THE QUEST FOR THE SELF-ACTUALIZING ORGANIZATION

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1. Experience, spirituality and organizing

1.1. Spirituality and organizing – a perfect match?

This is a book about trying to live as fully as possible as oneself and participating in processes of organizing in everyday life. I have since a long time wondered whether it was possible to feel as a whole unique individual and yet engage in mundane organized activities with other people, notably – work. The free is often pictured as the lonely in legend, literature and film. The collective is often seen an antonym of individualism be definition.

However, I do no longer believe in such definitions. They are among the most fundamental dichotomies I have encountered in my life, in my, perhaps not entirely successful, attempts at socialization in two cultures: the Polish and the Swedish. As much as these cultures differ, they both seemed to contain this dichotomy and many of their institutions were built upon it. You can be yourself, but then you are an eccentric, a misfit, all alone. Or, you can engage in the warmth of human communication, but then you have to sacrifice your uniqueness and adapt.

Due to the fact that my family moved several times between Poland and Sweden, I felt I was an outsider in both countries and longed to fit in. It could be quite difficult to be accepted as part of the team, especially as a teenager, if you were not like the others in some important respect. I invented a suitable identity for myself and started presenting it to others, hoping that they now would want to be pals with me. When in Sweden I pretended to be entirely Swedish, and when in Poland I omitted the fact that I had lived in Sweden a long time. I had suitable alternative life stories, partly based on fact and partly pure fiction. This seemed to work, my classmates now seemed to accept me. I also lied about my age, because being the youngest
one in class marked me as different. This identity deceit gave me what I had wanted: pals, and a sense of belonging, but there was still something that did not feel right. Something was missing. It took me some time to figure out what that something was – *me*. I was absent or maybe a passive bystander in my own life. Paradoxically, I also felt alone. I wished for acceptance and friendship, but none of it is possible without a real identity. At some point I started to admit to bits of my real story to others, and consequently lost some of my pals. Did they object to who I really was or to my lying to them? Hard to say, and of course there is no easy way out of a false identity. It took me a long time to get out of the trap and as I started to feel more and more present, I also discovered that I had real friends who accepted me for who I was. The whole process was really difficult in many ways but it gave me happiness. The dichotomy that I had believed in was thus empirically disproved and seeing how things fall into place after its dismissal was purest joy.

Togetherness and uniqueness belong together. I want to reflect on how it is possible but with the use of parables rather than life stories. Thus I hope to be able to present a picture that is at the same time related to my and others experience but that also can be played with, reshuffled and rewritten by the readers – something that could be rather disrespectful if it was done with people’s real life stories. I think that the idea of self-actualization and belonging put together will benefit very much from a more playful and disrespectful treatment. In this way we: authors and readers can invent something entirely new out of it, and maybe even test it out in practice? That is my idea behind this book.

I chose to actively collect stories and poems and to reflect upon them. The result is a kind of textual collage where I am putting the pieces together. However, I hope that my presence will not dominate the picture. I wanted the collage to gain some momentum of its own and part of
my quest is about where it leads. Sometimes I am an active author of the collage and sometimes I let it take me wherever it leads me.

My interest is spiritual – I ask existential questions. As an organization theorist, I also feel a natural need to understand the ontological status of the subject of my research. The text combines those two interests in the general theme of the collage: togetherness, organizing, on the one hand, and uniqueness, spiritual experience, on the other. What happens when they are brought together? Or, in other words, I intend to explore the links between organizing and spiritual experience, with the use of narrative media.

Linking those two areas is not a new or by any means a revolutionary endeavor. For example, the links between religion and society have been explored since Max Weber's (1904-5/ 1958) fundamental work on capitalism and Protestant ethics. The relationships between various aspects of social life and religion have since been a topic for research and insight, such as influences of religion and theology on social structure (e.g. Kolakowski, 1984), on economy (e.g. Boulding, 1989a; Boulding, 1989b; Stein, 1989), and on organization of industrial society (e.g. Fromm, 1989).

However, it was the opposite opinion: that work and spirituality are two separate domains that has, perhaps, been more popular during the last century. It has been called the secularization thesis and was seen as a powerful tendency.

Recently it has been losing some of its dominance, as, for example an interest in culture and organization has arisen and grew in popularity as well as significance. This “cultural turn” has "revived managerial interest in exploring the sacred dimension of organizations and drew attention to the religious potential in management" (Bell and Taylor, 2003, p. 339). Culture management in its various guises has led to the emphasis on "emotional links" between
employees and work organizations. These links have been problematized and explored by
many authors. I will now relate a few of the perspectives, which have had the most influence
on my thinking about these issues.

Seen as cultural phenomena, organizations offer their participants rewards not only of a
material kind, but also of even of an existential nature. They give people an identity and
perform an ontological function, providing a sense of Being to the participants (Schwartz,
1987). They are a way of life (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1993), and they provide networks of
meaning (Smircich, 1983/1987). The cultural perspective offers a means of understanding the
vital – or, in Schwartz's terms, ontological role of organizations to humans, and also what I
would call the religious significance of organizing. Sometimes they strive for replacing the
role of religious institutions in pre-modern society (Kostera, 1995a), they become „creator[s]
of meaning in a confused world, where identification and commitment to the management and
organization ethos, can provide opportunities and rewards” (Bowles, 1989, p. 411). They
provide people with contemporary ideologies and mythologies, to justify and legitimize the
current order of things.

It is, then, not surprising that religious and spiritual metaphors have been quite popular among
researchers of organizations. According to Burkard Sievers (1994), Greek mythology is a
fruitful metaphor for participation. It approaches life and immortality from an ambiguous
perspective, which can be found useful to understand contemporary organizations. The
organization is often mythologized as immortal; leaders are deified and reified, while workers
are reified. All participants are, thus, devoid of their mortality if the common images of
management and participation. In conclusion, the author advocates a „management of
wisdom.” Silvia Gherardi (1995) explored the symbolic dimension of gender construction in
organization, through the adoption of metaphors taken from Greek mythology. She narrated the archetypal roles women adopt as Greek goddesses: Artemis, Athena, Hestia, Demeter, and Persephone. Another author to use Greek archetypes, Martin Bowles (1993), looked for a representation of „divinities” in contemporary organizations. He searched for images of collective unconscious and argued that gods and goddesses of the contemporary corporate pantheon tend to be represent only one side of human phenomenology: those that symbolize its darker and more irrational aspects are absent from the managerial discourse. Jerzy Kociatkiewicz (1997) has used mythology to study the interactions between computers and professionals using them in Polish organizations. He analyzed the field material as a set of mythical themes, where the intercommunication between human actants and technology are portrayed as typical mythological plots. The computer is referred to as a demon, an angel, a trickster. The fundamental set of myths these narratives are rooted in concern the idea of progress, which also can be recited as characteristic myths (of the promised land and paradise lost). The role of myths seems to be fundamental in organizational settings. First and foremost, it helps people to make sense of their experience, keeping the everyday reality real. The narrative aspect of the myths enables communication and reproduction the socio-technical net and the actors’ construction of reality. Myths are ambivalent — and therefore they can be seen as a poetical form of expression, helping the actors to cope with the intransparency and paradoxical character of their everyday experience. In such a narrative role I have used the metaphor of a religious crusade in a study of Western management consultants coming to Poland after the fall of communism. I have depicted the symbolic impact of the dissemination of their models (Kostera, 1995b). I identified the following myths, central to the new religion: hard work, economizing, and the free market. Seen this
way, the one-sided communication between the West and the East does not remind of a conversation, but of the sermonizing of heathens.

The interest in spirituality and organization has recently not only become a recurring theme in the discourse but also led to many specific publications and events, such special issues of two academic journals: *Organization* (Calás and Smircich, 2003a) and *Journal of Organizational Change Management* (Neal and Biberman, 2004a) dedicated to spirituality, management and organization. There has been a significant amount of popular and consulting oriented books on this topic, as well as conferences, spiritual-cultural practices in companies, articles in practitioner and academic journals etc. (for a review see Calás and Smircich, 2003; Bell and Taylor, 2003; Benefiel, 2003; Neal and Biberman, 2004; Heaton, Schmidt-Wilk and Travis, 2004). Bell and Taylor state that "in terms of both practice and analysis management has at the very least acquired some of the language and characteristics of religion, albeit in a secularized version" (2003, p. 330).1

It is not main aim to fully represent the current “spiritual turn” in management and organization theory, but rather to roughly indicate some of its width and breadth. The publications I have referred to above are but examples of a rich and growing field. They illustrate my main background points, which can be summarized as follows. The interest in organizing and spirituality is not a new phenomenon, it is multifaceted and the use of spiritual images has had and still has many roles to play in the discourse about society, organizing and management. Also, the use of religious symbolism in business is morally ambivalent. It can be an empowering but also a totalizing discourse (see Bell and Taylor, 2003). The liberating role of workplace spirituality comes into view in many interviews with practitioners.

1 On an empirically grounded definition of spirit at work see Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2004).
Workplace spirituality is important in the work of emotion-laden organizational contexts such as the work of paramedics (Boyle and Healy, 2003). Spirituality offers a language to talk about difficult emotional labor, it can help employees to make sense of their experiences and perhaps even remain one of the few ways in which workers can practice resistance. Iain I. Mitroff (2003) relates the interviews he has carried out with high-level managers, where the interviewees speak of the importance of bringing their whole selves into work. They need to express their spirit at work and regard spiritual issues as paramount, but they distinguish sharply between spirituality and religion. Spirituality is private and holistic. Religion is structured and organized. The two should not be confused, in the workplace and elsewhere.

However, showing the dark side of the attempts to manage the soul is just as significant. In the classic work of Erving Goffman (1961/1991) a special kind of organizations is portrayed: ones that have almost unlimited access to the lives and souls of the participants. They become their lives: they strive to mold the participants, they profoundly intrude into their privacy and even their selves. They treat people as parts of a bigger category; individual identity is defined for the individual. Lewis Coser's greedy institutions (1974) are just as intrusive even though they do not erect physical walls around their participants. People are, physically, free to come and go. Yet they become spiritually paralyzed, as more and more of their life becomes managed and organized. The impact of the greedy organization on the life of the individual is absolute; there are no alternative engagements of his loyalty and attention. Coser gives a few examples of such institutions; among others are religious organizations and the family.

Work organizations often strive for a similar influence on the life and the self. Combined Insurance, a company depicted by Robin Leidner (1993) wishes to equip its employees with a
loyalty and motivation that makes them completely dedicated to their work "out of their own will." Tech is another example of such corporate aspirations (Kunda, 1992). One of the clearest examples of the management of souls is Amway, a direct selling organization. Michael Pratt's ethnographic study (2000) shows the engagement of the participants in the business, which is explicitly religious. The corporation deliberately links business and spiritual values in order to motivate the employees. The organization strives to reduce all conflicts and ambiguities with its philosophy, offering easy standards and answers to difficult questions. Heather Höpfl and Julie Maddrell (1996) speak of the way the company does business as kind of evangelism. It is a fake evangelism: the company does not give salvation but ensnares its employees by an appeal to their dreams and souls.

Thus, the interest in spirituality and organizing can lead to reflections and interest as disparate as: religious values in management, manipulative motivation techniques, new age and meditation as means of human resources development and experiencing the spiritual dimension of organizational life. The last one is my point of departure for my narrative quest I want to undertake in this book. Before I proceed, I would first like to introduce the idea of self-actualization as the aspect of spirituality that I am most interested in here.

1.2. To fully experience

Self-actualization is a state of mind and a way of life that makes it as a habit to experience fully the reality the subject is immersed in and to express the experience in a way that is unique for the subject. In other words, it is very much about living in the present and not taking it for granted, as well as a creative way of being in the world.
The author who has coined and popularized the concept of self-actualization is well known in many parts of the world. Abraham Maslow (1962/1968) has studied healthy people, while most psychologists before him had been concentrating only on sick people. According to his theories unity, integration, consistency, and coherence characterize the normal personality. To understand a person, it is necessary to see the whole picture; concentration on parts does not lead to a comprehension of the whole. People strive constantly to realize their natural potential and they use different paths, which are available to them. They are good by nature; they are also unique and talented. If society is far from perfect that is not the fault of human nature but of frustration, of twisting and rejection of the inherent energies that we all possess. Maslow characterized self-actualizing people by the following attributes (1962/1968):

1. Realism – they are open to perceiving reality without hindering defense mechanisms and beliefs.

2. Acceptance – they accept themselves and others.

3. Spontaneity – they are spontaneous and not burdened by custom, they do not live preprogrammed lives.

4. Problem centering – they concentrate on problems, not on themselves; they see life problems as demanding solutions, not as personal plight to be raged at or surrendered to.

5. Different perception of means and ends – they do not necessarily believe that the end justifies the means.

6. Need for privacy – they can and like being alone, they need privacy.

7. Autonomy – they rely on their inner judgment.

8. Social interest – they take deep and personal interest in social life and problems.
9. Profound social relationships – they are capable of genuine love towards their friends and they tend to attract followers and disciples.

10. Resistance to enculturation – they do not adopt any cultural system without reflection, they are non-conformists.

11. Continued freshness of appreciation – they experience people and events as they come, and avoid stereotyping them.


Furthermore, self-actualizing people have a sense of sympathy for and identification with humanity. They develop deep bonds with a few others and are capable of friendliness for everyone, regardless of gender, class, age or race. They tend to be modest and they are not ego centered. Much of their energy is dedicated outward, towards perceiving and experiencing reality. That does not necessarily mean that they reach out for the exceptional and grandiose in life – they are just as fascinated by everyday life and events. It does not mean that they accept the dark sides of life – they are put off by injustice and react with deep emotional pain to prejudice inequality and other wrongs.

They transcend their environment, do not take things for granted, do not automatically rely on any cultural system of norms and values, and problematize social institutions rather than inattentively embrace them. Nevertheless, these people tend to have certain lightness about them. They take things with humor; they can laugh at themselves and life. However, they do not make jokes that hurt other people.
Self-actualization is often regarded as a synonym for creativity, because the two go together: everyone is unique and when we strive for an expression of that uniqueness, creativity is born. Their creativity makes them work with their favorite media: art, literature, cooking, bricolage and other and it enables them to resolve dichotomies, merge opposites into a third experience. They rarely accept easy categorizations as objective truths.

Abraham Maslow points to two paths to self-actualization: self-exploration and action. He recommends to experience things as fully as possible and to try to avoid concentrating on the ego while doing it. In the process, the self emerges. We should let it surface, without labeling it or evaluating it. That is another experience that generates insight and liberation. Totally absorbing experience is a powerful source of enlightenment.

Life is often about making choices between safety and risk. According to Maslow, self-actualization can be reached if we choose development and risk several times a day. It does not need to mean that we should seek excitement and danger. The risky choices are often about seeing clearly, listening to others, and listening to oneself. Honesty is crucial: self-actualization depends on it. That includes a fundamental honesty toward oneself – one should be faithful to one's tastes, perhaps even to the whims. Self-actualizing people find out who they are.

Hard work and quality are of key importance as well. Even the mundane tasks and the goals, which do not seem very high-flying, deserve attention and work. The self-actualizing person knows how to fully experience the present and so everything one is engaging in becomes interesting and important.
Abraham Maslow believed that there are two levels of needs: the higher needs – or being needs related to self-actualization and the more basic needs, which he called deficit needs. They embrace such needs as physiological needs, safety needs etc. These fundamental needs have to me fulfilled, before people can strive for self-actualization. However, some people are driven by their creativity so much that they need to self-actualize before other needs are met. This was the case, among others, of Galileo, Rembrandt, Trachtenberg, and Viktor Frankl. Even if they were exceptional because of the intensity of their drive, they are not an exception when it comes to the drive’s characteristics. Every person has an internal, natural, drive to become the best possible person he can be.

Pure spontaneity consists of free, uninhibited uncontrolled, trusting, unpremeditated expression of the self, i.e., of the psychic forces, with minimal interference by consciousness. Control, will, caution, self-criticism, measure, deliberateness are the brakes upon this expression made intrinsically necessary by the laws of the social and natural world, and secondarily, made necessary by the fear of the psyche itself. (1962/1968, p. 197)

Intuition is an important ingredient of a creative life style of the self-actualizing person.

This development toward the concept of a healthy unconscious and of a healthy irrationality, sharpens our awareness of the limitations of purely abstract thinking, of verbal thinking and of analytic thinking. If our hope is to describe the world fully, a place is necessary for preverbal, ineffable, metaphorical, primary process, concrete-experience, intuitive and esthetic types of cognition, for there are certain aspects of reality which can be cognized in no other way." (p. 208)

People who self-actualize are not immune to unhappiness or suffering. They often feel anxiety, some are absentminded, and some tend to suffer profoundly and genuinely whenever
they encounter a social injustice. They develop many needs, which color their lives. For example, many self-actualizers need the following:

- Truth (not mistrust)
- Goodness (not evil)
- Beauty (not vulgarity)
- Unity (not dichotomy)
- Aliveness (not deadness)
- Uniqueness (not stereotype)
- Justice (not injustice)
- Simplicity (not confusion and bewilderment)
- Playfulness (not grimness).

All people appreciate those things. However, self-actualizers need them in order to feel good. If a self-actualizing person fails to encounter them in her, she feels depressed, alienated, disgusted, perhaps even starts to despair.

Not all people become self-actualized. Not all try and of those that do many people fail. Among the reasons for the failure, Abraham Maslow pointed to the deprivation most people suffer as the most important inhibition. People must first meet the fundamental needs in order to be able to go further on the path toward personal development. Furthermore, culture tends to stiffen and limit, people have to transcend their own cultural systems if they wish to become self-actualizers. They have to consistently choose growth over safety. Finally, many times people experience the so called Jonah complex: many people are afraid of their own
destiny and fear that becoming more fulfilled will lead to situations where they will be unable to cope.

1.3. Experiential wisdom

Is it possible to learn self-actualizing spirituality and use it for practical reasons such as in everyday organizational life? Is there an experiential everyday way of learning that helps us to develop our spirit? Anthony de Mello point to a kind of experiential wisdom:

The Master was an advocate both of learning and of Wisdom.

"Learning," he said when asked, "is gotten by reading books or listening to lectures."

"And Wisdom?"

"By reading the book that is you."

He added as an afterthought: "Not an easy task at all, for every minute of the day brings a new edition of the book!" (de Mello, 2004)

This wisdom is essential but cannot be taught through formal schooling or abstract reflection. It is an experience waiting to be made:

No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge (Gibran 1923/ 1996: 34).

This knowledge is a lived experience that can give us wisdom. Often it means to subtract rather than add – in Anthony de Mello's words: "wisdom comes to those who learn nothing, unlearn everything" (2004). Or, in Lao Tzu's famous saying:

To attain Knowledge, add things every day. To attain Wisdom, remove things every day (Lao Tzu 1999).
The experiential wisdom is not separate from the person – you do not "have" wisdom, you are it. In the same mode, "when a Zen master was once asked what Zen was, he replied, "Your everyday thought"" (Suzuki 1964: 45). The roots of Zen wisdom are far from the rational model of knowledge. Suzuki explains that Zen is not a system founded upon logic and analysis. If anything, it is the antipode to logic, by which I mean the dualistic mode of thinking. (...) If I am asked, then, what Zen teaches, I would answer, Zen teaches nothing (Suzuki 1964: 38).

Zen followers may have their own principles, habits or ideas, but Zen as such is freedom from them all and from the idea of a doctrine itself as well. Suzuki notes: "anything that has a semblance of an external authority is rejected by Zen" (ibid.: 44). All authority comes from within. The inner authority, the experiential wisdom that cannot be taught or reflected upon is rather hard to pass on to others. It can perhaps be shown by means of surprise, shock or puzzle, such as by art or Zen koans. The story-type known as the parable may also serve as a device to talk about this kind of knowledge.

That gave me the idea of the narrative collage: of poems and stories written my others and put together by me. Most of them were addressed explicitly to me and written by people I know. I have asked specific people to provide me with stories: sometimes people I knew, sometimes authors unknown to me personally or even completely anonymous (that was the case of stories collected by my colleagues from their students who have never met me and whom I never met). It was an ongoing process, a dialogue that lasted for several years, where every request and each batch of stories added something to my collage until I felt it was completed. I like to see it more as a kind of art than precise science. It is created in my preferred medium: the text, than a traditionally scientific endeavor. However, it may have some scientific significance as well, which I will address in the chapter 4.
Before I present the collage I will address some of the important issues that will provide its background. I do so in order to make clear my initial understandings of the main themes of the collage. First, in chapter 2, I discuss spirituality as experience of awareness. In chapter 3, I present my view on organizing and organizations. In doing so, I make use of a collage of poems about organizing that I have gathered from my friends who are, like me, interpretive researchers of organizations. In the fourth chapter I briefly sketch the methodological relevance and implications of my endeavor.

The chapters that follow contain the collage itself: the stories and how I have read them and made sense of them. The last chapter begins with my own story that is a part of the collage and then tries to frame the text in a model of spiritual experience and organizing which is the result of my sense making of this narrative quest.
2. Experiencing awareness

2.1. Spirituality versus religion

Self-actualizing spirituality is different from religion. Anthony de Mello (2004) contrasts spirituality and religion: while spirituality is a way of life, religion as practiced today deals in punishments and rewards. In other words, it breeds fear and greed — the two things most destructive of spirituality (de Mello, 2004). Religions are more like ideologies, they can be useful but sometimes they can be dangerous, and even inspire violence.

Religion can be seen as institutionalized spirituality, a social behavior pattern with an adherent hierarchy and norms. Spirituality is a state of mind. "Spirituality is awareness, awareness, awareness, awareness, awareness," as Anthony de Mello (2004) succinctly put it. Awareness is the way to enlightenment that is the heart of spirituality. To be enlightened is to see:

   Spirituality is about seeing. It's not about earning or achieving. It's about relationships rather than results or requirements. Once you see, the rest follows.
   (Rohr, 1999, p. 31)

The organization theorist Ian Mitroff (2003) emphasizes the difference between spirituality and religion, as expressed by his interviewees, high-level US managers. He lists the following characteristics of spirituality:

- Spirituality is not formal, structures or organized,
- Spirituality transcends denominations,
- Spirituality is inclusive and universal,
• Spirituality is timeless, neither absolute nor relative,
• Spirituality is the ultimate source of meaning in people's lives,
• Spirituality expresses the awe people feel in the presence of the transcendent,
• Spirituality is about the sacredness of everything,
• Spirituality is the deep feeling of the interconnectedness of everything,
• Spirituality is inner peace,
• Spirituality offers an infinite source of power.

Religion, by contrast, works well in organized settings because it is well organized, it does impose distinctions and is much more liable to become a subject and means of manipulation. Therefore, echoing his interviewees standpoints, Mitroff declares: "Thou shalt make no company religion" ((2003, p. 377).

2.2. Enlightenment

If not in organized religious settings, where then can self-actualizing spirituality be found? Many mystics speak of a solitary peak experience that is perhaps the most distinguishing feature of spiritual practice. It is often referred to as enlightenment.

Enlightenment means a kind of change that is devoid of motivation, although it is not unintentional. Motivation encapsulates change, due to motivation "the future is what we are now" (Krishnamurti, 1996, p. 55). Enlightenment is an unpredictable, unpredicted, and uncontained change – a transformation (Rohr, 1999). It can be found by an inquiring mind, but not by way of formal education or logical problem solving, nor development in the sense of training the logical mind, or by the adoption of rational techniques. To become enlightened
the mind should be absolutely free and completely dedicated. Enlightenment is an experience that evades description but it is also a feeling: of ecstasy, transcendence of subjectivity and objectivity. De Mello (2004) depicts it in the following parable:

"There are three stages in one's spiritual development," said the Master. "The carnal, the spiritual and the divine."

"What is the carnal stage?" asked the eager disciples.

"That's the stage when trees are seen as trees and mountains as mountains."

"And the spiritual?"

"That's when one looks more deeply into things -- then trees are no longer trees and mountains no longer mountains."

"And the divine?"

"Ah, that's Enlightenment," said the Master with a chuckle, "when trees become trees again and mountains, mountains."

Being present and aware means that the self is moved into the center of his personality, thus filling the inner void and becoming Consciousness, a release of an internal light. The psychologist Piotr Fijewski (1998), who describes the light of consciousness as an

[openness for experiences in which consciousness is engaged […]. The light of consciousness is readiness for the embracing of experience, is a manifestation of the faith in the presence of a good giver, it shines upon the creation of the “I” and upon the territory where the experience of coming in contact with the world takes place. The light of consciousness exists from the birth to the death of a person [… it]

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2 The Master in de Mello's stories is "not a single person. He is a Hindu guru, a Zen roshi, a Taoist sage, a Jewish rabbi, a Christian monk, a Sufi mystic. He is Lao Tzu and Socrates, Buddha and Jesus, Zarathustra and Muhammad. His teaching is found in the seventh century B.C. and the twentieth century A.D. His wisdom belongs to East and West alike." (de Mello, 1992/1998, p. V).
ensures an intense and meaningful contact with reality […] Yet in a multitude of human experiences the involvement if the light of consciousness is small or altogether absent. (p. 14-15; original emphasis)

The enlightened person is present in the sense that his light of consciousness is clear and intensive. He feels free and does not need identify himself with the incidental and false personality. She is present in the now, and feels whole, whatever she does and wherever she is (Tolle, 1999). Siddhartha Gautama Buddha spoke of it in the following way:

Wakefulness is the way to life.  
The fool sleeps  
As if he were already dead,  
But the master is awake  
And he lives forever.

He watches.  
He is clear.

How happy he is!  
For he sees that wakefulness is life.  
How happy he is,  
Following the path of the awakened.

With great perseverance  
He meditates, seeking  
Freedom and happiness. (Kornfield, 1993/1999, p. 1)³

Awakening means to become present. Zazen, the Zen meditation is often characterized as pure presence. Its aim is to achieve enlightenment. The Zen enlightenment⁴ can be described through the following chief characteristics: irrationality, intuitive insight, authoritativeness, affirmation, sense of the beyond, impersonal tone, feeling of exaltation, and momentariness (Suzuki 1950/1994). The irrationality of satori means that it cannot be reached by reasoning

³ From the Dhammapada.
⁴ The more common kind of Satori is a glimpse of enlightenment. It is also possible to attain permanent awareness, a much more rare state, beginning with satori becoming enduring. This is the first step to permanent enlightenment in Zen.
or explained logically. The intuitive insight derives from seeing, as it embraces the essence of nature. Satori "is concerned with something universal and at the same time with the individual aspect of existence" (ibid.: 26). The authoritativeness of satori means that the knowledge feels final and it is not negative – hence its affirmation. All kinds of enlightenment are concerned by a sense of the beyond. However, as Christian mystics tend to speak of the personal dimension in their experience (love of God), the Zen satori lacks this coloring. Nonetheless, the feeling of exaltation typical of Christian mystics is common for Zen adepts as well. The momentariness of satori means that it is devoid of time yet powerfully transformative: "satori comes upon one abruptly and is a momentary experience," it "opens up in one moment (…) an altogether new vista, and the whole existence is appraised from quite a new angle of observation" (ibid.: 30).

Enlightenment can be found through and inquiring mind (ibid.), not by way of formal education or logical problem solving, development in the sense of training the logical mind, or adopting of rational techniques. The mind should be absolutely free. A Zen master gives the following advice to his students:

Have your minds thoroughly washed off of all cunning and crookedness, sever yourselves from greed and anger which rise from egotism, and let no dualistic thoughts disturb you any longer so that your consciousness is wiped perfectly clear. When this purgation is effected, hold up your koan before the mind: "All things are resolvable into the One, and when is this One resolved? Where is it really resolved? Inquire into this problem from beginning to end, severally as so many queries, or undividedly as one piece of thought, or simply inquire into the whereabouts of the One. In any event, let the whole strong of questions be distinctly impressed upon your consciousness so as to make it the exclusive object of attention. If you allow any idle thought to enter into the one solid uninterruptible chain of inquiries, the

The spiritual contrast to this vision is epitomized by the Zen koan — a riddle, irrational and illogical, or perhaps beyond rationality or logic, like the question of One's resolution quoted above. Another famous koan is also a question: what is the sound of one hand clapping? The inquiring mind is like an intellectual obsession, like a state of creative fury, when all mingle and fuse.

The road to enlightenment is described somewhat differently by Eckhart Tolle (1999)\textsuperscript{5} – as something that is inherently ours. The book *The power of now* begins with the following story:

A beggar had been sitting by the side of a road for over thirty years. One day a stranger walked by. "Spare some change?" mumbled the beggar, mechanically holding out his old baseball cap. "I have nothing to give you," said the stranger. Then he asked: "What's that you are sitting on?" "Nothing," replied the beggar. "Just an old box. I have been sitting on it for as long as I can remember." "Ever looked inside?" asked the stranger. "No," said the beggar, 'What's the point?' There's nothing in there." "have a look inside," insisted the stranger. The beggar managed to open the lid. With astonishment, disbelief, and elation, he saw that the box was filled with gold." (1999, p. 9).

And then Tolle says the following:

I am the stranger who has nothing to give you and who is telling you to look inside. Not inside any box, as in the parable, but somewhere even closer: inside yourself.

(P. 9)

\textsuperscript{5} I do not imply that the Zen and Eckhart Tolle’s views are incompatible – to me they are one like climbing the mountain from different sides.
To be enlightened it is not necessary to accomplish superhuman deeds or even sit and meditate for the best part of the day. Enlightenment is our "natural state of felt oneness with Being" (Tolle, 1999, s. 10), finding that which is fundamentally ours. It is not the ego, the mind, and not even the body. It is what is left when all those labels are discarded. A pure energy that is us, the experiencing awareness. It is a spiritual state of being, but not religious, not even mystical in the sense we usually put into the term. It is not a state separate from what we are but springing from the very center of it. To be enlightened one has to rise above the thinking mind and experience the present – the now, take it just as it comes. Consciousness is the way out of pain and out of suffering – which is how Buddha describes enlightenment.

2.3. Permanent awareness

Enlightenment is momentary, it is an instant illumination, but it can lead to a more permanent state of mind. Mystics speak of the spiritual person as being constantly aware. According to Alan W. Watts (1951) spiritual awareness is not to be confused with being aware of something. Awareness is not tied to any object outside of it. It is a way of being – permanent awareness.

Quite often people tend to move their self into the periphery of their personality – to the sensation part of it. They feel and think and through these acts they identify themselves as themselves. The center of such a human being's personality is left empty and void, like a black hole, feeding on energy that can only be obtained through the supply of more and more gratifying sensation. Through awareness the self can be moved back into the center, and thus fill the inner void. The psychical pain, the feelings of being inadequate, depressed, miserable does no need to be experienced as one's self (Tolle, 1999). Awareness thus helps to fill the inner void that is due to the dislocation of the self, with what really belongs there –
consciousness, a source of powerful spiritual, psychological, and corporal energy. It makes the person free to experience the world instead of waste energy on building psychological fortresses serving to protect the vulnerable marginalized self, or to seek endless gratification. But what does it mean in practical terms? In one of de Mello's (2004) stories awareness is presented in the following way:

When out on a picnic, the Master said, "Do you want to know what the Enlightened is like? Look at those birds flying over the lake."

While everyone watched, the Master exclaimed:

"They cast a reflection on the water that they have no awareness of — and the lake has no attachment to."

Awareness excludes evaluation – when we evaluate, understanding ceases. Awareness is "a view of reality free of ideas and judgements" (Watts, 1951, p.116). It is different from thinking and discerning. It is just being there – and through it finding oneself and becoming free (de Mello 2004).

Awareness is a floodlight. You’re open to anything that comes within the scope of your consciousness. When awareness is turned on, there’s never any distraction, because you’re always aware of whatever happens to be (de Mello 2004).

Awareness is, however, not just a source of happiness and a potential blessing but a prerequisite, a necessity. In the words of Anthony de Mello's (2004):

These things
will destroy the human race:
politics without principle,
progress without compassion,
wealth without work,
learning without silence,
religion without fearlessness
and worship without awareness.
Or, as Socrates said, “The unaware life is not worth living.” To live a worthwhile life means to feel alive.

2.4. Experiencing oneself and the flow

Awareness brings one to the point where the person experiences himself as at the same time unique and one with everything. This consciousness is sometimes referred to as taking part in the cosmic flow.

Self-actualizing spiritual experience is about making a difference through perfecting one's difference (Jung, 1989), and thus becoming unpredictable and unpredicted. We die to the extent that we do not make a difference – this is the meaning of the individuation principle. According to Carl Gustav Jung, if we remain faithful to our soul, that is, to our difference, we do not dissipate into Pleroma, or nothingness and entropy. Difference means uniqueness, the differentiation from common streams such as egoism, fear, and pain – and thus feeling the moment to its full potential that is a glimpse of infinity (Krishnamurti 1996).

The psychologist Piotr Fijewski speaks of feelings of spiritual emptiness and typical ways of coping with it (1998). Sometimes the life energy of a person is blocked and she cannot fully express herself. It becomes impossible to fully experience one's feelings, body, and spirituality. The light of awareness is dislocated and hidden, instead of a steady flow of energy, the person experiences emptiness. She usually tries to fill spiritual emptiness with help of various strategies: the cult of detail, an obsession with time, a cult of the internal observer (what Eckhart Tolle calls the thinking mind). To regain the connectedness with the flow, it is necessary to find one's center. Fijewski believes in reconnecting through
experiencing others and the world. His strategies of relating to others and the outside reality remind of Watt's meditative strategies – he recommends short exercises of seeking connectedness in one's imagination. Then he suggests that the person concentrates on the present, and tries to experience the Other in the now. That is the way to real communication as well as to spirituality.

Again, I would like to stress that spirituality and religion differ very much. Religions sometimes preach the necessity to choose between the light and darkness, between spirit and matter. Spirituality emphasizes unity rather than dualisms. The Buddha’s teachings pointed to that understanding begins with the abandonment of dualisms (Kornfield, 1993/1999). Jesus Christ’s counsels were very much the same (de Mello, 2004). Similarly, the wisdom of the Chassid mystics is emphasizing the need to transcend thinking in dichotomies (Buber, 1949/1989). Sufi and adwaita Hinduism (as well as many other mystical streams within different religious systems) hold a similar standpoint. In fact, it is advantageous to see a third possibility:

The individual may be understood neither as an isolated person nor as an expendable, humanoid working-machine. He may be seen, instead, as one particular focal point at which the whole universe expresses itself […]. (Watts, 1966/1989, p. 78)

According to Alan Watts (1966/1989) as I read him, the person is a meeting between reality and the self, and that not as a noun but as a verb, the happening of the encounter, the cross-over in the making. The world and the person express themselves in the cross-over. They both become.

Tolle (1999) speaks of joy as the natural state of mind. The free flow of life energy makes life full of joy, ease, and lightness.

As soon as you honor the present moment, all unhappiness and struggle dissolve, and life begins to flow with joy and ease. When you act out of present-moment awareness, whatever you do becomes imbued with a sense of quality, care, and love – even the most simple action. (p. 56)

2.5. Spirituality and experience – changes and portals

How does one become spiritual? How to use the experiential knowledge and where does it lead? The changes in one's life and in the way one relates to others and the world are another important point I would like to briefly consider.

When our life-force is flowing freely, we can bypass mere identification from the "me" [the false incidental personality] and experience a merging of potent essence, which is what real spirituality is all about (Benstead and Constantine 1998: 284). Spirituality is not change in itself, for "the future is what we are now " (Krishnamurti 1996: 55). While motivation is a drive, an impulse that encloses change and makes it but a completion of the present, spirituality is change without direction, flow without enclosure. Meditation is possible when motivation is absent (ibid.). Spiritual change is not the striving for gratification, financial or otherwise, as the thinking in terms of reward and penalty makes us resemble trained dogs and thus is a product of a limited mind (ibid.). It is not appraisal – the mind "tries to subject its measures on the immeasurable" (ibid.: 97) and first when we free ourselves from the temptation to evaluate we can plunge into meditation. It is definitely not greed, incessant activity, desire of external achievement – leaving the person with a feeling of internal emptiness and loss (Jung, 1989). It has nothing to do with winning, we need to escape
the common trap that makes us "ignore our true character to accommodate to what society names as successful" (Rohr, 1999: 137).

Solving the problems of a living human being means change, though not changes in and for their own sake, nor planned change, so typical of, for example, mainstream management books. Spirituality is unplanned change, a change that can only take place if we let go of expectations and fears.

Letting go, opening up brings about change and transformation, according to Alan Watts (1951). This clear perception is a state of mind that leads us to the threshold of understanding. Full understanding is often described as either death (Watts, 1951) or meditation (more about transformative meditation e.g. in Watts, 2000). But there are more mundane portals, available in everyday life. I will present two of them: freedom and silence.

