ABSTRACT: Both social scientists and organizational practitioners are baffled that organizations not only fail to work according to design but often engage in pathological behaviors. The puzzle stems from a narrow, purely rationalist, approach, and so a metarational one is needed. I offer a shamanic organizational paradigm, exploring the ancient notion of soul-loss and suggesting how organizations can steal their personnel’s life-force and thereby foster pathologies because of compromised psychospiritual integrity. I end with suggestions for prevention and healing.

KEYWORDS: organizations, bureaucracy, bureaupathology, shamanism, soul-loss, soul-theft, management spirituality.

How can well-meaning people, in organizations aimed at our betterment, do such atrocious things to themselves, each other, their communities, and the environment? The question puzzles both social scientists and organizational practitioners. It seems irrational—pathology flows from organizations led and staffed by some of the world’s best and brightest. Whereas the typical organization begins its life by claiming to operate in the public interest, many wind up in a morass of adverse unintended consequences. Something happens ‘twixt the intent and the result, but what?

I propose that the purely rationalist organizational paradigm has resulted in a syndrome known as bureaupathology, which is best treated by an organizational paradigm based on shamanism, a psychospiritual perspective of ancient principles, guidelines, and practices but one currently enjoying a renaissance (Eshowsky, 1998).

While “spiritual,” it is far from “religious,” presenting no theological elite, strict dogma, written ritual, or conversionist élan. It suggests that an organization can steal soul parts from its personnel for its own aggrandizement, and so ignore their needs and those of others as it abandons its original serving motive for a self-serving one. As a result, it stops contributing to the wider energy system and instead, narcissistically, promotes only its own growth, becoming a cancer on the body public.

I first describe the origin and syndrome of bureaupathology. Then I lay out the shamanic perspective on the soul and its destiny, describing soul-loss by way of theft. Next I show how both motive and opportunity shape the organizational thief. I then offer a set of warning signs at both individual and collective levels.
Finally, to prevent and heal the thievery, I propose a set of metarational therapeutics.

The article is based on published works as well as workshops, conferences, and seminars on bureaucracy and shamanism. For illustrative purposes, I have included comments from an “expedited sample” of personnel who experienced soul-loss during their careers in major organizations (Gurr, 1972, p. 40). From such samples—small, low-cost, nonrandom selections of cases sharing properties relevant to an exploratory study—researchers can test assumptions, ferret out a phenomenon’s parameters, and collect initial evidence.

**Bureapathology**

Max Weber (1922/1978) was one of the first to warn against modern organizations that are based exclusively on rationality, since they could easily became obsessed with routinization, regulations, and resistance to change, eventually leading to soulless, disenchanting, and dehumanizing outcomes. Since that time, horrific events issuing from large bureaucracies, like the politicide against “enemies of the people” by Stalin’s apparatchiks in the 1930s, seemed to have proven him right.

Not surprisingly, then, other scholars began expressing full-blown concern with what has become known as “bureapathology.” The notion has a long pedigree, traceable to Victor Thompson’s work (1961) on managerial insecurity, a phenomenon causing such “bureapathologies” as rigidity, territoriality, and lack of initiative (p. 153). Insecure bureaucrats, he posited, appropriate organizational power to satisfy their own psychic needs, with negative consequences for the organization as well as the public. Indeed, later empirical research on 566 managers in private and public organizations showed that insecurity leads directly to bureapathic obsessions like overregulation (Bozeman & Rainey, 1998).

Subsequent works laid out further symptoms of the “bureapathic” syndrome, such as inertia, authoritarianism, and goal displacement (Caiden, 1991a, p. 2; Giblin, 1981, p. 22; Neugeboren, 1991, p. ix). One study documented no less than 175 “bureapathologies,” which were not caused by the incompetence of individuals but by “systematic shortcomings” at the level of the collective (Caiden, 1991b, p. 490).

Yet little has changed. Indeed, direct attacks on bureapathic organizations seem to have little effect. An exposé of the FAA for corruption, waste, negligence, and other faults (Schiavo, 1998), for example, appears to have been totally ignored, since a decade later an even more scathing critique documented these and other maladies, such as mismanagement, unaccountability, and falsification of documents, all leading to insufficient regard for the flying public (Misic, 2011). Bureaucratic inertia, again it seems, wins the day.

