an interpersonal phenomenon in which the ongoing present moment is vital. From whatever perspective dialogue is viewed, it leads to a flow of meaning and creativity. Dialogue allows the soul to work.

In the following two sections, we give an overview of organization literature related to spirituality and archetypal theory that is applicable to our case analysis.

Spirituality and the Workplace

Spirituality and work have been examined extensively in the management literature. Cavanagh (1999) observed that a recent bibliography listed 72 books on business and spirituality, 54 of which were published between 1992 and 1998. Fornaciari and Dean (2002) noted that at least two management journals, the *Journal of Organizational Change Management* and the *Journal of Management Education*, have devoted special issues to the topic of spirituality and organizations, in 1999 and 2000, respectively.

Definitions of spirituality at work differ. For example, Burack (1999) held that spiritual growth involves mental growth and reflects the fulfillment of higher-order individual needs such as achievement and belonging. Mitroff and Denton (1999) reported findings from a study of human resources executives and managers, who defined spirituality as "the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others, and the entire universe" (p. 83). These managers differentiated between religion and spirituality, saying that religious expression was out of place in the workplace, while spirituality was appropriate for discussion. While emphasizing that religion and spirituality are not necessarily synonymous, McCormack (1994), in his discussion of workplace spirituality, looked at spirituality as the experience of a person in relationship to that which is transcendent. In this paper, we draw from these definitions and understand spirituality to be related to belonging and being connected to that which transcends the ego, and to seeking or finding a sense of meaning in one's life.

Gozdz (2000) wrote that the worldview of transpersonal psychology, with its emphasis on spirituality, has much to offer to the field of organizational learning. It is with this emphasis in mind that we use the lens of archetypal theory to more fully understand

the way that organizational change takes place within the individual.

Archetypal Theory and the Workplace

One stream of literature regarding spirituality, work, and organizations is related to archetypal theory. Management theorists have used an archetypal framework to shed light on leadership (Frost & Egri, 1990; Egri & Frost, 1991; Smith & Elmes, 2002), organizations (Moxnes, 1999), organizational culture (Kaarst-Brown & Robey, 1999), organizational development and change (Olson, 1990; Goldberg, 2001; Starr-Glass, 2002; Carr, 2002), and organizational environments (Matthews, 2002).

Regarding the person at work, Stein (1992) declared that organizational life as a spiritual practice offers opportunities for individuation and development. Hollwitz (1992) examined individuation at work, identifying organizations as sites for soul making. Palmer (1994) emphasized the importance of elevating the value of inner work, such as journaling, reflective reading, and meditation, in work organizations.

Others have applied the technique of active imagination in organizations. Barry (1994) used the creation of sculptures by work groups as a way to elicit organizational change on a military base. Wisely and Lynn (1994) described ways to “cultivate hospitable spaces for disciplined reflection in organizational life” (p. 103). They list dialogue, story telling, reading together, and considering mission and history as ways of doing so.

This paper extends such work. We report part of a study of three organizations. We use concepts and methodology founded in archetypal theory to explore how individual and organizational change can happen concurrently. We show how the use of a dialogue-based journal writing technique evoked images that represent archetypes, creating soul and activating the transcendent function to integrate unconscious and conscious material and support individuation.

Methodology

Organizations can be understood as socially constructed systems of stories, discourses, or texts (Boje, 1991; Boje & Dennehy, 1993; Denzin, 1989) that are interpreted. This research project uses an interpretive or constructivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, pp. 20–22) to understand organizational change and

development at the intrapersonal as well as interpersonal levels. We explored individuals’ images of their organizations and their discourse about them. Fornaciari and Dean (2001) set forth two concerns regarding the increasing interest in research in spirituality and the workplace: the inadequacy of the traditional, monological tools of positivist social science to examine spirituality and business, and the possibility that knowledge about this area could be used to manipulate employees. They suggested that research sustained in a framework of dialogue speaks to both of these concerns, as it recognizes the complexity of the whole person and defies short-term, easily quantified results. In our study, the qualitative methodology, the methods of data collection, and the process of data analysis of this study are grounded in dialogue and respond to such concerns. Further, they are consistent with not only the values of dialogue but also the purpose of the research.

Each of the three groups that participated in the larger research project represents a different organization and was made up of members of that organization. The three organizations included one whose mission was to educate about justice; another founded to inform people about the work of Jung; and an undergraduate university writing class that met at a manufacturing site.

Data were collected through individual written exercises as well as observations of group meetings at which extensive notes were taken. Progoff (1975), a follower of Jung, developed a complex journal writing process to engage active imagination. As one means of data collection to study the role that active imagination can play in understanding organizational processes and change, the first author developed an exercise based on this journal writing process (see Appendix). The purpose of the exercise was to allow each participant to consciously process his or her images of work using intrapersonal and interpersonal dialogue. Additional data were collected through observation of the group dialogues centered on the results of the writing exercise. Data from the first workshop were thematically analyzed by the first author, and then portrayed to the participants in the second workshop. Participants either consensually validated the researcher’s interpretation or offered differing analyses.