Anthony de Mello (2004) speaks of freedom as something that the seekers already have as well as something they discover – and become enlightened.

"How shall I get liberation?"

"Find out who has bound you," said the Master.

The disciple returned after a week and said,

"No one has bound me."

"Then why ask to be liberated?"

That was a moment of Enlightenment for the disciple, who suddenly became free.
Krishnamurti (1973/1987) explains that life is movement, one that has no beginning and no end. Freedom is necessary to understand that movement. That kind of freedom means letting go of beliefs, illusions and fears. It puts one in touch with infinite energy – life itself.

Silence is the second powerful portal towards spiritual understanding I wish to address. "Pay more attention to the silence than the words," says Tolle (1999, p. 112). Thus the mind becomes still and through inner silence the portal opens up.

    Every sound is born out of silence, dies back into silence, and during its life span is surrounded by silence. Silence enables the sound to be. It is an intrinsic but unmanifested part of every sound, every musical note, every song, every word. (Tolle, 1999, p. 112-113).

Silence brings a kind of wisdom that consists of looking and listening, rather than talking and symbolizing, it is openness and meditation, making the encounter with experience possible. In Anthony de Mello’s writings (e.g. 1992/1998), silence of this kind is a spiritual door to the experience of absence and presence at the same time, of becoming, of the divine, and of what is – or perhaps is not beyond words and images. Silence is the passage into the awareness of the futility of categorizations, the hollowness of definitions, and the illusory character of passing and remaining.

Through these two portals we can reach awareness. It is not an absolute end. Rather, it is a beginning of a quest. The aim of a spiritual quest is neither gold or fame, neither is it self-esteem or advancement. Its aim is happiness or, if you prefer, self-actualization.

Abraham Maslow described the self-actualizing person (1962/1968) in a similar way as many mystics speak of enlightenment. Self-actualization is an achievement of one's full potential, making a difference as a person and experiencing wholeness and happiness. It is not an end –
rather, it means constant work. The peak experience that is part of the process reminds very much of enlightenment:

Feelings of limitless horizons opening up to the vision, the feeling of being simultaneously more powerful and also more helpless than one ever was before, the feeling of ecstasy and wonder and awe, the loss of placement in time and space with, finally, the conviction that something extremely important and valuable had happened, so that the subject was to some extent transformed and strengthened even in his daily life by such experiences. (1970, p. 164)

The effects of peak experience can be life altering: they can remove neurotic syndromes, they help to see oneself in a more healthy way, and they can change one's view about relations with others and the world. They have a tendency to release creativity and spontaneity and make people view life as more worthwhile. Peak experiences promote self-actualization and they make people realize that it can take place anywhere and everywhere. Work organizations are one of the possible self-actualizing contexts.

2.6. Work and spirituality

Spirituality and work, then, are not necessarily each other’s antitheses. Kahlil Gibran believes that they are indeed one:

Your daily life is your temple and religion.

Whenever you enter unto it take with you your all.

Take the plough and the forge and the mallet and the lute,

The things you have fashioned in necessity or for delight (Gibran 1923/ 1996: 48).
It is not possible to divide one's life into soulless work and soulful meditation and call it real spirituality (or for that sake, psychic wholesomeness and health, Benstead and Constantine 1998). Work is not separate from spiritual experience but an intimate part of it:

[W]hen you work you fulfill a part of earth's furthest dream, assigned to you when that dream was born,

And in keeping yourself with labour you are in truth loving life,

And to love life through labour is to be intimate with life's inmost secrets (Gibran 1923/1996: 13).

If we cannot do our work with love, we should give up working, says Kahlil Gibran (1923/1996), as the bread baked without love is bitter and fills only half the hunger.

De Mello's (1992/1998) Master put it bluntly, making a division between getting things done and the ability to do them:

When a guest volunteered to do the dishes after dinner, the Master said: "Are you sure you know how to do dishes?

The man protested that he had done them all his life. Said the Master: "Ah, I have no doubt of your ability to make dishes clean. I only doubt your ability to wash them."

(p. 5)

The enlightened life is a life that is whole, undivided. Suzuki quotes the following story:

A distinguished teacher was once asked, "Do you ever make any effort to get disciplined in the truth?

"Yes, I do."

"How do you exercise yourself?"

"When I am hungry I eat; when tired I sleep."
"This is what everybody does; can they be said to be exercising themselves in the same way as you do?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because when they eat they do not eat, but are thinking of various other things, thereby allowing themselves do be disturbed; when they sleep they do not sleep, but dream of a thousand and one things. This is why they are not like myself" (Suzuki 1964: 86).

It is quite meaningless to divide one's life in work and free time, hoping that when one earns enough money, it will finally be possible to enjoy exquisite idleness:

No, the enjoyment of an idle life doesn't cost any money. The capacity for true enjoyment of idleness is lost in the moneyed class and can be found only among people who have a supreme contempt for wealth (Lin Yutang 1937/ 1998: 154).

In the words of the organization researcher Ian Mitroff (2003), spirituality is essential in the workplace – but it cannot be an object to manipulation or organization. People feel the need of spirituality and wish to be able to fully express themselves as human beings at work.
3. Making sense of organizing

3.1. Processes of organizing

Like Karl Weick (1969/1979), I do not believe in fixed, solid phenomena called organizations, but in processes of organizing, or bringing together of "ongoing interdependent actions into sensible sequences i.e. generate sensible outcomes" (Weick 1969/1979: 3). The results of organizing are cycles linked together as loops (and not chains of causes and effects). The stages of a cycle of organizing Weick described as enactment – which means that people bracket out a segment of their environment and make it real through their actions; selection, where people try to reduce ambiguity by framing them with the help of their cognitive schemes; retention, or keeping of the effects within their cognitive schemes. Organizing is thus about active and continuous sensemaking, as much as it is about practice making the processes real or enacted (Weick, 1995). Organizing does not, then, mean strict ordering in the sense of imposing the rules of rationality, but is a complex process of far from linear sensemaking. The paradox of the sensemaking process of organizing is that successful results are stored (retained), extending the cognitive schemes, but at the same time limiting the possibilities of change: the process is one of ordering and directing.

3.2. Organizing as experience

The definition of organization is a result of the assumptions about reality and its description that the author takes on. There are many ways of seeing organizational reality, for example Gareth Morgan (1986) presents the most popular ones in his celebrated book Images of organization, together with their origins and uses. The result of my interest in processes and
sensemaking is my concentration on what is happening when people organize rather than on the effects of them doing so. Some aspects of organization are highlighted in my definition, such as collective and active features, while others are downplayed, such as structures or financial rules. All definitions do that: while highlighting one side of complex phenomena, they make other sides more difficult to see.

The enactment characterization by Karl Weick that I have presented above helps to understand what it means to perceive organization as a verb rather than a noun (Law, 1994). It is natural to talk about organizing in this context rather than of organizations. John Law views this process as ordering, more or less obsessive, more or less precise. It embraces people but things, artifacts. The entire practice John Law sees as a strategy, not necessarily a conscious way, or what he calls the *mode of ordering*, the way of forming the process of organizing by concrete actors. The specific mode is typically quite regular and repetitive, giving the impression of being something solid, a thing – the organization. It is common knowledge that habits are a person’s second nature, so for example a person who is often late is seen by others as a latecomer. Of course this is just a pattern of behavior, if the person changes his ways, he will cease to come late. The illusion of a “solid personality trait” vanishes. In processes of organizing the ordering strategy is usually not simple but consists of many coexisting modes, often linked together in complicated ways. This makes it often difficult or even impossible to unambiguously figure out what the concrete ordering strategy is. The organizing processes contain many simultaneous plots: for example, acting as a competitive enterprise on the market and acting as a network of colleagues, friends and enemies. None of the modes is universally defined and all depend on the actors and the environment in which they act. John Law argues that the inconsistency typical of organization processes is the
reason why organizing is practically possible at all and it should not be reduced or straightened out to a state of *hideous purity*. It is impossible but if it succeeded it would stop the process, kill the dynamics. The actors taking part in these processes are complex creatures, too, and no behavior, not even that of a single person, can be satisfactorily explained only in terms of rationality. Rationality is a useful category for description of organizations but it should be remembered that it is only a manner of explanation, and what more, it is irrationality that is the driving force towards change (Brunsson, 1985). However, this is not the only paradoxical feature of organization. Karl Weick (1969/1979) points out that organizing means that successful results are stored in the process of retention, thus enhancing the collective cognitive schemes. At the same time as it develops the cognitive schemes retention also limits the possibilities for change, because it gives the ordering processes a direction. That is where the persistency and relative stability of the modes of ordering described by John Law come from. Barbara Czarniawska draws attention to the same quality of organization, that is the enactment of directed change. Her emphasis is on the actors and their activities of meaning making when she says that organizations are:

nets of collective action, undertaken in an effort to shape the world and human lives. The contents of the action are meanings and things (artifacts). One net of collective action is distinguishable from another by the kind of meanings and products socially attributed to an organization (1992, p. 32).

Change, even if it is directed, is neither deterministic nor linear. Gibson Burrell (1997) claims that linearity kills: organization theory had been quite unnecessarily trying to force chaotic and non-linear processes into rigid descriptive orders that impoverished them. These theories are not very helpful if we wish to understand organizations and they reinforce an anxiety preventing understanding. The conceiving of organizations as things with well defined
borders is an illusion harmful to cognitive processes. The most useful way to think of organizations for people who would want to make change possible or just actively participate in them is to see them as multidirectional, flexible action, based on and agreement and they become real only when people give them meaning, as Susan Wright points out (1994). People do so by the way of negotiation in which routines and symbols play an important part, including those who refer to the conventions of how to define boundaries. Boundaries are thus culturally important to the organizational actors but their meaning can change depending on what people want to achieve or how they picture the processes in which they take part. For example, many public sector organizations in Western Europe have seriously redefined their boundaries during the 80ties and the 90ties. Before the clients (who were often not regarded as clients in the market sense) were seen as being outside of the organization. The reforms aimed at incorporating the clients into the organization itself, as well as at reconceptualizing ideas of quality and service. The expectations of the clients about what quality means to them were turned into internal criteria of quality (see e.g. Erlingsdóttir, 1999; Gustavsson, 2000).

Sometimes describing the organization and its boundaries based on the images created by the participants helps to understand reality but even then it should not be forgotten that the studied organization is a part of a greater context, the institutional order (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). At a given time and place there exists a set of dominating social institutions or patterns of action and social roles that are taken for granted. Part of those institutions concern processes of organizing: in practice, in theory and in people’s imagination. They relate to what actions are typically (traditionally) linked with what other actions. The idea to include the client into the service organization was a consequence of some broader institutionalization
processes and did not concern only a few chosen enterprises and public sector organizations. According to the new institutional order the service organization is active on the market and the clients have a right to be involved and define one of its key internal criteria for what is good, acceptable, rational functioning – quality. Another example of a social institution governing contemporary processes of organizing is the principle that an enterprise should bring in profit. The activities of an enterprise should be organized in such that they result in making a financial profit. That is however not the only way possible to run an enterprise. For example East European enterprises before 1989 were thought of quite differently: their ultimate aim was to fulfill a priori plan quotas. The ruling institution in that context was called plan economy and its functioning was evaluated in terms of a different rationality, namely the political rationality, to the one that is currently used in most European countries to judge the performance of enterprises, or the economical rationality. The old institution was regarded in Eastern Europe just as finally as the current one is: as a taken for granted and obvious way of doing things.

DiMaggio and Powell talk of the usefulness of the discerning of another contextual construct for analytical reasons: the organization fields, or net of actions institutionally connected. Examples of such fields are public administration, an industry, locally cooperating deliverers, producers, local governments etc. The researcher determines what the field of interest is and separates it from the broader context of actual institutional networks remembering that no boundaries are final or objective. The aim of a concrete separation of an organization field is to look at chosen actions. It is one of many possible configurations of activities inherent to a meaningful frame of reference: individual actors are indispensable to each other in order to make action possible, but they do not have to meet in reality. An organization field can also
have an empirical significance because, as Richard Scott (1995) points out, such a community of organizations often share a common system of meanings and act together more often than with actors from outside of the field. The cooperation has also further going consequences for them than the cooperation with other actors. The participants of the organizations also often tend to see themselves as part of a bigger whole. It is not necessary to assume that an organization defining its institutional identity in one given way has to hold on to the definition. Guje Sevón (1998) shows how the self-identification process, that is the process of defining one’s identity is strictly coupled with what organizational field the participants, usually management, see as important for themselves. New labels are added to old ones, and more rarely exchanged completely. “An innovative company” could be likely to add such new identifying labels as “hi tech,” but it is less probable that it will drop the “company” label and call itself instead “artistic project.” At least at the moment I write these words. It is not very likely to adopt the identity of “bureaucracy” either, because changes in self-identity are concurrent with the broader changes of the context and bureaucratic structures have been desperately unfashionable since some time now. People’s expectations and valuations change over time, and so do social institutions. When the self-identification has taken place, a process of imitation begins, where the actors regarded as typical representatives for the given field are being imitated. For example, an IT company is likely to imitate Silicon Valley firms such as they are locally perceived. A Swedish organization has probably very different ideas of such a firm from a Polish company. Both would imitate whatever they think is the “right” image.

The notion of the organization field helps to better understand many organizational phenomena such as the paradox of change I have mentioned before: organizations change in such a way as to remain as unchanged as possible. A successful change limits the possibilities
for further changes. And what more, organizations often change in clusters, as if they were trying to be alike. Institutional theory has an explanation to this puzzling fact: yes, they do in fact imitate each other, imitation is one of the important institutionalization drives, and the reason to change is to gain an institutionally acceptable (legitimate) identity. Within an organization field individual organizations change in order to become more similar because that is a part of the self-identification process. Very few organizations think up an entirely new identity for themselves and those who do are seen as either very innovative (such as the dotcoms in the nineties) or strange and not serious (consider an enterprise who would claim that it is not interested in money but in giving a convincing performance). While imitating others organizations are subjected to institutionalization and at the same time actively form new institutions. The outcome is institutional identity. Within an organization field this is a collective action, called organizational isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). Actors in the field communicate intensively, constructing interorganizational structures, such as for example patterns of coalitions, a kind of collective awareness is created (“we market organizations”), a sense that the organization has lot in common with other actors in the field. Barbara Czarniawska and Bernward Joerges (1996) describe how ideas travel within the fields, how they are transferred from one organization to another through translation and local adjustment. Only seldom are they transmitted unreflectively, without modification. The act of translation is often creative and it is always locally adaptive. TQM was a fashionable idea in the eighties and early nineties, implemented by many organizations but the actual practices differed considerably and took many concrete forms and each case is individual (see Styhre, 1998).
Management is a special case of organizing where individuals and resources are brought together in a coordinated way in order to achieve an aim (Sjöstrand, 1998). Such coordination can take individual as well as collective forms: a person or a group can be responsible for management. The need for management often emerges when people perceive an increasing uncertainty. Sven-Erik Sjöstrand explains that management is coping with uncertainty. There exist unmanaged organizations, but they are not too common. Uncertainty is often seen as a serious threat to be dealt with and people want to be able to react to it in an organized way. In other words, people do not know what will happen and when but they have an explicit expectation that something unforeseen will take place. Management is supposed to not so much prevent that such a situation occurs but their task is to ensure that if it happens the organizational participants will keep their ability to act collectively, or to “make the organization act in an organized way.” A sudden event can have a disorganizing effect on human and technological actors. The role of management is then to watch over the organizing and prevent chaos.

According to Mats Alvesson and Hugh Willmott (1996/1998) management consists of technical as well as social aspects, even if management books often tend to treat it as if it were a purely technical activity. It can be described in such a way but it does not help to understand what it is about or why it is there. The means, the activities, the knowledge, and awareness necessary to do a good job in management originate in both dimensions of organizing: the social and the technical. Furthermore, there is a distinctive political dimension to management, and failing to see it can lead to many naı̈ve ideas and sometimes to dangerously simplified propositions of practical solutions in search of “effective management.” The authors point out that such solutions have been many times proved to be
risky: they can be blamed for many grave problems, from the deterioration and poisoning of the natural environment to employee burnout, and that includes those who are responsible for management themselves. Therefore Alvesson and Wilmott advocate a more complex view on management, taking into account the fact that it is a social practice that emerged in concrete social and cultural circumstances. The tension between practice and theory springs from the tendency of theory to disregard complexity and to strive for being normative, that is, theory often tells managers how to effectively manage, instead of problematizing and holistically describing actions. Only by sticking to the latter it can inspire to the undertaking new endeavors.

I would like to add that not only management but all processes of organizing are ambiguous and complex. In addition to formal and rational goals those processes realize many other aims, they fulfill many human needs, including those that they officially hold to be paramount but they do not need to be central in practice at all. Some are conscious and realized, some may be unconscious, and there is even a phenomenon described as the organization shadow (Bowles, 1991). The Shadow is a Jungian term and Martin Bowles uses it to describe such aspects of an organization that it rejects about itself, that would threaten its members self-image and self-understanding: “facts which organizations wish to deny about themselves, due to the threat posed to self-image and self-understanding and, more generally, the need to be viewed in a favourable light by others” (p. 387). While managers try to “erect a persona of respectability, rationality, and efficiency” (p. 388), the Shadow comes to embrace all that is not viewed as suiting this ideal. Sometimes it erupts with a raw violence, and is the more dramatic, the more rational and technicist the organization presents itself as. The Organization Shadow often comes to represent negative aspects (such as aggression, greed and tyranny),
but it potentially contains also a positive side, known as the golden shadow. An individual could have “repressed more constructive characteristics of him/herself” (p. 391) because of a socialization pattern where the person has become the focus of the Shadow of the family members. Organizations, too, can have such repressed aspects: the “irrational” and the disruptive shades of the collective processes that lie beyond the dominating rhetoric and order. In Martin Bowles’ terms it is often the Eros energies, as well as energies associated with the feminine archetype that become the golden shadow. These energies are about people and caring instead of control and design. The repression and rejection of the unconscious energies: the standard and the golden shadow, lead not only to imbalance but pose a more sinister threat: the shadow is dangerous, but it is dangerous only when it is repressed (Jung, 1971/1981; Bowles, 1991).

3.3. Poetical definitions

I have asked my friends, practicing organization theorists occupying different academic positions, to try to define organization for me by writing a poem. Some were willing to give it a try and I am very grateful for their contribution. All of the poems were written in English originally. The collection was similar to what I describe in the next chapter as my method of collecting narratives, however, this time I was not interested in following plots and unraveling story lines. I wanted to see what different metaphors and pictures came to the organization theorists’ mind when they thought about organization. It is a similar end to what I have once tried to achieve with my poem collection from students on the topic of management (Kostera, 1997) that I describe in more detail in Chapter 4.

The poems the researchers have written express their personal meaning, their local knowledge. They explain practices, but also private ways of taking part in the experience of
studying organization in contemporary Europe. Their experiences of reflection and empirical encounters with the field together are in my reading the ground on which all the authors have built their poetical definitions. However, they chose different themes, sometimes more than one (and some authors wrote more than one poem). A.D. Jankowicz wrote three poems to express his ideas of organizing and of management. The first one is a glimpse of the process as it is reflected in the classroom.

A.D.Jankowicz

Organization: a Management Lecturer Looks at his Students
Why do they all wear suits?
"Convention demands it, ambition aspire
Customer expects it, the Director requires"
But why do they all wear suits?
***
It's the product that matters, the service that counts
"Self-presentation is surely a part?"
- A tiny iota: which scarcely amounts,
When everything else is sick at the heart.

"Empow'r the employees; make sure that they know
Comp'ny objectives. The Boss likes to see;
And if they don't like it, we'll 'let them go'
Leaving the field to conformists like me."
***
When will they ever learn?
- Success is quite simple. Motives engaged
If personal pref'rence and needs are uncaged.
Oh, when will they ever learn?

The author presents an organization of conformists: these students are the embodiment of the topic they study and also the probable key future actors. Organizing is a process of learning but when will they ever learn? The following poem, also by A.D.Jankowicz depicts the results of conformism in an ironic way, as a stereotyped relation between genders.

A.D.Jankowicz
The result of this roleplaying looks stereotypical and perverse, and the joy is absent. The organization thus described is a sexual creature, but its sexuality is oppressive and all but playful. The next poem by A.D. Jankowicz shows a political picture:

**A.D. Jankowicz**

Organisation: and organisational structure

The Boss;

[  
Assistants to the M.D.;

[  
An awful lot of middle managers;

[  
And somewhere below the whole heap- sits me.

The individual member is just one of the heap, an underling, a fragment of the foundation of the pyramid. It is difficult to imagine how she would be able to express her individuality. Maybe these are the direct results of the students impotence to learn new things, things that would enable them to escape rigid figures of thought. Charalambos A. Vlachoutsicos directs his attention to one specific quality of organization that makes learning so difficult – its being the manifestation of a collective desire to consume.

**Charalambos A. Vlachoutsicos**

On Organization
Guru! Guru! Tell us wise Guru:

How can you eat an elephant?
„I can eat an elephant bit by but”.
I am an organization man.

Bit by bit I can eat all problems, 
even organizations, 
even bureaucracies, 
even fascism.

I eat myself into the organizational frenzy of my business, bit by bit, 
of my time, 
of my life.

But by bit, 
cut, fit, eat, 
cut, fit, eat, 
cut, fir, eat. 
Be cut, 
be fit, 
be eaten.

The organization is a way to consume, even what is regarded as problems or production is a 
way of life that is about consumption. But in the end we all become consumed in our turn, we 
are devoured by this insatiable Chronos. Tiina Vaino’s is a long poem giving a dark picture of 
organization, which is perhaps seen from the perspective of somebody devoured already.

Tiina Vaino

ORGANISATION
PERFORATED SHADOWS
AGAINST A DREAMY
WALL DIMLY LIT

PERFORATED SHADOWS
HANGING ON EACH
OTHERS’ THROATS

ORGANISATION
HUNGRY HUNT FOR A CUNT
TO EXTEND THE POOR
DEVIL’S WISHFUL BEING
BEYOND THE LIMITS
OF ITS EMPTINESS
INTO ITS EXISTENCE.

ORGANISATION
ORGANISING LIFE:
SEEKING FOR SUSAN
IN ORDER TO LET
HER RIDE ON
HIS RUN-AWAY.

ORGANISATION
ORGAN IS ATION
ATION ATION (N)ATION
AND HOW DISGUSTING
IT PRETENDEDLY
EVER CAN BE.

THE LONELY BOY
IN THE LIGHT SUMMER NIGHT
STARING AT YOU
LYING NAKED ON
THE BEACH CLIFF

HUNGER BEYOND
REASON.
ORGANISATION

SHE TOOK HER LIFE
WITHIN HER HANDS

SHE TOOK THE EXCESS
OF THE HUNGRY HUNT
ON THE EMPTY
MARKET PLACE FOR
PRETENDERS.

IN HER HANDS.

ORGANISATION

ANGEL MY ANGEL.
LISTEN, WATCH AND TEACH ME:

TELL ME WHAT TO DO
IN THE WEB OF DREAMS
UNFULFILLED
ASHAMED
QUIETLY HUSHED DOWN
BEYOND REASON.

ORGANISATION
TELL ME ABOUT THE
SPIRITUAL CONTENT
OF ART AND
I WILL TELL YOU
ABOUT DREAMS
WHICH LEGITIMISE
ORGANISATION
STUDIES.

The organization I see before me when I read this poem is infinite and omnipotent, and I, the reader, am at its inner recesses, an amazed and helpless observer. However, the immersed subject is not voiceless: her desire and hunger color the surroundings and drive her towards searching, studying, and asking. The dreams that legitimize the studies of organization are evident on this level of perception. There are many dreams here, visceral and spiritual, all mixed together and searing. The next author is equally infatuated with searching, however, he looks elsewhere for his answers.

Steve Kaminski
In Search of! Meaning

For me, the meaning of my everyday world,
For my life, my reality.
It is contained in my work.
I belong, Yes, I belong,
to my organization.
It is My, organization,
I am my organization’s creature.
Yes, for me, it is,
It is important to,
to belong.
To share my joy, my sorrow,
With My friends, My group,
The people I work with,
Even (sometimes), with my boss.
Sometimes though, I think,
I think, although it’s hard,
to think, now,
I think, maybe, maybe I’m,
Maybe I’m going crazy!
I ask myself silly questions,
Yesterday, yesterday, I asked myself,
Where is the broccoli,
Yes, where is the broccoli,
Why? I don’t know!

For me, the meaning of my everyday life,
It is contained within my,
My organization,
Yes, within my organization.
You see, I need a job,
Yes you must see that,
that I need a job,
Any job, to earn money!
A position in society,
Yes, I would be nothing,
Nothing without a job,
There would be no,
No meaning without a job,
No reason to live!
No reason to enjoy my life,
To enjoy my spare time,
And yet, I have, I have so,
So little time to spare,
To walk, walk in the,
In the open air,
To feel, to feel, feel what,
Just to feel,
To search, perhaps to,
To search for broccoli!

Like me, all my friends belong,
Yes, they belong,
they belong to an organization.
We do feel, sometimes!
Yes, we do deal,
We feel we are owned,
Possessed, by our organization,
But what can we do?
What can we do?
Our work is changed, often,
Our skill, we were proud,
Yes, we were proud of our skill,
Once we were very proud,
of our skill, yet now,
Now our skill is not,
Not needed, the machines,
The machines have taken our,
Taken our skill.
We feed the machines,
With our bodies,
yes, we stand there and,
And we feed the machines.
But we are free,
In our heads we are,
We are free, free to,
To do that,
But not free to do!
Where is the broccoli?

Yes, my friends and I,
We have meaning, we belong,
We belong to our organization.
We have sold our bodies,
But not our minds,
Not our souls, only our bodies,
For a, a promise.
Our organization looks after us,
yes, it looks after us,
If, if we accept change,
If we accept, the rules,
If we, If we behave.
My friends, my friends and I,
We are people? aren’t we!
We search, to find, to,
To find what, the answer,
The answer to the,
The meaning of life!
We have searched,
We have searched for,
For a long time,
We have searched, hard,
Very hard, but, but what!
The answer, the answer,
The answer is,
There is no Fucking Broccoli!

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For the idea to write this poem! is a disjunctive style.

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For the lines:
„Maybe the answer to all our questions is, there is no fucking broccoli!” (private correspondence)
1996

Steve Kaminski looks for meaning in organizing through the eyes of an employee, somebody who needs his job to earn a living and to achieve status, maybe even to acquire an identity. The price is high: to belong one has to give up one’s freedom, one becomes owned by the organization. We often literally sell our souls and bodies to the big indefinite creature that devours us. And yet there is no meaning in it at all. By the way, who said that the search for meaning has to be sublime? It’s no more no less sublime than the search for broccoli in a supermarket. Monica Lee emphasizes, by contract, its transcendent dimension.

**Monica Lee**

Organisation happens

I, happen.
People, happen.
Organisation, happens.
Management, does, so I have to do.
I engage.
You engage.
We create, and we kill that which we are not.
I am what I am not,
You are what I am not, and we birth that in us which is what we are not.
I kill my creation, and thus I kill my death.
I happen.

The poem portrays the dynamic, lively nature of the process of organizing. In Monica Lee’s definition, it is a process that engages people, something that they do together in order to express their identities and their lives. In the process of organizing they experience and enact
their souls but also they are able to experience the Other, that what is different from their soul. Through collective action they create something that are them and not them at the same time. In the following poem Ulla Johansson faces the mundane as well as the transcendental while encountering the tedious, the poetical, and the funny in it.

Ulla Johansson

Organization

Organization?
Organize!
Organize yourself, your life, your time.
Make the circle from sunrise to sunset
into a linear calendar of time.
Standardise.

Organize?
Organizing...
Making the chaos into order,
making the flowers,
and the flow of life,
into piles of papers and texts...

Texts containing what?
Sentences, metaphors and try to grab what is left out?
Or just words that unveil and create new exciting perspectives?
Or papers containing figures and numbers
in such a way that you can think life exists of figures and numbers?

Science and organization.
Science of organization.
Science as organized thoughts,
containing suppressed, oppressed love,
popping up in frenetic outbursts of criticism i.e. „radical science”
or maybe bursts out in a devotion, a love of the latest pop theory?

It all seems to be kitsch.
And the rest is love...
Organizing can be so many things: limiting and liberating, ice-cold and warm… How about management? The Author takes an explorative look at that organizational aspect, too and sees it from an equally multifaceted perspective:

**Ulla Johansson**

Management

Management
manipulation
maybe liberation
maybe liberating...
within what’s acceptable,
thoughts wrapped into what gives rise to acceptable feelings...

development?
being on the fringe
being new and acceptable at the same time
being within the acceptable limits
and moving out from earlier acceptance?
extending limits?
or creating new limits?
or both?

more manipulation?
or more liberation?
or maybe both?

Management is one of the roles an organization can perform and it is directed at controlling the already controlled process of organizing. It can be both liberating and manipulating and probably is both at the same time. In the following two poems Ulla Johansson and Heather Höpfl take a different, more individually oriented view on the topic of organizing.

**Ulla Johansson**

Organizing

I used to love organizing, or at least I loved the idea of organizing, having everything neat and clean in piles of papers - and maybe also in my chaotic head.
No, I never thought about chaos at that time, I only thought about order!
Order was what I wished for,
order was what I took for granted was lacking,
and ambitiously tried to put into
the office
the head
and maybe the heart?

I only thought about bringing some more order
into the chaos of my inner life,
that I did not even realize was chaotic.
Bringing order into the chaos that I did know existed
(and yet I must have known)
a chaos I was not even touching, touched by, moved by
but only tried to control and get distanced from.

Organizing as the discipline
or trying to discipline the chaos.
Get control.

What’s the alternative?
What was left out?
What is neither the negative chaos nor the negative order and disciplining control?
What is left out from all of this?

I am thinking of flow,
of creative chaos with lots of colours chaotically laughing to each other
chaos as positive instead of negative
chaos as source of energy

And what happens with organization then?
With control?
I am not sure
but I think it transforms meaning
I think it has transformed meaning
or maybe it has just not become so important, becomes a non-issue?

Maybe the organizing aspect
or the need of organization
has diminished (yes in my own life... but not in the world as a whole... where chaos
is
growing and the need of organization and control constantly - and unfortunately -
grows)

But sometimes I think I need to organize myself a little more
if there is going to be a dissertation report
maybe I have to control myself a little more
organize myself
cut things out
discipline myself
do what is necessary to be done
to get an acceptable piece of paper
and not following all the feelings
where they want to go...
(the last would probably, maybe, only just drive me crazy...)

Ulla Johansson rebelled against her own desire to be organized and discovered an powerful
source of energy: chaos. It bursts with colors and meanings, and there is even place for
organizing within it, however different and transformed. Sometimes however some
disciplined non-chaotic organizing is useful: when she wants to accomplish something, when
she wants to write a text that would be able to be read by others. Heather Höpfl reflects upon
the different ideas and practices of organizing herself:

**Heather Höpfl**

Organising Myself

Well, the thing about getting myself organised is that
I need to keep classifying and making lists and
Crossing things off and putting things on and
Making fresh lists and finding myself with a never ending
list, of lists, of lists, of tasks, and tasks, and endless
Classifications.

Well, the thing about getting myself organised is that
I need to keep making piles of things of different sorts
A pile of administration, a pile of papers to review,
A pile of things to do, which is endless and which always
Moves, topples, collapses as more piles are created
Which cover the dining room table, cover the living room
floor, cover the bedroom floor, until I am surrounded
By things to do and piles of work, which are endless.

Well, the thing about getting myself organised is that
I have to make sure I have a clean supply of underwear and Blouses, and socks. I find that I must keep feeding the washing machine and must keep myself reasonably clean. There is so little time or space for getting myself organised between the clean piles of washing, work in progress and endless lists. Everything reduces to taxonomy.

Well, the thing is..... I will never be organised until the day I retire - and that, God willing. It is now too difficult to pull back from the mountains of lists and piles of work and clean underwear. My garden is overgrown and hardly a surface in my house is free. I think I must become more disorganised and defy classification, throw away my lists, kick over the piles of work and think about being.

Well, the thing about being myself is..... great! And so I conclude that there are broadly two forms of organisation:
One - the tyrannical taxonomies which destroy the spirit
Two - ordering which creates space, music, harmonies.

Let our projects be subversions and liberation.

Let’s create the spaces which defy classification and resist subjection. I send you peace. Let’s go forward in the power of other ways of knowing. And. I will stop trying to organise myself for classification and consumption - I will try to organise myself to be. Ah Life. To smell the warm sweet smells of a Summer evening, to breathe fresh air, to live at ease with the world, to enjoy my children, to be.

Organising Myself.
13.7.95

We can organize ourselves for classification and consumption, to be overwhelmed and devoured – or to be. The process of organizing itself has no meaning attached to it (maybe that is why Steve Kaminski had such problems with finding it), we give it meaning or we take the meaning away. Organizing can result in claustrophobic spaces that crush the spirit. Or it can mean life. Organizing is for each of us a choice: either the one or the other. And that is only the beginning.
The order in which I tell the story of the poems is not accidental – it is my way of reading them as well as defining what organization is to me. I could say that the way I organized this chapter is an expression of my own beliefs about organizing. It is about all the things expressed in the poems: oppression, perversion, irrationality, claustrophobic order, liberation and making choices. The path that unites them tell the story of my relationship to organizations. They can oppress and discourage but in the end they are always about making choices and statements. I approach them as collective superpersons or perhaps monsters, but finally they turn out to be about what each of the participating actors make them to be. They embody the shared and the individual, both at the same time, and each of the sides make the other possible.

3.4. The pleasures of organizing

I have started this chapter by referring to Karl Weick and I will end it with another Weickian reference. In his celebrated *Social psychology of organizing* the author concludes his analysis of the processes stating that:

> Organizations keep people busy, occasionally entertain them, give them a variety of experiences, keep them off the stress, provide pretexts for storytelling, and allow socializing. They haven’t anything else to give. (1969/1979, p. 264)

People organize for many reasons, among them and not unimportantly, because they like doing things together and dislike being alone; or doing things together is more convenient, easier, more practical than lonely toil. Yiannis Gabriel, Stephen Fineman and David Sims (1992/2000) take all those activities and reasons into account in their bestselling textbook about organizations and emphasize how organizing is part of human experience. The chapters in the book concern such things as rules and regulations, entering and leaving, morals,
responsibility, sex, feelings, career, production and consumption, us and them, etc. I think that it much owes its popularity to that: organizations are not presented as soulless and perfectly rational constructs but as a way of living. Similarly, in Mary Jo Hatch’s advanced textbook in organization theory (1997), technical as well as social aspects of organizing are presented and shown to be equally important. The author also describes some of the relations between them and shows why it is important to understand the complex relationships between the human and technological actors. People who fail to perceive them are prisoners of their own imagination – their ability to introduce creative change is limited because they try to interact with a very limited reality. Also, their life will be limited and boring if they persuade themselves that they should alienate themselves from their experience in the name of rationality.

And yet organizations are so profoundly and intensely human, they have been part of human life since times immemorial. Old books such as the Bible describe organized action and poets such as Homeros write about it. Organization as knowledge, legend and wisdom is being passed on from generation to generation and create the foundation of what we use as science, technology, civilization. All these are organized ways to solve problems and deal with reality. In our contemporary times organizations are perhaps particularly omnipresent, our times have been called the society of organizations (Perrow, 1991). We are born in organizations, we grow up with them, we gain our living in them, when we day they take care of the practicalities and of the rituals and even if we want to protest against them, we organize. To organize is human.
4. Gaining knowledge from stories

4.1. Stories in academic writing?

Jean François Lyotard (1979/1984) writes about narrative knowledge as opposed to the logico-scientific, the latter being a relatively recent invention. Lately, the narrative mode of knowing tends to gain legitimacy anew. In organization studies, the narrative approach in organization studies is increasingly gaining popularity (for example, Czarniawska, 1997). The interest concerns the academic text as a genre (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 1999) and the themes typically being studied by the management scientists\(^6\). The narrative is a natural way to organize experience and the way in which we perceive the world, as the psychologist Jerome Bruner (1991) argues, as well as the most fundamental human way to communicate. Alasdair MacIntyre (1981/1990) holds that enacted narrative to be the most common form of social life. Storytelling is also a very common form of communication and of sensemaking — we tell stories not only to entertain and inform, but also to explain and make sense of the world around us (Kociakiewicz and Kostera, 2001). Barbara Czarniawska (2000: p. 2) insists that a "student of social life, no matter which domain, needs to become interested in narrative as a form of knowledge, a form of social life, and a form of communication."