In this article I focus on a core set of bureapathic symptoms, namely those which are most recognizable (evidenced by scholars and public alike), extensive
(seen in many types of organizations), correlated (found together in a single organization), and consequential (having serious and widespread adverse outcomes). These include complacency, creative deficiency, inertia, mindless following of orders, intolerable labor demands, depression and suicide, overregulation, hypocrisy, fraud, abuse of power, self-protection, secrecy, obstruction of oversight, cover-ups, corruption, and persecution of dissidents within and opponents without.

Certainly all organizations are potentially bureaupathic, and many if not most show at least a few of the symptoms. In this article, an organization is said to be bureaupathic if these symptoms are numerous (suggesting a broad syndrome, e.g., the many types of legal violations by Waste Management, Inc.); pervasive (found across levels and functions of the organization, suggesting many personnel acting as a single unit and not just rogue individuals, e.g., FEMA’s performance before and during Hurricane Katrina); and persistent (continuing over a long period despite changes of personnel, e.g., the prolonged cover-ups of pedophilia by the Vatican). In short, the bureaupathic organization abandons its self-proclaimed destiny of service to others by way of the legal, efficient, humane delivery of needed public goods and services, and instead operates in its own interest, in the process doing irreparable harm to many creatures. In a word, it violates its own honor code.

Organizational Soul-Theft

But why? All the conventional, exclusively rationalist, approaches to bureau-pathology appear to have failed, that is, the modern paradigm of privileging the logical mind and thus efficiency, control, and manipulation often makes matters worse. The countless managerial schools, reinventions of government, prosecutorial crackdowns, and long marches through the institutions all ignore the metarational root. Indeed the fact that irrationalities flow from the most rationalized of human collectives offers a big clue to bureaupathology: we need to look for non-rational or metarational approaches to grasp the irrational behavior.

The most ancient, global, and arguably most useful such tradition is shamanism, which engages not merely the rational but also the metarational realm. The shamanic paradigm is increasingly taken seriously in quantum physics and elsewhere (Wolf, 1991). In transpersonal psychology, ecopsychology, and deep ecology, scholars are demonstrating the validity of shamanism and related traditions (Grof, 2005; Kowalewski, 2000, 2002 & 2004; Krycka, 2000; LeShan, 1995; Tart, 2009; Walsh, 2007). In medicine, research has shown shamanic practices to have measureable health benefits (Harner & Tryon, 1996; Vuckovic, Gullion, Ramirez, Schneider, & Williams, 2007).

According to the shamanic organizational paradigm, when humans constitute themselves as an organization, they become a single distinct energy-field which can, with ample motive and opportunity, steal the souls of its personnel, both managers and workers alike. If an organization’s public image is its light side,
soul-theft is its shadow side. As a result, an organization is able to induce its soul-lost personnel to commit the most vile acts in the guise of the good.

How so? To shamans, the soul is our vital essence, the force that enables us to pursue our destiny, namely our soul’s purpose of personal enlightenment and empowerment for the sake of service to the earth (Kowalewski, 2012c). When we follow our unique spiritual path, we maintain integrity, our character remains intact, and we are heroes in our own minds (Cousineau, 1999). But if we lose parts of our soul, we can easily stray off that path, ethically disintegrating.

The hero encounters many dangers, but the greatest is insecurity in the face of danger. Serious threats to wellbeing, especially trauma, can cause parts of the soul to split off and seek refuge in the metaphysical realm. Insecurity can arise from societal threats like economic collapse, crime waves, war, and natural disasters, and from personal threats like rape, parental abuse, loss of job, and vehicle accidents. Many are the reasons for a soul part to “bail out.” The deeper the insecurity, the more likely is soul-loss and hence pathological behavior.

A soul part splits off to reduce pain, the soul giving up part of itself so the person can best attend to the needs of physical survival. The part flees to metaphysical reality, and there waits to be re-membered by the soul in physical reality. Traditionally, it has been shamans who enter an altered state of consciousness to journey to the metaphysical realm to retrieve soul parts for clients (Ingerman, 1991; Kowalewski, 2012b).

In traditional cultures, soul-loss is seen as a common psychospiritual disease (Grim, 1983). Mayans, for example, consider soul-loss or susto a prevalent illness (Arvigo & Epstein, 1995; Avila, 1998). In modern culture, jilted lovers lose parts of their souls, as evidenced in the lyrics of popular songs. In clinical psychology, soul-loss falls under the rubric of dissociation (Dell, 2001). But as one shamanic practitioner notes, psychologists may know that something is “missing” from the dissociating client but have no idea “where it went” and find treatment difficult (Ingerman, 1998; see also Narens, 2002; Wangyal, 2002b).