The group on which we focus in this paper is the first, the organization founded to educate about justice. At the time of the research project, the organiza-

tion was rethinking the relationship among various members—recipients of their services, board, and paid staff. Three staff members and a member of the board participated in both workshops. At the first meeting at which data were collected, participants wrote a statement of their relationship with the organization at the present moment, surfaced an image of the organization as a person, listed ten steps in the organization's history, then imagined a dialogue with the organization. Participants volunteered to read aloud what they had written. The group then identified common themes among the pieces that they had written. Participants gave their written work to the researcher (the first author of this paper), who completed a more detailed thematic analysis of their responses.

Several weeks later, the group met again. The researcher fed back to them a tentative analysis of their work. They discussed these findings and offered alternative interpretations. The group members then repeated the journal writing exercise and the researcher again collected and thematically analyzed the written work. Later, the two authors of this paper reviewed the written data and used an archetypal framework to interpret and amplify the images, histories, and dialogues. A similar process was followed with the other two organizational groups, each of which was also facing changes.

The interpretation of the data grew from carefully considered dialogue between the two authors. The first author is trained as a Gestalt therapist and earned a Ph.D. in organizational behavior, which she teaches at a university business school; the second author is an English professor and has a deep knowledge of and extensive experience with Jungian analysis. In our interpretations, we have used the Jungian and archetypal concepts indicated earlier, our own experiences with the practice of active imagination and dream work, and our knowledge of the people and organizations involved in this research. We acknowledge that our interpretations of these data are shaped by our own professional and personal backgrounds, and others might differ in their interpretations. Since we are working within an interpretive or constructivist paradigm, we make no claim that our results can be generalized to other organizations. However, we are confident that our results are credible and that others could use similar methods in other organizations and discover individual and organizational changes particular to their situation. We believe that our insights and per-

spectives are valuable to people working in and studying organizations and contribute to knowledge about organizational change and personal and managerial development.

Results

The process in the workshops allowed organization members to imagine their organizations in a way that is somewhat uncommon and to engage in group dialogue about their images, thoughts, feelings, and intuitions about the organization. Images and dialogues generated during the second workshop were different from those that emerged in the first. Amplification of these images using archetypal theory indicated that change was evident in many individuals' relationship with their organization. One pattern emerged from all three organizations: many of the images generated in the second workshop tended to be more grounded, human, and differentiated and less numinous or "up in the air" than those in the first, suggesting that these individuals and their relationships with their work and one another had developed concurrently. This process also contributed to organizational development, as people dialogued with one another about their images and the implications that they had for their collective life, which was in a state of transition. In this paper, we concentrate on one case that represents this pattern. The individual has been given a fictitious name in order to ensure confidentiality.

Illustrative Case

Douglas was a staff member with the organization whose mission was to educate about justice. He wrote that, although his workplace was not the primary organization with which he was affiliated, "[i]t has...enlightened, enlivened, and moved me [and]...has allowed me expression, growth, and affirmation."

In the first exercise, he imagined the organization as a dancing woman who "expresses grief, struggle, hope, and solidarity. The dance ends with the body arched heavenward, hands outstretched...in connection between earth and heaven."

In dialogue with this image, he wrote: "Sometimes I feel like I am working in a vacuum.... You seem most associated with me when we have a common success. I think you are ready to support and connect yourself with me when you like my work and when that work is successful. At other times, I feel like our relationship

is floundering.” She replied, “Part of my problem is that I have so many voices in my head and so many dreams, ambitions, preoccupations, and responsibilities. I don’t feel so unified. . . . It’s as if my cells are exploding in hundreds of tiny directions.” He reflected that he felt “frustrated and tense about the direction of the organization,” and identified several conflicts and perspectives.

Two weeks later, at the second workshop, Douglas described his relationship to the organization in this way: “Over and over again these past six years I have been amazed and thankful for this job. I really love this work, this place, this style!” The image and dialogue that he generated during the second workshop were quite different than those of the first workshop. He described his image:

I see a circle of hundreds—people, predominantly women, gathered around...large picnic shelters, in a small sunny village in Guatemala...at a barn raising...., at a mass rally in [Africa].... I see bright colors, sunshine, happiness, children, musicians, large tables of native foods....

He imagined that he heard the organization speak in “a series of voices, remarks coming from every direction.” He wrote that he felt overwhelmed but still wanted to hear it all. He ended by writing, “I love the way you continue to teach me by your word and example. I am proud to be part of an organization that includes [many individuals that I respect].” At the end of the exercise, he described feelings of “peacefulness, satisfaction, happiness, excitement, mystery rather than confusion, creative diversity rather than conflict.”

Douglas’ statements of relationship expressed both connection and detachment. His first image, the dancing woman, was numinous, almost goddess-like. Their dialogue expressed ambiguity, confusion, and conflict. His second, more multifaceted but less ambiguous image, of a vibrant circle of hundreds, focused those voices, dreams, and responsibilities. It is as if they moved from their existence in the dancer’s head to have a life of their own. Douglas was in the center of the image, at the heart of the vital, diverse, noisy gathering he imagined. This second image is less god-like, more human, and more differentiated. Douglas is more fully a part of it.