Researchers can with advantage combine academic and literary writing, argues Barbara Czarniawska (1999) in *Writing management*. An author should strive to construct a clear plot in such writing, that is a transition strategy from one stable state to another. The narrative is the transition through a phase of turbulence or disharmony between two stable states. Plotless

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writing is often based on simple chronology or enumeration. Writing with plot seeks connections and relationships reminding of the cause-effect association. It does not have to be a causal chain in the positivist sense but it is sufficient that they describe the intentionality of action: what action has been performed by whom and what consequences it had. A good story can link chronological events into a story line, where things do not simply follow each other but are related to each other in ways that can be understood and being able to hold attention, making the reader identify with the protagonists and with the described situations. A narrative with a plot can be seen as an account about transformation. No wonder that stories are more and more frequently used in organization theory as empirical material as well as a way to organize the research report. Furthermore, they are increasingly often regarded valuable knowledge and (a) legitimate science.

4.2. Narrative (organizational) knowledge

Nelson Philips (1995) claims that „the barriers between fiction and fact, and art and science, have become increasingly difficult to defend” (p. 626). In fact, „social scientists often do what writers do: they create rather than discover, they focus on the unique and individual, they use illustration and rhetoric in an effort to make their case” (p. 626). Barbara Czarniawska-Joerges (1995) explores the links between science and story telling (narration). She makes a strong point for the reintroduction of narrative knowledge into social sciences and humanities, and particularly, into organization studies. There are already strong traditions within our discipline, such as case studies, and more recently studies of organizational stories and various interpretive approaches. Old fashioned scientific ethos can be replaced with other criteria such as beauty and use. Is what we write useful? Does it make sense? Is it beautiful? Those questions can with advantage measure the outcome of what we academically produce.
in organization studies. It does not look like it is a very solid basis for scientific judgment but in reality the old positivistic science did not hold its promises either. "Theories do not 'represent' reality; theoreticians take upon themselves to represent other people and even nature" (p. 27). Barbara Czarniawska-Joerges argues for

a conscious and reflective creation of a specific genre, which recognizes tradition without being paralyzed by it, which seeks inspiration in other genres without imitating them, which derives confidence from the importance of its topic and from its own growing skills (p. 28).

Other genres include first and foremost novels. Literature can be a rich source of insight and understanding. Pierre Guillet de Monthoux and Barbara Czarniawska-Joerges (1994) present works of fiction from different countries and show how they throw interesting light upon organizational and managerial practices in those countries. The ability of such books as Musil’s *The man without qualities* to be persistently enlightening depends on the authors’ detailed and rigorous research (even if they were not professional researchers), but also on a special quality of the genre. Their works are read anew over and over again and there is no one final way of interpreting them: they are open works. Umberto Eco (1973) said the following about open texts:

> The poetics of an 'open' text aims [...] to inspire the interpreter to 'acts of conscious freedom', to make him an active center for an unlimited net of relationships, whom he is to give an own shape, not being limited by a *compulsion* implied by the given rules of organization of a given text" (27-28).

Recently it is often pointed out that academic texts can be more open, approaching a more narrative genre of writing, and using narrative methods for the exploration of reality (for a discussion of current literature, see Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 1999). They can do so and
remain scientific: the notion of what is scientific has changed considerable after the debate on syntagmatic knowledge (Latour, 1992) and boundaries between "rational" and "irrational", between "mind" and "emotion" (Hassard, 1993), as well as the historical and institutional roots of rationality (Shenhav, 1999). These authors have clearly shown the necessity of non-dualistic thinking, which, among other things, is reflected in the recent literary turn (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2001). This does not necessarily mean strict equating of science with literature; as Umberto Eco, a powerful presence in both of these fields, writes in his recent book on semiotics:

theoretical discussions of mine are interwoven with "stories." Perhaps some readers will know that, when I feel the urge to tell stories, I satisfy it elsewhere, and therefore my decision to tell stories here is not dictated by a need to realize a suppressed vocation (a temptation for many contemporary thinkers who substitute philosophy with pages of bellelettrisme) (Eco, 1997/2000: 5).

Umberto Eco’s reasons for including stories are to enhance discourse, to illustrate theses, and to anchor scientific reflections in human experience. All those reasons are valid for organization studies. It is obvious that some organizations tell stories: Disney, or LucasArts are in fact in the story telling business. But the practice to tell stories is much more pervasive than that obvious statement. Barbara Czarniawska identifies the following uses of the narrative approach in field research:

- watch how the stories are being made
- collect the stories
- interpret the stories (what do they say?)
- analyze the stories (how do they say it?)
• deconstruct the stories (unmake them)

• put together your own story

• set it against / together with other stories (Czarniawska, 1999, p. 22)

The first two uses take place in the field, they refer to the practice of organizing. They are mainly about the gathering of stories, or listening to them. The last two – take place in the process of theorizing. They concern the writing of stories. The three middle ones are located in between those two discourses. They are about interpretation and translation.

How about the everyday practice of storytelling? Does it belong in organizations? Yiannis Gabriel thinks it does. He is the author of a well-known book about storytelling in organizations (2000). It is dedicated to the first use of stories: their collection in the field, and in part also to the interpretation process: how to use stories as sensemaking devices. The stories are a natural part of organizational everyday life and organizations are full of “narratives with simple but resonant plots and characters, involving narrative skill, entailing risk, and aiming to entertain, persuade, and win over” (p. 22).

Stories are, as I hope to have shown, generously present in contemporary academia as well as in organizational everyday life. I now want to address their possible use aimed at gaining knowledge.

4.3. The collection of stories as method of gaining insight

Knowledge about how reality works can be acquired from field research. Can field material can be gathered in the form of stories? Narrative researchers are positive on this point. The stories used in narrative research can either be invented or collected as interview data. In my own research I use stories to represent the organizational field I study in three different ways.
The first way is to ask actors in the field for a creative construction of stories, and I do this when I want to explore the mode of experience that is connected with imagination. This use goes consciously beyond realist storytelling and its purpose is to play with ideas and discover the cultural context and people’s creativity (on the organizational uses of imagination, see Morgan, 1993). I have used this research method to study the ideas that Polish students had of management (Kostera, 1997), where the actors wrote short poems, and I do so in this book to see what an encounter between spirituality and organization could produce in people’s imagination, for which purpose I collected short fictive stories.

Secondly, field actors can be asked to construct stories in order to make sense of some more or less vague or contextually loaded ideas, using their cultural knowledge and expertise. Barbara Czarniawska and Marta Calás (1998) used such a narrative method to explore cultural differences in gender construction. Their study was designed around a set of short stories with a female heroine. They only sketched the stories, giving no background information or explanations for the heroes actions. The plots were all similar: a more or less grave injustice occurred to a female protagonist in various social settings. The stories were distributed to students in 6 different cultures with a request to fill in information and clarify the plot. Many respondents pinned down the event as an instance of gender discrimination, but just as many or more explained away what happened with reference to some exotic or backward “culture” which was, of course, not the culture of origin of the respondents.

Thirdly, existing stories may be collected in the broader context or in the field. The researcher may want to explore the cultural context of some phenomenon or idea that is of interest to the researcher and that may be difficult to portray in its richness by other means. The book Good stories, better management, edited by Barbara Czarniawska and Pierre Guillet de Monthoux
(1994) that I have already mentioned is an example of this method. The chapters in the book explore the messages that works of literary fiction have for management learning and especially for the understanding of the cultural contexts of organizing where they were created. Stories may also be found, and in abundance, in organizations. This is what Yiannis Gabriel (2000) is primarily interested in – to make sense of what is happening in organizations by looking at them from a narrative perspective, but also by collecting short stories that emerge within the organizations. Some of the stories found in the field are realistic, they “describe the truth” such as the interviewees see it, but they may also be fictive, myths and legends. Yiannis Gabriel is interested in them because they are all profoundly symbolic. They can reveal conscious as well as unconscious aspects of organizing, the rational and the irrational, the intentional and the Shadow side.

All the above modes of doing narrative research of organizations are not mutually exclusive – they add up and overlap, as the whole process of organizing can be seen as storytelling (Czarniawska, 1997).

In this book I use the method of collecting short stories. I did not sketch any plots myself but provided the authors with a starting line. Then I asked them to write the complete story and chose its theme and genre. I did not analyze the collected field material in order just to understand social reality better, but to have a glimpse of the social imagination, which is a kind of reality too, and a potential source of creative action. I wish to give voice to the fears of people who entrusted me with stories about them, composed in short narratives.

My story collection is a way of coauthoring performative definitions (Austin, 1973/ 1993) of the phenomena of interest. Austin distinguished a kind of statements that define the state of things. These statements he labeled performatives: they do not only communicate but
”perform” as well. For example when the civil servant officially declares that a couple is married, they become so. The sociologist Bruno Latour (1986) has proposed, based on Austin’s concept of performative, a distinction between two definitions of society: the ostensive and performative. Czarniawska-Joerges (1991) analogously differentiates between two ways of defining culture and organization. According to her, the ostensive definition is based on the assumption that it is in principle possible to detect the qualities characteristic of the phenomenon. These characteristics "are there", but in practice they may be difficult to identify. The phenomenon should be approached "from the outside", by the objective researcher. The performative definition is based on an admission that the description characterizing the phenomenon is impossible, but in practice it might become possible. The actors themselves construct such definitions, in order to make action possible. They do this for themselves, as well as for others. While the researcher looking for ostensive definitions will be convinced that there are "objective methods" to employ in order to learn about the essence of the phenomenon, the researcher collecting performative definitions believes that the definitions of the actors are neither "better" or "worse" than her own. They are pragmatic and thus neither "false" nor "true", but instead they can be accurate, beautiful, important, etc. The knowledge of the actors is important, because it is the foundation of their actions. They are local, not absolute and can be many and varying (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1991).

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<tr>
<th>Ostensive definitions</th>
<th>Performative definitions</th>
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68
- formulated from outside
  - "objective"
  - found in order to describe the "essence" of a phenomenon
  - the aim is to find the rules
  - participants as informants

- formulated from inside
  - "working" definitions
  - formulated in order to enable action
  - the aim is to explain practices
  - participants are authors

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<th>Tab. 1. Ostensive and performative definitions.</th>
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<td>Based on Czarniawska-Joerges (1991)</td>
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My role as a researcher in the collection is that of an editor, actively looking for interesting material and trying to say something herself through it. The whole point with my collection is to look for subjective meanings and understandings. I am interested in feelings and imagination and not in “solid facts.”

I would like to discourage from a manipulative use of the story collection method: the case of the distanced, calculated researcher making people reveal their "inner feelings”, but not giving them anything of the kind in return. Any ”psychoanalytic” use of this method in order to study organization I regard as a misuse. Reading people’s minds just to gain an interesting insight is immoral, but I believe in reading people’s stories.
5. The meeting of two spaces

5.1. The story collection

Organizations as well as spirituality are ambiguous, fluid, and far from solid. They are not as disparate as to be each other’s opposites. But neither do they seem to overlap. In other words: a meeting place between them is not obvious. Since some time I have been intrigued about what their encounter would bring. In order to reflect more directly about such a possible encounter, I have opted for a territorialization of them; that is, I associated them with respective types of space and then staged an encounter between those spaces. Territorialization is a concept coined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1996). They see territorialization: deterritorialization and reterritorialization as the result of interaction processes between physical and/or psychosocial forces. Territorialization is an active process, where all the actors involved may be human, or non-human, sentient or non-sentient, material or supernatural. For example, the Earth’s gravity territorializes people, trees and buildings in their movement through space, acting on them through its energy. The ascribing of meaning can be seen as a reterritorialization process, consisting of material and a phenomenological aspects, as it settles the event in a fairly concrete frame. Territories and territorializations may be not only physical but also psychological and spiritual: ideology have historically reterritorialized land as Fatherland/ Motherland (Deleuze and Guattari, 1996). Ideas can thus territorialize and deterritorialize. I thought it would be interesting to see how stories told by different storytellers about organizing and spirituality are territorialized to narrate and what space they produce through the action of the narrators’ imagination. I have my own images of spiritual and organizational spaces and I would like to see how they relate to the spaces
portrayed in other people’s stories, as well as what happens when they narratively meet. Narration presupposes spatiality: in order for ideas to be presented, a space needs to be created for their presentation. Narration is a territorialization in the web of meanings.

First, I would like to present my own view of the two spaces and their brief characteristics. As for spirituality, it can be pictured as an empty space, in the sense that it is an unlimited possibility, an undefined presence, devoid of self (de Mello, 2004). It is a powerful freedom, one which means an ability to get rid of fear, to feel the connection to a transcendent reality. Spiritual space is a natural setting for individuation and the expression of the person’s transcendental aspects. In that space, relating to others is altruistic, or, in Krishnamurti’s words, "to express compassion one has to be truly free" (1996, p. 94). However, communication is not in itself a trait of spiritual space, it demands collective action and some kind of shared meanings enabling people to understand each other. Spiritual space is so individual that all language is lost.

Organizational space is very often associated with a linear reality (Burrell, 1997), but given that organizations are in reality processes of sensemaking, it needs not be seen this way. It can perhaps be expressed best as the right place and right time, where people do the right things (Czarniawska, 2000). People need not share all the definitions of what they do and why, not even of what is right – the main thing is that they agree upon all the most general points of reference so that they can act together (if they carry a table they need to know which way is up, and which down, and where they are to carry it). Organizational space is that of communication, even though expression is not a natural trait of that kind of space.

So, the spiritual space is in Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) terms a smooth space, while the organizational one is more striated. Striated space is inactive, ordered and possible to control;
smooth space consists of movement, representing nomadism and freedom. As I said before, I do not see organizational space as completely striated, or necessarily tied to hierarchy and oppression, but simply as less smooth than the spiritual space.

In order to see what happens when the two spaces: the spiritual and the organizational, meet, I chose a method of gaining insight that I have described earlier in the book: that of story collection. It is not far removed from either of the two spaces' languages: Stories are intimately connected with organizing, as I have argued before. Processes of organizing can in fact be seen as storytelling (Czarniawska, 1997). Spiritual spaces can, too, be produced by different kinds of stories, most notably the parable (e.g. de Mello, 2004). I asked researchers and students of organizations for fictive stories (belonging to imaginative genres) rather than realistic prose because I am not concerned here with physical or social space. Imagination is a mode of experience that is useful to spirituality as well as to organizing (on the organizational uses of imagination, see Morgan, 1993).

I have chosen to represent the two spaces I wished to be narrated using the most basic images that archetypically would symbolize what I think of as their most central features. The smooth space of spirituality was represented by a nomadic monk, while the more striated space of organizing by a door of a building hosting the corporate HQ.

First I have asked some of my friends via email to write short stories, belonging to any imaginative genre the author would prefer to chose. The stories should begin with the phrase: Once upon a time a monk knocked on a big front door of a corporate HQ … Later, I asked my students to write such stories during a master's level seminar I teach at Warsaw University. I told the students that they may sign their stories or just put down a symbol for their gender if they prefer. I gave them the choice to be anonymous because I have many times encountered
a fear of free individual expression among Polish students of management which can be somehow alleviated if the authors are given the protection that anonymity gives. I did not offer this choice to my researcher friends, as I did not think this was important in their case. Another difference between the way in which the two groups responded to my request, except the medium itself (email versus pen on paper and face to face contact) was the time limitation that the students were subject to – they had half an hour to write the story, while there was no such limitation in the case of my researcher friends. The students were told that they did not have to write the story if they did not want to; so were the researchers. Nonetheless, a bigger pressure to actually do what I asked must have been felt by the students. They did face me personally so even if they might not have been afraid to make me angry and dissatisfied with them (and thus for example lower their grades), they might think it difficult to disappoint me. Among Polish students there is a strongly institutionalized tendency to fear the anger and dissatisfaction of the teachers so the denial and comforting by the individual teacher is often not even noticed, or read as the expression of something else (such as cunning). I hope that my students know me better than that but the institutions are so strong that I cannot be sure. Another difference is the fact that most of my friends were familiar with my story collection research method, while a minority of the students knew about its existence. Nonetheless, I believe that both groups gave me something of similar value – a personal reaction to the opening line.

I received 24 stories in all, some in Polish and some in English. I translated the Polish texts to English, in most cases facing just the normal linguistic problems of the non-native speaker. In one case (the story by Józef Mrozek) my problems were much more complex – the story consists mainly of references to people and phenomena currently famous or notorious in
Poland, as well as plays on words and subtle jokes embedded in the Slavic culture. After many more or less desperate struggles to convey the meaning of this story somehow in English I gave up and chose to translate it literally. In the analysis of the story I try, however, to explain some of the intricacies of meaning it expresses in Polish that are lost in my English translation.

In the following sections, I will present the stories arranged according to their main plots such as I read them. I have selected whole stories or quotations to illustrate the main plots. In doing so I construct one more story, about what in my opinion happens in the symbolical meeting between the spiritual space (the monk) and the organizational space (the corporation) in the narratives I have collected. In that sense my story collection is a way of coauthoring performative definitions (Austin, 1973/1993) of the phenomena of interest, as I have explained in Chapter 4.

5.2. Tales of Clash

In most of the stories spaces fight and conflict with each other. At times one wins, at time the other, the conflict sometimes taking on rather violent forms. I call them the tales of clash.

One of the most cruel stories throughout the collection is one by Jan Czarzasty, where God reveals His patriarchal, vengeful nature:

Once upon a time a monk knocked on a big front door of a corporate HQ and asked a guard to let him in.

“Do you have an appointment, sir?” – the guard asked politely.

“I’m on the mission from God” – the monk replied straight-faced – “and I have to see the boss. It’s urgent.”
“The boss? Who exactly do you mean? The president? CEO? Besides, they’re all very busy, so unless you have an appointment scheduled, any of them won’t be able to see you, sir.”

While explaining the monk the complicated rules of the corporate etiquette, the usher reached for an alarm button placed underneath his desk to call the security guards. Apparently, he was dealing with a person that was not quite sane.

“I don’t care what they call themselves and I don’t have an appointment. As I said, it’s an urgent case. Whether the boss wants to see me or not, it’s up to him but if I were him, I would devote five minutes of my precious time to hear what a God’s messenger has to say. It’s definitely a good investment.”

Two robust and mean-looking guards appeared all of a sudden.

“I’m afraid I have to ask you to leave, sir” – the guard told the motionless monk. “Our company is on the Fortune 500 list. Thousands of people all around the world make their living thanks to us. We produce, sell and push human needs and desires toward new frontiers in an endless pursuit of happiness. Our bosses, those giants of the last floor, care for us all, working 24 hours a day. And now you, Mr. Nobody, wearing that ridiculous robe, simply come in here and want to see them?”

“Yes, I’ve got a message from God” – the monk calmly replied. “Well, give it to me, then and get out” – the usher was running out of patience. “No, that’s something I must tell him personally. All or nothing.”

The monk left. Three days later an earthquake destroyed the HQ. Well, originally the God didn’t have an intention of erasing the boss and several hundred of corporate employees off the surface of Earth. He only wanted to express his great appreciation to the corporation for promoting family values and sponsoring churches and charities. Nevertheless, kicking his messenger out of the building was simply too disrespectful to let it go unpunished. The person at the top of the corporate pyramid should have a sense of hierarchy. Such hubris, as one of the seven sins, must have been reprimanded. And who said God really resembles his conceived in
Hollywood Santa-Claus-alike image of a soft-spoken and generous grandfather distributing only gifts but no twigs? (Jan Czarzasty)

The organizational actors in this story do not revere or even respect the spiritual space and its representative, the monk. All they see in him is weakness and so they show him his lower place in their pecking order. They are the rulers of the current world, the strong and the successful ones, “our company is on the Fortune 500 list” the employee says, and in that chic company there is no place for a “Mr. Nobody, wearing that ridiculous robe.” That same Mr. Nobody insists on seeing the great boss in person – what an outrageous demand! However, it turns out that the monk has a boss that is even stronger. For how long, compared to His magnificent creation, has this unfortunate little Fortune 500 world existed? Not even a batting of an eyelash of an angel. And who among His servants, the Cherubim, the Seraphim, the Thrones would care the tiniest bit about some pathetic Fortune 500 list? And even so, those tiny little microbes dare to insult His own messenger. He raises his fist in wrath and strikes down the little nobodies inhabiting the corporation. Great as He is, He is not beyond the desire to prove who really is the boss. So he makes His point.

In some stories, the monk was ridiculed and offended by the people of the corporation, but God failed to make his grand entré. In a male student’s story, the security people denied the monk shelter and then laughed at him. The corporation was victorious in its own eyes, but what kind of victory is that? There is a sadness in the story. Differently, in a female student’s story, the corporation’s victory is complete. Here, however, the monk was not rejected, but welcome, and he became thrilled by the youthfulness and joy of the organizational actors:

Once upon a time a monk knocked on a big front door of a corporate HQ of a tobacco company. He wanted to talk with people and persuade them not to produce cigarettes because that's hurtful for humanity.
However, when he saw the corporate employees he became enchanted. They looked young and happy and his life as a monk grew plae and boring in comparison. So eventually, he shed his monk’s robes and joined the ranks of the people of success, forgetting what he had come here for. (Anonymous)

However, in most stories of this kind, it is the spiritual space that wins over the organizational, at least in the long run. It does so forcefully, like in Jan Czarzasty’s story, or with subtle grace, like in a female student’s story, where the monk discovered that the corporate world is devoid of spirit and of color and painted it in bright living colors, thus giving it back what has mysteriously been there all the time, though hibernating in the grayness.

Once upon a time a monk knocked on a big front door of a corporate HQ and, to his surprise, found emptiness. But the emptiness did not mean the lack of people in the building, but the lack of spirit of those people.

He began to reflect on the reason for this amazing lack of life and realized that the people were really not there, just their bodies dressed in suits. Even their thoughts were elsewhere.

But a brilliant idea came to his mind. He took out his painting tools and painted everyone and everything in bright colors. Only then their souls appeared: they had, in fact, been there all the time, but hidden in the grey mass, made null by the lack of individuality and joy (Anonymous).

Sometimes the victory of either side is unclear or even indeterminate – the actors fail to meet, and the spaces do not meet either, due to complete strangeness to each other. In a female student’s tale the monk entered the corporation and discovered how different the people were
from his the ones he was used to encountering. He wondered briefly whatever they could have in common so that they would be able to talk with each other and came up with an idea:

„They are stressed out, in a constant hurry. [thought the monk] I could teach them many relaxation methods – and they could, in return, help me to learn how to use modern technology.” (Anonymous)

But the employees of the corporation were too busy to notice the monk who finally decided that their expertise was not so important to him either. Even though he had entered the physical space of the corporation, it was as if never was there at all. In Marta Rostkowska’s story that’s exactly what happened: the monk waited at the door of the corporate HQ for a long time but nobody noticed him, so he went away. First then the corporate actors started to feel a vague absence but did not stop to ponder where it came from. The organizational actors are sometimes perfectly able to see the spiritual actors, but unable to let them in, as in Peter Case’s story:

Once upon a time a monk knocked on a big front door of a corporate HQ. A female receptionist opened the door and, gazing in disbelief at the monk's attire, came to the conclusion that he was a 'homeless person'. Little did she know that he was, indeed, 'homeless' and in need of rest and refreshment (this being the twenty-first day of a two month long pilgrimage). Acting on the basis of her prejudices about homeless people and feeling a little frightened by the figure that confronted her, she decided that it was probably best simply not to get involved. Faced with her own fear and embarrassment, she simply shut the door in the monk's face and returned to her reception desk slightly fazed and shaken.

The monk had no choice but to try knocking on another door.

The end. (Peter Case)
Who knows what would have happened if the receptionist had let the monk in? Maybe a powerful spiritual awakening, or perhaps a violent clash of worlds? But, on the other hand, just what happens every day, when the receptionist prevents homeless people from entering? Maybe she thus prevents chaos and impurity – but maybe they are messengers of another world, just like the monk? There are, indeed, precedents – and stories... As Heather Höpfl’s tale of the corporate man who, in spite of the improbability of such a meeting between strangers, managed to meet the monk. At first he was barred from entering by the woman at the reception desk:

“Show me”, said the monk, “where I can find the heart of this great enterprise”.

“I’m afraid”, replied the woman on the reception desk, “that strangers are not allowed to go onto the CEO’s corridor. However, I will see if his secretary can help you”. The woman picked up a telephone and began to talk. “I’m very sorry”, she said turning to look at him for the first time, “there is no one who is able to show you around and, in any case, as I have told you, outsiders are not allowed into that part of the offices”.

“Thank you” said the monk, “you have been most kind and I don’t want to be a trouble to you but may I go into your cafeteria. I have been traveling for some time and would like a little food”.

“I am very sorry but the cafeteria is for employees. If you were the guest of an employee you would be most welcome. As it is, perhaps you could find something down the road”. The receptionist gestured towards the door.

“Thank you” the monk was weary, “I will do that”. Outside once more on the street, the monk looked back at the building. At one of the windows he could see a man pacing up and down. The man had his hand to his head as he paced. Suddenly, their eyes met and the monk saw a look of terror in the man’s eyes. Instinctively, the monk touched the crucifix that hung from his belt. “Peace be with you, my son”, he
prayed silently. As he watched the figure ceased his pacing and stared at him with desperate and abject eyes. The he turned about moved out of sight.

The monk walked on and shortly came to a small café used by students from the university. He went in and felt at home among their noisy banter and youthful camaraderie. He bought a sandwich and a cup of coffee and went to sit near the window. After a little while, he saw the man he had seen from the window. He was walking down the street. His face was drawn and tense. When the man saw the monk in the window he paused, hesitated and then crossed the road towards the café. A moment later the door of the café opened and the man came in. He looked hurriedly around and then came over to where the monk sat.

“What did you say to me?” he asked his face pleading for some comforting words.

The monk gave him a careful appraisal and then said, “Are you troubled my son?”

The man ran his fingers through his hair. He hesitated as if he wondered whether or not he should speak.

“I have discovered a terrible secret”, he said at last. “I have discovered a poison at the heart of the company and I don’t know what I should do. I am the only person who knows and if I tell anyone I will certainly lose my job. If I don’t, then many people may become ill because of what the company has been doing”.

“You cannot let people suffer”, the monk said quietly.

“No, you are right. I am an honest man”, the man said.

“Then you must make what you know available to people who can stop it”.

“But, who will support my family if I do?”

“The Lord will provide”. The monk reached out his hand to touch the man.

“Father, I am not a believer. I have a young family to support”, the man was speaking more clearly now.
“And, indeed, I am not a father,” the monk said, “but all mankind is my family and it is yours”.

“This is too difficult for me to take on” the man said. “The company has been dumping contaminated waste. There is school nearby and a playground where young children play. I can’t pretend that it isn’t happening”.

“Then you must act and trust God”, the monk’s eyes were intense. “How can your company behave so badly towards people it should care about”.

“Everything is about money. My boss talks endlessly about what he is worth, about shares, cars, his houses, about profit. Why should he worry about children’s health. My organisation has no heart”. The man hung his head.

“Then you must be its heart. You must be the living, beating heart of the organisation. While you remember this, you must be the love that the organisation lacks. You will be wounded for your pains but you will not die. The organisation that has no heart is dead already. Forgive me for talking to you in this way but so much now depends on you. Be brave and act. Only pursue good. Remember your larger family”. The monk took the man’s hand. “My son, I believe God has brought me to you today because that is the way I live. You don’t believe in my God but you are a good man. Goodness must act. Action is what is needed to restore the heart. Be of good courage. Take heart”.

Then the monk got up, moved towards the door and was gone. The man looked down at the table and there beside the monk’s cup he saw a crumpled scrap of paper. On it was written, “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Hebrews: 13 v. 2”. He knew what he had to do.

(Heather Höpfl)

In this story the meeting was improbable, the receptionist was not willing to let the wanderer in and the story might as well have ended with the same nothingness as in many of the previous narratives. However, a meeting of eyes through a window pane becomes the first
step to an unlikely encounter. Other organizational actors might have not noticed the spiritual actor, but one of them, under distress, is more open to a revelation. The meeting takes place outside of the two spaces: on the territory of another, less organized, organization.

In most of the clash stories where one of the spaces remains invisible to the other the corporate actors are presented as demonstrating a persistent blindness. The monk is usually visiting the organizational world, typically with some friendly intention but no meeting is possible due to the other party’s blindness. In one story the reverse is true – Sebastian Kruk tells of a monk wandering around in the corporate building, looking for something, wondering where everybody is and failing to see anything or anyone. Even time seemed not to exist, only darkness, and a strange hum, not coming from any visible human source. The management center turned out to be a computer illuminated by many bright lights. The monk was amazed, looking around for someone who supervised the machine. He did not find any such person and went back to the monastery, disappointed.

5.3. Tales of Enclosing

In a smaller group of stories one of the spaces inundates the other – spiritual or the organizational space turns out to be the more universal one, either engulfing the other or turning out to be the ultimately real one. These I call tales of enclosing.

In Hervé Corvellec’s story the spaces are depicted as initially in opposition to each other, instantly recognizable as completely different; they stand for different values but even so no confrontation or clash takes place. Instead, it turns out that one of them integrates the other.

The monk knocked on the HQ's front door. It was still quite early, a few minutes before seven in the morning. A security guard opened instead the small door on the
side and let him in. The monk mumbled a thank you and threw a somewhat
colemptful eye, in a connoisseur way, on him and his colleague who was gazing
across the monumental entrance hall. The monk walked up a few steps. He stopped
to remove a tiny stone that had had come between his footplant and his sole, "a
scrupulous" he thought. Turning to the information desk he then asked with a mild
voice:

“I would like to meet the CEO, please.”

“Do you? And may I ask on which grounds?” one of the two ladies answered,
somewhat amused by the idea of who was asking the question.

“My order has bought this company”, the monk replied.

This how the two ladies at the information desk were the first ones to suspect that
the largest bank, insurance and brokerage company of the 21st century was soon to
go though some dramatic changes. (Hervé Corvellec)

Like in most of the clash stories, the monk was not greeted with respect nor friendliness by
actors of the corporation, proud of their elevated position in the contemporary society’s
pecking order. They did not pause to look, they are not interested to meet another person or
culture. They judge by their own herd-standards, and whenever they see someone who is not a
hegemonic male, they shower them with contempt. Organizations indeed do not care to meet
people. They rarely pause to regret that. Managers are not recorded crying in great masses for
their lost opportunities to meet the laughing American fan of Bob Marley, or the intellectual
gay librarian, or the female jazz musician. Or wandering monks. However, this time they will
have to pause, perhaps even stop on their way to worldly power and pride, and take a good
look, maybe – they will regret. The monk is insignificant by their standards, but their
standards will soon now be exchanged for his standards.
Sometimes the one space is depicted as already being inside of the other, usually – the organizational space is depicted as contained in a larger, spiritual space, like in Maureen McElroy’s story. First, the monk’s request to enter was rejected by the representatives of the corporation, as usually happens in the stories I have collected. The receptionist in this story was polite and the following dialogue took place:

Once upon a time a monk knocked on a big front door of a corporate H.Q. The weather was not foul, the wind not howling and there was no lightening at all. In fact it was as perfect a gentle early summer morning as you could wish for. The doorman came forward and held open the door for the man of God, bidding him a polite ‘good morning’. The receptionist, well groomed in dress and tone asked if she could be of any assistance.

“Yes” said the monk “I would like to go up to your roof and pray.”

“One moment” replied the receptionist, outwardly unruffled but inwardly stumped by this unusual request. “I will contact Security and see what can be done”

The monk thanked her. She suggested that he might sit while awaiting a reply to his request and indicated towards a pleasant seating area overlooking a Japanese style garden. The monk went over and sat, contemplating the order and calmness of the stones, plants and water before him.

The receptionist moved quickly and quietly from her desk into her office where she had a hurried phone conversation with the Security Chief.

“We’ve got a right nutter here Chief” said the receptionist.

“Has he any bags with him, anything that might hide a bomb?” asked the Security Chief.

“No” replied the receptionist, “but his robes are so baggy anything is possible. Of course, he might be genuine.”
“Don’t be daft, no-one in their right mind comes up to our door asking to pray on the roof! For my money he’s a bomber, or a suicide, or both. Either way, he’s not going up on the roof. Get rid of him.”

The receptionist returned to her public desk, wondering how best to phrase the refusal. If the monk was an impostor, she didn’t want to upset him. If the monk was for real, she didn’t want to upset him. Her agonizing was unnecessary because, as she quickly realised, the monk was no longer there.

The doorman had seen nothing. He had been gazing out of the door, watching a bird collect worms for its young. Frantic with worry, the receptionist contacted security.

“He’s gone” she said

“Good” replied the Chief of Security.

“No I don’t mean he’s gone, I mean he’s not here! He’s vanished! He’s somewhere else” the flustered receptionist almost shouted.

“In or out of the building?” he asked.

“I don’t know. After we spoke before, I came out to get him and he wasn’t here. But he hasn’t gone past the doorman. He hasn’t seen him”

Panic was setting in.

“I’m checking the floor monitors now” said the chief. “He can’t have gone far”

For the next 10 minutes the Security Chief frantically scanned every area that could be checked in the 30 story building. It was difficult to see in some locations because the workers were milling about at their usual tasks. he didn’t want to panic people by openly asking for the whereabouts of this mad monk, but at the same time he knew he had to be found. What if he was a bomber; a disgruntled ex-employee with a grudge; a religious fanatic; a depressed lunatic. The possibilities were endless, and as time passed with no sign of the monk, his panic grew.
Up on the roof, a man was watering plants. The area was quiet, tranquil and protected from unwelcome breezes by large glass panels, clear, allowing unrestricted views of the surrounding area. From this vantage point it was possible to see beyond the buildings to the hills and fields beyond. The gardener stood up, admired the view for a moment, and left the roof garden by an inconspicuous door. 2 birds carried food for their young, safe within a nest hidden in a large bush.

The office of the Chief Executive was everything that such an office should be; large, expensive, and free from any outward sign of business activity. The office of his Personal Assistant was, in contrast, a hive of activity. The ringing phones, chattering fax and clicking keyboards all lent an air of industry to proceedings but also served to heighten the contrast between the frantic office of the P.A. and the serene office of the C.E.

Into the hubbub of the P.A.’s office came the Security Chief.

“\textit{I need to speak to the boss}” he said

“I’m sorry” came the polite reply “\textit{but the C.E. is not available at the moment.”}

What the Security Chief could not know was that it was weeks since the P.A. had actually spoken to the C.E. All corporate decisions were made via e-mail, or fax. This particular P.A. had actually never met the C.E but would have rather died than admit it.

“I think once I have explained the situation to him, he will agree I should have been given access to him” spluttered the in house policeman.

“I’m sorry, but you will have to put up with me” the irritated PA rejoined.

“What seems to be the problem?”

In a few succinct words, the whole ‘monk’ situation was laid before the PA. She wasn’t panicked by it. After all this person had been in the building now for more
than 30 minutes, with ample time to get to the roof if he wanted, so the answer was simple.

“I think it’s time we had a Fire Drill” said the PA. And there was.

30 minutes later all the staff were in the car park and accounted for. The security staff had searched the building starting on the top floor and found nothing unexpected. The PA felt the situation was under control, and the Fire Chief was delighted at the speed with which the 30 floors had been successfully evacuated.

“I wish other firms took their staff safety as seriously as you do” he said. “it would make our job much easier”

With everyone back at their desks, the ‘mystery of the missing monk’ remained unsolved.

Up in the Executive Office, looking down at the staff safely evacuated, and now slowly returning to their work, the C.E. smiled, and, safe in the knowledge that he was looking out for his staff, returned to watering his plants.

The Security Chief berated the receptionist for leaving a visitor unsupervised and tightened up the systems. New, more and better security monitors were installed. The doorman was given the additional task of keeping an eye on anyone waiting in the lobby. In time the whole episode faded into memory and then from memory.

Up on the roof, a man watered the plants, fed the birds and watched over his people. Sometimes he even moved among them, but they did not see him. A monk in an office is something that should not be there – and so is not there. (Maureen McElroy)

Who would suspect the very essence of the organizational space, the top of the hierarchy, to be a door to another dimension? Or to another space – the CEO is a representative of the spiritual space himself, dressed as a monk, meditative and modest, but he also occupies a differently constructed physical space in the corporate building. His office is the visible
epitome of hierarchy and at the same time the passage from frantic activity into quietude. But he is never there – he spends him time on the roof, watering flowers and watching birds. This is impossible for the people of the organization to perceive.

A different kind of passage is depicted in Agnieszka Rosiak’s tale. The monk believes himself to enter a giant organization and proceeds to explore it with amazement and confusion until he realizes that the organization is in fact a part of a higher, more fundamental order, of the spiritual space. He has entered the purgatory and is learning to become more individual and creative together with other people. One day they will transcend the temporary space and ascend to heaven. The lesson is already taking root, although slowly and gradually, in people. At one moment he sees the foretaste of what heaven will be:

The monk noticed the clothing of the people. He was surprised to see that now it was no longer the gray identical uniforms but multicolored costumes of many different forms. The heads of the people were decorated with ribbons, feathers and hats with all sorts of forms. Smiling, the monk observed how they ate food and drank beverages from various places in the world. Each character emanated a unique and different aura now. It seemed that it was possible to discern their personalities. The inner worlds of the people radiated, overlapping each other, creating a common picture like a rainbow. The monk saw this and his eyes relished at the sight.

