Calling to the *anima mundi*:
On restoring soul within organisations

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Abstract

Concerns about the loss of spirit, morale and morality in modern organisations, apparent in the growing spirituality-at-work literature, suggest that the dominant business paradigm is unbalanced. Grounded in a patriarchal view of the world, it effectively negates the feminine and its intrinsic connection with nature. Alchemists, as C.G. Jung discussed extensively in his works, understood the risk of living in an unbalanced world which neglects the soul of the earth and the soul of people. This paper explores the lost connection with the soul and discusses its ethical implications. In particular, I argue that the *anima mundi* (the world-soul) can restore balance and values in organisations if she is attended to respectfully and with care. This process involves an appreciation of the feminine in its practical and archetypal sense, and some extensive inner work, in the spirit of alchemical imagination, to understand ourselves and our organisations better.

Keywords

Jung, archetypes, feminine soul, masculine order, ethics, spirituality

The message of the earth is change and rhythm and season unending.
Death, in all senses of the word, is an experience that takes us deeper into life,
deeper into mystery and deeper in power.
Salvatore Folisi

Introduction

The modern Western mind, argues Richard Tarnas (1996), has been shaped by three major but related developments: a transformed perspective on the cosmos led us to revise the existing ontology and, subsequently, epistemology. Through the works of Copernicus, Descartes, Kant and many others, modern men and women learnt that human beings are not at the centre of the cosmos, and do not benefit from favourable treatment by the Creator. They also learnt that wonder and mystery has little place in a modern world. Indeed, says Tarnas, a wondrous and mysterious world did not serve people's aspiration to be freed from its contingencies. The modern world is the world of the rational mind. The soul, with its whimsical qualities, sits in uncomfortably:

> The world revealed by modern science has been a world devoid of spiritual purpose, opaque, ruled by chances and necessity, without intrinsic meaning. The human soul has not felt at home in the modern cosmos: the soul can hold dear its poetry and music, its private metaphysics and religion, but these find no certain foundation in the empirical universe. Human beings, confronted with contradictory messages and conflicting needs, are at loss to find fulfilment and happiness. (Tarnas 1996, p. 418)

Our quest for control and power has made us lose both control and power, and 'we no longer experience the world in its fullness' (Denhardt 1981, p. 36). Tarnas suggests that the obliteration of the soul, that which grants fullness and wholeness to our experiences, is detrimental to individuals and, by extension, to the social institutions that regulate the modern world. Jungian writer Thomas Moore concurs: 'The great malady of the twentieth century, implicated in all of our troubles and affecting us individually and socially, is "loss of soul."' (1992, p. ix) The purpose of this paper is to explore the meaning and implications of this claim. Doing so, I aim to outline the connection between the soul and the feminine, and examine how inner work on the psyche may explain and solve the problem of the 'loss of soul' in the context of modern work organisations.

The soul is at the same time symbolic and experiential; it is the highest essence and the core of any being. The soul 'lures into life the inertness of matter that does not want to live. She makes us believe incredible things, that life may be lived' (Jung 1968a, par. 56). The soul connotes both the organising principle of the living, what makes entities alive through growth and movement (in this sense, soul is *anima*, translated as 'breath' or 'life'), and the principle of thought and spiritual direction (in this sense, soul is more usually associated with *animus* and translated as 'spirit') (Clément *et al*. 1994, p. 11). Thus, the soul pervades the body (matter) to animate it, but also displays an immaterial quality which connects matter with the spiritual domain (Woodman 2006). This dual view of the soul, central to alchemical work, was endorsed by Carl Gustav Jung, who defined the soul as both '*anima corporalis*' and '*anima spiritualis*', partly embodied and partly ethereal (Jung 1968b, par. 398).

Symbolically, as it appears through myths or alchemical texts, the '*anima corporalis*' represents the soul as anima, anchored in matter, nature, and of a feminine essence; whereas the '*anima spiritualis*' represents the soul as animus, reflecting spirit, mind and a masculine essence [1]. Our modern language, however, sometimes uses soul and spirit interchangeably, without appreciating the essential difference between the two. Debate over the renewed interest in spirituality illustrates the confusion: in a religious sense (formally or informally), the thirst for spiritual development involves a connection with the divine; mentions of soul in this context do not usually imply a celebration of matter or life embodied, but refer to the animus-side of the soul that longs for the Father (i.e. God). In this purview, however, the spiritual life is somewhat soulless because it aims to ascend to the heavens and leave the singular, individual life behind. Indeed, Moore (1992, p. 262) comments: 'Spiritual life does not truly advance by being separated either from the soul or from its intimacy with life. God, as well as man, is fulfilled when God humbles himself to take on human flesh.' Spirit, Moore warns, has to connect with matter and be grounded in life to bring forth true fulfilment.

On the other hand, holistic interpretations of spirituality (for example, what Heelas and Woodhead (2005) call the 'subjective-life spirituality') capture both dimensions, that is, they strive for a connection with the divine (the spiritual domain, soul as animus-spirit) all the while acknowledging the intrinsic sacredness of matter as soul-bearing (the embodied domain, soul as anima-matter). Jung's endeavours to bring the unconscious to consciousness, and integrate the dark mud to become a fully-fledged individual self, also recognise the necessity to balance spirit with soul, uniting them through a *coniunctio*, a marriage of duality.