Shamans do not just see the individual soul but a broader set of energy-fields as well, including those of organizations, in their journeys, waking visions, and dreams. According to Hawaiian shaman Serge Kahili King (1985), such collective energy-fields or aumakua are everywhere, animating nation, community, family, club, church, committee, and so on. As Siberian shaman Biven Mamota (2003) noted, every group of interacting humans has a “common aura” which affects the group’s members, whose energies become entrained into common behaviors. For example, women who have closely interacted with each other over time commonly experience simultaneous menstruation. A Chinese shaman put it bluntly: “Does a company have a soul? … Yes!” (Sha, 2003, pp. 138–139).

An organization, then, is a distinct energy-field, a metaphysical organism. Its personnel may come and go, but the entity remains intact; it is a collective
memory storehouse. If consciousness is an emergent property of systems of many individual physical parts, as some scholars posit, should we be surprised that an organization too has a mind of its own (Hameroff, 1994)? Thus, an organization does not merely take on a life of its own; it *is* a life of its own. It has a mind of its own no less than other “superorganisms” recognized by biologists, such as bee hives and bird flocks (Moritz & Southwick, 1992). Indeed whole human societies, as one biologist put it, “have cultural and social morphic fields which embrace and organize all that resides within” (Sheldrake, 1987, p. 321).

Shamans, then, are proudly guilty of the academic sin of “reification,” namely the assigning of intentionality to collectives (Stelter, 1976). Indeed, despite Herculean efforts by social scientists to slay this primitive dragon, it keeps rearing its beautiful head, as evidenced by such backhanded acknowledgements as “corporate culture,” “groupthink,” and “enmeshed family systems.” Whatever the moniker, organizations have long been understood as holistic entities, more than the sum of their parts. Just as some sociologists have talked about “emergent” norms and behavior of a collectivity, which cannot be reduced to those of its individuals, now the physical sciences are speaking the same language.

Emergent behavior associated with wholes in organic matter cannot be explained in terms of the collections of parts… A single-cell organism, for example, is a whole that displays emergent behavior associated with life that … does not exist in the mere collection of its parts. The list of emergent behaviors … has now become quite long. (Nadeau & Kafatos, 1999, p. 12)

In biogeology, the earth is increasingly seen as a single organism (Lovelock, 1979). In nonlinear quantum theory, 2+2 may equal 5 or more, a system’s behavior being more than the sum of its parts (McTaggart, 2007). When renowned physicists support the “re-emergence of emergence,” even the most skeptical sit up and take note (Clayton & Davies, 2008). The Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research (PEAR) team has shown that the joint attention of a group of individuals can make random number generators behave nonrandomly (Nelson, Bradish, Dobyns, Dunne, & Jahn, 1998; see also Jahn, Dunne, Acunzo, & Hoeger, 2007; McTaggart, 2002). Several PEAR experiments have found the “collective effects” of “collective resonance” to be several times stronger than individual ones (Jahn & Dunne, 2005, pp. 195 & 212). Related research has revealed similar anomalous “collective consciousness” effects (Mason, Patterson, & Radin, 2007, p. 295).

Complexity theory offers additional underpinning for the notion. Interacting parts in a wide range of systems can spontaneously create an order and functionality from the bottom up, without any central planner being involved. The emergent property is found to be independent of its parts, such that it cannot be deducible from, reduced to, or identified with them. It is different from the parts in kind, not just degree. The system of micro-level actions of the parts “self-organizes,” so to speak, a macro-level pattern that is often totally unexpected. The “new whole,” in turn, can affect the parts (Holland, 1999;
Kauffman, 1996; Page, 2009). So, even if shamanic reification were untrue, today’s science sees it as a useful way to view groups, namely as collective energetic templates or fields for action, as regions or auras of distinct identity and influence, acting the way magnets act on individual iron filings.

According to shamanic logic, moreover, organizations as energy-fields in their own right can steal the soul parts of their personnel. Soul-theft is a common form of soul-loss, being reported among Tibetans (Wangyal, 2002a), Evéns (Alekseev, 1997), Mayans (Arvigo & Epstein, 2001), Amazonians (Hill, 1992), Native-Americans (Martin, 1978), Inuits (Wood, 2009), and other peoples (Eliade, 1964). An organization becomes such a thief when it falls off its destiny’s path. “[S]pirit possession and bad energies,” writes one contemporary shamanic practitioner, “can be detected in … political parties, corporations, and even … an entire nation” (Beery, 2012, p. 37). In Mayan culture, for example, a village is periodically dismantled to purge toxicities so they will not “eat” its members and so the vitality of the community can be restored (Prechtel, 2003). An imperial mother-country is said to steal the souls of its colonized peoples, as evidenced in their “colonial mentality” (Fanon, 1998). As one shaman recently put it, whole peoples today are suffering “cultural soul-loss” and so need “soul-retrieval” (MacLeod, 2012, p. 18).