Organizational Results

In both workshops, when participants in the group

read and discussed the images and dialogues that they had generated, several tensions and issues emerged that, they reported, had not been fully voiced and explored among them. They revealed a sense of mystery, adaptability, and flexibility. They noticed patterns about which they had not been aware previously. They shared dilemmas, values, and beliefs that had been unspoken among them. This conversation probably influenced the images of and dialogues with the organization during the second meeting. When the organization was at a crossroads, each member listened to her or his own spirit and to the creative life of the others.

There was also some evidence of collective change following the second workshop. For example, the homogeneity of the staff was talked about. The two staff members hired after the workshops reflected greater diversity. Also discussed was the relative emphasis of the organization on one urban area of the state. Later, projects reported in the newsletter produced by the organization portrayed somewhat less emphasis on the urban region and more on rural issues and other geographical areas of the state.

While Douglas and his colleagues were members of the same denomination, none of the images that emerged in the workshops were specifically related to their religious tradition. This suggests that the process of soul making in organizations, linking spirit and matter, mind and body, is a spiritual one that is not necessarily linked to a specific religion and can be relevant to all people in a variety of organizations.

The images of the workplace that emerged, the ensuing intrapersonal dialogues, and the interpersonal dialogues among organizational members that followed were soul-making. They facilitated the integration of conscious and unconscious material about the organization and Douglas’s relationship with work. They enabled Douglas to create meaning individually as well as collectively with his peers. The workshops provided space for the rational and the imaginal to play together and acted as a vessel for the process of individuation in the person and for the development of soul.

Discussion

Of the four people who participated in the two workshops from this organization, three of them demonstrated a pattern of development in relationship to the organization similar to Douglas. The fourth person, another full-time staff member, was leaving the

organization to do other work; her results indicated emotional disengagement. We noticed similar patterns among many of the participants in the other two organizations that we studied.

The participants' tacit knowledge of their organizations was evoked by their engagement with the images generated in this exercise, as well as the interpersonal dialogues about the images among people who worked together. The material was first expressed in numinous archetypal images and then in more realistic, complex, balanced images that allowed for adaptation to the external world of the workplace. Uncovering the archetypal ground of the organization and surfacing the individuals' lived relationship to that workplace created space for the transcendent function, thereby transforming mundane ordinary activity into extraordinary soul making. Specific experiences of the ego, in this case the conscious processing of the archetypal images of work, activated the transcendent function. That symbol-making action of the psyche reconciled and incorporated conscious and unconscious material, creating not simply intellectual comprehension but also apprehension, that is, understanding through experience. The intrapersonal and interpersonal dialogues helped people to feel more included in their organizations and to find meaning in their work.

Organizational change and development is frequently studied at the levels of the small work group and the organization as a whole. The data presented and interpreted in this paper suggest that organizational change can be investigated at the personal level of the organization, as well. We suggest that using a qualitative methodology that supports dialogue and the practice of active imagination can help not only to uncover new knowledge about spirituality and work but also support individuation and organizational change.

Change happens within people as they become aware of knowledge about the organization of which they were previously unconscious, integrate that learning, and thus modify the perceptual screens through which they filter information about the organization. As people engage in soul making in the workplace—that is, as they integrate spirit and matter—they discover meaning in the activities and interactions of their labor and engage in the process of individuation. Through this process, they can also connect with others in their organization around values and issues that are important to them, thus creating a sense of inclu-

sion and belonging. Such a sense of meaning and belonging can help them to connect to that which transcends the ego. The person and her or his relationship with work and the organization develop concurrently.

When we envision ourselves and organizations as a pandemonium of images, we know ourselves and see our world from a variety of perspectives (Hillman, 1983). If we conceive of ourselves, our work relationships, and organizations as many voices and dialogues—as polyphony—we hear differences and possibilities within and among us. We discover that each person, each perspective, each voice, is one center of any organization (Hazen, 1993). It is from each of these dynamic centers that collective change can flow.

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Appendix

Dialogue with Your Organization

1. Relax. Close your eyes and let the chair and floor support you. Breathe deeply. Do not go into a deep meditative state—just relax enough to enter your imagination. (5 minutes)
2. Write a statement of your relationship with this organization at the present moment. (5 minutes)
3. Imagine the organization as a being with whom you can communicate. Use all of your senses. What does this individual look like? What do you hear? Smell? Taste? Sense kinesthetically? If the image shifts or changes, that is fine. Just note it. When you are ready, write down your description of the organization as you have imagined it. (10 minutes)
4. Now give this being a voice and a history. Using the first person, write down the eight or ten most important events in his or her life, beginning with the words, “I was born . . .” (10–15 minutes)
5. Imagine the organization again. Now imagine a conversation or dialogue with this being. Begin by introducing yourself. Write down your conversation as if it is a dialogue in a play. (15–20 minutes) Bring your conversation to an end. If you are not finished, agree to complete the dialogue later.
6. Relax again. Read what you have written. If you would like to add or take away anything, do so now. (10 minutes)
7. How are you feeling? Of what are you aware now? Write your feelings, thoughts, and observations. (5 minutes)
8. Decide what you will read aloud to others in the group.