Moore (1992, p. 259) notes that anima and animus can be wed in a divine union, although first 'each has to learn to appreciate the other and to be affected by the other – spirit's lofty aims tempered by the soul's lowly limitations, soul's unconsciousness stirred by ideas and imagination.' In simpler terms, spirit tempers soul and soul tempers spirit; besides, soul potentially reconciles spirit and body, transcending the tension between spiritual fundamentalism which neglects or condemns all bodily things, and material fundamentalism which neglects or rejects the values of the spirit and the intellect (Moore 1992, p. 232). A crisis of soul or a loss of soul, in this respect, reveals a major imbalance within individuals and societies, whose effects are not only psychological, but also moral and social (Moore 1992).

The confusion between soul and spirit in common discourse has also somewhat undermined the place of the feminine in soul-work. This, I believe, is what Tarnas laments and Moore alerts us to. For Jung, the anima-soul is 'the archetype of life itself' (1968a, par. 66) who shapes much of our psychological reality. Although the soul is not a feminine construct, its essential qualities are archetypally feminine, and that is how men and women symbolically relate to the soul. Marion Woodman, for instance, highlights the feminine dimension of soul-work; she discusses how soul and love can nurture creativity, and connect us with 'Sophia, a presence that has been associated with the feminine side of God' (2006, p. 35-36). Jung usually refers to the soul as 'she'. In the following discussion, I not only wish to address the loss of soul within modern organisations, but also to underline how such a loss has been accompanied by a deep neglect of the feminine noticeable, partly, in the patriarchal inheritance of modernity. I contend that work on the soul benefits from a full recognition of its feminine essence, present in both genders. The feminine understands particularly well the rhythms of Nature and the music of the living. The soul of the world, or *anima mundi*, an undeniably feminine archetype, knows the secrets of the living. I propose that a long-awaited rehabilitation of the *anima mundi* would help curb the loss of soul that affects our modern world, wounding individuals and stiffening organisations.

Soul and the spurned feminine

Jung understood very well the role of the soul in individual growth. Through his work on the unconscious, he came to appreciate deeply the function of the anima-soul in the arduous process of becoming an individual. At times, Jung equates soul with psyche (Psyche being another feminine character from the Greek mythology), and denounces the widespread

scepticism surrounding depth psychology. The following quote, first written in the 1940s, summarises to a large extent the current attitude of many modern men and women towards the soul:

> [There is a] universal depreciation of the soul in the West. Whoever speaks of the reality of the soul or psyche is accused of "psychologism"….[W]e must really ask: How do we know so much about the psyche that we can say "only" psychic? For this is how Western man, whose soul is evidently "of little worth", speaks and thinks. If much were in his soul he would speak of it with reverence. But since he does not do so we can only conclude that there is nothing of value in it. (Jung 1968b, par. 9-10)

The lost connection with the soul has paralleled the lost connection with the feminine in favour of a masculine paradigm. Tarnas (1996, p. 441) states that '[t]he masculinity of the Western mind has been pervasive and fundamental, in both men and women, affecting every aspect of Western thought, determining its most basic conception of the human being and the human role in the world.' Liz Evans (2006, pp. 24-25) concurs: 'Despite some 40 years of second-wave feminism, contemporary Western culture is still governed by a masculine economy…[which] has traditionally left the female without subjectivity'. The feminine remains largely conceived as object to a (masculine) subject, who orders the world praising spirit and neglecting matter. Enormous progress has been achieved by the ego striving for its independence from the original womb, but in return the feminine has been sacrificed. In Tarnas's words (1996, p. 442):

> [T]he evolution of the Western mind has been founded on the repression of the feminine – on the repression of undifferentiated unitary consciousness, of the *participation mystique* with nature: a progressive denial of the *anima mundi*, of the soul of the world, of the community of being, of the all-pervading, of mystery and ambiguity, of imagination, emotion, instinct, body, nature, woman – of all that which the masculine has projectively identified as "other".

Of course, the masculine provides us with essential values and skills, such as the ability to organise the world and make sense of what we see, feel and think. However, the demise of feminine goddesses, and the rise of monotheist religions organised around a usually masculine, fatherly figure who can create life by himself, have largely contributed to shaping the negative attitude towards the feminine. In Western Europe, this change started with the advent of Judeo-Christianity, further supported by the Enlightenment and its emphasis on

rational science and a mechanistic view of life (see for instance Harpur 2002, pp. 53-55, on rationalism and polarisation). This is not to say that the Eastern world has been immune to the demise of the feminine soul, especially since the industrial model of mass production and mass consumption has transcended geographical boundaries. The discussion is however particularly relevant to 'the West' because of the close relationship between modern rationalism, capitalism and the business culture it has led to (Bibard 2005).

As our connection with the soul of living things (matter, Earth, the Great Mother) slowly loosened, we atrophied ourselves from the very organ that allows us to understand and work *with* (instead of working *on*) our environment. As Moore (1992) suggests, recalling the myth of Icarus and many others who have fallen down after flying too close to the sun, there are risks in focusing on the heavens (the dogmatic spiritual domain) whilst subordinating the earth (the womb-tomb of embodied life): we effectively divide the cosmos, and ultimately split ourselves. Inevitably, the soul suffers, since the soul strives for wholeness. Then, the soul becomes diseased, and we mistakenly assume that the soul is the disease, condemning soulful matter and further dividing cosmos and psyche (Evans 2006). What the soul wants is to remind us we are individual bearers of the *anima mundi*, the soul of the world. Indeed, our soul is never only ours, but belongs to all that is as well. This is why soul-work is archetypal by nature: it touches upon a collective dimension of beingness. Of course, soul-work stirs the deep, dark mud: what was ordered no longer is, what was clear is now cloudy. In other words, soul-work brings confusion and challenges our set perception of the world. But it also brings forth a shinier luminosity to our experiences, through uniting what was formerly divided (Woodman 2006).