**Motive and Opportunity**

Like other crimes, organizational soul-theft arises from motive and opportunity. Many are the motives. An organization mobilizes the energies of its personnel to serve a self-proclaimed destiny—serving some public interest. It becomes pathological, though, when its original motive wanes and it starts requiring manipulated and sacrificial energies to feed its own power.

The bigger the organization, the greater the need to coordinate large workforces and memberships, and so the stronger the motive for soul-theft. Because the physical means of such coordination in past times—war, slavery, serfdom—have lost legitimacy, they have been largely replaced by manipulative “soft power.” Some industrial psychologists, for example, sacrifice their healing mission to the organizational soul-thief’s obsession with increasing the efficiency of “human capital.” Soul-theft, then, is especially prevalent in large modern organizations. Big Brother may no longer be beating you up, but you better keep a tight grip on your soul (see also Whiteley, 2009).

Too, the bigger the organization, the more inflated its ego compared to smaller groupings. As such, power easily becomes an end in itself instead of a way to serve. This is the meaning of “power corrupts.”

The bigger the organization, the harder it falls. We almost expect small businesses to fail, for example, but the fall of a big corporation represents a huge humiliation to all concerned. Personnel, then, are pushed to worship the false god of the organization instead of pursuing their unique destinies. According to one interviewee who spent 30 years working in major companies:
As far as the corporate world is concerned, “the more soul-loss the better” has been my experience. It took me way too long to realize that they would have made me work 24/7 if they could have figured out how.

In the shamanic tradition, sacrifice—which literally means “to make sacred”—of the self is not merely dangerous but indeed absurd and sacriligeous, since the self is already sacred. To sacrifice one’s own self, then, is to violate one’s sacredness, one’s very integrity, and so to fall off the path of destiny. Instead, the task of the self is to harmonize its destiny with the public-serving destiny of the organization.

Big organizations also demand relocation to far-flung branch facilities, such that some personnel, uprooted from their beloved bioregions, lose parts of their vital essence. From the shamanic perspective, the soul is nourished by the landscape in which roots have been sunk but is deprived of that vitality when forced to leave it. Loss of landscape weakens inscape.

The higher that personnel rise in an organization, the greater the likelihood their soul parts will be stolen. Indeed, a soul part appears to be lost with every step up the hierarchy, the price of benefits from promotion often being more self-sacrifice. Upwardly mobile personnel start to feel, literally, that they have sacrificed their souls at the altar of the organization. According to the CEO of a big defense contractor:

To get where I am today … I had to give myself away…. Each time I advanced in rank, I lost another piece of myself…. One day I … looked back at my life…. I had given away so much of myself … that there was nothing left. The corporation and the military own me (Braden, 1997, p. 118).

In the words of one interviewee, “With each benefit, more of my soul was taken away—I felt like I was becoming a monkey trained to perform.” Exactly—that was the whole point. Managers, having lost parts of their own souls, find complicity in soul-theft easy. No wonder so many bosses are called “heartless”—they, poor souls, really are. The organization as thief needs above all to control its leaders, who in turn are lauded for facilitating the appropriation of workers’ souls, thereby enhancing their own careers and the power of the organization.

Especially theft-prone are organizations headed by charismatic leaders, who can easily elicit sacrifice, indeed enthusiastic soulful sacrifice, from their followers. Perhaps this is why the organizational legacies of charismatic leaders so often turn out less than admirable, such as those of Adolph Hitler’s Nazis and Jim Jones’ People’s Temple.

Not only are the motives for soul-theft many, but also the opportunities. Thievery occurs if the spiritual doors of personnel are left open for the thief. Self-sacrifice is more likely, for example, in cultures rewarding hard work over sane health.
Traumatic events experienced by an organization make personnel more insecure and thus vulnerable. Such happenings can include the sudden loss of a popular CEO, a long and bitter labor dispute, the denial of a patent application, or a class-action suit by consumers.