(Agnieszka Rosiak)

Dorota Dobosz tells a story about a potential passage, or how organizational actors try to learn how to organize better from spiritual actors. The manager, Mr. Iceberg, actually takes lessons from the monk. He tries to learn the lesson best he can:

One week later the same monk knocked on the big front door of the same corporate HQ. This time Mr. Iceberg answered the door, which was the first time he ever touched this door handle; usually someone else did it for him.
-“Are you ready?” asked the monk.

“Yes. Everything is prepared to move. And where is your staff?”

They drove to the monastery together, where the teacher explains some ideas to the student, who seems to listen carefully, but makes mental comments to himself, translating the honest values to his own deceitful ways of thinking:

They came into a cool, shadowy church. Immediately both of them felt fresh after they left the hot, sunny courtyard. The monk kneeled down and crossed himself with the sign of the crucifix.

“What are you doing?” asked Mr. Iceberg.

“I am greeting my boss”.

-“Where is he then?”

“You cannot see him but he can see you all the time”

‘That's clever' thought Mr. Iceberg. 'Perfect control. I like it. I must ask my engineers to install cameras everywhere too. And just look at the respect he has for his boss. It is amazing!’

“Why are there no desks here, just chairs? How do your people work?”

“I tell them everything and they do it.”

“I see. Direct communication. So no emails or phones then?”

“No. If they want to speak to me in person they come to me and tell me everything they want. They tell me all their doubts, problems and what they have done wrong. Then I give them advice and absolve them on behalf of my boss.”

“That is an excellent idea! I will do the same thing!”
' I could use a lie detector to check if they're telling the truth. This monk seems a bit careless to me. I will improve his methods, make them reliable and thus create the perfect management system.'

The methods applied with such success at the monastery did not work out so well at the corporation, even though Mr. Iceberg seemed to had set in a big effort to accomplish changes. Soon he came back, angry and complaining, to the monastery:

“ You lied to me! I lost all my employees! I lost everything! The only thing left is this stupid monastery. You can have it back. I don't want it. I want to switch back! I want my office, my employees and my life back!”

The monk tried to explain how his ideas worked to the manager, but the latter remains full of mistrust:

'They must be doing some serious stuff here. I have to be careful. Maybe he's an international drug dealer and all of it was just a trap' thought Mr. Iceberg.

He did not understand when the monk told him that what the executive is missing is something that he already had, but keep locked up, something that people need as much as they need air. Mr. Iceberg did not grasp what the monk meant when he said that he had to find the key so he can unlock the door where necessary item was kept. The executive protested:

“ But I've got my key!”

“ It must be the wrong key then. Throw it into the ocean and start looking for a different one. When you find it you will know it's the right one.”

'From one hand he must be insane but from another hand he's having the best results in all the state. Maybe I should give it a try?’ thought Mr. Iceberg.

“ I have to think about it” he said and walked away.

Later on the monk discussed the meeting with his colleague.
-“How is he?” asked father Daydream.

“He forgot about the base of the iceberg that keeps him floating. I hope he will find it again.” (Dorota Dobosz)

In all the above stories the spiritual space was the more primary one, either embracing the organizational one already or just about to do it, with or without the actors’ knowledge. In a few other stories it is the organizational space that is the larger one, embracing the spiritual space where the monk belongs, like in a male student’s story:

Once upon a time a monk knocked on a big front door of a corporate HQ and said: Make a website for our order, because thanks to that invention people open up more and show their emotions; perhaps thanks to email it will be easier to tell about one's problems and we will be able to help more people. (Anonymous)

The monk recognizes the shared quality of his order’s space and the corporate space – and this quality is defined by the business. The monk wants to learn from the organization, make his own space imitate the other space more, for everyone’s good. In another of the students’ stories a conversation between two persons is depicted: one is called Mr. Monk and the other Mr. Archbishop. They meet in office settings and a receptionist arranges their encounter. The ending of the story reterritorializes the account from some vague twilight setting (religious people in a noisy modern office) to the perfectly “normal;” it feels like waking up from a dream. The actors only sound strange: the people called Monk, and Archbishop do not come from a strange reality after all, they only happen to have weird names and are here to talk about normal business:

“Please, sit down (said Mr. Archbishop) – what can you offer us today?”

“In order to meet the needs of our loyal clients we would like to offer you a special life insurance package…” (Anonymous)
Another story, by a male student, shows the same aspect of the meeting of spaces: the enclosing of the spiritual space within the organizational space, but transformation comes from spirituality: though not so much the spiritual space as spiritual values. The monk knocked upon the door of a big demoralized organization, the organization happening to be the Church itself, and the monk being Ignatius Loyola, the inspired reformer. The little monk enters a bigger, organizational space, but it is his spiritual values in his heart that eventually make a difference to the gigantic organizational surroundings.

In the following story, by A.D. Jankowicz, the enclosing clearly mutual and highly ambiguous, both spaces playing an active role.

Once upon a time a monk knocked on a big front door of a corporate HQ . ..

"Gizajob" he said.

"A job?" they answered, "you, a man of the cloister? But why? Why do you come here? Why choose the marketplace when you could have the peace of the contemplative life?

"Ah", he replied, "that requires some explanation. I'm not a Buddhist, I'm a Christian monk. So reincarnation is not an option; this one life is all that we've got. If I'm to purify my soul and merit eternal bliss in heaven, where else am I to do so but out here, in the material world? And what best represents the world than the business corporation?" "It's funny you should say that", they replied. Our managing director has turned to spirituality. He's been reading about relationship marketing, and feels that the same should apply to selling: only through the development of a spiritual relationship with the customer, and the provision of ethically correct goods and services, can we maximise our profits and experience the ultimate good of this material world." "Perhaps you've been right all along" they continued," and there is merit in goodness and contemplation. In any event, be gone; there is nothing for you here in this corporation."
And the moral of the story is that they were, of course, wrong: for you mustn't bite the fan that heeds you. (A.D. Jankowicz)

Ironically, the corporation who turned to spirituality rejected the representative from the spiritual space as a participant. The latter had, symmetrically, “turned to materiality.” All actors seemed to look for something the other space had which they thought they did not have themselves. Instead of meeting they went separate ways in this confusing reciprocal tale of enclosing.

5.4. Tales of Merger

In two stories the two spaces merge in another space, more primary, embracing both of them. I call that the tale of merger.

A female student locates the merger in a narrative space, which can be shared by the researcher and the researched. The monk was greeted by a native who happily started to tell him stories. They were very strange and interesting…

(Anonymous)

Józef Mrozk also makes the merger happen in narrative space, but the narrativity is much less comprehensible and its dimensions far less straight. The story starts in a deceivingly similar way to most of the stories I have collected – the monk knocks on the door and is dismissed by a guard. Soon it shifts to another plot and even another genre. Then it turns again. Over and over again, the turn is performed until the vague and ironic ending.

Once upon a time a monk knocked on a big front door of a corporate HQ. Nothing. The monk knocked again, louder. A uniformed guard appeared from nowhere like Richelieu from behind the arras.
“What do you want? You ring the bell here, you don't knock. The intercom is there. Besides, it's two in the night.”

“I'd like to use the toilet. Let me in, my good man”.

“ The toilet is for personnel only. Its door can be opened by a code which is announced daily by the shift manager”.

“I know the code. I am the code manager. Open up, sergeant. Procedure control.”

“Yessir.”

In the hall the monk murmured a prayer, crossed himself and pulled out a gun from his hood.

-“Okay, fellow” he said “This is a hold-up. Call the boss, do it right away. Make him come.”

“It's an hour's drive” said the guard with resentment in his voice. “Besides, it's two a.m.”.

“He has to come. Or I blow up this hangout.”

“This hangout...” said the guard. “How nice. All the former robbers used to say "this fuckin' place."

“I am not a robber” said the monk “I am a monk. I was born to a poor but honest family. Unfortunately, when I was just five, Gypsies kidnapped me from the kindergarten and took away to Oklahoma where they educated me to become a hairdresser for the next twelve years. I worked in the best hairdressing salon in Oklahoma City but I had to give three thirds of my wages to a guy with a nick Masa. Later I learned that he's a resident of the Pruszków Mafia. One day I was cutting Masa's hair and by accident I cut his ear off. 'Okay’ Masa said and looked into the mirror with contentment 'I was about to change my nick. From this day call me Ivan Gog. I am a painter, professor of the Gogol Academy in Bialystok’”. He started to talk with an Eastern accent. “’You, Masa’ I said ’where do you have this accent
from? ‘ It was like this’ said Gog ‘ I was once driving in my VW from Pruszków to Suwalki. Somewhere behind Grajewo I stopped at a gas station and this idiot gas man poured me diesel oil into my tank. I got mad because gas was then on rations, but this guy - nothing - he just politely apologized, put a tube into the tank, sucked in, spit out and let out the whole oil into the drainage ditch. ‘ No problem’ he said with this singing accent ‘ I will pour you gasoline’, ’ Where are you from?” I asked him kindly. ‘ From the other side of Bug’ he said.’ And why did you come here for?’ I asked.’ It's poor here, isn't it?’ ‘But your democracy’ he said ‘ is kind of lighter’. I experienced then a kind of a shock, you know, a flash of insight, like Augustin, or that Bergson. I knew then that I would always remember that accent. ‘And you’ Ex-Masa addressed me ‘what are you doing here, did you want to become a hairdresser all your life? Don't be an idiot, you're doing well with the razor. Come with me, you can keep the ear’. We then hit the road, from one bar to another. Late in the night we ended up at Masa's place. It was even rather tidy, except for a frying pan and a hammer than hung on the wall. ‘ And what is this?’ I asked. ‘This is a cuckoo clock’ said Masa. He took down the frying pan from the wall and stroke it with the hammer.’ -fu -fu fuck you!’ a voice from behind the wall screamed ‘ it's two a.m.!

“Indeed” said the guard. “It's two a.m.. The boos sleeps, I won't wake him up. He'll come in the morning. Anyway, you didn't tell me yet how you became a monk.”


A knocking could be heard from the door. A monk in a hood stood on the other side of the glass pane. The guard said: “One more, and it's only two a.m..” He pulled out a baton, opened the door a crack, hit the second monk on the head, and dragged a numb form into the hall. When the second monk came to his senses, the guard asked: “ And who are you?”

“My name is Bond” said the second monk ” James Sergeyevich Bond. I am just shocked, not confused.”

This story needs some explanation, as it not only contains stories within stories, but allusions and hints to Polish and Slavic themes quite obscure to readers from outside of the context.

The protagonist’s story is an ironic reference to many Polish and Central Europeans’ stories, who decided to search for their fortune in Western countries. Masa is a name of a notorious Polish mafia boss and literally means mass in the physical sense and can also mean “a lot,” and “mass” in the physical sense, not the Christian religious ceremony. Pruszków, Suwalki, and Grajewo are small Polish towns, and the singing accent is typical for Eastern Poland or the usual way people from Eastern countries pronounce words in Polish. The narrative space is one in which all these symbols are able meet, as well as symbols of the West: Oklahoma City, James Bond, Microsoft. The popular and vulgar culture: razor-blade gangsters, mafia bosses meets with the sublime: enlightenment, S:t Augustine. The monk meets the guard, but who is the villain and who the good hero? Are there banal morals, plots, sets of symbols and genres or do they flow freely and spontaneously, following an order that is neither typical of the spiritual, nor the organizational? I think the latter is true: the text is not enlightening nor organized, there is no good, evil or effectivity, not even action. Or they are all present as characters, equal and subject to another kind of logic – the narrative logic. Therefore the ending does not conclude nor locate the spiritual and organizational spaces in relation to each other, in fact the story had deterritorialized itself somewhere at the very beginning and the various spaces simply do not exist. The ending performs the purely narrative ploy – it surprises and opens to new associations and ideas.
5.5. Tale of Communication

One story, by Jerzy Kociatkiewicz, contains an altogether different plot from all the others, in it the spaces meet and produce together something new. It is what I call tale of communication– the meeting of the spaces enable a new and creative action to be taken.

Once upon a time a monk knocked on the door of a corporate HQ. It’s all a bit of exaggeration, actually – he wasn’t that much of a monk, and the corporation wasn’t all that big, either. Even knocking seemed half-hearted, much like one hand clapping. Still, he did knock, and after some time (a bit too much time, the monk thought), the door opened, and an individual in a shabby suit and a tie looked out, sized him up, and said, rather rudely, “what do you want?”

And so the monk asked his usual question “what is Buddha?”

“That’ll be five dollars,” came the short reply.

“B-but...” stammered the monk.

“Five dollars, or you get no answer,” said the businessman.

And so the monk went away to meditate on Buddha being five dollars. After all, it wasn’t the strangest answer he received so far. Three years later he returned to the corporation. This time everything was different. To start with, the monk seemed much more inspired, as if lit by some deep understanding. The corporate building looked more impressive, too, as it had been redecorated in steel, glass, and marble.

The man who opened the door was, however, the same, although somewhat older looking and dressed in a more expensive suit. He wanted to bark out the same question as five years earlier, but something in the monk’s smile told him to keep silent. And the monk kept smiling, then reached into a pocket of his robe and took

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7 left one, to be exact

8 whether it looked more tasteful remains outside the scope of this story
out a single grain of rice. He held it up for the other man to see. The businessman looked and was enlightened. (Jerzy Kociatkiewicz)

In this story not only the spaces meet and perform something original together, but in the background there is a narrative space arranging their meeting. The genre of Zen tale makes the meeting possible and it subtly suggests the plot’s turns. The reader can expect to be surprised by the ending – and indeed he is. However, the encounter of spaces does not produce an outcome than can be derived from the elements present in the story, it can be read literally, as an account of two persons performing rather strange actions, but it is not the most rewarding way of reading the story. The way I like to read it is as an open text, where the real action starts as the story ends. It is up to me, the reader, to imagine what happened next and I can only guess that it must have been something original and significant. The unarticulated continuation of the story exists in some combined space produced by the meeting of the spiritual, the organizational, and the narrative spaces, and the reader is drawn into it and invited to take an active role.

5.6. Crushed or inspired?

In the stories I have collected the opening line suggests a meeting between spiritual and organizational space. To summarize the main plots: spaces clash (tales of clash), sometimes they clash so profoundly that they fail to touch, or one turns out to be part of the other, or they merge in a third, encompassing narrative space (tales of enclosing). In one story (tale of communication) they meet and produce something new from their encounter. The spaces sometimes keep their spatial identity throughout the story, as in the case of Jan Czarzasty’s narrative of the vengeful God, Heather Höpfl’s account of the manager meeting a supernatural being, or the outsider monk meeting an insider monk and exchanging stories in a
narrative space. One of the most spatial stories is Maureen McElroy’s account of the CEO on the roof. Here it is clearly the spaces that play a crucial role in the story, all actions are situated somewhere: in the reception hall, in the office, in the car park, on the roof. There are passages between the spaces: elevators and doors, but the actors do not generally know how to use them. In some narratives the characters and symbols representing the two spaces become deterritorialized and the story reterritorializes them into some other setting and space, or loses one or the other completely. This is what happens in the story of the monk in the tobacco company, who is narrated as a stranger rather than a symbol belonging in the spiritual space; the dialogue between Mr. Monk and Mr. Archbishop, takes place in firmly organizational space and no other space plays any role; in Józek Mrozek’s story all symbols merge and melt in a thick narrative stew, thereby losing their original spatial identity. These and other stories are not about the spiritual and organizational spaces but about just one space: the organizational or the narrative. In some cases, such as the tobacco company story, they bear witness to the overwhelming nature of the clash between the two spaces. The victory of one of them, in this case the organizational, is so complete, that the other becomes erased from the narrative. Otherwise the story would be perhaps impossible to tell. In the case of Józek Mrozek’s story, the narrative presets itself as the postmodern omnipresent text of which everything and all are part of, a self-reflexive, ironic, and amoeba-like text flowing in all directions, in which everything is embedded, including authorship and readership, and all boundaries are only narrative devices, textual rules to be kept sometimes but not all the time. The text ultimately rules itself.

Whenever spatiality is distinctive in the stories the actors gain a freedom to move, as movement is enacted in space. Thus there is a definite potentiality in the story about the CEO
on the roof. There are ways to pass across different spaces and the people in the enterprise might some day discover them. Well, in Heather Höpfl’s story one person has actually done that, outside of the domain of his space. In deterritorialized stories, where the symbols are kept as part of the narrative but the spaces have been erased the freedom of movement of the actors is limited. Józek Mrozek’s gangster-monk can perform all kinds of breathtaking narrative turns as long as convolutions remain purely narrative. As reader of this story I could not picture the monk meeting an angel otherwise than in some self-reflexive irony. The monk who became enthralled with the tobacco company cannot pray or meditate. He can move around, but solely in the organizational world.

The spaces are usually portrayed typically as more or less each others’ opposites. The organizational space is hierarchical, structured, ordered, the actors are stuck in images of a social hierarchy based on power and material gains. In almost all of the stories symbols of contemporary worldly power are present in the description of the organization and its actors: managers wear suits, receptionists are well groomed, the CEO’s office is vast and expensive looking, the corporate HQ has been redecorated in steel, glass and marble, etc. The physical setting and the interpretive schemes sometimes not only get ordered but rigid, restraining the actors from individual perception, not to mention individual expression. In almost all of the stories organizational space is thus definitely a striated space, perhaps even an oppressive one. Agnieszka Rosiak pictures a glimpse of a different kind of organization – people dress colorfully, they emanate happiness and variety. But this is just a brief image, this is what the purgatory tries to show the individuals as an alternative happy way of organizing. Their everyday life is that of dullness, tediousness and uniformity. The people in the story about the monk who joined the tobacco company are clearly depicted in a different fashion than in most
of the narratives: they are young, happy, full of energy. The organizational space here radiates energy and potency. In some of the students’ stories, such as in the story of the monk who decided to ask the corporation to make a website for his order the organizational space is hinted at as the home for effectiveness, a place where useful things are born. These and other stories which cast organizational space in a positive way also picture it as striated, but in a productive rather than oppressive manner. Spiritual space is usually portrayed as fluid, which the wandering monk in the opening line suggests. In Heather Höpfl’s story it is embodied in the monk’s movement, as it is, to a certain degree, in Maureen McElroy’s story: here the monk is able to move more freely than any other actor. His freedom is emphasized by the open space in which he dwells: the sky instead of walls and roofs. Spiritual space is quite smooth. Sometimes this is not an attribute granting happiness: in some of the students’ stories the wandering monk is tired and sad, he has no roots but he also has no rest. In some narratives the spiritual space is more striated, for example, Dorota Dobosz places some of the tale in the setting of the monastery. People there do things in a quite orderly way, which the manager mistakenly takes for hierarchy and coercion. However, they do it of their own free will, spontaneously, so the apparent repetition is an expression not for an underlying structure but for a more fundamental and individual desire. Furthermore, the tales paint the spiritual space as colorful, the home for compassion and genuine feelings. Or, as in some cases, dull and oldfashioned.

Another interesting question regards the outcome of the plot: what does the meeting produce when it takes place. There is clearly a possibility of transformation, as some of the stories show. One possible outcome is erasure or subjugation of one of the spaces: God annihilates the company, the order takes over the corporation, the employee prepares to confront the evil
perpetrated by the employer organization after a revelation and intends to rebel against subjugation.

Another result of the encounter of spaces is pervasion: one of them is depicted as part of another, bigger, and a way between them is shown as opened up, letting the larger one inundate the smaller. This happens to the people in the purgatory, unlearning organization in order to be able to experience heaven in Agnieszka Rosiak’s story, the deceitful manager trying to learn organizing from the monk in Dorota Dobosz’s story, and remains as *in potentio* in Maureen McElroy’s story, which, as it currently is, is a story of failure to meet.

In many cases the spaces fail to meet, and the failure is due to one of the spaces’, usually the organizational actors’ blindness to the other. The actors do not meet at all, or the monk is rejected by the organization, or (in one story) he does not understand that organizational space does not have to be managed by human beings and fails to understand it. In Maureen McElroy’s story the spaces touch through the actions and paths of one person: the CEO, who is the only one, among all actors depicted in the story, capable of seeing the both spaces: the spiritual and the organizational. The people are potentially able to see what he sees because they both see and respect him. For the time being, they do not, but nonetheless, they are unbeknownst to themselves being watched by a person “from outer space,” or at least from another space, looking out for his staff and smiling down at them from the roof, with a different perspective, literally as well as metaphorically, than the worldly organization below.

Finally, there is at least one story where the spaces keep their spatial identity and neither overtake or melt into one another but perform something entirely new together. In Jerzy Kociatkiewicz’s story the actors engage in strange meaningless actions at first glance. In a deeper reading they turn out to be interacting on a profound level. It may be a spiritual level
and the enlightenment reached by the both of them seems to point in that direction. However, I do not read this story as an account of spiritual enlightenment and thus of how the spiritual space triumphed over the organizational space. The monk was enlightened as a result of an action that the businessman performed. Corporate symbols, such as dollars, headquarters decorated in glass, steel and marble, an expensive suit, seem to be part of the mystical interaction. The actors exchange their symbolisms and in that exchange enlightenment is produced. But what is enlightenment – to the monk? To the businessman? Is it the same thing or different? Spiritual, organizational? Territorialized in striated or smooth space? Reterritorialized elsewhere, in a new space? Or deterritorialized altogether? It is in the nature of enlightenment to leave all the above questions unanswered and open.

I have been wondering why those outcomes were plotted by the authors, and what makes each of them possible or inevitable: how does the plot work to produce the outcome? I have found some interesting narrative paths, and I will briefly address them now. The way leading to failure to meet is clearly blindness, actors not being open to an alternative way of reading the Other’s symbols. The actors may have a strong motivation to read them in the own well trained way, as when they feel proud of their status in the societal herd. Of course they are not interested in seeing something that threatens their whole life view and the very reason for their pride. Or the actors may simply not be prepared to perceive what is in front of their eyes because they are used to interpreting everything they see before they really see it. They see a room and they think: a CEO’s office. They see a garden on the roof of an office building and they think: a garden. They immediately place the items in a structure of other items and meanings determined by language: the CEO belongs in the CEO’s office, while the gardener belongs in the garden. The CEO is a person with much status and dressed in a suit. The
gardener is a person with low status and dressed in overalls. The monk is something that does not belong in either of those settings. In such a well defined world, there is no place for things that do not fit into the settings, they have no place, no names and they are truly and physically invisible. When aspects of the different spaces succeed to meet, blindness prevents one of them, usually the organizational actors, to see the spiritual actors for what they are. They see a superficial image which they read and react to according to their encoded standards. The same process is started as described above: the actors immediately interpret and label what they see and then they evaluate it accordingly to the set of meanings that the labels belong to. The man in the long robe is a "nutter," a homeless person, a Mr. Nobody, someone that there is no reason to take seriously or even treat decently according to the embraced system of norms. The actors of organizational space translates the spiritual symbolism to their own code and they read the message in their own way. No communication is possible. In one case an organizational actor succeeds to meet the spiritual actor, however unlikely the meeting is. The manager is under severe stress, he knows that his company is not acting in a moral way. His pained eyes meet briefly with the soothing eyes of a supernatural being. He decides to follow the impulse to follow him and talk with him. He listens to his advice and realizes that he has spoken with an angel. An impossible encounter: even if angels walked every day in the streets people would not be able to see a single one for what it was. It is not the existence of the Other that is impossible but the meeting. Meeting the Other depends on the look – on being able to see\(^9\). What the organizational actor saw in Heather Höpfl’s story was an opening, a crack in his world, coming from his broken heart. In the gap he saw the eyes of another, someone blessing him. He was still open enough to follow, before he began to categorize:

\(^9\) So perhaps it is spirituality, which I have in this paper defined as seeing, organizations lack and needs in order to be able to cease to be blind. I am aware that this statement is optocentrist, but it is only partly so; the kind of
“Father, but I am not a believer.” But by then he has seen sufficiently to communicate with
the Other. He is ready to receive a sign and understand it: “Hebrews: 13 v. 2”. It was not
mere words, but a message, a performative, now he knew what he had to do. Performative
messages that one would be unable to think up oneself cannot be derived from interpretation
and evaluation within one’s own taken for granted cultural frames, they are not like labeling
of the world, they are more like falling in love. The event described in Jerzy Kociatkiewicz’s
tale has that quality and magnitude. The actors exchange obscure expressions which the
reader has problems with interpreting. From the story she can infer that so had the actors.
They concentrate and meditate on them, creating an opening, a crack in their worlds, until
something very powerful happens to them, they become enlightened. They communicate in
order to get there, but their communication is not easily interpreted or, indeed, they do not try
to interpret it easily. On the contrary – it is their silence that produces the crack.

Silence, then, can be the way to meet creatures from another space. But why should one
bother to meet them in the first place? It is not spelled out explicitly in the stories, but in
many of them I think I can read it as an implicit context: the Zen story, Heather Höpfl’s story,
the story about the monk who painted the enterprise in bright colors etc. They are based on
the notion of a fundamentally important inspiration that can be gained from such a meeting.
The theories I have used for my initial search which I have presented a summary of in the first
part of this paper suggest this as well: the spiritual space, a smooth space, could be a good
context for human beings to understand and imagine. The organizational space, more striated,
could be a perfect context for doing things, especially for doing things together. Therefore it
could also provide a context for communication, of the more pragmatic kind. Taken together

seeing I have in mind is not about physical sight.
this way the spaces inspire each other: now people can actually try to share their insights, and
they can be allowed the freedom of individual expression and try to work on shared aspects of
that expression. In my opinion the combination of spiritual and organizational spaces can
offer such an inspiration, resulting in originality and beauty. Of course, it may also take many
other forms, from violence to kitsch, as the stories rightly point out. Violence occurs when the
spiritual space is being devoid of its smoothness and becomes more striated – a religion, in
fact, or just another organization (organized spirituality). The brutal clash happens, then,
between two organizations, rather than between organization and spirituality. There is no
guarantee that the encounter will be creative or even constructive – but is it not so with every
work of art? Or consolidated effort, for that sake. The quality definitely depends on the
individuals involved, just as with everything else.
6. Reverse journey

6.1. A second collection of stories

What happens if spiritual and organizational spaces meet in the reverse order, that is, if it is the CEO who comes for a visit to the monastery? What kind of meeting between them is possible when my initial assumptions about the character of the spaces are dropped: the CEO becomes nomadic and the monastery static? Curious to find the answer, I started another collection of stories. I followed a similar procedure to the one described in the previous chapter. I asked friends and students via email to write short stories, and I asked my colleagues to collect stories from students. They did so partly in class and partly by email. All authors had the choice to sign their work or remain anonymous. This time the opening line was: The CEO knocked on the door of the monastery ... A part of my respondents had written stories about the monk visiting the corporate HQ presented in the previous chapter but a majority participated in my story collection for the first time. A few tales are self-reflective and a kind of a response to my previous chapter, which some authors have had the opportunity to read. I see the variety of approaches as something valuable and enriching and did not strive for a mythical ceteris paribus. Quite the contrary, just as the diversity of authors is to me a possibility to develop a more intricate narrative, so is the multiplicity of their perspectives, contexts they come from and intertextual backgrounds. I can only wish there were more of them. I received 21 stories, mostly written in Polish which I translated to English. A few were in English. Once again, I will present the stories arranged according to their key plots. I either present them whole or abbreviate them when the effect of the plot is in my opinion better brought about by a shorter tale.
6.2. Tales of a Failure to Meet

Sometimes the protagonists do not meet – as well as the spaces where they belong. The wish to change one’s life may be present, but the change does not occur. In a story by an Anonymous student the CEO is looking for spiritual support, feeling tired by his work and life, and wishing for a change in values and lifestyle. The monk is puzzled by his appearance at the gates and does not know what to do. Likewise, the CEO realizes after having been let into the old fashioned chilly space of the monastery that he feels out of place. There the story ends, giving the protagonist very little chance of transformation. Yes, he wants to change, but there is a long way from intention to action, even to being able to formulate his thoughts in speech. And he has a real problem: he does not know how other people live. He has, however, made the move and come to the monastery; he is ready to listen, even if it is not certain he will be able to hear. Also, we do not know if the monk will be able to give him what he is only vaguely beginning to realize that he wants to look for. Hervé Corvellec depicts another failure to change even if the wish is there

The CEO knocks at the door of the monastery. A monk opens and mumbles something that the CEO does not understand. The CEO politely asks the monk to repeat. He receives an answer that he again cannot understand. At the third trial, the CEO suspects that the monk has some purpose in mind and that it is probably no use to insist. He decides to remain silent for a while, exhausted as he is. The monk answers to his silence with silence. They face each other for about an hour; the monk rises and quietly closes the door behind him. Sitting on the monastery’s threshold, the CEO tries to remember the end of that film by Orson Wells after that book by Kafka. He realizes that it had been a long time since he read the latter or saw the former. He is not too disturbed by the prospect of sleeping outdoor tonight. The night is falling; it is getting colder, even in a three piece suit.
"It could have been an awful night, but it has not been" the CEO thinks when he wakes up. He actually smiles at his having actually spent worse nights in luxury hotels. He even evokes the idea that it could be worth trying to force his directors to sleep outdoors now and then, an innovative and cost-effective idea as managerial ideas should be, he would find some motives later. Just that he happens to have right now no directors to decide on and no cost to cut. He feels somewhat disoriented, yet all right. The only thing that really worries him is that he cannot remember his name.

A few hours pass. The monk opens the door in an attitude that the CEO interprets as interrogating. "He probably wants to know what I'm doing here, at the monastery’s front door, and what I want", the CEO is thinking. But he does not know where to begin with, and so he says. The monk answers that he will come back later to hear if the CEO then knows where to start. The monk leaves some water, some bread, a piece of cheese and an apple, and closes the door behind him. The CEO clearly feels that his temptation to leave the threshold of the monastery is weaker than his will to stay. The denial of entry that he is opposed appeals to his taste for challenges. "And it was my decision to come" he keeps repeating himself. The CEO moves a few meters away, sits down under a tree, and tries to figure out what he actually wants, what he wants most. It turns out to be not that easy for him to find out, although he is an acknowledged skilled decision maker. The situation feels mostly unusual. The CEO spends the rest of the day, and some hours of the night pondering over what to say to the monk.

The third day feels even better than the second one. He thinks that it has not been raining yet and that it is a good omen. In a while, the monk will probably come back he thinks, and so it happens. The monk brings along some food, a blanket, some soap. He has also a large umbrella with him. He squats down and accepts to stay a while and speak a little.

And so it goes day after day. The CEO stays outside the monastery for more than a year. He learns how to sleep on hard ground, how to protect himself from cold or rain, and how to eat with parsimony. He develops a new approach to time. One of
the most important of his new habits is the daily discussion he has with the monk. He confers with him about all sorts of issues, mostly issues that he, a CEO, has not paid attention for ages. To his amazement, it turns out that he-the-CEO regularly reaches interesting standpoints, often unexpected or surprising ones. He can now find his way in the maze of responsibility and duties; he can feel the many differences between love and friendship; or he knows how crucial it is to take care of one’s open-fire. For every day that goes, the CEO realizes better how he gets influenced by the wind or a rainfall. He is even convinced that he has found out why the monk has not allowed him into the monastery. It is so because his exclusion is one of the premises in his thinking about these matters. One has to be left out to start thinking. To be true, he is not really sure he has ever asked to get in. He might have begged for permission to get in the first day, but now, after a year spent under a tree across the door of the monastery, he is not sure any longer that he did ask. *May I...?* was definitely not among his favorite ways of opening a question at this time.

This year has made that he is now living with more questions than ever, but one question keeps haunting him and overshadows all the others: who is he? All these days and nights spent thinking have not brought any answer to this, for him, essential question. He still cannot remember his name. He suspects that it is because he had been Mister Director for so many years that he had forgotten his own name. Or else. He must have a name, everyone has a name. "I am stuck on that point" he states. Maybe could he ask the monk for help?

The monk’s answer is immediate. "You are a former CEO who has been sleeping outside the door of our monastery for a year now" he says. "We know you very well. We have done it from the start. Monks have a pretty good knowledge of the world outside the monastery nowadays you know. Do you want to get in?"

"This is the first direct question that the monk has ever asked me", the CEO realizes. Or so it feels. To his surprise, however, the CEO hears himself answering no, that he rather would not, not yet anyway, that he might want later, but that thank you, that he feels OK as it is, thank you again.
"You should have accepted my invitation" the monk answered. "The president of your company mentioned on the phone a couple of days ago how happy they were at Inc. of the progresses you have made since your breakdown, Mister Director. After such an answer, I can do nothing else but tell them that you are ready to get back. I would guess that they will come and fetch you within a few minutes. You could have joined us, though. Our order is great and I am convinced that you would have rapidly become a high-performing deep feeling trainer, you know. Our contract with Inc. allows me to ask you to join us only once. My mission is over. Good bye and good luck Mister Director." And before the CEO fully realizes that he has just spent a whole year on threshold training advanced emotion management, the monk gets into the monastery and silently closes the door behind him. (Hervé Corvellec)

The CEO wanted to change and learn, he was very persistent and even insistent. However, he was too much used to his old ways to be able to ask to be let in. Even after having spent a year on the threshold of the monastery and forgotten his own name he is still too much his old self to be able to change: he cannot accept a simple invitation. The space in which the whole interaction takes place is a kind of a threshold between spaces. The CEO is authorized to be there, because a contract between the relevant organizations has been signed. It is a no man’s land, a transitory space and yet he was unable to use it according to its role. He gets stuck in between. Anita Rochalska draws an even more jammed picture. The CEO wants to move on; he is looking for a chance to change. Yet he does not really believe that he stands at the door of a monastery:

And so here he was now, at the threshold of a new life, or so it could seem. But was he really ready for such a change? Was he ready to renounce all the comforts of life, all material possessions, the company of other people, the apparently great fun he was having in his life?
No, he realized, he was not ready, and he turned back, towards his car parked nearby. He then heard the gate being opened and looked back. In the doorway there stood a monk, radiating calm and serenity. But now he knew that he is unable to make the change and left – to lose himself again in all that he felt he was finding so insufferable… (Anita Rochalska)

His old life, insufferable as it was, still had the power to hold him back. The spaces failed to connect. In the next story, something had been preventing people from communication in the past but a physical meeting in the present, a kind of a drifting towards each other, makes it possible for them to try anew. Inga Zychowicz speaks of an accidental meeting between two people, who had been close but no longer spoke to each other. The CEO knocked at the monastery’s door because his car broke down and he wanted to call for help. And then he suddenly saw his wife, in a nun’s robes, standing on the threshold, with a face as surprised as his own. She had left him a long time ago but they had lost contact and he did not know that she had left to join a religious order. Inga Zychowicz leaves both the protagonists on respective sides of the doorstep, looking at each other with amazement. It is going too far to surmise that they started to talk and that an understanding was immediately brought upon them. But the most basic condition for communication was finally present: they saw each other, saw where they were and the story implies that the desire to understand was there at least on the side of the man. Maybe they will now get to communicate? It is not certain that they will but it is not entirely impossible.

6.3. Tales of Escapism

Sometimes the story of how the CEO approaches the monastery is a tale of escape from reality. There is a wish to change but it is unrealistic and perhaps even wasteful as in the story
of an Anonymous student, where the protagonist is a school director, looking for his lost pupil. She had left school and her family and ran away to enter novitiate. He is worried and wants to talk with her. She was a very talented student, who used to write beautiful poetry and a very sensitive person. He believes that she must have been afraid of life to escape like this and sees it as his mission to bring her back. Another story by an Anonymous student presents the spiritual space as a hideaway, a place to flee to, not dangerous at all, just unreal. The director is a CEO and a very wealthy and powerful man. He has everything he wants and seems to enjoy his life. Nonetheless, the idea comes to him to seek something different, a bliss, maybe a new thrill, perhaps a new possession? He thinks of a new sensation, a moment of peace, and idleness. Therefore he arrives at the doors of the monastery, hopeful but not quite sure of what he wants. Both these stories present the spiritual space as unreality, a more or less benign imaginary refuge from the hardships of real life.

Łukasz Sobczak describes a very intense wish to change on the part of the protagonist, which ends in disheartenment. The CEO is an impatient man, he is not so much knocking as banging on the monastery’s door. But his intentions are sincere:

he wants to transcend his everyday life. He wants to experience something different, not connected to his duties. He wants them to let him in, he wants to get inside a place where a person can be all alone with himself.