What if we fail to recognise the wounded soul? What if we don't rebalance feminine and masculine in the world? For Evans (2006, p. 30): '[M]an hasn't thought through his exploitation of nature, and therein risks his own death. He has determined his relation to nature by means of appropriation, and symbolically stopped the earth turning, having immobilized it within theory.' Jungian analyst and writer Murray Stein (2008) concurs by exposing the self (human as well as archetypal) as carrier of holistic opposite forces. Jung's conception of the self, says Stein, encompasses a fundamental, intrinsic law of opposites and compensation that links human psyche with the natural world. When disequilibrium occurs, balance must be restored, one way or another, inside and outside. Thus, Stein (2008, p. 318) notes, our exploitation of nature will come at a cost:

As a consequence of human disturbance to the evolved ecological systems, for instance, the 'self of the world' will restore equilibrium and drive forward the evolutionary *telos* of nature's individuation on its own, perhaps even to the extent of destroying, or at least curbing, the disturbing elements (i.e., the human species with its unrestrained Titanic ambitions to rule and control nature for its own benefit).

Adopting a feminist lens, Evans (2006, p. 30) proposes that women 'reinscribe themselves, …end the complicity with men against nature, and rediscover themselves through an embedded, embodied connection with the non-human, opening up a symbolic to include all sentient beings, and not just those classified as *homo sapiens*.' Although women's role in society has been undermined for a long time (see for instance Jironet 2011 on leadership), it must be acknowledged that the feminine in men has equally suffered (Gustafson 2003). If women can bring forth change and reconnect with nature, men also have a crucial role to play in rediscovering the vivacity and compassion of the feminine (a key dimension of their *anima* in Jungian terms) that will give them a deeper understanding of the forces of life. Work on the individual soul is at the same time work on the *anima mundi*, in the same way as work on the individual psyche reverberates in the collective psyche (Jung 1957, par. 583). Thus, organisational agents who tend to their soul are likely to bring more soul to their workplace as well, since their inner transformation triggers and resonates with collective evolution.

Soul and organisations

Whether organisations have a soul or not is a problematic question, especially when debating ethical issues at work (Bell *et al*. 2012). The idea of an organisational soul, first merely a metaphor, has gained some credibility as a substantive and normative concept thanks to the spirituality-at-work movement (Bell *et al*. 2012). Duska and Ragatz (2008) argue, following Aristotle, that it is possible to conceive that organisations have a soul to the extent that they have a form (formal cause) and a function or purpose (final cause). Therefore, 'a business, like a human being, is a living enterprise driven by its projects and goals, i.e. its purposes. Further, when it loses its purpose or changes its purpose, its very being is changed. […] The corruption we see in business today is the result of such a loss of purpose (soul).' (Duska and Ragatz 2008, p. 152) The appeal of 'the organisational soul' lies in its framing of ethical issues as both individual and collective, underlining the co-responsibility of organisational agents and organisation-as-entity for the moral values sustained. In any case, the ontological

difficulty of determining the existence of organisational souls does not change the fact that the ethical climate and morale levels within an organisation are likely to be influenced by the state of the soul of its individual members. As stated in the previous section, individuals are distinct from, but also make up, the collective; therefore, talks about soul with regards to organisations are, to a great extent, talks about soul with regards to individuals that compose organisations.

It is important to discuss the soul of individuals in the context of their work organisation in so far as the workplace (and the activities relating to it) has 'a great deal to do with the condition of the soul' (Moore 1992, p. 177). Workplace organisations witness both suffering and search for meaning, two phenomena that greatly affect the soul (Driver 2007). Stein adds that most of the organisations we belong to (work or otherwise) 'do not provide a context for [the] third level of consciousness' that consists in a reconnection with the *anima mundi* (1992, p. 16). Our modern conception of work as primarily instrumental to sustain acceptable standards of living is removed from the understanding that work is as much about technique and achievements as it is about art, meaning and crafting one's individual life. For Moore, contemporary businesses seek efficiency by mimicking the seemingly successful methods of production of other cultures, when they should instead diagnose a loss of soul and understand that 'it may not be enough to copy surface strategies, ignoring the deeper evaluation of feeling and sensibility that gives work grounding in the human heart and not just in the brain.' (1992, p. 184) In this respect, argues Moore, a good workplace is one that consciously advocates soul values, and a soulful organisation is one that finds a balance between ecological and economic concerns. Bureaucratic organisations, in which impersonal and instrumental transactions provide symbols of recognition, approval, success and, ultimately, immortality, stand in opposition to soulful organisations. Instead of giving space to individuality and soul, bureaucracies (and many large organisations) demand conformity and absorb all individual expressions of soul, spirit and personal moral values (Denhardt 1981).