Personnel most prone to theft are those so deeply insecure that they crave protection. As one interviewee put it, “I felt that if I did all the right things, I would be taken care of.” These personnel fear walking alone on their unique path and “long to belong,” as one interviewee told me, even if to a thief. The organization becomes a protective parent to whom they surrender their own destiny. In effect, they give up control over their life’s journey to the organization, willingly abdicating their soul-responsibility.

Big organizations offer especially ripe opportunities for soul-surrender by attracting a disproportionate number of insecure personalities eager to lose themselves in a large mass of people. Also, inside the maze of big organizations, personnel often feel lost and find it easier to follow the organization’s power instead of their own. Their vital essence, then, is more likely to be overwhelmed by the organization’s imperatives.

The narrow compartmentalization of big organizations also makes it likely that personnel will feel like lifeless cogs, thereby undermining what psychologists call “locus of control” and encouraging the surrender of control to the organization. As a longtime bank manager told me:

*I've always felt more in control of my essence when the number of people-interactions was less. In a smaller organization I was usually involved with many aspects of its wellbeing, and so had more feelings of involvement, value, and contribution.*

The bigger the organization, the more material benefits and social prestige it can offer insecure souls, and so the more likely it will be pedestalized. These personnel sell their souls to the organization as sacrifice, trading freedom for security, which is not as difficult as it sounds. It is far easier in the short term to blindly follow someone else’s path than to struggle on one’s own. Walking the path of destiny, thereby staying true to one’s honor code, is appropriately called a *hero’s journey.*

The big organization in particular, then, exerts a seductive magnetic pull that draws soul parts away from already insecure personnel for its self-serving priority—albeit allegedly for “the cause.” To one interviewee: “Big organizations want to become an employee’s universe, and once this happens, their control over the employee becomes much easier.” The lesson is clear: Be careful of what you pedestalize—it may steal your soul. Every big organization has golden handcuffs hanging from its belt.

**AN EARLY WARNING SYSTEM**

Yet like many crimes, soul-theft only occurs after individual and collective warning signs have appeared. Individually, personnel feel stress; the
incongruence between their destiny’s demands and those of the organization widens. They know, deep down, that they should sacrifice nothing to anything that is not their unique path. In the early stages of soul-theft, however, victims deny the problem. The thief comes silent in the night. Only when symptoms have accumulated to the crisis level does awareness arise.

Symptoms take physical, psychological, and philosophical forms—they occur throughout the person’s whole energy-field. Physically, as studies in psychoneuroimmunology have shown, people who have strayed from their path compromise their immunity, making their bodies fair game for microbes (Solomon, 1990). But these “findings” have deep shamanic roots. In Africa it is well known that soul-theft victims are vulnerable to disease (Credo Mutwa, 1996). Soul-lost personnel, lacking the totality of their vital essence and engaging in workaholic sacrifices for the organization, sooner or later show signs of fatigue. The more self-sacrificing the victims, the faster the burnout; they have literally sacrificed their vital essence. Other symptoms such as migraines and skin disease appear (Ingerman, 1998).

Common as well are addictions to alcohol and drugs, consumed to fill the void left by the stolen soul parts. Victims expect the substances to provide the ecstasy missing from walking their own paths. Addiction also reflects a self-destructive anger at having let parts of one’s vital essence be stolen. Victims blame—and take it out on—theirselfs. Soul-stealing organizations eat their own.

Psychologically, symptoms include anxiety, robotic social interaction, and depersonalization of relationships with family, friends, and neighbors. With each loss of vital essence, victims experience more and more emotional disconnection and eventually psychic numbing. As they lose more of their essence to the organization, they have less vitality for their families and communities. As one interviewee told me:

*The negative effects are first felt by the family. They receive less time, energy, attention, loyalty, and love, as more is demanded by the organization and given by employees. Later, employees are devastated as they realize that their loss will never be returned by the organization. The family has been fractured forever. Employees have the “organizational family,” but the home life has a vacancy.*

Should we widen our notion of “organized crime family”?

Previously close and affectionate links in the organization are replaced by Machiavellian manipulations, especially at higher levels. Excessive caution and servility appear, evidencing a need for protective security, as do refusal to take responsibility, passing the buck, and covering one’s posterior at all costs—all these fears being fed by a wasteful bevy of lawyers, spin-doctors, and security squads.

Philosophically, victims typically identify with the thief, just as hostages manifest the Stockholm syndrome—which is exactly what the power-seeking
thief wants. Victims also develop an inordinate attachment to material goods, preferring having to being. They try to fill the void left by the stolen soul parts with expensive cars, houses, and vacations. Some go into debt, especially by way of gambling, thereby deepening dependence on the thief’s payroll. Might office pools be diagnostic?