He has so many dreams and expectations about this new place and is eager to experience new things in sacred silence and loneliness. When he is finally let in

he enters… but soon a crowd of monks surrounds him… (Łukasz Sobczak)
The director wants to cross to the other side. He knows what he wants, but he looks for it in the wrong place. Is it to be found here? Is it to be found at all? The reader is left with a feeling of deception, just as the protagonist.

### 6.4. Tales of Dislocation

Some authors move the plot into narrative spaces, thus turning the heroes themselves and the meeting between them into fiction. One of these accounts is a highly sophisticated, multiply deconstructed, intertextual reality, constructed by an author not just aware of my previous story collection but one aware and even perhaps self-conscious of the role I offered my authors in the second round of collecting stories. Dariusz Jemielniak created a metanarrative space from various bits and pieces and put them together in a Zen-alike fashion:

> The CEO knocked on the door of the monastery. The door hinges squeaked, a narrow opening showed, though in the dark abyss of the abbey only small sparkles of light could be seen on the white robe of a monk. “Smoke rises from the can of Mountain Dew, and the hour grows late, and Director the Great rides to the monastery seeking my counsel. For that is why you have come, is it not? My old friend.” The low hiss of the captured figure echoed in empty corridor.  

> “Aah, frankly I just thought that I could ask you some questions”, said the CEO.  

> “But you are late, Mr. Anderson. This monastery is one of the top monasteries in the world because every single person understands that they are part of a whole. Thus if one has a problem, the monastery has a problem.”  

> “I am sorry. Now, answer as quickly as you can”.  

> “Sure”.

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“You're in a desert, walking along in the sand when all of the sudden you look down and you see a tortoise. It's crawling toward you. You reach down; you flip the tortoise over on its back. The tortoise lies on its back, its belly baking in the hot sun beating its legs trying to turn itself over but it can't, not without your help, but you're not helping. Why is that? Is it because you’re too small?’ The CEO looked down at the man.

“’Size matters not. Judge me by my size, do you? Well, do you, punk?’’ the monk turned back, masking the anger in her voice. She snapped her fingers. “That is the sound of inevitability. That is the sound of your death. Goodbye, Mr. Anderson.” The doors were closed with a loud clap. In the dust of the old sandy road, in the rays of the setting sun, the director stood. The shadows of the dark hurried along the trees. The whisper was barely audible. “My name is CEO”. And then there was silence. (Darek Jemielniak)

Jakub Zdybel lets the meeting between the CEO and the monks occur in a narrative space of the crime genre, where both protagonists do not belong too well and thus the reader is left with a mystery as to what had happened and why:

The CEO knocked on the door of the monastery. It was not common that someone knocked on this door after 10 in the evening. […] Yet this particular night brother Tomek could not sleep, and was lying awake, immersed in painful thoughts. He rose from his bed and went down the two flights of stairs, crossed the courtyard and opened a tiny window in the gate, asking:

“What happened?”

The visitor did not answer, just fell down on the ground.

Brother Tomek, terrified, pulled the lifeless man into the courtyard and closed the gate. The visitor was dressed in expensive clothes, but looked like he was in a bad shape. He was
holding on to a leather briefcase. Brother Tomek thanked God: the man was still breathing.

He leaned over him and heard a feeble whisper: “Marylka” before the man lost consciousness.

Brother Tomek did not know what to do. To begin with he decided to wake up his friend, father Tadeusz and seek his advice as to what to do with such an unusual guest. And who could this Marylka be? (Jakub Zdybel)

Who indeed is Marylka? And why was the visitor wounded? It may all be an accident but the narrative space of the genre suggests otherwise: some violent deed has taken place here, thus uniting two unlikely domains in the process of narration. Without the crime having been committed the CEO and the monks would not have met. The following anonymous story achieves the same effect but the narrative space where the impossible meeting takes place belongs to a different genre, the horror fiction. The CEO was on vacations and was passing through the area in his car. It grew late and he hoped to find a roof over his head in the monastery.

First he was fascinated. But after a few days the excursion turned into a horror. The enthrallment of wild nature and the exoticism of the place turned into anxiety and fear. The director knocked one more time […].

Suddenly, from behind a huge pillar, on the other side of the gate, a figure appeared. Behind her more figures came into sight, all looking the same, dressed in long wide robes. One of the characters slowly approached the director… (Anonymous)

The two tales of escapism and of dislocation into narrative space present the meeting between spirituality and organization as something vague, just a story, a dream, or, like in Dariusz Jemielniak’s story, a story with possible effects on organizational and spiritual spaces, as all texts are ultimately interconnected and there is nothing outside the text… Read this way, it is not just a tale of dislocation but a source of energy, resembling me of a black hole, sucking
my text into it as surfacing in an altered version in Dariusz’s textual universe. Perfectly for that reason, while being aware of its special features, I prefer to regard it as a tale of dislocation, albeit an intertextual one.

The following stories differ from the above in that they make the meeting between the spaces really happen, at least in the negative sense.

6.5. Tales of Rejection

In some of the stories I have collected the meeting produced an effect similar to one of the effects of the clash that I have described in the previous chapter. However, I do not want to use the same labels thus giving the impression that all things are ultimately the same or easily put into orderly categories. This is also a consequence of a changed perspective – in the previous chapter I discussed the effects of territorialization of organizing and spirituality. Here I have deterritorialized and re-territorialized the symbols: it is now the CEO who wanders and knows upon doors, and the spiritual domain is contain within the solid walls of the monastery. This reconceptualization can be seen as a tentative deconstruction of my first reading of the story of the meeting between spirituality and organization. Some stories tell about a clash, a failure to meet – rejection. It is the delegate of the corporate world who gets rejected, because of his gender in the following little story shaped as computer program:

```plaintext
If Monastery <> empty then
    If Loudness_of_knocking >= Limit_of_hearing then
        A = Rnd(Numberofsisters)
        Sister[A].Say="Men are not allowed!"
        Goto End
    Else Goto endif
Else Goto Endif

Else Goto Endif
End (Anonymous)
```
Although the message probably intended by the author is rather straightforward: a man comes to a cloister and is not allowed because of his gender, in my reading it contains an additional dimension. The corporate delegate is a man, as in all but one of the collected stories\textsuperscript{10}. However, it is the only case where the order is defined as female. In all other tales monks inhabit the monastery, not nuns. To me the point of the CEO’s rejection is thus somewhat less simple: in my collection it is the only instance where the spiritual domain is gendered as feminine and rebuffs the corporate presence gendered as masculine. Maybe there is a touch of feminist reprisal here.

In another story, written by an Anonymous student, it is not an outer characteristic that causes the visitor’s rejection, but his values and his desires. The monastery is a fantasy realm, inhabited by dwarfs and elfs. They lead a peaceful life, surrounded by beautiful things which is exactly the reason why the director wanted to be let in. He spontaneously liked his host – he was far from an evil man, but greed was what motivated him more than sympathy. He wanted to buy the monastery and thought he was offering a generous price. His host laughed at him: did he not know that not everything was for sale? There the story ends. I do not think it likely that the CEO will be taught a lesson or that he will change his mind about life and what is important in it. However, the spiritual domain deals out another rebuttal to the corporate world in this tale, denying what is seen as its basic principle. Also, it is the only story where a mythical creature is one of the key heroes. The half elf half dwarf is made real and powerful, he represents the monastery and he denies entry to it. But perhaps it also shows how impossible it is to deny the corporate domain entry: you have to be mythical, at least half elf, to even being to try.

\textsuperscript{10} Not just in Polish, where the gender of the CEO was defined as male but in most of the English ones as well,
6.6. Tales of Transformation

There are tales where the spaces meet in a powerful impact and one of them influences the other. In most of the plots the change starts with the individuals and possibly spreads to the rest the spaces. In many stories the reason itself for why the director has decided to move, to knock upon the monastery’s door, was a profound and significant change that either has taken place in him or is about to take place. Aneta Milczarczyk tells a tale of a director who presumably had made up his mind to change his life before he entered the monastery. However, he did not know how or why, he just more or less let himself be drawn into the new space, hoping that his unasked questions will be answered. He was welcomed into the monastery, given a room and offered meals and he enjoyed his stay very much. He got to meet the abbot and instantaneously liked him. His serenity put the director in a confessional mood. He started to tell him about his life: how he had achieved his current position through hard work, how often he experienced humiliation and contempt, how his employers had treated him badly and how one day, in part thanks to his own ingenuity and in part due to favorable circumstances he become one of them himself. The abbot just listened. He did not ask any questions. Finally he said: “It’s well that you found your way here.” And then he excused himself and said that he must return to his duties.

The director decided to stay some more time with the monks and the more he observed them, the more he grew to admire their organization and work. Everyone seemed to know their place and their role, or so the director thought, reflecting upon the managerial virtues of the abbot. But on closer inspection, here nobody was managing anyone else and the abbot was a

where it was undefined.
friendly and good-natured person who kept to his study and his books. He was perhaps more like a mother than of a boss to the friars. The director did not understand this at all.

And then, like on a film seen before his mind’s eye, he saw another scene. He saw his office and his desk where a man sat with a stern look on his face and before him stood the anxious and meek silhouette of the secretary. The director observed the face of the man behind the desk and suddenly he grew paralyzed by an insight. “Is this me?” He looked up again and met the eyes of the abbot who was looking at him. After a long silence when the director tried to realize what had just happened to him, he finally said: “It’s well that I have found my way here. Now I know what to do.” He turned around and started to prepare for his trip back home. (Aneta Milczarczyk)

The CEO decides to go home after the transformative insight. In Izabela Dembicka’s narrative, the protagonist goes through an almost identical process, even though he did not have the intention initially:

The CEO knocked on the door of the monastery. Silence. No reaction. The director was not used to knocking on doors, and even less to waiting for them to open. He felt a sudden adrenaline surge. Neither really panic, nor nervousness. “What can I do?” he thought. He did not have the time to answer, though – he heard approaching energetic and decisive steps from behind the shabby door.

Finally, the door opened and he saw a young monk standing in the doorway. He greeted the visitor and asked him to come in. The director started to complain that he had been kept waiting but the monk interrupted him:

“We do not use a commanding tone of speech here; we refrain from negative expressions of our demands, compose our words with care and listen. Listening is the most important part.”

The monk led the guest through corridors and rooms, explaining to him the amazing facts of the spiritual space:
“It is very important to live according to one’s beliefs” the monk spoke to him “to believe in a meaning with one’s life and action. Without this the spirit is restless and full of anxiety, we are unable to concentrate and we chose wrong paths. We wander about and we let ourselves be deceived by appearances. It is very important to have someone to look at us, someone whose eyes express support for our spirit in the hardships and doubts of everyday life. We need a shield that we could trust. Our sages taught us this.”

The CEO listened and intensely took in his surroundings; even he did not quite seem to understand what it was all about. Finally, they entered the monastery’s tower, where the director was surprised to see a modern glass elevator and contemporary art prints on the walls. The elevator brought them to a conference room. A big wall screen appeared before their eyes.

“This was not described in the sages’ books, but the art of using technology is our reality. Without it truth would remain banished to inaccessible books and writings.”

The LCD screen started to display well known pictures to the director. He forgot about the monk’s presence. He saw. He saw his company, his desk, his laptop placed in the middle of the desk, tables with financial plans. He saw the offices of the employees. He saw them in the so familiar spaces. The well known places of everyday office reality. The modern conference room, the human resources, the guards, the cameras installed in the smoking room and the corridors. The artificial lightning and computers of the last generation. The social room with the hard chairs and the tiny fridge. He felt the anxiety contained in the pictures, the phobias, the hopes. He felt the pressure for results and success. He heard the gossip and the sounds of radio that was strictly forbidden in the office. He saw the nervous looks on the clocks.

He turned around. The monk stood smoking a cigarette, resting his back against the wall.
“You wanted to say something when you first arrived.”

“It’s not important any more. Thank you.”

Standing at the steps of the monastery the director felt a heavy but supportive weight on his shoulder. He knew it was a shield. (Izabela Dembicka)

In both above stories the protagonist has gained a knowledge that he is willing to take with him home, to his own space where it will presumably be put to use. So will the hero of Artur Michalski’s story, who differs from the former two directors in that he is more evidently undertaking the spiritual quest in his own name. He had broken the bonds with his original corporate space before he arrived. He had been a competitive man and his life had been an endless path of success and more success. But what he really was after, he realized, was happiness. Winning and success did not grant happiness but instead made him feel empty and depressed.

He decided that the reason for his unhappiness was due to the fact that he was so fixated on time, that he had to deal with such enormous amounts of information in his work and with so many people. Therefore he thought it obvious to start his new life doing something completely different. […] He decided to live in a monastery. And so one day he knocked on the door of the monastery, located in Tibet in this story, and his life as a monk began. He did not spend his time at the monastery in an idle or even very meditative way. He participated in some religious practices but most of the time he busied himself with hard work. He became well liked by the monks and he himself got to like them. Nevertheless, he still did not feel he was happy. A young monk he talked to the recommended to him that he go and talk to a great sage living nearby.

“I know just one man who could help you. It’s a sage, he lived in Lhasa. Talk with him.”
After a certain time the director knocked on another door, this time not of a monastery but of a building looking like a miniature monastery. […] The door was opened and he went inside. A young monk led him into a room lit up only by candles. In its middle sat a very old man. The director sat down, too. After a while the old man spoke:

“Why did you come to see me?”

“I am unhappy.” Said the director.

“So are many people.”

“But I should be. I am a winner! I have been working hard to achieve happiness.”

“You come from the West. What is your life story?”

The director then told the old man his story and received his advice. Happiness is not a thing, the sage explained and it cannot be possessed, planned or even reached. It is not something you can catch. It is something you can feel. The director pondered this and asked the old man if he was happy. Yes, said the sage, and his inner peace radiated to the visitor. The director bade farewell and started to walk. He walked for a long time until he saw a beautiful tree, under which he sat down to meditate. Finally, he understood:

“You were right, Master.”

exclaimed the man and jumped to his feet. First he went to thank the monks he had first met for their help and then he went home. He now knew that happiness is not a goal to be reached and that

one should do the things that you do well in life, and the rest will follow. (Artur Michalski)
In this story the director achieved enlightenment, through a meeting of three spiritual spaces: that of the monastery, then that of the old sage’s and finally his own, located so characteristically under a tree, where he transported himself into his own spiritual space through intense meditation.

In Dorota Dobosz-Bourne’s story the director had no intention to change his life, but ended up doing so anyway. He came to the monastery in order to act according to his old selfish and cruel impulses and as things turned out, took it to the extreme.

The CEO knocked on the door of the monastery. He didn’t resemble the usual CEO everybody knew. This time his stiff-looking, neat suit was replaced by baggy jeans, loose jumper with the cannabis leaf hand-painted on it, giving him sloppy, careless teenage look. His hair was in a controlled mess that must have cost him few good minutes in front of a mirror. As he was waiting for someone to open the door he lit a spliff and turned around looking at the garden surrounding the monastery. After a while a man dressed in a military-style jacket and trousers answered the door. The CEO turned around:

“You’re all right Broth?”

“Yeah, I’m safe; I’m safe man… “

“You’re ready?”

“Yeah, let’s go.”

The two men left walking slowly towards a car parked in the alley. They got into a dirty, gray Land Rover. They started the engine and were about to drive away when a child opened the door of the monastery and started running towards them.

“Take me with you! Take me with you! Daaad!!! Don’t leave me here!!!”
The CEO hesitated and stopped the car but the other man punched him in the arm and shouted:

“Drive away, go, go!!!”

“Are you going to leave the kid like this?!?”

“It’s none of your fucking business, just go!”

“No way, I’m not going to let you leave the kid in here without saying a word to him! You’re his fucking father and you owe him that!”

“What do you know, you loser? You’ve never even had a proper relationship apart from those hookers you shagged at your fancy smart-ass company parties!”

Shouting abuses at each other they didn’t notice the child standing next to the car watching them in disbelief. The tears were falling down his cheeks and his mouth was open as he was nervously trying to catch some breath.

“I’ve had enough! I can’t stand it anymore! I’m trying to make sure the kid will have a better future and life than me and all I get is abuse and that I’m a bad father! Do you wanna know what’s bad father, hah?! Do you?! I’ll show you what bad fathers do. How about this?! – shouted the man in the car and suddenly took a gun out of his jacket.”

Before the CEO realized what the man next to him was doing, it happened. It happened so unexpectedly, so quickly that CEO didn’t even have time to try to stop him. Even after he saw a blood dripping on the sand from the boys head he didn’t quite get that it already happened. Faster than a blink of an eye, louder than a thunderstorm, it happened. And lasted longer than a lifetime. Lasted long after the CEO died as a monk in the same monastery 52 years later. Lasted in the stories he told to people, things the taught them, hearts that he moved and the lives that he changed. (Dorota Dobosz)
The man killed his own child and only then the change took place – he sobered up. The realization had cost a life. In Agnieszka Rosiak’s story the cost of change is a life, too, and the reason why it happens is similar in a way to the motive of the drama in the former story.

The CEO knocked on the door of the monastery. He was looking for his co-worker, Mr. Kazio, who had hid himself within the walls of the monastery. He was looking for Mr. Kazio, because due his sudden disappearance from work there have been some problems with the finding of important documents. It wasn’t so that Mr. Kazio had left a mess after him. Quite the contrary. All the documents were carefully filed and arranged in folders and the folders were stapled on the bookshelf. Depending on the contents the folders had red, green or blue backs, and the exact contents were described with three letter abbreviations. However, Mr. Kazio had not left a description that would enable the CEO or any of his coworkers to figure out the pattern according to which the documents were ordered. Therefore the CEO, immensely irritated at the state of things, finally got so seriously mad, that he decided to get a word with Mr. Kazio in person.

Everyone who knew the boss also knew that this did not bade well… The obnoxious employee had left a letter in which he explained that he had chosen a “different way of life” and entered a religious order. The CEO thought this was perfect rubbish and got even more angry as he thought about it. He knew where to look for him, because the personnel department had sent him all his employment records to his new address, which belonged indeed to a monastery.

If you asked the CEO why he had come, he would not have easily found an answer. He decided that this cannot go on further like this and that the situation must return to normal. Normal meant to him that he could call for Mr. Kazio at any time, night or day and command him to bring the necessary documents, to fatherly scold him that he was terribly slow (it sounded a bit differently in the mouth of the director, but it was a men’s conversation, wasn’t it? so the expressions were matched
accordingly to the situation) and calmly plunge into work. How to bring this situation back again, the CEO thought. Maybe he believed that one word from him was enough and Mr. Kazio will shred his monk’s robe (or whatever he was insisting to wear), put on his suit and return to where his place was, which means to his office. And maybe he thought that Mr. Kazio at least will teach Ms. Basia how the documents were filed. But, knowing Ms. Basia as well as he did, he was aware of that it would take her a few weeks at least, and even the finding of an ordinary invoice from a month ago takes her at least a week.

Why did Mr. Kazio decide to quit a well-paid job? The CEO did not ask himself this question. It was a healthy defense mechanism of his body, because if he analyzed the reasons why the employee had left, he would arrive at some to him very unpleasant conclusions. Luckily for him, he was not a man of reflection but a man of action, and so now he stood facing the gate and was energetically banging at the door. Because nobody opened him after two minutes, he stepped back and started to look around. Then he noticed the bell or rather what was left of it: two wires protruding from the bell’s case. Without hesitation he approached and connected the two wires, trying thus to make the bell ring. In this very moment the gate was opened, the briskly released door struck the director on the hands. His hand holding the wires contacted the cables and each other. A short circuit blew up the fuses in the entire monastery and produced a forceful electric shock which stunned the nervous system of the CEO. The evening the company driver took the CEO’s body back to the city. Mr. Kazio… But that is an entirely different story. (Agnieszka Rosiak)

The CEO took his own life and did so by accident – it happened because he insisted, he would not let go. He would not allow his co-worker the freedom to run away from the corporation, he would not allow himself to ask a few key questions, he would not patiently wait. He acted in accordance with his arrogant self, like in Dorota Dobosz-Bourne’s tale but this time no
outsider suffered, only himself. We do not know what Mr. Kazio did with his freedom, but “that is an entirely different story.”

In all the previous stories the CEO changed when he encountered the spiritual space. Not so in the next story. Here the roles of the changing and the changed are reversed:

The CEO knocked on the door of the monastery…

It was absolutely quiet in the tent; nobody attending the service dared even to grunt more loudly. The priest, after a while and having taken a deep breath, started to read the History of the Firm.

The door was opened by a manager, in this ancient time called abbot, a very kind-hearted old man, and he asked the Director:

“To what do our modest persons owe your visit, my Son?”

And the Director, humble in his greatness, answered thus:

“I wish, Father, for a wisdom that would lead my Firm, my Child to greatness!”…

Here the priest made another pause, raised the index finger to the sky and looked around at the assembled. He stood immobile for a longer while, thus giving the faithful a chance to a better realization of the greatness of the legendary Director, and of His proverbial humbleness. He continued with emphasis and deliberation, accenting the most important words.

…At this dictum the abbot spoke the following words:

“My Son, you have to find it yourself, I cannot help you with it. It is more likely that you could teach me in this matter.”

The old man knew that he was dealing with a great and infinitely wise Man and he foresaw how important role for the whole world the Firm was about to play, because the fame of the Director preceded Him. And he added:
“But there is one thing that I can tell you, my Son, before you leave: let it befall you according to your fate! Thus spoke the Lord. Now go and do what you are called to do!”

“I will, Father, thank you very much!” – responded the Director, as He fiercely believed in Himself and His Firm. And He now knew what His fate was, all thanks to the good-natured old man. His fate was this: power and eminence. He did not know yet what Lord thus spoke, as He did not recall having said anything like that in an Interview or in any of His Holy Books.

And He did what He had resolved, and His greatness He passed on to His Successors. And our Firm survived all so-called nations and states, and all pagan religions. And it filled up the emptiness of our lives, until the day of today.

The priest finished to read, looked around at the assembly anew and all eyes were directed at him. He loved this silence, this look of reverent respect on their faces. Now there is time to make the speech, he thought, and he felt the growing excitement, almost euphoria. He exclaimed:

“And all this took place for real! Exactly in July, eighth year after Registration Day, still in the then called XXI century; that is more than one hundred years ago, long before the Corporate Wars. It is no fiction or legend!”

He waited for the echo of his words to resound and finished in a much softer voice, and very briefly, in accordance with the maxim: the best speech is one that has the beginning and the end as close to each other as possible:

“I leave you, my dear faithful employees, with a reflection for tonight. Consider in your hearts how much the Firm gives you. If you are not happy it is the result of the lack of faith in the Firm and the Successor, and nothing else! Goodnight! I await you tomorrow morning for the reading of the Holy Book of Motivation. (Przemek Piatkowski)
This strange, indeed, this perverse story, tells of a dramatic change resulting from the meeting of the spiritual and the organizational domains which is the opposite of what all the other stories saw as the outcome. This is a deconstructive story: the opening line turns out to be a quotation from a holy book which in the story is a holy book written by managers for the sake of motivation and productivity boost, but also to achieve a sort of uncanny moral edification. The spiritual is but a tool of the organizational, and this dystopia, placed in the future, is depicted as somehow deriving from the meeting between the CEO and the monk that once had taken place.

An anonymous author produces another take of dramatic change where it is the spiritual space that takes in something vital from the organizational space and gets transformed. The tale can be read as a rather typical “turn-around-management case” – but for the ending… however, let's start from the beginning:

The CEO knocked on the door of the monastery. He was not just any CEO. He had been hired though the best head hunting agency in the country. Neither was it any monastery. It was since long famous for its activities: the monks grew herbs in their gardens that they used to heal people living in the neighborhood for symbolic fees.

The reason for the visit was special, too. A regulation had been issued which forbade selling products below their market price in the entire province, but the monastery defied this rule and kept selling their products below the costs of production. This they could afford because they were not a company in the legal sense of the term, they did not have to pay fees and they were exempt from taxes. This affected the local entrepreneurs considerably and worried the CEO. He considered the situation and decided that the monastery simply deserved a helping hand from a professional businessman. He hoped that they would pay for the assistance he wanted to offer. He was greeted by the abbot,
who seemed to him a bit backward and not particularly motivated to do new things. The
director tried to explain how he could help and why it was important to manage the business
that the monastery was running. Only when he suggested that he himself was willing to act as
its manager to show them the new ways, the abbot finally agreed. This puzzled him somewhat
but they shook hands on the deal. But the business was far from what he had expected:

What he saw differed much from what he had imagined cultivation of herbs would
look like. The grass and the bushes were waist high and they took up almost the
entire area of the garden. There were a few unkempt narrow paths visible and below
the monastery wall there grew old fruit trees. In a decrepit shed there stood a few
hoes, a spade and a rake, and a few baskets where herbs were left to dry.

He was terrified and regretted his promise bitterly. He considered escaping for a while but
decided against it, after all, he was a Catholic and was it not a major sin to deceive an abbot
like this? This is not gonna work – he fretted. Work, he considered. Work is what they all
seem to be hating around here. But… hello, maybe there was a solution to the problem after
all! He proposed to the abbot to get rid of the business altogether and instead open the
gardens to the tourists for a small pay.

The abbot was pleased. The monks did not have to work at all. And the tickets
brought them a nice income.

And so the CEO out of laziness and cowardice made a decision that made everyone
happy. (Anonymous)

In this story everything is transported to the well known corporate space. The monastery is a
kind of an organization, even one producing goods, thus acting on the market. The actors are
talk and behave in a way that would not be too outlandish in a management textbook. But the
end is clearly different: an ironic step away from the genre, a wink. The terrific results of the
turnaround were not due to knowledge and managerial virtues as they usually are attributed in textbook cases. They came about because of the protagonists' cowardice and sloth.

6.7. Tales of Sharing

The protagonists are depicted as equal, meeting and exchanging values important to each other in the story by Jakub Mazurkiewicz. In order to communicate, they leave their territories, they deterritorialize, before such the meeting can be complete. They do so in a way that does not exclude their respective spatial characteristics, however projected as character traits:

The CEO knocked on the door of the monastery. He stood still and in his thoughts the entire journey replayed itself. He did not know why he ended up here. He stood and waited and the waiting seemed like eternity. He reflected, and in his conscience he was leading a struggle: whether to stay or to leave.

Knocking on the door of the monastery was to the CEO like crossing the boundaries of the physical world. Like passing through to the other side of the mirror, where it is possible to see one’s own life.

The CEO stood and waited. After a few moments the door was opened and he saw a monk standing in the doorway. Now both stand and look, considering each other. The monk is open-minded and generous and he considers the other because he wonders why he is here. The CEO knew where he was going, but is uncertain if he is able to cross the gates of heaven. They stay and look at each other. One is dressed in an expensive suit, the other in rags. One is cleanly shaved and he smells good, and the other has a ragged beard and is devoid of worldly charm.

Each of them wanted to speak first, each wanted to utter the first sentence – the welcoming of the guest on the side of the host, and the request for support on the
side on the guest. The stand and look at each other. You, the reader, sit and read and think why I compel the guest to wait for such a long time.

Many years ago there were two small boys playing in a village. They ran around in the green fields, in the forests. They tended the flocks of cattle; they smashed the clay pots drying on the neighbor's fence. One day the flood came and the two boys were separated. One was carried away with the current and the other stayed to save the belongings. The one carried away by the flood was imprudent, he let the current take him. The other brother was able to assess the limits of his abilities and skills. The water took them apart. It turned out that both lead different kinds of life. The fate so wanted and so now they stand facing each other in the doorway of the monastery: the one who got lost and the one who came to find himself and his friend.

They stand and they look. It is obvious that the newcomer does not intend to tour the monastery. He has come to find his way in life. They had lost it somewhere, when he was gaining the world. The monk welcomes the guest to come inside and takes him for a tour. Imagine how this world, for so long closed to the visitor and of which he knew so little now becomes paradise, paradise for the eyes and the soul.

The path leading from the gates is heading gently downwards, straight into a small vestibule, from which you can exit into the courtyard or upstairs to the chambers. The ground is paved with old cobblestones, the walls are made of red brick, and here and there the plaster is flaking. It is visible that this place wants to keep its old appearance, but the tooth of time is damaging the walls. The monk leads the visitor by the path that reaches the courtyard; from where a wall covered with creepers is visible from the one side and the entrance to the chapel from the other. It is small and just one of its windows is discernible. The stained glass window is quite nice, but the visitor is not impressed. The impressive courtyard now faces him. The grass is beautiful grass. The sun caressing it produces a magnificent view. In the distance there are buildings and temples. You can see monks, walking and reading. They cross the courtyard side by side. They pass by a granary and the aisle of a shed under construction. The chapel seen from the left is much bigger and more dignified.
The gaze of the guest, however, escapes further to the end of the green flowery field, on which they tread. They arrive at the walls demarcating the boundary. You can see cliffs and an abyss below. A plum thrown down falls and falls.

The visitor now knows that he had not seen miracles for such a long time, and he mistook miracles for the life’s enjoyments.

The sat down side by side on the edge of a cliff overlooking Tuscany and started to talk.

It is not a place and time to quote all the words uttered all the gestures that expressed their feelings, their tears, and their embraces. They talked and what I managed to hear from their conversation, while I was sitting in apparent contemplation close by, was just some implorations, some promises. One of them was under the pressure of the mundane world. He was busy gaining status and power and did not notice that the everyday life cannot be limited just to the acquisition of goods. He had believed in the infallibility of his position and the power of his authority that he had forgotten about his family and destroyed what was sublime in him. Love and joy was rejected in favor of the mammon. He had come here to seek comfort and forgiveness, his own forgiveness for his materialistic accomplishments. But it was evident that the visitor was a courageous man.

The other, the monk, was sensitive and fragile but aware of the importance of values and full of love for the fellow human.

The sat and talked. The guest wanted to find himself and arrive at reconciliation with his own soul, forgiving himself for his life’s sins. The other wanted to help, but could only do so in the spiritual sphere.

Maybe there is no place for extremes in our contemporary world, even though they have been depicted by so many. Maybe the monk, after the talk with his once lost brother will find the courage and strength to look for the answers in the external world to the questions that he had only reflected on in his soul. Maybe the visitor will find inner peace. It is necessary to try to find heart in what gives the strength to
go on and to find self-confidence. Even brothers of the same mother see the world so
differently. (Jakub Mazurkiewicz)

Both parties have something to offer the other; in fact, they had been divided by accident,
they are related and they need each other. They try to communicate, not too successfully, but
with eagerness and sincerity. The directions they went in are accidental and their points of
view are derivative of these accidents. It is obvious that they need to talk and they seem to
want to do just that. However, it will not be easy and the outcome is unknown.

The next story is written originally in English by Mihaela Kelemen, who knew about the fates
of the wandering monk from a previous paper I have written. Here the CEO is a woman.

   The CEO knocked on the door of the monastery. A young monk opened the door
   and invited her in:

   The monk: we had been expecting you. How was your trip?

   The CEO: very nice, thank you. It was quite easy to locate you on the map. You
   are not as hidden as you think.

   The monk: the chief monk is waiting for you in the praying room. I’ll take you
   there: follow me, please.

   The CEO was surprised to see so much order and efficiency in the monastery. She
   said hello to the chief monk, who was a man in his forties. His face was serene and
   welcoming.

   The chief monk: I am glad you are returning my visit. I hope we can be of use to
   you: we’ve certainly benefited a great deal from your expert advice.

   The CEO: that is good to know.

   The chief monk: yes, we’ve implemented most of your recommendations: we now
   have a formal monastery chart with clear lines of command and control. All my
people have written their job descriptions and seem quite happy with the clarity brought about by this exercise. There are less quarrels and more co-operation between them. We’ve even set up two quality circles to improve the way we work together and our involvement with the community. So, as you see, all good stuff.

The CEO: I am afraid, we have the opposite problem: there are too many lines of command, too many teams and improvement projects and my people are becoming very dissatisfied with the way day-to-day business is conducted. I was hoping we could come and spend a week at the monastery to meditate on what is important to us as individuals and as a business. You know, to look for some meaning in this meaningless life. Do you think you could help?

The chief monk: That will be no problem: we have plenty of accommodation in the old building at the back and the forest is next by. It is all yours. I’ll set up a plan and a coordinating team to take care of the catering, cleaning and the organization of meditation sessions for your staff. If we want this to work, we have to plan and organize it carefully. I’ll send you the budget and we can talk about costs over the phone.

The CEO thanked the Chief Monk and left the monastery. She had a busy day ahead of her. But for some reason, she felt dissatisfied with the meeting even though she got what she wanted from the Chief Monk. Oh well, time to go back to the real world, she said to herself and ask the driver to take her back to the city.

(Mihaela Kelemen)

The spaces communicate and share in the above story; they have something to offer each other, even though the communication is not perfect. The CEO, representative for the corporate space, would wish for something more that she is given, something deeper, more real. The monk is satisfied with what the organizational space gives him and accepts it without a second thought. Ironically, it is indeed the CEO who is the more spiritual of those two. She is the sincere, questing one. She is not satisfied with appearances, even if she cannot
put a finger on what it is that bothers her. The story has run full circle and is about to be deconstructed in this tale.

6.8. From imaginary land to site of exchange

The reversal of the roles and the de- and reterritorialization of the main protagonists of the former story collection was a somewhat deconstructive strategy. The CEO lost his embeddedness in the striated corporate space – I have made him move. The monk was surrounded by a solid monastery, becoming less a representative of smooth spiritual space and more a member of a striated organizational space. However, they have kept their basic identity and the initial situation in which they were posed was no less filled with tension than the one in the former story collection. The authors felt compelled to give a good reason why the two met this way. The CEO always has a good reason for knocking on the monastery's door, sometimes a preposterous one.

To tell the story of how I read the stories, I will first compare them to the earlier ones. Then I will address the plots (what the meeting produces), the narrative paths leading to the conclusion (the reasons why the protagonists met), and finally, the role of spatiality. I will take up spatiality last and not first, as I did with the former story collection, because of the reversed character of the narratives. Space will be analyzed as an outcome, not the assumption – I will consider the new qualities the reversal itself highlights.

The first thing that strikes me when I read the new batch of stories as compared with the old is, as I have already pointed out, the striated quality of the world spiritual protagonists inhabit. The monks acquire now an affiliation more clearly than in the previous batch. They are usually Catholic, except in one story, where they are depicted as Buddhists. Even so, in
many of the stories they express spirituality rather than organized religion. An affiliation has
usually not changed their aura. In some stories the organized monks are not very spiritual, but
neither was always the lonely wandering monk depicted as a true mystic.

The CEO is a determined, daring character. Sometimes he is reckless, sometimes cruel.
However, she is always active. The mobile CEO is similar to but also different from the
mobile monk from the former stories. They both tend to have a mission, but the CEO is much
more dynamic and proactive than the wandering monk. While the monk was often reflexive,
only sometimes spirited, the CEO is almost always strong-minded and at times even obsessed.
The monastery in the present tales is similar to what is appeared like, when it appeared, in the
former stories: somewhat old-fashioned (but not always), a good place to meditate, full of
silence, a bit solemn. The corporation does not come into view in the current stories. It is only
hinted at in the background as a place to feel from or come back to. In one story it is reflected
in the spiritual space, but as it is revealed it changes its meaning. In one story (by Przemek
Piatkowski) the monastery and the corporate quarters are the same, because the spaces had
merged. The prayers are part of business and business is made in tents, more suitable for
religious meetings. The two spheres had appropriated are ironically bent each others' symbolisms
and the resulting amalgam is a parody of them both.

The question of where the story leads, or the outcome of the plot is another one I want to
reflect upon. As in the previous set of stories, some narratives present a failure of the
protagonists and spaces to meet. However, here the intention to meet the Other is not only
mentioned but in many cases emphasized. The director sincerely wants to change his life in
the first story. He can see the monastery, and he can see the monk. His problem is different
from the managers' in the first batch of stories – it lies not in blindness but in impotence. He
wants to help but does not know how. In Hervé Corvellec's tale the CEO is not only willing but very determined. His vision is perhaps quite good; once again, it's a kind of impotence that hinders him from encountering the spiritual space. He cannot accept an invitation. The third story states the impotence even more dramatically: here all the conditions for a meeting are present; the protagonist has to withdraw because he is unable to accept happiness and change. The last story is an opening. As much as the hero was unable to see spirituality or even his wife who had left him in the past, and now he has now encountered her. An accident has led to the meeting but he might now be ready to cross the line.