An increasing number of studies and scholarly papers defend the premise that spirit and soul have a place in human society that is on a par with economic and social needs. Research into spirituality in the workplace (e.g. Ashar and Lane-Maher 2004; Benefiel 2005; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003; Lips-Wiersma and Nilakant 2008; Mitroff and Denton 1999; Pauchant 2000; Zsolnai 2004 to list only a few), and accounts of practitioners' experiments (e.g. Henry 2009; Kernochan *et al*. 2007; Mirvis 1997; O'Brien 2008; Zaidman *et al*. 2009) have become

ever more popular and visible in discussions about ethics, business, management and leadership. The spirituality-at-work movement somewhat contributes to re-enchanting the world following centuries of disenchantment ensued especially, but not only, from the Copernican revolution (Tarnas 1996). Although the very notion of spirituality calls for caution, and although spirituality is not always synonymous with soul-work, such a trend possibly asserts a need for meaning which is not fulfilled by our profitability- and efficiency-minded organisations (Driver 2007).

Manifestations of the wounded soul

Several symptoms of the wounded soul were discussed during a 2011 symposium aimed at reflecting upon organisational life through a Jungian lens. The three invited speakers, Lea Holford, Tarja Ketola and Jill Yielder, shared their experiences, as scholars and/or therapists, on how organisational issues could be tackled more holistically. Each identified a specific problem within the context of business organisations and management practices that illustrates a major split between conscious and unconscious, and contributes to a loss of soul and ethical ideals. In what follows, I will outline what these problems are and how they can be apprehended.

Ego-development and lack of integration

As we live our existence switching from one role to the next, we nurture fragmentation and compartmentalization (Rozuel 2011). Social expectations, perceived duties, projections and mirroring all affect our sense of identity, of who we should and could be. Self-improvement is mistaken for role-perfection through acquisition of specific skills and competencies. In order to acquire those skills, the person has to rely on certain inner abilities and discard others. For example, tasks that require analytical skills appeal to what Jung called 'rational' functions of the psyche (thinking and occasionally feeling) in contrast with the 'irrational' functions intuiting and sensing, that do not purport to classify or order *per se*. Mainstream education that praises specialisation encourages to some extent such compartmentalised view of human functioning (Chatterji 2011).

Jung (1971) argued that each person presents a specific psychological type or attitude which co-ordinates the four main functions of the psyche in specific ways: one function is dominant, one secondary or supportive, whilst the other two are under-developed. The rational and irrational functions stand in opposition with one another, respectively and as a whole. Adding

the general attitude of the psyche in relation to the outside and inner world (extraverted or introverted), Jung offered a useful tool to understand human behaviour and the effects of the repressed unconscious. These psychological types were later expanded upon and reframed as a management tool (the 'MBTI') by Katharine Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers.

We are not a type for life, for we can – and should – develop the functions that are not naturally dominant. Jung, as Tarja Ketola (2011) underlined, conceived each function as potential. When we consciously work towards developing one function or another, we tap into additional potential that was always there but had to be found. But this is not enough to live well; we must also integrate all four functions so as to form a harmonious whole. This, and only this, enables us to become responsible leaders in our personal and professional life. Modern organisations by and large emphasise and value the rational thinking function far more than the other functions, thus jeopardising the process of integration by rewarding narrow behaviours, and discarding or sanctioning non-conventional ways of approaching a situation (Ketola 2011). When potential lies untouched, both individuals and the communities they belong to, lose out.

The very definition of management or organisational 'science' implies a high degree of control over circumstances through planning, forecasting or strategizing. Yet, individuation (which is the process of psychological integration of unconscious content, such as archetypes, into consciousness) cannot be planned, strategized or controlled, because the ego does not know what the self really is. If the ego does not let go of its effectively limited control, the self will find it harder to emerge – harder, but not impossible. Are modern, rational organisations ready to confront the shadow, that is, the hidden and repressed? To do so means that they need to allow the dirty, chaotic, shattering work of integration to take place as it should, and accept what the self unveils. What if change is radical? What if individuals who work in these organisations change in such a way that their individuated selves no longer believe in the old value system? What if they aspire to something else, something more authentic to their soul? Then, so be it, for that is the essence of life (Jung 1969; Woodman 2006). Organisational agents would be encouraged to live first as individuals and not succumb so wholeheartedly to the sirens of the numbing collective. Individuals may be exposed to suffering and darkness, but they are also more apt at judging ethical issues in a constructive manner. Bell, Taylor and Driscoll (2012) likewise argue in favour of 'sick souls', that is, a soul that acknowledges the presence and influence of evil to better cope with

its effects on health and happiness, in contrast to an approach to soul that denies the impact of pain and evil onto the world. They believe that 'sick souls are more insightful; their melancholy concerning the loss of meaning, fear, personal sin, and inequitable social structures provides the basis for strenuous activity through which a more sophisticated ethical sensibility can be achieved' (p. 432).

Schema of archetypal dominance and unbalanced values

Fear surrounding soul-work in organisations often finds its roots in power issues. Existing power patterns usually reflect a patriarchal worldview, whilst business, as Jill Yielder (2011) stated, is the realm of 'he' (the masculine principle). On the whole, gender equality (of which pay gap is but an illustrative factor) has still not been achieved within and outside organisations (Jironet 2011; Plantenga and Remery 2006). Western societies, and many others, continue to perceive women as the main carrier for the mother archetype, even though this creates tension against women's aspirations to actualise other parts of their lives (Yielder 2011). Yet, to live archetypally is to live without limitations; new skills and aptitudes can be developed if we learn to work with and integrate archetypes.