Soul-theft is also evident in the lack of ecstasy—bureaucrats are hardly known for their ecstatic behavior. Obvious too is the lack of the heroic. Few bureaucrats are ever accused of too much courage, with the exception of that despised deviant, the whistleblower. Loss of soul is loss of character.

Yet identification with the seemingly protective thief eventually fades, and a psychospiritual crisis ensues, a crisis of meaning itself. In the words of one manager-interviewee:

"I kept part of my integrity, which prevented me from falling into the abyss, but I woke up one day realizing I had lost part of myself. I didn’t know what it meant but the sense was very clear. Fortunately I found my way to spiritual practices."

Victims start feeling betrayed by the organization. The realization of having sacrificed to a false god hits home. From the shamanic perspective, however, this is far from being “bad” and in fact shows the soul’s yearning for integrity. The victim wants to re-member, to be whole again. The worst thing one could do is to suppress the symptoms with psychopharmacology or psychotherapy. The crisis is the soul re-calling itself to its path. It forces a life-examination, the big question being whether one’s life is congruent with one’s destiny (Roth, 1997).

The victim does not feel “all there.” As one interviewee told me, “I felt I no longer had a life of my own, that I had lost something vital.” Victims feel an emptiness because part of their soul really is gone. They feel a loss of—literally—integrity. This is reflected in the law of diminishing emotional returns: victims realize that their souls have been hijacked in return for more stuff, which will never satisfy their hearts. Since the soul, for the sake of security, has abandoned the heroic journey towards its destiny, it feels a loss of meaning. “The more benefits I got,” one executive told me, “the less satisfied I felt; I found myself singing that Peggy Lee song, ‘Is That All There Is?’” Victims start feeling trapped, that their troubles cannot be solved, and perception darkens.

As they realize they have given control over their lives to the organization, they literally feel they are, in the words of one interviewee, “out of control.” Soon, therefore, motivation, responsibility, and work performance decline. Resentment, its seed planted in the breeding ground of self-sacrifice, grows along with disillusionment and cynicism. As one interviewee put it, “I felt that the only way out was to get myself fired.”

Collectively, symptoms also appear. Organizational sickness is well known. Reports of mass psychogenic illness, such as bites from nonexistent insects,
characterize some big organizations that make sacrificial demands on personnel (Benson, 1996; see also McTaggart, 2002). In Asian factories of multinational corporations imposing heavy labor requirements, workers experience simultaneous hallucinations, faintings, and other disruptions requiring total shutdown (Kowalewski, 1997).

The organization shows excessive self-protectionism, determined to survive at all costs. The resolve takes the form of nondecision and refusal to take responsibility for failures and malfeasance. Darkness, expressed in paranoid secrecy, enshrouds the organization as it disconnects from the wider community.

After the organizational thief has cached a critical mass of soul parts, a major turning point is reached. Personnel stop operating the organization and it starts operating them. They perform their duties automatonically, as if in a dream. At this juncture the collective, just like the individuals, is truly out of control, taking on a momentum beyond anybody’s direction. It engages in destructive behaviors that nobody seems to have planned and nobody knows how, or has enough integrity, to stop. It is now a leviathan. As one interviewee put it, “I felt like the system was running me around.” Out of the sacrifices of personnel and those close to them come the sacrifices of communities, consumers, foreign countries, and the environment. Once an organization becomes a successful soul-thief, ruthless downsizings, political purges, and other adverse consequences are not far behind. Soul-theft seems a necessary condition for bureaucratic nightmares like the CIA’s Phoenix, FBI’s COINTELPRO, Pentagon’s Abu Graeb, Union Carbide’s Bhopal, and BP’s Gulf of Mexico.

Personnel, however, feel little guilt; psychopathy is in fact comorbid with dissociation. Having disconnected and numbed themselves emotionally, they suffer from compassion-deficit, caring little for those damaged by their organizations (Emory & Oltmanns, 2000; Hare, 1993). Personnel who have—literally—lost their integrity have little problem with organizational crimes. They rightly take the Nuremberg defense. Since they have followed the organization instead of their own destiny, they can truthfully say, “I was just following orders.” Heroic humans, in contrast, take orders only from their destiny.