In some of the stories the meeting between the spaces in not an actual encounter. The spiritual space can be more of a dream space, a place where maladjusted people go when they cannot or do not want to face reality. It might be benevolent or evil but it is out of touch with reality. The second plot which does not lead to an actual encounter is similar to what I have before called Tales of merger. The two spaces merge and the produce turns out as a different space. In the reverse journey stories the effect of the merger is even more muddled than in the previous set of stories. I cannot help but referring to them – as at least one of the current authors, Dariusz Jemielniak, who has composed a deliberately intertextual narrative. The protagonists appear dislocated and dissipating. They also do so, although to a lesser extent, in the story by Jakub Zdybel. They do not belong in either of the two spaces, they are so deeply uprooted that they do not even quite belong in the narrative space, where the characters of the Tales of Merger felt at home. Perhaps the horror story is, paradoxically the most welcoming genre space, even though the heroes are lost and scared. At least, their sense of being lost and scared belongs in the genre.
Some tales depict a sort of a conflict – I have called them tales of rejection this time because here they do not fail to meet like in the Tales of Clash, but do in fact bump into each other and then one consciously rejects the other. The space actively rejecting the other is the spiritual. Sometimes it does so because the CEO is an intruder. The nuns want to be left alone; they do not want a man interrupting their privacy. In another story, which by the way bears the characteristics of a fantasy setting, the monk, seeing through the CEO bars him from entering – his motives are not entirely sincere. It is not a story of dislocation; here the characters are well at home within the setting as well as in the plot. They have good reasons for how they act and they are realistic. The CEO wants – the monk rejects. Who is the most fantastic one? The elfish monk or the manager who thinks he can get away with wanting it all at once?

The next group of stories, which I have called Tales of Transformation, tell about a very consequential meeting of the two spaces. In Aneta Milczarczyk's story the director goes through a profound personal transformation which is not a characteristic of the space as such – once made, he is able to move on, return back home. Izabela Dembicka's protagonist returns home, too, with the very same sense of personal revolution. The third and the fourth tale lead to the same effect even though the path is much more difficult. In Artur Michalski's story the monastery as such cannot offer transcendence, the CEO must look for it further. Finally he finds it in lonely meditation, only to understand that enlightenment is omnipresent and not at all restricted to religious spaces. In Dorota Dobosz-Bourne's tale the path to enlightenment leads through violence and death. Change does not necessarily mean awakening – it may be a change in a very physical sense – as in Agnieszka Rosiak's story the setting changes as the hero is physically removed from the scene. He is intruding, forcing himself upon the
surroundings. By his ill-advised insistence he accidentally takes his own life. As a reader of this story I experienced a kind of a Shadenfreude – now finally there was quiet again. Nobody will disturb the peace or bully poor Mr. Kazio into working for the reckless boss. Instant karma? An annoyed guardian angel? Whatever or whoever it was, it worked as a means of liberation – this time. The last two stories of this type are different. Przemek Piatkowski's take is the most provocative one. The roles of the changer and the changed turn around. The spiritual dimension had somehow taken over the mundane but then turned into the mundane. The holy marketing function, the sacred book of PR… The employees are trapped in an Orwellian future where enlightenment is sought through recitation of management principles and salvation is found in a takeover. The last story is plainly a case of strategic turnaround management. The spiritual space needs the corporate space for its survival – in the strategic sense.

The last group of stories, Tales of Sharing depict a profound meeting of the spaces and a change occurring within both of them. In the first tale the characters carry the attributes of their spaces: the monk is more fluid, sensitive, the director is more daring, active, but they are brothers. They had parted in the past, now they meet and talk. It is not a problem that they see the world differently. The story does not say what happened next but as a reader I had a feeling that everything was possible now. Whatever happens, it will concern both of the heroes. Mihaela Kelemen's story, which features the only female CEO, is an account of a continued dialogue between the two spaces. They had already learned some things from each other, they are both relatively open towards one another and the learning process will probably continue. And even though the CEO feels dissatisfied with the conversation with the Chief Monk, I feel relatively comfortable that they will continue to negotiate meanings and
values. Even her reference to returning to the "real world" sounds slightly ironic rather than judgmental. It is she who is the seeker and who seeks shall find.

The most elaborate efforts have been dedicated to the narrative paths: why do the characters meet? Why is the CEO knocking on the monastery's door? The answers are often quite intricate and inventive and they cannot easily be divided into those leading to a positive outcome (spaces meet) and to a negative one (spaces fail to meet). Sometimes the reason behind the CEO's movement is determination to change and find a spiritual life. In some narratives it leads to a success. In others – not so. Other reasons include a desire to help someone else or to prevent someone from making their own choices. Death and violence are not rare events. Sometimes they are the reason behind the CEOs movement and sometimes they are the result. In the dislocation stories the movement is not only dislocated territorially but also narratively. There are no logical reasons why the CEO moved – or they are so improbable that the whole tale is moved into the realm of the fantastic. In other stories the spaces meet by accident. In a few the meeting is a result of a previous agreement. The agreement in question had to do with preceding encounters, which usually were some kind of business agreements.

The next question concerns the issue of spatiality in this batch of tales. The monastery is a stationary space, it is solid and steady. It reminds of the corporate HQ from the former batch of stories, but not quite: the HQ was usually implicitly a visible place and the monastery is typically described as an explicitly secluded or even hidden place.

What role does space play in the narratives? The first answer that comes to mind is that it still is the medium of communication. Whenever the protagonists move in space, they are better able to see, hear and make important insights. The two brothers take a walk and talk, the CEO
find enlightenment under a tree after some considerable moving around etc. Generally, in this batch of stories the organizational protagonist is spatially mobile and thus much more actively questing. What he seeks can be found although not always in the monastery. In order to find it the CEO often has to go further than the stationary space of the order. In this batch the spiritual space is more organized and more striated than in the former, however, it is not enclosed and the actors are often free to move beyond the confines of the monastery. In one story (Izabela Dembicka's) the spiritual space is a kind of mirror space reflecting back the realm of organization but in an altered way, with a kind of insight and, indeed, reflection added.

In most stories the spatiality of the two spheres preserved and the protagonists are carriers of their respective symbols and energy vectors. Only a few tales (Tales of Dislocation) are completely deterritorialized and some (Tales of Escapism) are reterritorialized: the spiritual and the organizational space are translated into fantasy spaces.

Through a deconstruction of the spatial characteristics of spirituality and organizing, we have thus achieved a re-embeddedment, a re-invention of the two spaces. They are rarely reconstructed as each others' opposites, the dichotomy is now gone. What we see instead is a beginning of a synthesis. To see what (spatial) shape it takes when reflected upon further, I will present more stories in the next two chapters: now using some of the spiritual portals that have been discussed in the second chapter. Portals are like doors in the spatial sense: through the use of them we will be able to venture further into the emerging spiritual-organizational space.

As a last thought, I would like to address the question, why have I chosen a CEO for the main protagonist of those stories. Some people wondered why not a middle manager or perhaps just
an employee. That would correspond better to the former batch of stories, where a monk was
the main hero. However, we do not know if the monk was a person of high rank or not – it
was up to the authors to decide. Some chose to see a simple monk in him, while others
described him as a monk of some hierarchical importance. I needed to present the monk in a
way as free as possible from any striated qualities: no definition of status, class, order was
implied in the opening line. The only strong social institution that I let be part of the initial
presentation was gender, but I did not see a way of bypassing that linguistically. In the second
batch of stories I wanted free the organizational character from her striated space but I did not
want to deconstruct her identity completely. I wished her to carry some important
organizational attributes and so I made her the most powerful corporate actor – the CEO. She
could use that power to make change effectively possible – or to obstruct her path towards
change. The stakes were supposed to be higher and the energies – different than before. Also,
I did not want to achieve a simple reversal of the narratives but a reterritorialization of a
slightly different order. And so the stories turned out: not an account of changing places or a
masquerade but taken together a kind of a synthesis of what it means for a relatively striated
and a relatively smooth space to meet.
7. And then there was silence

7.1. The third story collection

My next question concerned some of the spiritual portals I have mentioned in the first chapter: silence and freedom. Silence was moreover one of the main attributes of the spiritual space, as they were depicted by authors in the first batch of stories, when transferred to the organizational domain. I thus initiated another round of story collection. Again, I asked friends, colleagues and students via email and some of students during class to write stories. At this point, however, I chose to let a new category of authors dominate: students of two of my colleagues. I have never met those students and they have never met me.

The authors received an opening line: In the big conference room all the assembled employees fell silent ... and the same instructions as in the previous collections. Some arrived in Polish and some in English and I am responsible for all the translations. I have gathered 17 stories this time.

I will now present the stories according to the role silence have been given in the narratives, or what kind of a narrative device it is used as.

7.2. Silence? Impossible My Dear

One of the stories presents the whole occurrence as completely unreal. Its anonymous author, a student whom a colleague of mine asked to write the story in class, moves it all into a bizarre space where odd things happen and everything is absurd. Because of the general weirdness the CEO, the corporate surroundings, and the silence have a place, just like all the other elements haphazardly plotted together.
In the big conference room all the assembled employees fell silent. Ms Kendyævetoed the proposal again. This turned out to be the last straw. The CEO took out a “small handy gun” from under his jacket and shot a few shots in her direction. [...] Terror hung in the air. Tick-tack-tick-tock, the clock sizzled and winked perversely. (Anonymous)

And so on… Children’s books in crocodile skin, managers looking for truth, exaggerated emotional responses, all this belong together with silence in the conference room. It is a chaos, a primordial soup of meaningless words but an ultimately unreal one. No substance will spring out of it: it is just a story, and it goes on forever.

7.3. A Slight Disturbance Takes Place

In most of the stories I have collected from students silence is a prelude to a minor disturbance in routine, a temporary and well rationalized disruption. The narratives were gathered by one of my colleagues during the first phase of the 2002 FIFA World Cup. Many football fans in Poland had high hopes and believed in the national team’s chances to win, maybe not the entire cup but at least a few matches. All of these stories begin with silence meaning surprise – the employees are surprised to see their boss dressed in an unusual way:

It was strange that the CEO, instead of in an elegant suit, was dressed in a loose-fitting red and white costume. (Marek Graniszewski)

The boss, who was a tyrant and despot, did something that none of the employees expected from him, especially those who had to deal with him on everyday basis. It was June 4th 2002, twenty five minutes past one p.m. The “tyrant” appeared on the meeting dressed in a red and white cap, and a matching scarf in the national colors. (Remigiusz Traczyk)
In the big conference room all the assembled employees fell silent when they saw that their CEO had come to work wearing a new dazzling hairstyle. The hairstyle was indeed unusual: the color of his hair was really impossible to describe, his hair was read and white. His cheeks were still marked by the remains of not entirely successfully wiped out red and white flags. (Mariola Nowakowska)

The change in the boss’s appearance is described as causing shock among the subordinates who were used to him looking strict, being a tyrant or just being formal. In one story they became

speechless when they saw their CEO, they would never expected of him – always so responsible, strict, well organized, attaching a great importance to dress, and now, just look at him! (Mariola Nowakowska)

Then the stories rapidly go on to explain the cause for this change: it is due to the football cup. The boss is a fan of football and encourages the employees to be as enthusiastic as he is:

“And what are you doing here? It’s 13:30! The person who’s not in the canteen in one minute will have his bonus cut!” (Marek Greniszewski)

The Polish national team gets to win in all the stories, people become overjoyed and life goes back to the strictly normal again:

Nonetheless, the CEO now stood, watching the cheerful employees, waited until all calm down and said: “Well, now we have to do the scheduled job.” (Leszek Mariusz)

Only in one case

The party lasted a bit long and so the meeting about the merger had to be rescheduled to the next day. (Marek Greniszewski)

In another the event was used as an irresistible tool to persuade the employees to work extra hours:

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The first half ended with the result 2:2. And here another surprise took place. The projector was turned off during the break and the boss took off his cap and scarf and started the meeting as if everything was just as normal. He started to describe the main problems. The enthusiastic employees were stunned by this brutal, merciless action. (Remigiusz Tkaczyk)

It turns out that the strategy worked well:

All the employees agreed to working the whole coming weekend without extra pay in return for the possibility to watch the second half of the match. […] Was it ethical? Perhaps not, but having such an ace up his sleeve, who would withhold from using it? (Remigiusz Traczyk)

Katarzyna Pinkiewicz tells another story of minor disturbance. The boss appears looking “strange” before the assembled employees but he has a different explanation for his “change:”

In the big conference room all the assembled employees fell silent… the boss that they all hated, a soulless miser, so much stood there right in front of them with a blush on his face. He, usually a man of fashion, with his suit all buttoned up, was wearing shorts and a T-shirt with a design of Hawaiian palms. (Katarzyna Pinkiewicz)

Everyone was stunned:

Everyone was looking for a rational explanation. April’s fools? A sunstroke? A miracle…?

The reason was much more prosaic. During the mother in law’s birthday party, where much alcohol was flowing, the CEO, without thinking of the consequences, accepted the bet that his failure of a brother in law made. […] And what exactly would he have to do now, in order to regain but a small percentage of his image of the “boss-tyrant”? (Katarzyna Pinkiewicz)
The protagonist realizes that the consequences of this event can be lasting and perhaps more serious than he was ever willing to face up to. Even so, it is far from certain that any change will take place. More probably, he will continue pondering what should be done in order to undo what has been done. Given his determination, I think he will succeed. Differently, in Mariola Nowakowska’s football story the disruption caused by the match can be an opportunity to consider some changes – even though these changes are quantitative, not qualitative: the employees are offered a bit more of what they have just received. The story ends thus:

The boss started to realize that he is perceived by his employees as a rigid person. So, at the end of the meeting, he proposed that in a week everybody can take a break during work and watch the world championships in football, because then Poland will be playing against France. (Mariola Nowakowska)

7.4. A Sudden Shift

Some of the stories among the ones collected in class and those I received by email, suggest that the silence was a prelude to some significant change, albeit one that remains in full congruence with the ways things used to work in the corporation. The change is but quantitative, a leap in the same general direction even if the consequences may be now serious. In Ewiaslaw Barawiecki’s story they definitely will, and the surprise of the assembled people is fully understandable but no paradigm shift is imminent:

In the big conference room all the assembled employees fell silent. All were expecting the worst. Everybody thought that what the main stockholder, Gordon G. will have to say, will be a shock. They were right. He started to talk. […]

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The speaker invoked American history and ambitions, emphasizing how they used to be grand but how they have fallen into triviality. He spoke of money but explained how money only was instrumental. Finally, he proclaimed:

“Yes, greed, which has once has built America and now will make America to stand up on its feet again.”

A racket began and the noise grew louder and louder. Everyone was impressed by G’s speech, all wanted to congratulate him. G. triumphed. (Œwiatos³aw Barawiecki)¹¹

In Beata Szubartowska’s story the person speaking out of line and being met by surprised silence is not a wealthy boss but an innocent young assistant, who comes up with a thrilling new idea for how to improve the company strategy.

The young man’s vision met with considerable recognition from the conference participants. The trainees system was introduced, and the trainee himself was given a well-paid position in the strategy department. The aim was achieved in two ways: on the one hand it gave the young man the chance to achieve self-actualization, and on the other, it cured the firm. (Beata Szubartowska)

And so they lived happily ever after, is one tempted to add. Katarzyna Niewczas tells another cozy success story where the initial silence meant joy, the crowing of many years hard work with success.

In the big conference room all the assembled employees fell silent. All these years of hard work did not amount to nothing after all. The problem of AIDS has been with us for such a long time and all the attempts to solve it had not been able to bring effective results. Now the boss of the research institute declared that it’s very

¹¹This is a scene from the film “Wall Street” by Oliver Stone in which Michael Douglas as G.G. makes a speech. I have narrated the abbreviated version. [ŒB]
probable that the last research has resulted in the discovery of the chemical formula of antibodies to HIV.

The speaker was overjoyed but at the same time scared of his success. All those present sat in silence,

only here and there you could hear single murmurs and voices. After a while of disbelief everybody stood up and started to clap hands. The boss got a standing ovation and this is just the beginning! (Katarzyna Niewczas)

Perseverance is rewarded with success and glory, and the person who gets the credit is the boss. That too was to be expected. No transformation of spirit is imminent. Similarly, in another story by an anonymous author the silence that occurred signaled shock. The problems caused by the undertaken actions may be serious. However, the hero acted as he did because that was something expected of him, even if by a stroke of bad luck the results were disastrous instead of serving common enjoyment.

In the big conference room all the assembled employees fell silent. Nobody knew what would happen in a moment. The joke that they had invented for the CEO’s birthday had taken an unexpected turn. And it was supposed to be so much fun! Mr. Joseph K. woke up early this morning, in a good mood. (Anonymous)

He had prepared a surprise for his boss's anniversary. He had hired "exotic dancers" from an escort firm who would, at a crucial moment, jump out of a giant birthday cake.

The party began. Mr. CEO sat down on a truly kingly throne, all the staff surrounds him, presents, congratulations and… time for the show. The lights grew dim and three huge cream cakes were pulled into the room. One from the staff, one from friends and one was a special price for persistence. The sounds of drums and bam! Three ladies jumped out of the cakes. What a surprise the CEO had! The first was his daughter, the second – his wife and the third was his mother in law! The entire
room froze. The CEO grew red in his face and fell down to the floor. Yes, this birthday is definitely going to become a historical date.

PS. The CEO survived… (Anonymous)

The story is a depressing one for me to read, for a few reasons, none of them being empathy with the hero named after Kafka’s famous central character. The company seems to be a place where the criteria for fun and enjoyment are quite different from my own, where sense of humor seems to have a meaning alien to me. The employees are expected to arrange a big gala to honor of the boss’s birthday, which to me looks like fawning more at place at a baroque court than a modern work place. The idea to cheer the boss up with a performance of escort girls is somewhat strange. But then the ending where some of the escorts appear to be relatives of the boss, is equally strange. What more, it is completely in line with the rest of the tale and even if I understand that the boss was shocked, I as a reader was not. After all, was it not only logical?

In Anna Tomasiak’s story the employees are shocked and perhaps even stunned by the news, maybe this is the beginning of a waking up experience to them, but the turn of plot leaves me almost as unperplexed as the former one.

In the big conference room all the assembled employees fell silent… when they heard that their company is going to be liquidated and this means, of course, layoffs. The reason for this was a financial scandal. The CEO of the company had embezzled an enormous amount of money and this has lead the firm to a slow bankruptcy. […] The employees had heard various rumors about this issue, but they did not want to believe them to the very end. The CEO? This honest, nice man? It’s impossible! – you could hear in the corridors. […]
The CEO had left a suicide note in which he supplied names and addresses of people who had directed him, and these are not ordinary, average people… Nobody would have expected that of them. (Anna Tomasiak)

Well, I would, for one and I can’t see why some of my readers wouldn't?

All of the above stories were written by authors I do not know. The next one is written by a good friend. Dorota Dobosz depicts silence as a sign of shock and dismay. Here the events are dire and unexpected for some of the protagonists (and for me).

All the employees gathered in the big conference room fell silent. In the silence that befell the sound of a cup breaking, a door slamming and her heel clattering resonate in his ears like a merciless drill. His head was spinning, the room suddenly grew stuffy and everybody was staring at him with idiotically held back smiles on their faces. If only someone said something! The tension and the irony in their eyes were unbearable.

Then Andrzej spoke up:

“I suggest that we end this meeting tomorrow at 2 p.m. Thank you all. Paweł, please stay for a moment.”

When the door closed behind the last person Andrzej moved his chair closer to Paweł and said, in his usual calm and composed manner:

“I should have fired you now. But you’re a good professional. You will stay but remember, it is thanks to me that you are allowed to be here. I will expect you to pay me back this favor sometime.

If somebody told him, perhaps a fortune teller, as much as two months ago that his work, his marriage and his reputation can fall into pieces, he would have laughed out loud in his face. He was the best expert in his area in the country, well respected and well known nationally as well as internationally. His bosses have a high opinion of him, his friends like him a lot, women always seem to try to pick him up even
though his wedding ring is well visible on his finger. His personal life until now is exemplary. His wife, Joanna, a spirited person, professionally active and very attractive was the epitome of what any man could desire. His friends envied him and he knew it. And everything would have stayed that way if not for this cursed business trip to Paris.

Already in the plane he felt something in Jola’s was of looking at him and talking to him that he had never noticed before. Of course, Jola was a professional. She would never allow herself to flirt in the office. But when they sat on the plane together in the comfortable business class seats, when they drank their drinks and joked together, Jola seemed to him somehow different than ever before. He did not remember how exactly it happened but they came to their senses only on the next morning. He remembered lots of alcohol drunk on the plane, and later in the night club. He also remembered Jola’s underwear, extremely sexy, which was so wonderful to tear on her suntanned body. He also remembered the amazing sex they had. Yes, the sex. But here something was wrong somehow. Something was weird, but he could not recall why exactly this wild and fantastic evening ended with such a row and, ouch!, here he touched his still aching cheek, a blue eye and half of his face swollen. Whatever possessed her? Maybe she got mad? Maybe she drank too much?

Of course, it was impossible to attend the conference with such a face. He changed his ticket booking and went back to Warsaw. He decided to tell his wife some story about a robber and a dark street.

The moment he entered his house he felt something was amiss. Even before switching on the lights he felt the emptiness. The house was big, true enough, but he had never heard such an echo before. He turned on the light. Strange, empty corners. No trace of the furniture, all the things so strangely absent. Only vast shining floors.

“What the hell is this?” he thought and he felt as if something was grabbing his throat.
He called all his friends; nobody knew anything, or they did not answer. After a sleepless night spent on a bit of a blanket left in one of the corners he went to work. Jola still was not there. Good, at least he won’t have to face this one.

He told his friends the story about the robber, the assault and his brave self-defense. “What about Jola?” “Aaah, no, she was in her room then, at the hotel.”

All the time he felt as if he was walking through a tunnel in the mist. But he walked on, performing all his duties. And so he arrived in the conference room for the meeting with the shareholders. He now regretted that he did not jump out of the window before he entered.

The meeting itself went fairly well, he even succeeded in saving his ass after that letdown of TKK Poland, when suddenly, *she* came in. She opened the door with such a thud that they banged against the wall and some of the plaster fell off. A man dressed in a suit stood behind her. And Jola! Jola, absolutely serious and strangely satisfied, but calm.

“I always knew that you were a bastard, a jerk and that you run after women like a dog! But that you’re a pervert and sado-masochist – that’s going too far! Here, sign this immediately! Now, when everyone can see you! And this is, let me introduce you gentlemen: this is my husband, and this, my lawyer.”

Joanna’s eyes glittered, with anger or with regret. He didn’t know. But all that could be heard in her voice was anger. And hate. And satisfaction as she said:

“I gathered you know Ms Jola already. I don’t need to introduce you, I gather? You know each other since long and you’ll meet in court during a lawsuit I am bringing against you, you rapist and sadist! The signed documents you are to hand over to my lawyer, and here is the business card. See you in court!”

She turned around so vigorously that she knocked off a cup standing on the table, which fell and broke to pieces on the floor with a sound accompanying the blast of
the door which slammed closed. All the employees gathered in the big conference room fell silent. (Dorota Dobosz)

The shock and the shame, the disgrace, the magnitude of the betrayal, all merged together in a moment of stunned silence. The main protagonist was completely unprepared for the course the events took. So were all the others – the bafflement was genuine. The disruption takes on a shattering scale, not just tastes or attitudes will be moved, but whole lives. The organization will probably not change, though. And there is no certainty the main hero will, either. He may continue to live just as he had before, but perhaps driven by other motives, such as revenge or self-pity. But it is also possible that he will use the silence to breathe in, then throw all the papers on the floor, say goodbye and sail away to an entirely different life, as a teacher, a writer, maybe a holy man? Who knows…

7.5. Here Comes the Revolution…

There are stories where the silence was a sign of a radical change, not just in quantity, but in a qualitative way. Life then totally changed, in a way defying the old logic. Neither consciously nor unconsciously did the protagonists work towards this end. It just happened. Przemek Pi¹tkowski, a student then writing his master’s thesis under my supervision, tells a tale of unintended chaos resulting from a normal organizational practice:

All the employees gathered in the big conference room fell silent and grew perfectly still, but only after a short while heads started to lean against each other, and whispers and comments could be heard from all directions. “He just lost it a bit, that can happen to anyone!” someone said, but the majority was much less tolerant. A bald fellow gasped: “What a gaffe! To say so before everyone! Was he bitten by some insect behind the desk top or what?” Someone else, somewhere in the last rows, had already come up with an entire theory: “He’s Italian, you know, maybe he
wanted to say curve\textsuperscript{12}. It’s impossible, you know, impossible that he just…” He shut up, silenced by a choir of muffled laughs.

But the situation still remained unexplained. The speaker continued to present the company's strategy as if nothing had happened. Then he repeated the same faux pas again, this time in clear and obvious Polish. At the same time the speaker calmly presented a new product: a high tech optical projector. Then, suddenly,

a woman came in through the wall. Her look made everyone present stunned with amazement: she was thin, tall, she wore a long black skirt and a white shirt, a delicate face with aristocratic features of classical beauty, very short black hair and… pointed ears! She looked as if taken directly from some book by Tolkien or from Scandinavian mythology. And that was more than enough for the audience.

The newcomer who was obviously an elf threw a glass of water in the face of the speaker and when it failed to soak him, it became clear that all this had been a part of a performance:

“This is the new product! The projector!” the bald fellow yelled and laughed hard “what a lark!” Most people however did not enjoy the way the product was presented […].

It so happened that the whole event was observed through a key hole by a journalist. The article appeared before anyone had a chance to straighten it all out, and the stock exchange reacted… The corporation avoided bankruptcy by the skin of their teeth. (Przemek Pi\'tkowski)

The organization did not end its existence but the bang must have been indeed a big one. Did it change the people involved to any significant degree? I think it did, even if the change is far from certain and its direction is unclear to me. The people present at the presentation have definitely been exposed to something strange and maybe even unnatural happening. While

\textsuperscript{12} In Polish „kurwa” is a seriously offensive swearword (meaning whore). Its etymology is however the innocent
some will be able to explain it away more or less swiftly, some will remain affected. The organization as a whole will, too. Andrzej Powierza is another author whom I have never encountered personally. He tells a story where the silence marked another phase of the transition:

All the employees gathered in the big conference room fell silent. During the five years of the company’s existence this room has witnessed many a dramatic scene. […] But none of [them] did make such an impression as the simple sentence just pronounced by the CEO: “I love you!”

These words did not at all fit the cool, severely furnished interior of the conference room, as did not the soft tone of the CEO’s voice, so much different from the one he habitually used.

The interruption itself was nothing put of the ordinary – the CEO was in the habit of doing that during others' speeches. Also his tone and manner were normal. It was just the word: love that did not fit in to the routine in the corporation. The declaration of love was directed at the speaker, a stunning woman with enchanting eyes:

[Her eyes] reflected the whole world, as so each one saw something different in them. […] The platitude saying that the eyes are the mirror of the soul was so very true in her case. (Andrzej Powierza)

She was a person full of empathy, warmth and charm. Men loved her and women did not resent her popularity. Her presence helped the employees achieve a higher productivity rate.

She was an ideal employee and a good person. She had changed them all – and for good.

Some elements in this story approach the supernatural. Marzena is not a living human being, she is devoid of human weaknesses, as well as human drives and vigor. The way she is

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Latin word curvus which means curved.
portrayed resembles a dream of a prepubescent schoolboy: she is extremely good and beautiful, a character from a fairy tale, not from real life. It is impossible for me to imagine her getting up in the morning and preparing her coffee, buying tomatoes or falling in love with a guy she met at a dance party. However, the way the men in the company are depicted, their feeling for her, the attraction she obviously has on them, is far removed from her own lifelessness and dullness. Those men are not just in love with her, they are reborn through her. The whole organization becomes passionate and transformed through her presence. Perhaps she is not a woman after all but an angel, a supernatural being, walking among the employees and radiating a power which cannot be described in everyday terms. They have been changed already, now they are in for something big. What? New ways of living? Perhaps. Maybe. The CEO has taken the challenge, he has spoken the truth that everybody was carrying inside their minds, words that do not belong at a business meeting or in a business organization. He has spoken of feelings, of love, and meant it. Agnieszka Rosiak who is one of my doctoral students, makes an even stronger point of change in conscious thinking.

All the employees gathered in the big conference room fell silent. The CEO was about to speak. But, for some unknown reason, he was silent, too and the attention of everyone present was drawn to a little vibrant bird singing so heavenly outside the windows. […]

The participants of the meeting listened to the unusual concert for some time. Then one of the managers decided to take charge of the lack of discipline that had ensued. With a raised voice he ordered everyone to get back to their places, explaining that they must be mad to let such a trifle to distract them form their task at hand. Then he looked into the CEO’s eyes, awaiting his approval. But much to his surprise it did not come. The CEO ignored him and continued to stand in the window, listening to the bird’s song. He had a radiant smile on his face. […]
Finally, the CEO gathered his wits about him and returned to his seat by the big desk. His head was filled with thoughts that surprised and thrilled him: thoughts of beauty, life, and death. When he started his speech,

    Silence fell in the room. And then it was softly broken by the little bird starting to sing again. The CEO looked up at the employees and said:

    „Let this bird become a symbol…” (Agnieszka Rosiak)

This story borders to the supernatural too, just as the preceding one. However, this time no angelic intervention is necessary, an ordinary little bird marks the shift from routine to a new awareness. Its song makes the people present wake up and concentrate on the present. They become enthralled by the present that appears to them strange and normal at the same time. For who has not been standing in awe of the present moment at times? Almost all people I know have had moments of wonder like this, while hearing a bird sing, or a rock band play, or after having climbed up a mountain, or admiring the view of the city panorama. The magical feature in the narrative is the fact that almost everyone in the conference room was struck by awe simultaneously and the event that triggered it was the same for everyone (well, except for one guy who first recovered from his wonder). They were certainly different people, with different figures of beauty and life experiences. Yet the same external incident seemed to have the same meaning for them all. This is why I read this story as a fairy tale, perhaps a company legend, written ex post after some important change in life view had taken place. The bird is a symbol for that change.
7.6. Business as Usual

In one story (received by email and written by a Swedish author I have never met) silence falls and it is a regular organizational custom.

All the employees gathered in the big conference room fell silent and started to meditate, or at least that was what I had been told that they did. I am a journalist and I had been sent to the fastest growing telecom company in Sweden to write a success story about how they had made their revolutionary in-break in the telecom market. I take my job seriously and had been very well prepared when I met the CEO of the company earlier this morning. I had spent a week trying to understand how their products had driven other companies’ products out of the market. I was armed with intelligent questions when I sat down facing the CEO. He just sat there and looked at me, so incredibly calm, and he started to smile. I was just about to start the interview, when he said quietly:

“We have our morning meditation now. It will last an hour; you can join us if you want to.”

And now I was sitting here, looking curiously around me. I had never meditated before and I did not really know what to do. I decided to take the opportunity to observe this strange act. In my preparatory work, I had found out that there was about 150 people in the company and when I counted them I concluded that all of them seemed to be here. Were no one occupied in sales meetings or other important business? How come that they were all gathered here, doing nothing? I was puzzled, but I was also starting to enjoy the atmosphere in the room. I felt relaxed and calm. In some strange way, I was feeling sleepy and alert at the same time.

Suddenly, there came a soft sound from a bell and the meditation was over. Had an hour passed already? Surprised, I looked up and met the warm smiles from the people who started to leave the room. There were all kinds of people, but they all seemed so, so, so...normal! Finally, there were only me and the CEO left in the
room. He looked at me, but at the same time it was like he was looking through me. He started to smile again, warmly.

“Did you enjoy the meditation?”

I did not answer his question, but could not stop all the questions that were popping up in my head.

“Do you organize a morning meditation every month?” I asked.

“Every morning”, he replied.

“Every morning? But don’t they have more important things to do? Who will run the company when everybody is meditating?”

“What could be more important than meditating?”

As a business journalist I could have stated hundreds of important actions, but suddenly they seemed empty and meaningless. I was silent, but my mind was working hard and I got irritated.

“How can you force people to meditate every morning? Don’t you understand how hard it must be for them to manage everything that they have to do during the day when you steal an hour from them?”

“Firstly, no one has to meditate, it is their free choice. Secondly, they don’t have to do anything during the day, they do what they want.”

Now I was really irritated, did he think I was stupid?

“But of course there are things that they have to do? They are employed for a reason, aren’t they?”

“Of course there is a reason”.

Finally, I got him. I felt a triumphant smile appear on my face, but it disappeared quickly when he continued:
“The reason is that I like them”.

“But no one runs businesses like that,” I stuttered.

“I have never looked upon it as running a business. I make my own inner journey and people who have made a similar decision surround me. The fact that we are in the telecom industry is only a coincidence; we might be doing something totally different tomorrow. The business is only a side-effect of our inner journeys”.

I was amazed. I was sitting with the man who was celebrated for his outstanding strategic decisions and actions on the market by a united business press, and he was describing it as a side-effect? I noticed that my irritation was gone. It had been replaced by a sensation of curiosity and excitement.

“How do you find these people?”

“I don’t, they find me. I never advertise”.

“Do you employ all the people who come to you?”

“No. I ask them a question. If I like their answer I hire them”.

“But if 50 people appear today, and you like their answers, would you hire them all?”

“Yes”.

“But how could you suddenly employ 50 people? That could hardly be within the limits of the budget?”

“Budgets are for people who don’t trust. I trust”.

“What is the question that you ask them?”

“Usually I ask, “What do you want from your life?”

I prepared to go, but there was something I felt I wanted to do first.
“Could I ask a final question?”

“Of course”.

“I would like to be a part of this company, would that be possible?”

“Well…what do you want from your life?” (Thomas Andersson)

In Thomas Andersson’s story silence means meditation and is a normal way of organizational life. People gather regularly to meditate and it is seen as a priority, for what can be more important than to meditate? The company the Author depicts is fictional but not impossible. It is a company of his dreams and of mine, too. I wish I was the business journalist in the story and were asked by the director: what do you want from life? I have no ready answers to the question, just lots and lots of silence out of which I hope an answer would spring if the question was asked at the right time, in the right place, by the right person. And that is perhaps an answer in itself.

The story creates a strong feeling of longing in me. Not just for self-actualization but for a sense of belonging which I read into the initial silence. The people in that organization clearly shared the silence and they make business as a side-effect of their inner journeys. They travel inwards and yet they meet – in their organizational business life. The whole story could be easily shaken off as a fairy tale if not for one important section. The journalist asks: “How do you find these people?” “I don’t, they find me,” says the director. This exchange makes the story true. There might be an organization like this somewhere, if we look for it, we will find it. Or create it, as the case might be, which amounts to the same thing.
7.7. Where does silence lead?

If silence is a portal, then where does it lead? I will now try to answer this question with the help of the stories I have collected. The opening line suggested that silence had fell rapidly rather than gradually and it was my intention to suggest it. My initial picture was that of a spatial portal, a passage that suddenly opens. The authors have all used the image to form their own spaces that lie beyond the door that was thus opened. Well, all except for one. The first story does not lead anywhere. The plot spins around and around – there is no door and no space that can be imagined without assuming first that the whole story is deterritorialized (in the sense Deleuze and Guattari, 1998 use the term) into an absurdist setting. The author leads us into a kind of narrative nowhere, a chaos that does not breed any kind of order.

The second category of stories takes the plot into a space that is part of the initial ground. The transition occurs into a temporary and exceptional space. The passage is announced by the perplexing dress of the CEO, or his new hairdo. It consists of a break in the routine (the employees are invited to go and watch the TV during working hours) but after the break they all go back to routine. In one case the break is even used as a leverage to make them work more, during their free time. The director held an „ace up his sleeve” as the author expressed it. The break of routine was even more temporary and illusory than in the other stories. These stories have a good explanation for why the routine was broken: it was either a joke, or an event of extraordinary importance, such as an important match of the national football team. The surprise marked by the silence did not last long.

The third category consists of stories where the silence leads to a quantitative change. The protagonists now get more of the same: more greed, serendipity, glory, authoritarian culture, and transgression and sin. The passage will not lead to change in culture, values, or even
rules. The change is important but only for the individuals involved, not for the organization.

Only in one of the stories there is a possibility that the change will be more all embracing. Dorota Dobosz-Bourne’s narrative leaves a possibility for a change of a bigger magnitude than a shift on the individual plane. The people exposed to the betrayal and the shame made public may leave permanent marks on everyone present.

Some of the stories introduce a major change through the portal of silence. Here the transition is significant and seems to be permanent. In Przemek Pi’tkowski’s story silence marks reaction: people take offense and the truth is let out. In the story by Andrzej Powierza silence is what people hear: and through it feelings are let in and let out. The last narrative in this category depicts silence as something people see and hear: and so they let in experience. It is not clear what the experience is about but obviously something important has occurred.

The last story is a category on its own. Here the silence is a portal to a routine practice of the organization – people assemble to meditate. The organizing process is perhaps a process of permanent transition and continuous transcending. Silence has become quite ordinary.