Archetypes, which originate from the collective unconscious, are universal patterns illustrating given traits or characteristics. They have been captured in myths, stories or folk tales, but they have shaped our culture and behaviours tremendously (von Franz 1996). The ancient Greeks captured a fair range of such archetypes through the Olympian mythology, and many Jungian and non-Jungian scholars still refer to these mythical figures to discuss the ways of the psyche (for instance Robert Johnson or Joseph Campbell). Building upon her own experience as Jungian therapist, Yielder (2011) proposed that the most recurrent archetypes that operate in business organisations are Zeus, Hermes as well as the duality *puer aeternis-senex*. Being able to identify manifestations of an archetype is most useful because archetypes are, like everything, dual in nature: they display both positive and disruptive qualities which, if expressed unconsciously, can overwhelm ego-consciousness. On the other hand, when consciously integrated, archetypes provide support to enhance skills and knowledge.

Zeus is much loved in the business realm because he is the ruler, the all-mighty god ruling the sky (symbolizing the external, material world) whilst his brothers rule over the sea and the underworld. Zeus personifies power, which in its positive side stimulates intelligence of

control, rational thinking, will-power and decisiveness, good insights, aspirational drive and self-confidence. Zeus-type characters, Yielder (2011) explained, are charismatic and magnetic, so long as their universe reflects who they are. Whilst Zeus's influence helps build a strong ego, necessary to survive the collective pressure, it also reveals undesirable features. Being so high in the heavens makes it much harder to relate to others in a warm and empathetic manner; on the contrary, it feeds ego-inflation and paranoia that others want to claim the throne for themselves (Yielder 2011). Hermes, on the other hand, is known as a trickster character who brings change and is at ease at crossroads. Famously the god of commerce and the messenger, he is gifted for eloquence and invention, as well as for deception and theft. Hermes thus captures the idea of limit, both moral and psychological – a trait that many traders of late have failed to develop (Yielder 2011). Indeed, Hermes-type business agents have no real sense of crossing lines, no clear definition of right and wrong because they stand in the 'in-between'. Expressions of impulsiveness reveal the *puer aeternis*, the eternal adolescent living on the edge where everything is possible, no matter the consequences. Such model of psychological development is creatively appealing, but obviously detrimental to a much needed sense of moral responsibility for self and towards others. Thus, the *puer aeternis*, for all its qualities of hopeful growth, must be balanced by the *senex*, the wise old man who, with discipline and rational thinking, can channel energy to construct and relate in a considerate manner (Yielder 2011). Of course, the old man can swap wisdom for power and become tyrannical, embodying the worst aspects of Zeus, or those of his father Chronos who devoured his own children.

Yielder (2011) also stressed that extraverted thinking types are very present in the business world. These types generally display either Hermes or Zeus-type qualities, making them effective, innovative, assertive and logical thinkers, but also more apt to discard feeling and otherness (both feminine characteristics). Managers who successfully climb up the organisational ladder sacrifice the feminine by subjecting it to a domineering masculine, because the organisational structure and culture assume spirit controls nature, and mind controls feelings (Yielder 2011). They often do so unconsciously, because 'we have to' or 'these are the rules of the game', muting their own inner feminine whilst reacting conservatively to the projections of the feminine perceived in others. On the other hand, employees or managers who have consciously engaged with powerful feminine qualities (such as the ability to cope with natural cycles) may not thrive in an environment dominated by colleagues or bosses whose ego-consciousness has identified with the Zeus or Hermes

archetype. The examination of Enron's corporate culture clearly illustrates how such a situation is morally and economically destructive and unsustainable (Gibney 2005). Leaders who unreflectively embrace Zeus or Hermes characteristics are usually dangerous for the organisation and society at large (see Kets de Vries 2003 for examples). Long term prosperity and sustainability involves the idea of balanced growth. This cannot be attained by following the existing patriarchal model that denatures nature and rationalises the sacred.

Lost sacredness

Our disconnection from the sacred is relatively recent in light of human history (Holford 2011). Up until the Middle-Ages, matter and psyche were appreciated as interconnected, especially by alchemists who conceived of life as a sacred encounter between feminine (matter) and masculine (spirit) (Tarnas 1996; 2007). However, the mind's need for order led to the rationalisation of the environment and the subjection of matter to spirit. In parallel, the once revered gods of nature were discarded as irrational beliefs (Holford 2011). To preserve the soul of the world, human beings transferred it into their own subjectivity. This, as Holford (2011) explained, led to inevitable ego-inflation. Modern men and women came to believe that since it was not rationally possible to accept the presence of gods and ethereal spirits, these forces and energies that ancient people perceived in nature and called gods and spirits actually originated from their own minds or their own psyche. This rationalisation illustrates a withdrawal of projections, with a subsequent inflation of consciousness as compensatory effect, whereby modern rational men and women started to believe that they were gods themselves (e.g. 'I think it, so it is real'), and that they possessed the powers attributed to spirits through the single ability to think rationally and scientifically (Jung 1968b, par. 562). This remains a problem of present days: our blind faith in science and technology as a sure way to master (i.e. enslave) the natural environment; our lack of responsibility for the obvious consequences of modern ways of consumption; our race to appropriate resources and destroy those we cannot have; our culture that assesses success in terms of material acquisition and ruthless competition, are all examples of human inflation. To a large extent, modern men and women behave as if they were entitled to control the entire universe without concern for, or accountability to, other living beings.