But eventually, in the metaphysical as in the physical realm, crime does not pay. The organizational soul-thief experiences a crisis and engages in self-destructive behavior. As vitality declines, as personnel defect and rebel, as the costs of malfeasance rise, and as the broader public revolts, the heavens administer to the thief its just desserts. The true gods will not be mocked—this is a social law.

**Shamanic Therapeutics**

Purely rational fixes for bureaupathology—by definition—can be manipulated or evaded by anyone smarter than their creators. The shamanic paradigm, in contrast, insists that both the soul and its thief must be engaged in the metarational realm. As one psychologist noted:
Shamanic treatment entails, then, a radical rethinking of the ways to deal with the ills of modern life. Among today’s shamans, the notion is growing that to heal individuals one-by-one is not enough (Hinton, 2012; Reddy, 2011). The crises are so numerous, complex, severe, global, and growing, and the world’s population is expanding so fast, while the number of shamans is so few, that simply healing individuals without healing the larger structures that affect them is a fool’s errand.

Not surprisingly, then, some managers have in fact become “corporate shamans” (Whiteley, 2002). As one shamanic consultant put it, the aim is to heal the whole organization as a single energy-field.

This work reminds me of an anthill. The organism is not the ants themselves, but the anthill community containing all the … energy … within. (Brennan, 2012, p. 34)

In family counseling, for example, practitioners increasingly try to heal the whole “energy field” constellation (Manne, 2009). Yet this “new” approach is just the latest installment of a long tradition. Among Peruvian shamans, according to researcher Jose Luis Herrera, collective healing has long been known to restore individual health:

Serve the collective … and … you heal the individual … . Becoming an Altomesayok [shaman] is a big undertaking … for those whose guiding mythology is … individuality… . The focus is on the collective … . (Bryon, 2012, p. 16)

In a word, shamanic soul-doctors need to treat the organization as a single unit, realigning it with its original purpose and so returning it to its heroic path of destiny.

Realize, though, that shamanism is about methods not prescriptions. In each specific case, shamans as well as their clients journey to the spirits for help (Kowalewski, 2012a). That said, the following suggestions for prevention and healing are offered as a general framework consistent with the shamanic paradigm.

For prevention, managerial education needs overhauling to minimize motive and opportunity by encompassing the metarational aspects of organizational dynamics. Teaching spirituality to managers is now taken seriously (Barnett, Krell, & Sendry, 2000; Biberman & Tischler, 2008; Karakas, 2011), with the added benefit of organizational success (Tischler, Biberman, & McKeage, 2002; Duchon & Plowman, 2005). A shamanic focus harmonizes organizational growth with health, and material prosperity with spiritual fulfillment. Trainees learn to be wise and not just smart; the rational approach may be
mind-full but is soul-empty. They learn to balance metarational energetics with bureaucratic control.

Future managers are groomed as specialists in the organization’s vitality, as facilitators of the destinies of its workers. The shamanic organization harnesses the mythopoetic energies of its personnel, not their boring routines. Vitality is not “morale”—which is easily faked—but instead the healthy exuberance of the organization’s energy-field. Such vitality is evident when the organization is following its path of service. Its signs are affordances, acknowledgements, and similar accommodative paranormalities (Kowalewski, 2000). It declines if the organization deviates from that path, at which point omens appear.

Managerial students learn to foster authenticity instead of conformity, in order to encourage a protective integrity. They learn that a healthy organization exists as a means to help individuals fulfill their destinies, not an end that replaces them.

Future managers learn that, since energy cannot be created or destroyed but only transformed, the shape-shifting of collective energy by shamanic practices is one of the best ways to revitalize an organization. They discover how to foster a dynamic equilibrium between individual destinies and collective project.

They discover that leadership cannot be reduced to career advancement but rather consists of heroic acts. They learn that the most fulfilling reward for a leader is honor, not pay. They recognize the point at which organizational loyalty stops and legitimate whistleblowing begins.

Anti-theft systems would be taught.