The use of silence in the stories goes from abnormal (in the absurd story) to perfectly normal (in Thomas Andersson’s story). In between those extremes lies a broad spectrum of standards. Silence can thus be anything from ordinary to creepy, but what narrative purpose does it serve?

In almost all of the stories silence is used as a narrative strategy indicating change. Change can, however, be of varying magnitude and significance. In some cases it is just a slight shift, in others, a world shattering alteration. Only in two stories silence did not mark a change: the first, where silence was so outlandish an occurrence that it could not have happened, and in the last, where silence was part of the normal practice. The people in the first story were
unreal and they lacked agency: they did things without a real reason, they did not seem to have feelings or thoughts of their own. In the last story the protagonists had lots of agency, feelings and thoughts. The organization was founded on them, as it became visible form the interview with the manager. In order to be admitted as part of the team, they need to know what they want from life.

It is clear to me that a meeting between people takes place in the last story. The journalist encounters and communicates with the CEO. In most other stories the plot does not lead to a genuine meeting between people. Sometimes no meeting takes place at all, not even a superficial encounter: so it is for example in the absurd story, the football stories, and the success stories. Often it leads to a confrontation: people are angry with the offensive advertising campaign, a dishonest manager is exposed to the public, betrayal is enacted before an audience, etc.

Most of the stories were collected from people I have never met. On former occasions I have used the method of story collection a vast majority of narratives was authored by people who knew me quite well, or at least knew me through the internet. This time I felt I wanted to distance myself somewhat from the stories at this point. An idea to collect a set predominantly second hand occurred to me. These stories are not always directed at me but either at my colleagues who collected them for me, or at an uncertain addressee, or shall I say, a silence. As a receiver of stories about silence I was, then, often myself a silent audience.

Once again, the collection made me wish for another turn and I started it partly before this ended. Before I have closed this set I begun to receive narratives belonging to the next set. Maybe it was an effect on my part of my more silent role in this phase. I rushed towards the next one: testing narratively the experiential portal of freedom.
8. In search of freedom in the corporation

8.1. The fourth round of collection of stories

The final question about main attributes of the spiritual space that I set out to explore was the role of freedom when transferred to the corporate domain. As in the previous cases, I asked friends and students via email and some of my students during class to write a story, this time beginning with the words: You are free said the CEO ... In Polish, I had to define the CEO’s and the addressee’s gender and so in the Polish version the director is a woman and the person she speaks to is a man. In the English version the authors made their own decisions about the protagonists’ genders. Some Polish speaking authors wrote their texts in English and most of them (all but one) took the hint from the Polish version and used the genders I have defined in Polish. In the Polish versions the corporate actor was called “director” rather than CEO, as there is no word in everyday use to denote that position.

I received 14 stories, which is much less than I have collected as a result of my former quests. Some friends wrote back and commented that unlike the previous one, this opening line failed to inspire them. I knew all authors from the internet or personally: as friends, colleagues or students, or a combination of the above.

I will now present the stories according to the leading metaphors of freedom I have found in them.

8.2. Freedom as Something Dubious

In some stories freedom was depicted as something shady. The heroes understood the word differently and the outcome of the interaction was rather unexpected to the initiator. In Michał...
Nasierowski’s narrative the intention of the director is clearly a putdown, but it is not received as such by her interlocutor:

„You are free” – said the director. Marian, quite taken by surprise by the situation, did not think. He turned slowly on his heal and started to head for the door. He did not even slam the door. For the first time he was at peace, convinced that he did the right thing. He knew that the director did not foresee this turn of events, and he was proud of himself. He thought about the emotional and highly unsympathetic way of presenting his weaknesses, the whole electrifying criticism of his personality – it did hurt. But he acted in a calm and composed way. Not like he usually did. He said:

“Very well, I quit.”

The boss was surprised and taken aback. She tried to persuade him to stay after all, but he declined her favorable offers of advancement or higher pay. He enjoyed the situation quite a bit, because

he knew what she did not know. His real income was the effect of quite another activity of his. He knew that cocaine was a prized product and the client is always waiting. What should he then worry about? He was free – at least for the moment. (Michal Nasierowski)

The protagonist not only did not allow himself to be humiliated by the rejection – he has something up his sleeve and answers with audacity and poise. The director has no power over him. He is indeed free. However, the reason for his bravery is far from dignified or even legal. He is free because he has another source of income, he is a drug dealer. The next story presents an emotionally different scene. Here the director means no offense and the protagonist is not a criminal. Nonetheless, freedom is something sad, a defeat. The protagonist – Adam thanked the director profusely for the pronouncement of freedom and made a show of his enthusiastic departure from her room. He stopped by and chatted with the
secretary Zosia who had always been kind to him. She is worried but he ensures her everything is fine:

“At last! She decided to leave me alone, I don’t have to study anymore.”

“How come? After all those years she just gave up on you?” – Ms. Zosia sadly shook her head.

It turned out that the director was about to quit her job and decided to put the school in order before the new director arrived. Adam said that suited him just fine because

“I don’t want to study, I prefer to drink beer on the bench by the block.”

He collected his papers from Ms. Zosia, gave her a big hug and left.

[...]

Adam left the school building, whistling. Suddenly he stopped and for a last time he looked at the school house. It hasn’t been so bad after all. Maybe I’ll miss them after all? – a thought passed through his mind but he dismissed it quickly with a shrug.

His pals were already waiting for him on the bench. He had to hurry, it wasn’t nice to skip his turn of beer. (Michał Strzałkowski)

8.3. Freedom as a Letdown

Most of the stories depicted freedom as a sentence, a punishment, an act of rejection. The recipient of “freedom” understood this way is expelled, and freedom becomes another way of saying that it’s over, no more, whatever relationship existed between the protagonists before.

Paweł Mazuruk’s story is one of unjust punishment and powerlessness. The protagonist was,
once again, a high school pupil and the director was throwing him out from the school. He tried to object but the director would have none of it:

“This is enough! The case is closed, if you like you can lodge a complaint, or what’s-it-called, appeal… Don’t make your situation even worse!”

The pupil was feeling trapped and furious at the same time, unable to protest his innocence and quite confused about what he should do next. So he wandered around aimlessly some time and then sought out his old pals from the block.

„You know, man, they failed me.” [he said]

“What, failed you? You’re talking…”

“No, really, but you know, I don’t care…” I thought Siwy would not understand this anyway, all I knew was that I needed a walk and to sit down on the bench by my block, and a vodka by the rails, and… I don’t know what else. It will suck to have to tell this to my brother, and as for my parents…they deserve it anyway… (Pawe³ Mazuruk)

The expelled student is a powerless object of oppression. He does not stand a chance in confronting the power that is exercised, and he is discouraged from trying. The only choice or freedom left to him is in what way to accept the verdict. He decides to take it at face value, if the director of the school pronounces him “bad” than “bad” he will become. As a way out with some sort of dignity but also as an act of revenge. Now he will “punish” the grownups by turning into the sort of person that they had preached against him becoming: a nihilistic good for nothing without ambition. In the next story, the role of the protagonist is more ambivalent. Konrad is in the process of being fired when the story begins but he is far from unhappy. He did not enjoy the office routine or having to subordinate himself to the abusive boss. But he also
knew that the feeling of relief would pass soon, so he made a conscious effort to
enjoy it while it lasted. He returned to his desk and started to pack. He realized that
he was missing his work mates already. Ewa looked up from her papers and asked:

“What did she say?”

“That I was free” – Konrad shrugged his shoulders nonchalantly.

Ewa tried to console him and offered help but Konrad made a display of his coolness. He left
the building immersed in thoughts.

“Yet another change – that’s cool. I’m leaving all this behind and starting over
again.” He actually started to feel exited as he continued walking down the sunny
street. It was different every time, every time he took a new job, and he actually
loved the feeling. Maybe that’s why he’d been changing jobs so often. He realized
that even now he had been playing a game and left the director no choice but to fire
him. He was an impossible subordinate, he concluded.

These thoughts improved his mood even more. He started to tell himself that he has not been
fired at all but had wanted to leave anyway.

“I am really free, ain’t I? I wanted to quit, so her words weren’t worth a shit.” – this
thought crossed his mind like a flash. “I have always been free” he assured himself.

“Or maybe never?” (Artur Zakrzewski)

Freedom is a penalty, a condemnation and at the same time, an act of aggression. Konrad tries
to make sense out of this situation and he strives to keep his dignity. He turns to his friends
for consolation, just as the student in Paweł Mazuruk’s story. On the one hand, he finds it
there: they express their concern and understanding. On the other hand, he will have to look
for a new job. He had have many jobs before and one can surmise that the conditions there
were similar. His freedom is either an illusion or a state of complete helplessness. But at least
he had managed to save his face. In the next story, freedom is something even more sinister – it is the ultimate letdown.

„You are free” – said the director. Maybe you wonder why a woman? I did not know either at the beginning. A woman director for the toughest jail in the country. Criminals, murderers, rapists and she. Young, quite attractive, all in all, a real doll. It was only later that I learned why she ended up here. Never before or after having done my time did I meet a bitch like her.

“You are free” – sounded a bit idiotic after 15 years of having being inside. The first impression was even paralyzing. My legs gave in and cold sweat poured down my back. Well, I did know this, I even counted the days till the end of my time, but this morning this sounded like a bit. Another one. Standard procedure: I reclaimed my stuff from the storeroom, the old jacket, my worn out jeans, the shoes, the straw hat. The bull gave me a kick in the ass for good bye and I wound up in the middle of a busy street, into a crowd of happy, nice smelling people. Two streets away Jadzia, my wife, used to live. True enough, I had got my last parcel from her ten years ago, but I went to see her anyway. Jadzia was not home, but the new guy, who’s taken my place, was there. When he learned who I was he offered me a kick (a second one this day) and threw me down the stairs.

“Come back again and it will grow even worse.” – he said and slammed the door. My attempts to see Jadzia by other ways all failed. I was all alone. My mates from the big house all did well and it did me no good to meet them. The others either all kicked it or were under glass again. After about one more week of wandering around and sleeping in railway waiting rooms I found out that there is a prison fund for maladjusted ex-prisoners. So I got a new flat and some cash for starters. But what do you know about life if you haven’t done time? During these 15 years of isolation the world had moved on. Nothing was like in ’68. Nobody wanted to hire somebody who’s done their porridge. The cabbage soon ended, so did the vodka, the cans, and the pals. The flat became a real pigpen, not even the cheapest pros wanted to drop in. Everything went to pieces.
As I write these words, I am sitting in a chair, in the sunniest room of my flat. There hangs a noose above my head. It dingles and waits for me…

If you ever hear from me again, it means I have changed my mind… (Michał Szpila)

Even if the story leaves the reader with a tiny trace of hope, the role that freedom plays in it is deeply menacing and destructive. The prisoner’s life while in jail was depressing and lonely but he always could hope that he would regain his freedom and he would be given a second chance, or maybe even life would be back to normal. The director of the prison declares him a free man – the ironic reflection of the judge once having pronounced his sentence. Nobody greets him, nobody awaits him, his life is a ruin and there is no way to go. Well, actually, there is one way to go: the final exit, suicide, the way out into another kind of freedom, nothingness. But maybe he did not do it after all? The author has left the reader this suggestion of freedom to hope. Michał Izak, the author of the next story leaves no such hope. His protagonist is a convict and a gladiator, redeeming his life in a bloody TV show of the dark future. They pronounce him free.

The shackles were taken off from my head. Someone was sweeping the blood covering my body. Mostly not mine. Others took me out of the ring and led along corridor, which I have never seen to before, to a large, light room. They helped me to lay me on the bad. Then the director came.

He was praised and congratulated for an excellent performance and spectacular mercilessness. The director of the TV station shook his hand and declared that his kids would be proud of him. Then he left the room, leaving the winner to his own thoughts.

I was too weak to shout in his face: “But I don’t have any kids”. I wanted to tell him exactly how much I hated him, everyone in this studio, the whole world including
myself. Or maybe I did shout after all? Anyway, it doesn’t matter now. All that matters is how to cope with the world outside, once they have released me.

The brutal shows were common practice in the story’s setting.

It all began so innocently. About 60 years ago, in the late of 20th century, reality shows started to gather a huge public and bring in millions of dollars to the producers. In 2020’s, colonisation of Mars, Europa and Ganiedes were watched closely and live by people all over the world. Special education channels were established were activities of the colonists were shown 24 hours a day, like stuff like mining, gathering samples, setting the instruments. However, the public was attracted by educational values, but rather by an expectation of accidents and disasters. That was why 1 billion people could be watching for news on the channels all night. And they often got what they had been waiting for. Improperly designed equipment, meteorites storms and psychological pressure often resulted in catastrophes. And so TV producers started create similar ones on purpose. The methods varied: from minor bribes to the maintenance staff to research sponsorships for mining companies.

It all finally came to light in 2032 and the producers were sued by the victims’ families. As a consequence they decided to stage such shows from the beginning to the end, finding an adequate inspiration in the history of ancient Rome. New shows started to pop up.

The first one was “You can run, but you can’t hide”, produced by Afghan TV, were voluntary participants were shooting at each other with paralizers, and fighting for the main prize – one million dollars. Then came the Americans.

Twenty years passed. Publicity plummeted. Finally, the president of BBA, the main producer and former director, came up with the idea of Redemption. The feast which turned out to be very easy to prepare. And, even easier, to digest.

Ten prisoners that were sentenced to death were proposed to compete for ten consequent weeks in various ways. The main price was, naturally, total pardon and
freedom. After each week of competition the public was asked two questions: which of the participants should be killed this week and how should it be done. Death during the competition didn’t spoil the show. If somebody was killed, someone new was elected. Each participant was prepared for the competition, therefore among them were: 3 ex-boxers, 4 holders of black belts in martial arts and 2 rugby players. I belonged to all of these categories. Place: everywhere, except inhabited areas. Security: “Don’t even try.”

When my attorney asked me, two months before execution, if I wanted to take part in the reality show, I didn’t hesitate. I would now.

Number five was suffocated in a plastic bag, because he started to beg for mercy. The public doesn’t like wimps. Number four died of a heart attack on 35th kilometer of the marathon. Nine went crazy, after spending four days in dark cell full of snakes and spiders. The fact that genetic engineers removed their venom glands wasn’t much of a consolation. He was hanged on the same day. Number eight.... No, I don’t want to remember number eight!

One week ago only Nick and I were left. Numbers two and ten. If not for him I would have fallen from the rock on Cerro Torre or I would have frozen to death in Siberia. He was the only person in my life I ever cared about. Now he is dead. I killed him.

There was only one rule: there are no rules. Open ring. All styles are allowed. No weapons. Nick had no chance. A rugby player will never beat former Brazilian jujitsu master in the open ring. He fought bravely. If I would have been only a little bit slower, he might have had a chance. Unfortunately, Nick helped me to recover after the meeting with Siberian wolfs.

Well, it’s not true what I just said. Man always has a choice. I chose to live.

Someone from security drove me out of the main building. Once outside I started to consider the last events. Maybe I could start a new life. Perhaps I could leave this dammed town and recover somewhere in the country. Maybe, it has some deeper
meaning. Maybe watching Redemption allows people to compensate their violence instead of killing each other. Maybe...

The first group of fans with my name and number on their T-shirts was waiting for me in an area where only press was supposed to be allowed. I fought off five of them before security could react. I was tired but not slow. However another group tore my clothes and scratched my skin, so that my blood now covered the walkway. I was naked and blinded by all the blood when a big group jumped over the fence, swept the security away and started to tear up my body. All I heard was a scream. (Michał Izak).

Dariusz Niedzieski also depicts freedom as a sentence and act of rejection and injustice, but on a much less violent note. And the story ends with more than a hint of hope. It is set in an office. The company is in big trouble as some crucial information about its plans has been divulged to the press. Associates meet to discuss the situation.

Fortunately (or, as I look at it now, unfortunately), a group of people able to have given out this info was limited to four people, including me. We knew that the Board would like to find the responsible person. Therefore, we met to decide how we would testify.

It was the protagonist’s co-worker Ed who had proposed the meeting. He acted concerned and spoke of solidarity and the importance to keep together. He was the first one who had been speaking with the director and the protagonist was the last. The director accused him of being guilty of the information leak and threatened with immediate dismissal. The protagonist returned to his desk, in a very heavy mood. As he sat, weighed down by the situation, the phone rang.

“Hello”
“The Director invites you to her room again. Oh, and please, take Ed with you.”
(Dariusz Niedzieski)

The hero was treated unfairly, he did not deserve the punishment he received by being declared “free.” However, the director’s role in this tale is more benign, she might have misjudged him, perhaps she misunderstood, in any case, she probably did not have the intention to oppress or bully him. She just wished to punish the offender and she might have realized her mistake. The reader is left much more freedom than the former narrative gives him. The wrongdoer is a third person, not the hero nor the director. The latter is concerned about the company’s well being. There are some honest characters in the tale and all is not lost yet.

8.4. Freedom as An(other) Order

Freedom is sometimes represented as an extra effort to oppress, another means of domination, a way of letting the underdog feel his inferiority. The director usurps the authority to give orders and the: “you are free” is the most ironic, indeed, the most mocking and cruel of them all.

You are free said the director
You are a citizen of a free country
You are aware of your opportunities

You have the right to choose
You decide about everything
You set your own goals

Nobody can command you
Nobody can decide for you
Nobody can do your job for you

I can order you nothing
I will not try to convince you
I cannot speak for you
We are not constrained
There are no masters and slaves
You are free she repeated
I obeyed. (TR)

The above narrative shows the dialogue, or rather monologue taking place between a superior and her subordinate. The director preaches to the underling, she lectures him on his rights but without giving him any in reality. The hypocritical insincere declaration is just a façade, the underdog is supposed not just to obey but to pretend that she does it by her own will, that it is precisely so she chooses to exercise her freedom. Our human rights are just another reason why we stay oppressed. Nothing is holy, no word is our own property. It is Them, those in power, who use them as they please, just as they use us, just as they use everything else. In the story below the same perverse appropriation of words takes place but here the worker at least tries to present his of view.

Director: You are free.

Worker: Does that mean that I have no value. That I can be obtained for nothing? Is that what you think of me?

Director: No, you misunderstand me. By "free", I was not talking about your economic value. I meant that you are free to make choices.

Worker: About what?

Director: About how you do your job -- we call it empowerment.

Worker: Does that mean I can change jobs? I really don't like working on an assembly line all day.
Director: No. It means that you can do the same job any way you want to. Of course, I would prefer that you talk with me about whatever changes you are going to make, first. Together, we can make changes.

Worker: That is like saying that a bird is free to fly anywhere he or she wants in his or her cage -- once "we" decide a flight path, of course. What good is that kind of freedom?

Director: We are not talking about a cage -- more like a nature preserve.

Worker: Let's not squabble on the size or beauty of the cage.

Director: You know, of course, that the best freedom is limited. If we were free to do anything we wanted to, we would likely never decide what our first action should be.

Worker: But why should you provide the limits on my freedom and not me?

Director: Because I know what is best for the company.

Worker: So you keep me in the same job, and I can do what I want -- as long as I talk with you about it first. Doesn't seem much like freedom to me.

Director: You are twisting my words. It seems as if you do not trust me.

Worker: There is the rub. How can I have freedom without trust?

Director: This is all too philosophical for me.

Worker: Am I free to go home now? My shift is over in 15 minutes.

Director: You are free. Just be sure to punch out on the time clock on the way out.

(Anonymous)

The worker talks back, but the director does not listen. The worker’s replies are common sense but they are labeled as too philosophical. Finally, the worker gives up and reclaims his
only remaining freedom – to go home because work is over for the day. The director keeps her control over the conversation even at this point, pronouncing a double bind sentence: you are free but be sure to use the device which is the ultimate symbol of your conformity before you walk away. Freedom begins outside of the factory gates, as Karl Marx had observed.

Lindsay Gallagher paints a similar corporate scene in the following story:

“You are free,” said the director to her secretary. But he was not. Every night his employer would release him with these words; Sam felt it was her way of reminding him of her dominance over him. The truth was that her words cut him deeper because there was something inherently wrong with the hierarchy of the firm in which he worked. He was a man who worked under a woman. Imagine that! They had been of equal status once: both as MBA students looking for the shortcuts to the top. Only she had found them first, and Sam was left to pour her coffee and hang up her coat.

Walking through the desolate offices, Sam found himself asking the same questions again. Why don’t you leave? There are a thousand other jobs you could do. As he continued, he knocked a sheaf of papers to the floor from one of the many empty desks around him. As he bent to pick them up – a reflex action – he stopped himself.

Why should I? I’m not the cleaner. In what felt almost like an act of rebellion, he walked away without retrieving them.

“Sam? That was a little clumsy, wasn’t it? The least you can do is pick them up!” She had been following him out! Now he felt like the naughty schoolboy who had been caught red-handed. Obediently, he picked them up and continued walking.

Inside, he was in turmoil; angry with her, angry with himself, and angry at the situation. He was better than this, but still he kept on walking. She was in control, after all.

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13 The actual quote is:
Through the external door, Sam could see a flurry of snow accompanied by a blast of icy air against his cheek as he opened it to survey the damage. Damn! He had forgotten his coat. So, back he went to the lioness’s den.

Climbing the stairs, Sam could hear her voice from one of the abandoned offices of those released much earlier than he. It seemed different – hushed and secretive with much to hide. He pressed his ear gently to the door and strained to hear the words. A hint of a smile flashed across his lips as he realised the full implications of what he was hearing. His head buzzed with the realisation of what he had to do next. Carefully, he returned to her office which was still unlocked. He pushed open the door and turned in the direction of the filing cabinet. Bingo! The locked drawer was open, and everything suddenly made sense.

Sam smiled as he flicked quickly through the documents. *Who's been a bad girl, then?* He reached for his coat, then stopped himself. She may notice if he took it. *So what if she does? She won’t get much sleep tonight.* He took the jacket and left the room.

As he reached the exterior door for the second time that night, Sam could not help but smile. As he stepped out into the snow, the smile became a grin. Now he had control – she would never keep her job when this scandal became public. And who would be next in line for the position? Why Sam of course! *Perhaps I should offer her my old position,* he pondered. As he reached his car he realised that he hadn’t needed the jacket anyway, and the irony was not lost on him. Revenge had been all the warmth he needed. (Lindsay Gallagher)

Sam the secretary is feeling abused and subjugated, suffering even more because his oppressor used to be his class mate, and also because he is a male chauvinist at heart and cannot stand a woman executing power over him. Both the director and the secretary seem to be morally corrupt as is the way of doing business, based on shortcuts to the top. Sam finally

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The realm of freedom begins, in reality, only there where that labor, which is determined through need and outer purposiveness no longer exists; hence it lies, from the nature of things, beyond the sphere of real material
rebels, he consciously lets papers lay on the floor that he had unintentionally knocked to the floor. However, the director makes him pick them up and he feels like a naughty schoolboy. Sam felt increasing humiliation and anger, probably not an unusual state of mind for his working life. And then suddenly the tables turn. By accident, he now knows he will be the one to end up on top. He will have his revenge and the certainty delights him. In the next story the situation begins similarly but the end is slightly yet significantly different.

„You are free” – said the director.

You are free? I am free? What kind of statement is that?! Of course I am free. Does she think she’s god or something? Or is she a corporal? Where does one get such manners? I heard that she became director very fast. And I heard that she quickly developed these manners. Maybe she had a boss like that herself. A boss who liked to pronounce: “you are free.”

„Something else? You are free.”

If she says something more I will get an epileptic attack. Instead, I produce a smile that hurts my face.

The boss was an iron lady, displaying no emotions or even politeness. Her style was much disliked in the whole corporation although everyone agreed that she was a good boss. The protagonist, still fretting, went back to work.

I then asked that new assistant to come over. [...] The young assistant is really young. He will grow to become a really good co-worker, but he seems a bit lost in the department politics. But I can feel a bit lost myself, so who am I to judge. At least there’s not as much of that stuff in our department as in others. We’re a good department, quite task orientated. A bit stressed out perhaps. Anyway, I talked with the young man and asked if he had any ideas. He came up with two. One was good, production (Marx, 1867/1994, p. 439).
in need of some work, but realistic. The other was completely spaced out. Yeah, he is gonna be a good employee.

“You are free.” I said.

The young assistant did not smile. He gaped.

“…you are free, man. I mean, you really are. Really free, a free human being. You don’t have to take any shit, you know?” I added quickly, trying to control the color of my face. (Agata Granowska)

The custom to issue orders, among them the sarcastic dismissal “you are free” is in Agata Granowska’s narrative an organizational convention. It is a way of being of the powerful that rubs off on the subordinates. I think that the main protagonist adopted the way of talking at first but then woke up when he saw the assistant’s amazed face. Then he suddenly realized what it was he had said. He rapidly changed the message to a liberating line: “You don’t have to take any shit.”

8.5. Freedom as a New Deal

Declaring that someone is free may sometimes be a semi-question and a more or less open suggestion that something new is going to take place between the people involved. In the following stories I see the main metaphor for freedom as a kind of opportunity window opening. If you are free, then a new occupation may be possible for you. The opening line takes here on a slightly different color, it is not a doom, not an order or an imposition, it os almost a question. In Barbara Czarniawska’s narrative the interlocutor even gets to form a tentative reply.

“You are free” said the director.
“Well” I said with some reluctance. Actually, my ex-wife calls me every second day and I call Joanna every second week and she always put down the receiver when she heard my pleasant voice, but, first of all, you can hardly call that an occupation and second, the tone of the director’s voice was not that of inquiry.

“That’s great. We need escort service.”

I must have made a particularly stupid face, which moved her.

“That’s exactly what an escort service should look like – innocent and full of mystery!”

“But I… but who… but what…”

“It’s simple. You realize that we are having more and more female executives and professionals visiting. I can’t put them into a hotel room and tell them to watch TV. Neither can I invite them home or go out with them. I have a life and a family. On the other hand it’s scary to let a woman all alone go to a restaurant in Poland in the evening.

“Escort service combined with body guard?”

“Well, we do pay for your workout, don’t we?”

“But who will pay for these dinners?”

“We, under the condition that you will not drink more than a glass of wine. And don’t speak of “dinners’ as if you were being ironic, it’s supposed to be normal dinners.”

“How far would my services have to go?”

“And what do I care? If you need extra money, you can polish their shoes, I don’t care. As a compensation you can limit your work time by the hours spent with the guest, but no more than 3 hours an evening.”
“And… what about clothing?”

“Jeans and jacket. You are supposed to work as escort service, not as a gigolo.”

I left the director’s office, a but dizzy in my head. Finally! Finally someone has appreciated me and given me duties befitting my talents! Say what you will, but if I had a male boss, I’d sooner become a pensioner than get sensible tasks to perform. (Barbara Czarniawska)

It is of course an ironic story and I appreciate the quirk of fate it presents: the female director offers a position to her male subordinate that I see as degrading and slightly irregular, and the subordinate is happy to receive it. It reflects old fashioned ways of seeing the woman’s role in the corporation but in a deconstructed way, turned around and against itself. The man is there to serve the women, his role is to bring enjoyment and fun into their difficult everyday work. Was it not, indeed, is it not still the taken for granted role of many female secretaries, and not necessarily in faraway backwards lands but in Central European Poland where I live? It is not questioned so very often and certainly not many Polish business people imagine the stereotypical role being reversed. The above story not only performs this twist but adds an extra bonus: the man in question is happy, even delighted to receive this offer. He sees is as an opportunity and a very right one for him, where he finally can make use of his talents. An opportunity is also present in the narrative by Hanna Pasik, where the initial pronouncement means literally what it says: the director is reminding the employee that she is, indeed free to choose and make her own decisions. The two then negotiate details of the work contents of the employee. Sometimes it is the director who proposes and suggests what the co-worker should do:

D: Let’s go. First of all, you are responsible for the value of sale and for customer satisfaction in Northern Poland If you find time and promising trade contact in the
other regions you can make business there. I give you independence but I oblige you to maintain every points of companies policy, the most important of which is your loyalty towards my company.

I: OK. Got it

Sometimes the employee suggests her own ideas:

I: I am satisfied with this agreement, but I have to mention my special interests. I like to learn new things about Human Resources Management. Particularly, I am interested in personal development as a result of staff appraisal. I have participated in some interesting courses and I would like to learn more. I think it would be beneficial for the department too. Therefore, I would like to get access to literature, participate in interesting courses and conferences and so on. What do you think?

D: “Mhmm … it sounds interesting. I agree with you that it’s good for the company and I will help you as much as I can.”

Both parties come to an agreement and the employee feels really happy. She likes her work and she enjoys the feeling of agency she has in her workplace.

What do I really need? To feel motivated and to enjoy work. (Hanna Pasik)

Hanna Pasik has presented the initial phrase as an opening line, too, although more in the sense of a proposition than a semi-question. It is the most important part of the protagonists’ agreement, one that allows them to cooperate as equals even though one is a boss and the other an employee. In this story freedom means independence. It is not really acknowledged but neither is it ordered. It is very clearly an offer, a condition for what can happen in the future between them at work.
8.6. Freedom as Free Time

The next story I would like to present takes up freedom in a way that has already at least been recognized in passing by some of the others: as free time. However, it is the only one to view it as the main metaphor and furthermore, I think it carries have an additional underlying message.

“You are free” said the director.

“OK, thanks Jane” said Tom.

He closed the door and said to himself: “Great, I have free time”. Then he went to his office. He asked Barbara – his secretary – to bring him a cup of coffee.

Drinking it Tom started to think.

“What does it really mean, I’m free. It is not true. I’m not free. I have my own team here in the firm. I am responsible for people working with me. I have a family: a wife and children. They need me. I can’t do whatever I would like to.”

“Tomorrow we are supposed to be at Kowalski’s party. I like them but not all the guests they usually invite. All these politicians, businessmen, and other scum. I will have to wear a new suit with a tie, a shirt which is like a collar around my neck. At least there will be nice buffet there. Oh, and on Sunday we can ride a bicycle and then go to movie theater.

The telephone rang. It was the director.

“Tom, I’m sorry I forgot about a new report we should give Supervisory Board members on Monday. It is connected with new market strategy we discuss. I understand, you can manage to have it done till Monday or Tuesday morning, can’t you?”

SHIT! SHIT! SHIT! – a four letter sign flares up in his head!
“Jane, I’m sorry it is impossible. All my staff work really hard. You perfectly know, that we are below the schedule with at least three new products because of legislation changes. I told you in June: we need more people.”

Jane interrupted with audible anger in her voice:

“Tom, I remember. I told you also something in June: fire and hire, it is up to you. So don’t blame me for your troubles.”

“OK. I’m not blaming you. Please let me finish.”

“I’m not interesting in anything except the report on Tuesday morning.”

Tom knew that this is a start of traditional dance – Monday, Tuesday, Thursday …

“Jane, it is absolutely impossible. Or put it other way. I can prepare a report on Tuesday, but it won’t be the report we know, SB needs. So be reasonable. I need at least two days to gather data and another two to prepare it. It makes next Friday. That’s it.”

A moment of silence and then:

“You are kidding, aren’t you Tom? Today is Friday so your team can start working immediately. You can gather all the facts and numbers till tomorrow evening. Then we have Sunday and Monday. The report is due on Tuesday morning.”

“Sorry, Winetou but you told me ‘You are free’. Seriously, it is 6 P.M. right now so nobody is working in our offices. For some people it is Friday night – don’t you think that they can sleep? By the way how long have you known about the report?”

“Doesn’t matter. OK. But promise you will start on Monday.”

“I love you Jane. OK. I will. See you at the Kowalski’s party.”

“Yes. Though it would be nicer in our own company, not with these …”

“Don’t say that, they are our benefactors.”
As I said before, the whole dialogue is a bargaining process which stake is free time. What is free time and where it ends and begins is not so clear as in the story where the worker was assumed to be free when he finished work for the day. Here Tom can be persuaded to take upon himself extra work that will shorten the time he has begun to see as his free, or his own time. Furthermore, even during this free time, when he does not have to carry out extra tasks, he has obligations which limit his freedom, or shall I say authority over his own life? One sign of such authority is to be able to avoid things that he does not like. He is not entirely authorized to make such decisions. He has to attend the Kowalski party and even dress in a way that is abhorrent to him, which is symbolically represented by the shirt acting as a collar. The collar of a dog or even better of a slave comes to my mind and indeed this is what threatens Tom’s sense of self all the time. He has to bargain himself free or relatively free, free for the moment that is. He cannot let his guard down, for the process is the answer. His ability to negotiate what is his free time is his freedom – and that’s all there is to it.

8.7. Freedom as Misunderstanding and Ambiguity

In Polish the word “wolny” has many meanings, some of which are related to “freedom” but not all, one of the being for example “slow.” Józef Mrozek has written a wonderfully intricate tale where the play on this ambiguity is the recurring theme, presented in a tantalizing way. Unfortunately, it cannot be translated to English without serious semantically and literary losses, at least not by me. Nonetheless, I will try to give at least the impression of what the tale can have been like in its original language.

„You are free” – said the director. I envy you, Mr. Kazio. Since three weeks now I am a married woman. Do you realize what it means? I am a house slave, forced to
scrubbing floors and washing dishes, cooking, doing laundry, shopping and offering free sexual services to my husband who last Thursday turned out to be a drunk, druggie and libertine. You are free, you don’t have to endure such things. By the way, are you free during the next weekend? If so, maybe we could go for a short business trip to Kutno? I have a bottle of excellent whiskey, we can surely get some weed at the railway station, you’ll see, it’ll be wonderful.

“Well, I don’t know” – Mr. Kazio silently groaned. You see, I am a bit slow,14 I don’t quite get it when you talk so fast. To Kutno you say? There is always trouble with Kutno. Once I stood on platform two on the Central Railway Station and waited for the train to Kutno, but it didn’t come. Finally the voice form the megaphone boomed: “Attention passengers! The delayed rapid train from Ma³kinia to Kutno arrives on track three platform… I shoot – four!” Do you understand any of this? As for me, it took me five minutes and before I got to that platform four, the train had already gone. When I wanted to return the ticket, the cashier said: “You are too slow. You think slowly and you run to slowly! It’s not allowed15 to be that slow. PKP16 cannot take responsibility for your sluggishness! Get out from this beautiful railway station!”

“Impossible” – said the director “The rapid train was delayed? The cashier treated you in an offensive way? When did all this take place? Mr. Kazio, we cannot allow such things to happen!”

“Er, Ms Director” – Mr. Kazio mumbled “Freedom is realized necessity. I remember when Ms Director explained this to us in kinder-garden when we did not want to scrub the stairs. And this about the cashier happened about twenty years ago, perhaps in 1984”.

“Ah, well, that explains everything” – said the director. 1984. Under communism. If you knew Orwell better, you would know that the announcement of the arrival of

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14 “wolny” – the same word in Polish as for free is used to signify both “free” and “slow.”
15 „wolno” – in Polish the same word is used to signify „it is allowed,” “slowly,” and “freely.”
16 Polskie Koleje Państwowe, The Polish State Railway Company.
the train as well as the statement of the cashier were pronounced in newspeak. In an appendix to 1984, explaining the rules of newspeak, published in 1982 by the underground publishing company Kr¹g17 on pages 245-6 it is written: "For example the word: free existed in newspeak, but was used only in expressions such as: the dog is free from fleece or the field is free from weeds. It was not allowed to use it in its old meaning: politically or intellectually free, because political and intellectual freedom ceased to exist, even as abstract terms and became by necessity nameless. If you, Mr. Kazio, took your readings from school more seriously, you would have known that the statement pronounced by the cashier: you are free, did not have any sense.

“But Ms Director” – Mr. Kazio stammered “You said that yourself at the beginning of our conversation. I know that I am not well read enough, but please observe that Jean-François Lyotard in his La condition postmoderne, Paris 1979, draws attention to the crisis or even the end of narration as such, and Philippe Sollers is his Logiques, Paris 1968, uses the term écriture in a rather contemptuous sens: not as the dignified "writing," but as "penpushing." And I agree with them. And I don’t read anymore. I am satisfied with computer games that perhaps do not match Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus in the regard of brutal scenes as well as those and commonly considered sadistic, but then I can do everything myself with the help of a mouse and keyboard.”