The fading relation with the sacred, and the subsequent inflation, did not go unnoticed however; it left a void, a longing for something that was but no longer is, yet remains part of life. This longing reflects the need to reconnect with nature, although we are far from being

ready to give up a highly materialistic way of life (Holford 2011). What is thus required is a change of worldview and transcendence of opposites (Jung 1958; Holford 2011). As Hillman (1995) suggests, we need to shift away from a paradigm of growth and efficiency towards one valuing service and maintenance. Holford (2011) believes we slowly come to realise that the heartless pursuit of wealth is a disease, citing the 'Occupy' movement (see occupywallst.org) and the rise of the '99%' platforms (for instance the99spring.com initiated by workers and trade unions, or wearethe99percent.tumblr.com) as evidence of a growing discontentment. Growth and efficiency have a shadow side too. In the human body, exponential growth leads to cancerous cells. Similarly, when growth and efficiency fail to be integrated with more earthly factors, we risk a life-threatening disease affecting not only humanity, but the planet as a whole.

Associated with feminine values, service and maintenance have long been devalued as inferior tasks (Holford 2011). Service is too often thought of as servitude. Customer services department are not meant to offer real care and attention; more often than not, the services are scripted, rehearsed, robotic and designed to prevent bad press for the company. Service here is, again, service of the masculine by paying lip-service to the feminine. The idea of maintenance, meanwhile, portrays a static world in which hyperactive Hermes would feel pretty unhappy. On the contrary, growth implies that something bigger and better awaits us in the future, so we do not need to content ourselves with what we have now. The present cannot be sacred when all the attention is turned towards the future. This masculine trait, for its merits, fails to value the resources of the present as mother to the resources of the future (Holford 2011). The sacred mystery of creation through destruction, of regeneration and re-birth, carried by the archetypal feminine, has been both rejected and feared (Pinkola Estés 1992). Until we become fully conscious that we live *in* earth and not *on* earth, said Holford (2011), we will not come to grips with our actual responsibility towards life. The growing interest in biodynamic farming is one step in the direction of valuing maintenance and integration rather than dominance and specialisation. This idea is not unlike the Indian concept of 'Lokasangraha' which Chatterji (2011, p. 96) proposes to 'reconcile individual growth with sustenance' in a spirit of sustainability. It is essential we understand that everything has a cost. This is not merely financial; the psychological cost of our deep split with nature has been the atrophy of the inner self and the world-soul.

Re-awakening the *anima mundi*

The *anima mundi* is a concept familiar to alchemists, although the idea of a world-soul is not new. Ancient Greeks like Plato, the Gnostics, Renaissance craftsmen and artists, as well as, beyond Western Europe frontiers, the Sufis, all shared an understanding that the world is a universal spiritual living being (Vaughan-Lee 2005). Contrary to the Church's belief in an unreachable transcendence of the divine, the *anima mundi* asserts that matter is spirit and spirit is matter. All is in all, as above so below. The *anima mundi* is that spark, that breath that gives life to everything, and contains all life that exists and has ever existed. Each living being is carrier of the *anima mundi* in their soul, and we are connected at a spiritual level with the entire universe: vegetal, animal, ethereal.

The *anima mundi* is dual and complex. Alchemists looked for gold and light in the heart of darkness, thus the world-soul is both darkness and light. It is the light that transforms darkness, and it is darkness containing light. 'It can be had for the asking and can be found anywhere, even in the most loathsome filth' (Jung 1968b, par. 421). It is the self as Jung described it: a holistic reflection of the divine, present in human psyche but also revealed in all parts of the cosmic order (see Stein's 2008 thorough discussion of the concept). Jung (1968b, par. 413) commented that as the divine spirit descends into the world, Christians assert:

> [the spirit] stops at the *living body* of the Chosen One [i.e. Christ], who is at once very man
> and very God, whereas in alchemy the descent goes right down into the darkness of inanimate
> matter whose nether regions, according to the Neopythagoreans, are ruled by evil. Evil and
> matter together form the Dyad, the duality. This is feminine in nature, an *anima mundi*, the
> feminine Physis who longs for the embrace of the One, the Monad, the good and perfect. […]
> She is "the divine soul imprisoned in the elements", whom it is the task of alchemy to redeem.

The task of each individual, for alchemists, is therefore to free and redeem the imprisoned feminine, because the longing and suffering that occurs in our lives are but a reflection of the longing and suffering experienced by the dejected world-soul (Jung 1968b, par. 414). The psychological task of individuation, of discovery and integration of unconscious contents into ego-consciousness, is extraordinarily painful and scary, but it is an ethical obligation in Jung's view. If we do not tend to the inner life, if we do not hear the calls to redeem the

anima mundi, we not only fail to live fully, but we also ignore the wisdom of natural cycles and jeopardise the intrinsic balance of cosmic forces. As mentioned earlier, we already witness the consequences of such unbalanced attitude by the compensatory effects on the social and natural environment.

Although human beings are responsible for their conscious attitudes to a large extent, alchemists do not believe that they are the ones to be saved and redeemed. Jung notes that it is the divine that needs to be saved from the 'darkness of matter…[to produce] an ineffable material being…which displays the most paradoxical qualities apart from possessing *corpus*, *anima*, *spiritus*, and supernatural powers' (1968b, par. 420). Thus is regenerated the *anima mundi*, the self, the soul of man and woman. The work is primarily individual, with collective implications. The first problem to tackle is ego-inflation. Jung (1968b, par. 563) bluntly declares that:

> [a]n inflated consciousness is always egocentric and conscious of nothing but its own existence. It is incapable of learning from the past, incapable of understanding contemporary events, and incapable of drawing right conclusions about the future. It is hypnotized by itself and therefore cannot be argued with. It inevitably dooms itself to calamities that must strike it dead.