- *Downscaling* treats the correlation of size with theft. A healthy organization bifurcates and decentralizes as soon as symptoms of soul-theft appear. Small is shamanically beautiful, offering personnel a greater sense of responsibility and control over their destiny’s path and so more prospects for creativity.
- *Reshuffling* recognizes that destiny paths are mighty crooked roads, and therefore that permanent tasking is counterproductive. Longevity, managers would realize, is not life, just the ticking of a clock. A healthy organization encourages task-groups made up of destiny-mates, people whose soul-affinities mesh. In such groups, coordination is natural so managerial control is less necessary—at great savings to the organization. In short, a healthy organization periodically reshuffles itself to coordinate work on the basis of metaphysical attraction.
- *Restructuring rewards* involves shifting toward authenticity and away from materiality. A healthy incentive system honors unique expressions of soul, namely the most effectively creative ideas, practices, products, and policies, so as to discourage soul-loss and encourage the following of each person’s path. Rewards are offered for the most soulful acts of service.
• Diagnosing energetics entails assessing subtle pathological cues within the organization such as “stuck energy” and “out-of-control energy.” Social scientists and industrial psychologists can conduct energy-audit surveys, paying special attention to questions like, “To what degree do you regret having expended energy for the organization?” Shamanic counseling can help personnel return to their paths.

• Passing the talking stick in a “soul circle” sets hearts right in formulating policies and performing tasks. “[P]ower,” shamans say, “moves in a circle” (Jansson, 2012, p. 30). Personnel can meet to raise metaphysical awareness and construct their harmonic group path. They might pass the stick to ferret out early signs of soul-loss. Sharing deep experiences with a sympathetic group sensitizes vital essences. Pathological organizations operate in the dark, so anonymous “confessions to the gods” can expose manager spying, secret file-keeping, and enemy lists, as well as worker sabotage, thievery, and goldbricking. All these modalities of “circle sociology” can help prevent soul-theft (Kowalewski, 2000).

For healing, soul parts need to be liberated and reintegrated into personnel’s souls. To this end, spiritual practices consistent with shamanism can be introduced.

• Soul-retrieving entails the journeys of shamans into the metaphysical realm to free stolen soul parts from the thief, then the return of those parts to the clients’ souls. Because of its effectiveness, soul-retrieval is now used as a form of psychotherapy (Ingerman, 1998).

• Healing the thief. Journeying shamans work not only to retrieve soul-parts from a thief but also to heal the culprit. Another possibility is joint journeys of trained members of the organization to do the job. In shamanic terms, the organizational soul is thus returned to its path of destiny to serve the public interest.

• Soul-remembering can then be done in ceremonies, with groups meeting to reintegrate their stolen parts and reconstitute a vital community. Each person could re-call their destiny, asking how it can best be pursued in the organization for the collective project. Such practices allow personnel to re-member their natural selves and recover authenticity. A mask ceremony, for example, might allow personnel to remove, symbolically, any false faces they had been wearing in the organization, and to replace them with masks showing their true paths for the sake of acknowledgement and acceptance by co-workers.

• Developing integrity involves deprogramming personnel from sacrificing to false gods. The proud motto might be, “Never sacrifice your destiny to a self-serving organization.” Personnel might atone for all the victims of their misguided sacrifices.

• Reconnecting to the wider community recognizes that the soul is only “all there” when it is fully connected to, not blocked from, the single energy web that is the universe. Personnel can be encouraged to keep old bonds, and form new ones, outside the organization. Deep connections with nature in particular can be supported, which in turn allows for the unlocking of psychic powers of use to the organization (Kowalewski, 2002, Organizational Soul-Thieves 177
Personnel are never told, in the interests of globalization or anything else, to uproot themselves from their beloved bioregions and live somewhere else—unless it is truly their destiny. Bioregional bonding loosens a thief’s hold on the soul part and strengthens the soul on its path.

**THE SHAMANIC ORGANIZATIONAL PARADIGM**

Purely rationalist approaches to bureaupathology have failed, so I have offered a shamanic take on the problem. A century of high-quality research has shown that humans are as “paranormal” as they are normal, as “spiritual” as they are material, as “metaphysical” as they are physical, as “metarational” as they are rational (Radin, 2006). Any approach to bureaupathology, then, must engage the mystical domain.

Some of the worst horrors in the modern world have been committed by soul-sick organizations, and such acts are commonly called evil and perhaps rightly so. At least we need to acknowledge and engage the spiritual dimension of the problem. At the same time, the answer cannot be found in religious organizations, which can sometimes steal their own members’ souls and whose historical record, therefore, has been less than exemplary (e.g., witch hunts by Protestantism, aggressive wars by Islam, illegal settlements in Palestine by Judaism). Instead, shamanic practices—which speak to our souls but which lack a bureaupathic agenda—offer a useful way to avoid and remedy such soulless behaviors.

As such, an organization is best served if its individuals are soul-filled and working from a state of vital integrity. It is not merely more efficient when everyone is playing with a full metaphysical deck, but it energizes its original self-proclaimed destiny—serving the public interest.

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