On account of our past behaviour, and the poor inheritance we will leave future generations in environmental, social, cultural and economic terms, it is hard to deny humanity has been suffering from 'an inflated consciousness'. The inherent values of capitalistic societies are self-interested and self-centred (Lordon 2010; Swanson 2002), and the model proves fallible when it comes to anticipating the environmental, social and moral costs of economic growth. Yet, we have so far failed to implement a more progressive, fairer socio-economic system than neo-liberal capitalism, in spite of the 'calamities' it triggers. It would seem that our faith in the market as salutary is unbounded, and that we find inconceivable a world that would question the existence of for-profit business organisations. Meanwhile, financial crises succeed one another, caused by the same ruthless and egocentric speculative behaviours (Enron's corporate culture prior to its collapse shares remarkable similarities to Lehman Brothers'). Further hints of ego-inflation can be found in examples of corporate exploitation such as mass lay-offs announced in parallel with record profits and bonus plans, or intense corporate lobbying in the name of free speech and stakeholder dialogue. Ego-inflation is

dangerous because it prevents self-reflection; instead of stepping back to assess the situation (rationally, if not morally), the ego is pushed towards excess since the archetypes are left unbounded. Scandals and crises are evidence of archetypal play, when the ego has given up its power to satisfy a fantasy of greatness.

The task is certainly daunting. Yet, individual soul-work is significant enough to action change on a more collective level. This is the encouragement we need: organisations and institutions are affected by the inner work of individuals, even if these individuals are a minority. For Vaughan-Lee (2005), 'what matters is the level of participation […], we do need to recognize that there is a certain work that needs to be done, and that we can no longer stand on the sidelines and watch our collective dreams spin out of control.' In that purview, grassroots movements that rely on individual will and individual work pave the way for truly profound and redeeming transformations. We can easily discard accusations of dogmatism, because individuation is bound to be a singular experience of individual awakening. It cannot be transposed literally from one individual to the next, although the process of self-discovery entails collective patterns and universal images. What we discover inside our soul nonetheless is singular, even if it also is a reflection of the world-soul herself. Forever wary of the 'masses [which] are blind brutes', Jung (1968b, par. 563) reckoned our moral responsibility starts with extensive individual inner work:

> Of course, what we discover there is nothing that can be held up to the masses – only some hidden thing that we can hold up to ourselves in solitude and in silence. Very few people care to know anything about this; it is so much easier to preach the universal panacea to everybody else than to take it oneself, and, as we all know, things are never so bad when everybody is in the same boat. No doubts can exist in the herd; the bigger the crowd the better the truth – and the greater the catastrophe.

Becoming aware of our deep and essential connection to the *anima mundi* thus fosters tremendous opportunities for both individuals and their environment as a whole. Undertaking inner work is a hard but unavoidable task of life, which enables us to relate to 'the whole of creation and the heart of the world', and further to 'unlock the secrets of nature, so that we no longer have to attack and destroy the natural world in order to survive' (Vaughan-Lee 2005). This is a radical change from the paradigm we have constructed over centuries of industrialisation and modernisation, but it is a paradigm rooted in something more earthly,

balanced and wise. It goes far beyond a shift in the balance of powers; rather, it brings an awakening to the nature of life through an understanding of life in nature. Movements such as ecofeminism, whose foundation is 'a positive perception of the relationship between woman and nature, in full awareness, and therefore defiance, of having been "othered" [by the masculine patriarchy]' encourage this awakening in women – and men open to it (Evans 2006, p. 31).

Awakening the *anima mundi* requires growth in consciousness and faith in imagination. It is not surprising that Jung's favourite methods of exploring the unconscious were dreams and active imagination (Chodorow 1997; Hannah 1981; Jung 1970). Both of these practices put us in touch with archetypes since they are not formatted by the social expectations that characterise ego-consciousness. In so far as dreams and the imaginative realm are liminal and reflective of the self as unity of opposites, they directly tap into the potential brought forward by the redemption of the world-soul. Vaughan-Lee (2005) eloquently captures the significance of reconnecting with the feminine embodiment of the divine light:

> The World Soul is not a fixed or defined substance, but a living substance made out of the hopes, dreams and deepest imaginings of humanity and of all creation. This is the home of creation's collective memories and the myths of humanity. Here are the archetypes and powers that define our life. Here are hidden places of magical meaning, places where dreams can come into being. We have lived for so long in the stark barrenness of a rational landscape that we have forgotten the potency that lies beneath the surface.

What we are invited to do is to strip ourselves from hubris and ego-inflation, and ensure our intentions are honest. The psyche must be approached carefully and reverently if it is to reveal its wonders. As with every task, preparation is key. We will likely achieve a mediocre or insufficient understanding of ourselves, and we will fail to appreciate the divine power of the world-soul, if we set ego-expectations ahead of the journey. Honest intentions and open-mindedness are essential: 'one must keep the eyes of the mind and soul well open, observing and contemplating by means of that inner light which God has lit in nature and in our hearts from the beginning' (Jung 1968b, par. 381). We are asked to open ourselves up to imagination (the 'key that opens the door to the secret of the *opus*' for alchemists, notes Jung 1968b, par. 400) without agenda, except to welcome what will surface. This is a radically different approach from the instrumental take on imagination and creativity that often

prevails in organisations. Our need to justify idleness and daydreaming by providing tangible results is the exact opposite of what the world-soul demands. We would be well-advised to stop aiming to produce something, and instead trust that something will be produced (beyond our ego-conscious will) that will be valuable.

We could also learn again the value of play, though not with a view to encouraging team-work, strengthening organisational commitment or improving employees' morale and productivity. Rather, play could be allowed as a way to explore what we do and what we are, as well as what we should be doing and what we can become. Time for play and imagination can hardly be regulated by corporate policies, nor should it be forced upon by leaders. Much of the scepticism surrounding spirituality-at-work initiatives reflect the fear that leaders will impose their beliefs onto their employees without consultation, out of naïve faith, instrumental motives or proselytism (Lips-Wiersma *et al.* 2009). This is a legitimate concern, even though leadership can be honest and reflective when leaders are attuned to their inner complexes and patterns (e.g. Jaworski 1996; Zsolnai 2004). I nonetheless argue that activities of play and imagination do not pertain to leaders or senior managers alone. Instead, it is essential that each organisational agent reflects upon whether and how they feel the need to engage in playful explorations and imaginative dives, personally and within the context of the organisation. Although general advice on the process can be given, the means and end-results are necessarily peculiar to each individual and each organisation. What matters is that we, as individuals, allow ourselves to begin the descent towards our soul, our lost feminine, the *anima mundi*.

It is also important that we understand the journey will cost us (Woodman 2006). This means letting go of the structures, institutions and values that cripple the feminine; this means we may undergo radical transformation both inside our psyche, and outside in the natural order. Understandably, those currently holding the most power would resist the most. But this is where we could rely on the positive qualities of Zeus to trust the self, and let Hermes guide us in the in-between world, so that we make space for the feminine. Doing so, we learn to integrate what stood in opposition before. Tarnas (1996, p. 444) warns:

> to achieve [the] reintegration of the repressed feminine, the masculine must undergo a sacrifice, an ego death. …This is where the real act of heroism is going to be. …And this is the great challenge of our time, the evolutionary imperative for the masculine to see through

and overcome its hubris and one-sidedness, to own its unconscious shadow, to choose to enter into a fundamentally new relationship of mutuality with the feminine in all its forms.

Sacrifice is required by the feminine because the feminine is dual in nature, like all things. The practice of ritual sacrifices to honour the gods at least acknowledges that nothing comes free, and that what is neglected is likely to manifest itself with revenge.

Conclusion

As we undertake the inner process of redeeming and re-awakening the *anima mundi*, Vaughan-Lee (2005) says, 'we will begin to see that the world and our own selves both are more magical than we know.' Indeed, the *anima mundi* brings magic and meaning back into our conscious world, and we need both to live fully. To find meaning in our life is what Viktor Frankl (2006) believes keeps us going and alive in the hardest of times. Drawing from his own traumatic experiences of suffering in concentration camps, Frankl dedicated himself to providing tools for others to uncover meaning in life, however hidden, however surprising, however painful the discovery process. In Frankl's words (2006, p. 76), we must learn that 'it [does] not really matter what we expected from life, but rather [what matters is] what life expect[s] from us'. When we allow ourselves to be questioned by life, we give space to imagination and invite the soul to guide our steps. For Denhardt (1981), this process is more often hindered than supported by contemporary organisations, and an individual has to develop strong psychological resources to differentiate from the seemingly authoritative and reassuring organisational image.

By re-awakening the *anima mundi*, we uncover at once the deepest, darkest, most luminous meaning of life. The search for meaning demands we do not limit ourselves to what ego-consciousness knows, but instead that we embrace the unknown, the other, the unacknowledged. Integration of the feminine and rehabilitation of the *anima mundi* is an essential quest for meaning in our restless world. The quest does not have to be entirely traumatic. We can, and should, consciously choose to be infused with the magical essence of the unconscious, so that we participate in our own transformation. Furthermore, since we live in a world of organisations, and since most organisations 'have not evolved to the point where seeking soulful communication is highly prized' (Auger and Arneberg 1992, p. 50), it is essential to remain conscious of the influence of organisational culture when we undertake inner work (Denhardt 1981). Socialisation is beneficial up to a point, but it shouldn't impede

the individual's quest for meaning, lest the *anima mundi* should return to the shadows and we should face a soulless world.

Notes

[1] In archetypal terms, feminine does not equate 'woman' and masculine does not equate 'man'. Archetypes are not genders, but they possess qualities that reflect the mythical or symbolic qualities of women and men in their own ways. When brought together, they form a whole in a complementary fashion. Thus, men and women are inhabited by both masculine and feminine psychological energies, tapping into the same collective unconscious. The gender difference, according to Jung, lies in the biological make-up of masculine and feminine genes: women consciously manifest more feminine traits or genes, whilst men consciously display more masculine traits or genes. However, all that is not consciously expressed belongs to the unconscious. Therefore, women primarily relate to their masculinity via the archetypal *animus*, whereas men project their femininity in the archetypal *anima*. Of course, the unconscious is populated by many other archetypes, some more visibly gendered than others. The following discussion of femininity and masculinity is therefore not sociological or cultural, but symbolic and psychological. It should be noted, however, that the latter influences the former.

Acknowledgements

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