“What kind of rubbish is that, Mr. Kazio. Your mouse has not worked for weeks. I’ve had enough. You are free” said the director “tomorrow you will be given notice.” (Józek Mrozek)

Here freedom is presented first as a marital status, and a civil right, but is a covert seduction. Then it is used as in the story I have presented, that is in the sense of free time. After that the director’s interlocutor uses the Polish word “wolny” meaning stupid, then – slow, and finally in the phrase “it is not allowed.” The self-declaredly slow Mr Kazio refers to philosophical

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17 Kr¹g = Circle.
meanings of freedom, claiming to have learned about them in kinder garden. The director joins in, discussing the signification of freedom in Orwellian and communist newspeak. She upbraids Mr Kazio for his gaps in education, who defends himself referring to Lyotard and the postmodern cult of low culture. In doing this he shows astonishing erudition. By the way, is it not the case with most postmodern prose that upholds the so called low culture and praises mass entertainment but does so in the most sophisticated style and wording? It has always puzzled me how this hangs together. This little story captures well my puzzlement and it does so with a nice self-reflective irony. After all, it is a story written in the postmodern genre as well. The story ends where it starts after having gone full circle. This time around though it carries the same meaning that many of the stories I have recounted here do: you are fired, our relationship is over or perhaps in this context it would be more appropriate to say the game is over.

8.8. Alarming, puzzling, unattainable?

Where does the portal of freedom lead? What do the protagonists do with the freedom? Why does the CEO declare that the other person is free? What does it mean? What does the other protagonist do?

Just as some of my correspondents pointed out in their emails, the portal of freedom does not seem to be very inspiring in most of the cases. First, it can lead nowhere. The declaration is clearly an insult in some of the stories, one of many other insults probably used toward the employees in the depicted organizations.

In some other stories, the declaration means that the addressee is thrown out. It is more or less a synonym of „get out” and it leads to feelings of failure, aloneness, even to death.
The stories of another order describe the announcement as an affirmation of being “in” – caught in a closed space. There is no way out, the declarer defines the world for the other person. It is either a painful dismissal of the other or an Orwellian takeover of his reality.

A majority of the narratives see freedom as a new arrangement. It is a possibility to negotiate or renegotiate the current arrangement. The protagonist who receives the declaration will from now on be more able to use his talents. Both parties use one more thing in this process of negotiation: the rules.

One story uses freedom as a passage from unfree to free time. The passage is, however, illusory – the declarer, a person with power, is always in the position to use it in order to trespass on the subordinate’s own space, the space where he has his „free time.”

Finally, in one of the stories freedom is a portal towards something more transgressive and creative. Józef Mrozek uses the pronouncement as a portal to ambiguity and ambivalence. The narrative space that both the actors interact in makes them capable of moving without restraint among words and meanings and they do so. Everything is possible, no definition is able to hold for longer than one exchange of sentences. They flirt even though one of them is a director and the other a subordinate. The hierarchical relationship sometimes restrains them but sometimes it only adds a flavor to the flirting. The declaration of freedom is in this case many things, among them – a pick up line, a means of seduction.

One of the interesting issues in this batch of stories was the way gender was treated. In this batch I have decided to make use of the characteristic of the Polish language that makes nouns and adjectives automatically gendered. I did it because the gender of most of the protagonists in the stories I had collected this far was male and I now wanted to deconstruct that part of my narrative collage. I put a woman in the position of power and a man in the
position of subordinate. However, many of the Polish authors seemed to have problems with that definition. Instead of dedicating their entire storytelling energy to the declaration of freedom, they sacrificed a considerable part of it to explaining why the director was a woman. Therefore she often turned out to be a school director – high administrative personnel in Polish schools tend to be women. In one case she was a director of a prison which colored most of the story that resulted. The narrative acquired almost a shade of kinkiness. Even so, the role the director played in the tragic fate of the main protagonist is not clear. To me this story is in fact two narratives: one about the bizarre prison director and one about the unfortunate prisoner who is set free. It is also worth noting that none of the English stories defines the gender of the CEO as female.

Freedom is a portal that is definitely to be found outside of the corporation, or at least – it does not fare well if it is pronounced by the hierarchical superior. I wondered what would happen if the tables were turned? If it was the employee who declared freedom to the director? I did not feel it was a topic for a completely new collection of stories but I directed my request at one specific person I have chosen. I did it because I knew about her interest in synchronicity and I felt that I did not wish to deconstruct hierarchy in this story collage but rather look for another way. I hoped synchronicity would help me in my quest. Here is the story she wrote for me:

“You are free,” the employee said to the director.

The employee of the labour camp was happy and relieved to be able to announce this news to the director of the University of Jilin, Ms. Wu.

Ms. Wu had been in the labour camp for one year and a half and suffered inhuman torture. She is only one of more than 70 million people in China today who are
secretly and systematically persecuted for their belief in “truthfulness, compassion and tolerance”. Although many guards have tortured her very badly, and although criminals did so too, because they were promised to have their sentences reduced if they did so, she was always kind to them, and tried to explain the facts about Falun Gong and the persecution with her compassion.

One day, she was taken into a room by a female police guard. There was a chair and a table in the room. On the table were several instruments of torture, and the policewomen told her with a perverse tone that she would torture her all night long. Ms. Wu recited silently a beautiful poem written by Li Hongzhi. That gave her the strength to tell to the policewoman the great benefits she has gained since she started practising Falun Gong. The guard listened to her and left the room for a while. When she came back, she was much more calm and asked Ms. Wu to show her the Falun Gong exercises. She did not touch Ms. Wu. However, criminals were ordered to watch over Ms. Wu and not let her sleep, drink or use the bathroom for 24 hours. This was only one day at the forced labour camp of the province of Jilin.

Ms. Wu has gone through painful and brutal torture and was on the verge of death several times. She has been forced-fed, shocked with electric batons (sometimes over 40 thousand volts at a time), she has been gang raped, she has been beaten till her both legs were fractured, she has almost lost her sight from being forced fed through her nose, and a lot more. But in her heart she has kept the compassion and the will to tell the people in the forced labor camp the truth about Falun Gong.

Today an employee of the labour camp, who knows the truth about Falun Gong, tells her she is free. She may be arrested tomorrow again, but at least at that very moment she is free to go. (Carole Caulier)\(^{18}\)

\(^{18}\) I have written this story, because these happenings are part of my everyday life as I translate everyday narratives written by people practising Falun Gong who have suffered of the persecution in forced labour camps and psychiatric hospitals in China. Ms. Wu in my story represents the hundreds of thousands of women, children and men who everyday are suffering in hidden Chinese labour camps. The name of the place and the character is not intentionally chosen to correspond to specific places and persons.
In this last story, the director is not an official supervisor of the employee who declares her to be free. Even though she is a director at a university, she is formally subservient to the employee of the camp where she is held prisoner. The employee uses his or her (the gender is unclear) power to set the prisoner free. The freedom is uncertain, and there is no guarantee that the heroine will be able to enjoy it also in the future. The story is very sad: its main theme is torture, imprisonment, cruelty, and injustice. There is no hope of a better future, and the wrongs are overwhelming. However, at the same time as it is dark and sad, this story is full of light and spirit. The director, Ms. Wu, is a free spirit and nothing can take her freedom away from her. Even though she suffers pain and humiliation, she is able to keep her peace of mind and kindness towards others. I think it is not because she is superhuman or equipped with an extraordinary stamina, but rather because there is a space where she can still be free and be herself, even though she is physically felt captive and mistreated. She is not entirely of this world – a world where people mistreat each other and act towards each other in perverted ways. I think she would be happy to be able to occupy that space with her mind and her body but as long as the sinister organization keeps her prisoner, she must remain split. Another touch of light and kindness in this story is the employee who has power over the prisoner and uses it immediately to set her free. Thus she or he also loses it. I believe that it felt good and natural to the employee to do that. The freedom he or she offers is not freedom as such – Ms. Wu has never lost it – but integrity, wholeness. Now, for as long as it lasts, the heroine will be able to be whole, body, mind and soul. She will also be able to contact her two original organizations: the Jilin University where she works (but we don’t know what kind of organization it is, it may well be so that they have denounced her to the police) and the other people who practice Falun Gong. The latter is the light and good organizational counterpoint to the sinister and dark prison camp. It offers her a sense of belonging that makes it possible
to survive the oppression of the camp. It is not a formal organization, but a movement of people who engage in practicing an ancient Chinese self-cultivation practice for body and mind. They can meet to do the exercises and study together the teachings of Falun Gong based on the Buddha and the Tao school and on principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance.

Carole Caulier’s story is a transitional story: between light and darkness, between integrity and injustice, between right and wrong. Good and bad impulses both co-exist, good and bad ways of organizing are equally real. It reminds me of yin and yang, and of the resulting tendency of everything to be in motion, to change. Therefore, even though it is not spelled out in the story, I think it leads in a new direction, where the oppression will stop and people who be follow their good impulses, like the employee and Ms. Wu, will be able to take over the responsibility for organizing processes. The dark tendencies will move into other domains and perhaps lose some of their sinister qualities.

Freedom is possible and it is present even under the most unfree circumstances, but in order to use it as a portal to holistic organizing, there must be someone taking the initiative. It can be a person in a leadership position but does not have to. It can be anyone who at a given point in time and space acquires the power to defeat certainties and institutions. I believe that hierarchy is offensive and destructive of freedom. However, initiative is useful. Hierarchy often brings a bonus initiative in organized settings. Even though it seems unlikely, it may be used to bring about creative change. This conclusion is now plain to me after having read Carole’s story, where the initiative was taken by a mere employee, someone who at the moment realized that she or he had it. The portal of freedom works as a doorway only with its help.
And now, I would like to present my own story.
9. Where the narratives meet

9.1. My story

Once upon a time a monk knocked on a big front door of a corporate HQ. A receptionist buzzed him in and he entered into the great hall, decorated in glass and marble. He went to the receptionist's desk, greeted her politely and asked:

"I am lost in this city – can you please help me to find a cheap place to stay? I am sorry to bother you but all there is in the entire neighborhood are office buildings and I can't seem to find any place to even ask for directions."

"Well, I would be more than happy to help," said the receptionist, "but this is not a hotel, it's the HQ of Mediatec."

"I am aware of that," said the monk, "I thought maybe you knew how to get to the nearest hotel."

"Hotel? Yes, I can help you with that: our guests stay at the Sheraton and Hilton, and sometimes at Bristol. Do you want me to call a taxi for you?"

"No thank you very much. No, what I had in mind was something more affordable than Hilton."

"No, I'm sorry. I really am."

"Then maybe you know where the closest buss stop is? Or subway station?"

"Well, actually, no, not really… I always come by car…"
The CEO, who was on her way out of the building at that moment, overheard pieces of the conversation and something made her stop by the receptionist's desk and address the monk.

"Good day. I hear you have a problem here. Maybe I can help you?"

"Ms. Director… We were discussing…” the receptionist butted in, looking confused and uncertain.

"Subway stations. As it is I know where the closest one is. We will be going in that direction now, so maybe you want us to give you a ride?" The CEO amazed herself making this proposition. She sincerely didn’t know what made her want to help the thin little man with very white hair – but there was something magnetic and irresistible about him. Or maybe she was just feeling helpful. Anyway, the man thanked her and followed her outside, where the company car waited for the director. They both hopped in and the car drove off.

The rest of the day was uneventful and perfectly normal. She went to a meeting with the law firm, then held a small press conference about the plans of the company, then worked some with the new policy statement. Then she went home. All the time she couldn't stop thinking of the monk. She regretted not having asked for his name or affiliation. She knew nothing about religious people and she couldn't even say which denomination he belonged to, or, indeed, if he was a Christian monk at all. Why was she so interested in him? Maybe because he was so perfectly out of place, when she first saw him, in the big hall, talking with the receptionist. And he had treated her with lots of respect but not of the kind she was used to getting from other people in her everyday life. There was something compelling about it all. She could not get it out of her mind. Many days and weeks passed and she still occasionally caught herself thinking of the mysterious monk. She even made a search on the net of different religious orders in the hope of finding one that would remind her of the way he looked. Finally she
found a Taizé webpage, where the monks didn’t look exactly like him but at least were sufficiently similar to inspire her to reading about their philosophy and history.

An year full of stress, hard work and some substantial success passed but the monk was still on her mind. One day she decided to contact the Taizé community and talk with someone there. She wasn't entirely sure what she wanted to talk with them about but once the thought of going there occurred to her it wouldn't leave her. So one day she hopped into her car and went out into the suburbs where the community had their quarters. She stopped by an old grey house, "A monastery!" she thought and parked her car. The sun was setting and there was a suggestion of a drizzle in the air. The building looked so peaceful and quiet.

The CEO knocked on the door of the monastery. She was let in by a young man dressed in the white robes of the community.

"Good afternoon," he smiled at her and shook her hand, "how can I help you?"

"Good afternoon," the director said, "I'm not sure. That is, I'd like to talk about… the community, I am the director of Mediatec, and I thought our company could perhaps support your community.""

"Then perhaps you might want to talk with brother John," said the monk and led her to a tiny office, where a youngish kindly looking man greeted her. They talked earnestly for some time and when she made her offer to support the community financially, brother John vigorously but kindly protested.

"No, there is really no need. We are but a small community and we are used to make our own living. But if you want to support worthy causes, we can give you a list of disadvantaged
institutions that would benefit much from such a financial assistance: orphanages, hospitals, schools for underprivileged children…

The director thanked him, took the list and said her goodbyes. She said she knew her way out; there was no need to accompany her. While walking down the corridor she passed by a hall where a group of young people were sitting and talking loudly. She stopped and looked at them. One of them, a girl with dreadlocks wearing brightly colorful clothes, waved to her. The others looked up and eyed her cautiously.

"Wanna go for a beer?" said the girl with the dreadlocks.

"Sure why not?" said the director, all the while thinking: I must be mad, I am in a hurry, I have work waiting for me and I don’t know these people, they are teenagers for Christ’s sake, but she followed the group down the corridor and out on the street.

"There is a pub over there" said the girl and pointed with a hand with extremely tattered nails. They went in. Everyone ordered a beer for themselves and they started to talk. The atmosphere soon became very friendly and animated. The director sipped her alcohol free beer, listening and relaxing. She ceased commenting what she saw and heard in her mind, she just listened and looked.

"See?" said the girl with the dreadlocks "We argue a lot," and then she laughed.

"You with the Taizé community?" asked the CEO.

"Yeah, kind of. We hang out there sometimes. Nice chaps. Nice place. Cool prayers," said the girl.

"You are Christians?"
"Not all of us, no. We are all different. That's why it's so much fun." And when the girl saw the director's baffled face she added "Imagine what the world would be like if everyone could be what they are, I mean what they are at heart. Different. So many colors!" she spread out her hands and laughed.

When the director finally came home, it was late and she went directly to bed, the work would have to wait. Anyway, she now had a growing conviction that she knew what she wanted to do. On the following day she called all of Mediatec's investors and set up meetings with them. She called several of her old professors from college. She went to the library and studied intensely, preparing herself for the meetings with the shareholders. When it was all done, she scheduled a meeting for the entire workforce of Mediatec.

All the employees assembled in the big conference room fell silent. The CEO looked at the crowd and hesitated. Will they understand? What will they make of it?

"Dear team members," she said in her clear, magnetic voice, "We have assembled here today in order to discuss the new plans of the Mediatec Corporation. As you well are aware of business has been exceptionally good for us the last year…" She went on to present the financial results and the gains in market share, thus far moving on a certain and well known ground. The employees listened respectfully, although they already knew all these facts.

"We have thus decided to support a number of worthy causes in order to share our good fortunes with others. These are: hospitals, schools, and orphanages," she saw that the announcement went down well with at least part of the people. Some smiled, there were even a few applauds. We have good people here, she thought. So maybe this is the right time to do it after all. She took a pause and looked around the room and finally said, slowly and deliberately: "And from now on we will also change our working procedures. We will
reorganize work and you will be the ones to do it. It will be your own responsibility to decide what your schedules will be, where you want to work, and how you want to look like. It is time to start self-actualizing. This means of course different things for each one of us because we are all unique people. I am quite positive that it will, in the end, turn out to be good for the organization. I am not sure what will happen because that depends on all of us. Go ahead and think, work, create, be yourselves! All are written procedures and policies cease to apply from this moment on." The audience sat in absolute silence; they even seemed to hold their breath. And then a bird started to sing. A bird? thought the CEO. Wherever did it come from? The people started to look at each other in puzzlement, perhaps even in alarm.

"You are free," said the director. And then she smiled. In the corner of the room stood the thin little monk with the white hair and beamed at her, and sketched a gentle wave with his hand.

9.2. And then they lived happily ever after?…

I wrote the story after having collected and thought over all the other stories. It responds to the way I have read the stories I gathered and pasted together in this book. It is what I wanted to say to the authors19. But does it say anything more than that, anything worth putting in a book directed at a, hopefully, larger audience that just “my” authors? I think so, and I will now try to explain why.

My story is about a person and an organization, or rather, about ways of organizing that meet through the protagonists and hopefully take root. Something is about to change in the old ways of the corporation Mediatec where the main protagonist is a CEO. I am not entirely sure what it will be, but I know what kind of energies has been set loose. The declaration of

19 Well, of course I owe them a big THANK YOU apart from that.
freedom by the CEO meant that people were free to create and to participate in the collective adventure. She has initiated a process that will free the organization from the until now taken for granted institutions and rules. It is unsettling but it is also full of hope.

The CEO in my story has followed the directions offered by the protagonists in the stories I have collected from other authors: she sees the monk, listens to him, and she literally moves out of the corporate structure with him. They both move spatially, she lets him ride in her car. Afterwards, she feels compelled to move again and gives in to the desire. She moves in cyberspace: looking for traces of the monk, and in physical space: visiting a monastery herself. Then she unexpectedly meets some young people there with whom she again moves in space and to whom she listens. She has learned quite a lot during all these journeys and she feels like sharing her insight and the power with others. She uses the portal of silence to let her words be heard. Her employees listen and seem to understand. Then she pronounces them free. And yet nobody is dismissed, fired or excluded. Quite the opposite: what she did was a way of welcoming people to co-create a new venture together with her.

In all of the stories movement was a crucial means of encountering and of learning something new. Learning almost always brought important insights and turns of events. Sometimes movement brought about isolation and loneliness, but it felt as inevitable in the stories as the disasters that followed.

The organization that is a result of learning and movement is depicted as one where people can meet and talk, where they are seen and heard. It is crucial to abolish hierarchical walls in order to be able to practice this kind of communication and all need to be equal and different. There is a kind of tension at work in these organizations that result from the participants being different; there has to be place for everyone: the director on the roof, the monk, the female
CEO, the broken hearted manager. Only in a setting where all people are seen and their differences are respected can all those individuals work together and yet not lose their distinct features. The instances when this imperative is realized in the stories are often not more than glimpses: the moment when they looked into each others’ eyes and understood, the message which made it all fall into place. But in some there already is such a setting ready to use: it may be heaven, or a hallowed monastery, not an everyday work organization, but it is nonetheless there, waiting to be populated by protagonists and plots. The people who succeed in learning something new know how to listen, they listen actively and they are not stereotypical in their reactions and interpretations. Whenever an easy interpretation of a plot is made, learning is finished. The most adventurous protagonists move beyond the obvious, beyond the taken for granted and explore new grounds.

The kind of organizing processes that my stories depict when they show how spirituality and organizations successfully meet is close to entrepreneurship. Bengt Johannisson (2005) describes entrepreneurship as a life style, a playful and creative approach to life and work. It is about questioning of old institutions and breaking old patterns in order to test the borders of the possible, explore new grounds and perhaps establish new institutions. Entrepreneurship is paradoxical: it is both anarchic and organizing, both a revolution and an evolution, it is a vision and action, dependent and independent, based on both experience and reflection.

An entrepreneur does things with others: entrepreneurship is a collective endeavor. But it is a collective where everyone is treated as a unique individual, and therefore there are constant tensions deriving from people’s boundaries. Creative people working together will almost certainly engage in many quarrels and there will be much disagreement. Entrepreneurship is a way of life that is linked to a quest for identity that does not need to presuppose narcissism.
Indeed, if the entrepreneurs are too much concentrated on their own egos the whole endeavor is doomed to fail. Entrepreneurship is a way of realizing the self but no ego-trip. Bengt Johannisson (2005) stresses the importance to see entrepreneurship in the context of its three domains: the individual, the event, and the environment. As a power of renewal and innovation, it is a set of processes within and between all those domains. According to Johannisson, entrepreneurship is an affirmation of individuality and the entrepreneur’s identity. Creative organizing is the result and at the same time the medium in the bringing together of individuality and collectivity. In that, the entrepreneur is similar to the bricoleur, however, she does not organize things, but people. The artist is another creative personality that is not dissimilar to the entrepreneur. They both question boundaries and they both actively seek to construct reality. They seek for a free space where they do not have to abide the controlling society and problematize and perhaps even re-construct their reality. What differentiates the entrepreneur is, again, her primary engagement that takes place with and about other people.

Johannisson et al. (1997) describe entrepreneurship in terms of passion and transcendence. The entrepreneur is driven by a desire to transcend boundaries, stereotypes, taken for granted truths. He is alert and creative in the domain of vision (imagination) as well as action (practice). Resources are not seen as given but something that can be extended. The environment is seen in terms of possibilities not limitations. Such an attitude demands self-confidence as well as modesty, which are both developed in communication with others.

To return to my story, there is definitely a person with the entrepreneurial driving power in it. The CEO is engaged, passionate, daring and curious. She communicates with different people and lets her quest take her to the courageous rule-breaking point, when she decides to
completely re-organize the company. I believe that such an initiating individual is needed in order to instigate an organizational process where people can be themselves and yet do things together. Someone is needed for the kick-off, and that someone is the archetypal entrepreneur. The next stage of work is to convince others that his vision is worthwhile, which is another typical entrepreneurial task, according to Bengt Johannisson (2005). If that succeeds the event develops into a necessity. This is the phase where my story ends, and the organization begins.

I have chosen to call the type of organization that is a result of and a medium for this engagement as the self-actualizing organization. I will now take a closer look on it as a way of organizing, as well as other ideas that are close to it.

### 9.3. The self-actualizing organization

Maia Duerr (2004) speaks about the contemplative organization, a way of organizing that normally embraces stillness and silence as a modus operandi. This kind of organization is a good ground for ideas and innovations and a step towards the espousal of an attitude towards work that is alien from the concept of competition and stress but profoundly linked to quality. The contemplative organization definitely rings a bell for me when I reflect on the organizational consequences of the collage I have assembled here and my own addition to it in the form of a story. However, it works well as a starting point to reflect on it but after that it also points to the differences between our visions.

My idea of an organization open to spiritual experience is not that peaceful and still. The collage is full of movement and dynamics. The organization that I wish for engaging in is a lively setting, perhaps even adventurous, a bit crazy. I am a calm and risk-avoiding person myself but when I am with others I feel much more safe and willing to do more risky things. I would like it to be based on communication and respect for the participants’ borders and
individuality. This is a self-actualizing organization, where creativity is the basis of collective action. Individual differences are guarded and respected, and communication is based on those differences and not on similarities. Bengt Johannisson (2005) describes the entrepreneurial event in the same words that I use to depict the self-actualizing organization: it is based on action and reflection, individuals are treated as unique, they enact the event together, and instead of hierarchy the tool used to structure their work is heterarchy (Grabher, 2001, as quoted in Johannisson, 2005), a structure where all are considered different yet equal. To Bengt Johannisson the event is different from the formal organization, which he sees as being hierarchical and role-based. Having arrived at the same point, but from a different direction, I believe that it does not necessarily have to be a separate phenomenon. Rather, I see it as a special case of organizing.

The self-actualizing organization can be depicted by the following model.

INSERT MODEL HERE

The self-actualizing organization emerges as a process where an individual and the Other meet. The initiative has to be taken by someone. It may very well be a person with an authority position in an organized setting, but at the same moment that the initiative is taken, the person who took it loses his authority. Ordering practices cease and become replaced by entrepreneurial activities, in which others join. They can now use some of the known portals into spiritual, or self-actualizing space such as: freedom and silence. Freedom can be used to explore and experiment with boundaries, demolish institutions and certainties. Through silence others can be heard, and recognized. There is much boundary work embedded in these
processes: not only the experimentation with external boundaries but also the pronouncing and defending of individual boundaries. It is of crucial importance that these are respected, so that no one’s personal integrity is compromised. In the difference between people lies the power to create new things. The differences and the way they are transformed into collective action are the basis of the self-actualizing organization.

Freedom as a portal is tightly linked to initiative. It can result in ambiguity and acceptance of the unexpected and even the impossible. It is a rarity in itself and often accompanied by a dark side. The darkness tends to dominate over the portal itself, it is a difficult path to find. Silence is perhaps the opposite when seen in terms of availability. The more of a standard practice it is, the more powerful it becomes. In some settings it does not occur, and so self-actualization is hardly possible. It can bring forward a great change and it can be used as a revolutionary tool. But it exists also as a natural, normal phenomenon in some settings and there it is the most powerful.

Meeting the other person is not easy, it can even be described as quite impossible. There are may reasons why people never meet, and even if there is no easy solution to the dilemma, there is at least one path to follow in order to make the meeting more probable (if not certain): movement in space. One thing that definitely precludes any meeting is an inability to see the other. Openness to difference and an abolishment of categories and especially stereotypes is necessary if we want to see. If we insist on categorizations, categories will be all we perceive. We will never meet the living, authentic, unique person with her own agency to feel, to think and to act. In other words, if we are blind to the unpredictability and the sovereignty of the other, we will never be able to encounter her, just our own expectations, notions, ideas, and demands. Therefore processes of organizing, if they are to be self-actualizing, should not be
managed in a traditional way, because traditional management is a way of keeping uncertainty at bay. Actually, management is defined as a specific way to organize that is aimed at reducing uncertainty (Sjöstrand, 1998). Entrepreneurship is much more suitable as management ideology for these purposes, because its very aim is to play with uncertainty and ambiguity and construct new things. It does not view resources as limited but as extendable, because of the inherent uncertainty of all things, making them unpredictable and subject to change in time (Johannisson, 2005).

The antonym of the self-actualizing organization is, however, not management as such, as it can be practiced in many ways, for example, as a way to balance one’s own wishes for action with others’ wishes. The ideas of the management are to be fulfilled but for that it needs other people. This is a more modest understanding of management than what most management textbooks tell us and it does not clash with self-actualization, even if it is about streamlining and uncertainty avoidance. It is perhaps not the most spontaneous way to run a self-actualizing organization but I do not see it as its adversary. Its opposite is, instead, **managerialism**, an ideology used as a tool of maintaining control and stability, and of taming passion (Alexandersson and Trossmark, 1997, Hjorth, 2001). Ola Alexandersson and Per Trossmark (1997) describe it in opposition to creativity:

> If creativity is understood as anarchy, then the management ideal means perhaps an ordering antithesis. They are depicted as two different forms of knowledge (cf. Björkegren, 1993). Some do not use the word anarchy to signify the spontaneous and unplanned creative expression. Instead, creativity is connected with freedom. To create what one feels for, to express one’s ideas — that is what creativity is about (p. 124).
A managerialist is, according to the *New Webster’s Dictionary and Thesaurus* (1993) „one who believes that government, business, etc. should be run by professional managers” (p. 605). The central characteristic of the managerialist ideology is the assumption about the universality of rules, economic rationality and order. Introducing managerialism means imposing order: structured descriptions and rules about decisions and control (Alexandersson and Trossmark, 1997).

Creativity requires a method (intention) as well as contingency, the acknowledgment of coincidence (intuition), in the quest for artistic expression (Welsch, 1998). Perhaps all kinds of human expression call for both these elements. Creativity can co-exist with ordering, but only as long as it is modestly acknowledged by the people engaged in organizing that ordering is a process never to be completed or perfected. Managerialism, on the other hand, thrives on the idea of *hideous purity* of order (Law, 1994). It aims at the elimination of all disorder and of making it permanent. All disorder, all chaos, all imperfection is viewed as negative and dangerous.

The typical modern organization is devoid of spirituality of the private, experience-oriented kind, offering a scant substitute for meaning through „motivation” (Sievers, 1994). Allowance for active meaningmaking, through the admission of ambivalence, would, like in mystical spirituality, make people responsible for and free to look for their own individuality and ways of expression. According to Carl Gustav Jung (1989), spirituality is essential for creative power and individual development. Managerialism does not encompass spirituality, because it is incompatible with the ideals of order and emotion-free rationality. „Managerialism” is, however, not a necessary nor obvious way to manage. Formal organizations have much to learn from anarchism, and such lessons could be helpful and inspiring (Guillet de Monthoux,
They can be managed in a more modest way or replaced by entrepreneurship. Instead of avoiding paradoxes, it would enrich organizations just to accept the paradox of simultaneous method and anarchy. This is not a compromise, nor an inclusion of order into anarchy. It is a process based on the acknowledgement of coexisting energies.

As I have explained in chapter 3, my view of organizing is very broad and basic. Organization is the word we tend to use to describe dynamic processes of collective sensemaking and communication that can come in many variants. I will now compare the self-actualizing with other well known variants which I have addressed above: the managerialist organization and the entrepreneurial event. I have borrowed the attributes from the well known Burkean pentade (1945): Act, Scene, Actor, Means, Aim, as has Bengt Johannisson (2005) who used a similar representation to present the the entrepreneurial event.

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<td><strong>Managerialist</strong></td>
<td>Working against uncertainty</td>
<td>Striated space</td>
<td>Adaptation to roles</td>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>To balance goals and resources</td>
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<td><strong>Managed</strong></td>
<td>Working against uncertainty</td>
<td>Striated and smooth space</td>
<td>Adaptation to roles and some individuality</td>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
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<td><strong>The self-actualizing</strong></td>
<td>Following the flow</td>
<td>Smooth space</td>
<td>Genuine individual</td>
<td>Heterarchy</td>
<td>To change self and reality</td>
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<td><strong>organization</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Entrepreneurial</strong></td>
<td>Acknowledging uncertainty</td>
<td>Smooth and striated space</td>
<td>Unique individual</td>
<td>Heterarchy</td>
<td>To change reality (and self)</td>
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<td><strong>event</strong></td>
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Tab. 2. The self-actualizing organization in comparison to other organizational forms.
Managerialist organizing is a way to work against uncertainty. The self-actualizing organization follows the flow, uncertainty is accepted and even welcome, as it leads to new discoveries. The entrepreneurial event is even more positive towards uncertainty – here it is acknowledged and cherished. It is out of the chaotic and intransparent reality that the entrepreneur brings forward new things, ideas and institutions. If she doesn’t know what is in the room behind the closed door, she can furnish it as she pleases. The managerialist organization clearly works in a striated space, the more striated the better. The self-actualizing organization is at home within smooth space, where spirituality can be experienced and explored. The entrepreneurial event makes use of smooth space, where it can develop creatively, as well as striated space, where it takes advantage of the friction produced by the meeting of entrepreneurial ideas and the protuberance and obstacles and turns it into energy. The entrepreneur enjoys some resistance and it tends to generate extra energy in many events (Hjorth, 2001). The actor in the managerialist organization is not the person but the role. People playing roles have to adapt to them. In the self-actualizing organization, the people accept and acknowledge their uniqueness in the process of organizing. The actor is here the genuine person. The entrepreneurial event is also enacted by unique individuals who can, but do not have to, actualize their potential fully in the process. While managerialist organizations thrive in hierarchical settings, self-actualizing and entrepreneurial processes fare best with a heterarchy (Grabher, 2001, as quoted in Johannisson, 2005)\(^2\). Finally, the aims of each of the organizing processes differ. The managerialist project stands apart as one which aim it is to balance needs and resources that are considered to be scarce. The self-
actualizing organization is about change: for the actors involved and for their reality. The entrepreneurial event is also about change, but its most obvious aim is to change reality. However, the archetypal entrepreneur is someone who take every opportunity that presents itself to learn and thus to change and grow as a person. The table shows that self-actualizing organizations and entrepreneurial events are similar, even though there are some marked differences between them. The most dissimilar from either of the two of them is the managerialist project, which, as I have pointed out above, does not mean that management and self-actualization do not belong together at all.

To manage means to balance goals and resources. To fulfill this aim and to keep uncertainty at bay it is necessary to engage in some kind of negotiation between different tendencies and people. It is a task of precision and grace. The managerialist solution to the dilemma of the delicate balance is to streamline and to make goals and people uniform. It is a more straightforward task than keeping a graceful balance and yet still keeping uncertainly at bay, which is yet another idea about how to manage. People make use of dark as well as light energies in them and they often engage both in their lives. We are human: neither entirely bad, nor entirely good. Human sounds proud – but also weak. Trying to set oneself above human weakness is usually a very bad idea, that can result in tragic consequences. It is an act of pride and is the mechanism behind many sufferings of the person who wishes to be perfect as well as those around him. Narcissism is one of the shapes that a desire that perfection can take. Emotional coldness is another. It seems that our weakness is at the same time our strength: by accepting one’s humanity, the person tends to accept others and life as well. Managerialist organizing is often based on ideals of perfection. Only rarely the intentions of a

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20 The heterarchy is a structure where power is dispersed and every actor’s uniqueness is recognized.
tyrant are entirely bad. Typically they are good – she wants to big and strong and rich empire or make everyone equal and happy or eradicate crime etc. She knows best what is good, and sets out to be so. She defines good and bad for others as well and treats them as her own extension. That way of treating others is narcissistic. Sane communication means respect for other people’s agency and for their personal boundaries. If someone trespasses the boundaries and denies others their feelings and agency, communication patterns that emerge turn into oppression and violence, no matter how noble the intentions of the initiative taker. The manager who rules this way inevitably takes upon himself the responsibility for much suffering. No self-actualization is of course possible under such circumstances.

Management does not need to be tyrannical or managerialist. Balancing of aims and people is achievable by addressing people’s light side and at the same time recognizing their human weakness and their separateness and agency. Uncertainty is perhaps not kept at bay as effectively with a graceful management style as with a managerialist and it may seem much less successful, especially in the short term. There is much more chaos, political negotiations and ambiguity in such a modestly managed organization. However, in the long term it may prove much for rational from the point of view of sustainability, responsibility and human needs and rights. And, as I have pointed out, it does not need to clash with people’s need to become themselves. It does not exclude other creative processes, such as entrepreneurship. Graceful management is a natural ingredient of organizing processes, whenever stability is sought after.

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21 That includes the tyrant herself: she is not realizing her true potential that way because she is human and the role of tyrant precludes humanity.
9.4. Narrative collage as a research method

The method used in this book is a variant of the story collecting methods I have used in parts of my research, which I described in Chapter 4. I will not repeat what I have said already but I intend to highlight a few additional points about the potential usefulness of the method. I usually have a preference for ethnographic methods, as they give a good picture of the intersubjective. They are close to practice and show reality from the perspective of the social actors. However, there must be a reality already well under construction to be able to be represented in that way. Ethnography is perhaps not the method of choice when we want to explore imagination. I have failed miserably with an ethnographic project when I tried to persuade Polish managers to tell me about their visions of the future. Being helpful and wanting to answer the question somehow, they instead told me stories of the past and, in some cases, stories about the present. But the future cannot be narrated because it has not happened yet. I am not the only researcher to have made this mistake but I am a very lucky one: my interviewees were kind enough to provide me with lots of interesting field material even though I asked completely wrong questions. The interest in visions was not a mistake in itself but the method was not suited for its exploration. In order to talk about things that do not exist, we need a medium and a language suited for and respectful of the imaginary. What I could have done then, if I really wanted to know what the managers’ ideas about the future were, was to ask them to invent a science fiction story about their company that is set, let’s say, 10 years into the future. I would have collected fiction, not fact and it would not become an ethnography. At that specific point in time, I was not as much interested in visions as in the actors’ everyday lives, so I accepted their framing of the topic and wrote down the accounts that the actors provided me with. Not only the topic and the method, but also my own role...
would have changed if I collected fiction instead of fact. The ethnographer is a modest and self-effacing presence and should be all ears and eyes, open to everything that happens in the field. As a story collector, the researcher becomes a more active figure, an editor and central author, initiating and also actively leading a conversation with others. So, it would have become an entirely different study if I had insisted on dealing with the managers’ visions of the future.

I am of the opinion that the elected method should fit the author as well as the studied subject. Not all things can be analyzed statistically and not all people should do statistic analysis. Perhaps many researchers can profit from the knowledge about how to do them but not all need to employ them in their work. It is the same way with artists: not all need to be sculptors or paint with water-colors. Some people are more inclined to a certain medium and technique at a certain time and it is only natural to follow the inclination. Similarly, the theme of the study can be shown and explored better or worse depending on the methods used. Creative methods such as fictive story collection are very well suited to the imagined rather than the experienced as real. Furthermore, the more imagination is used, the more the narrative logic takes priority over others (for example the scientific, fact-registering). The study becomes more like work of art than a fact based ethnography. The role of the researcher becomes more central and active, such as the role of the author of a visual collage. I have not assembled stories in an “objective” way and I have not removed myself from the process. I am very much in it even though I hope that do not dominate and I try to follow the flow of stories as much as I follow the flow of my own unraveling narrative. It is important to be faithful to the course of the narratives and react to the twists and turns that it undergoes. If I had insisted on one single theme I would not have arrived at the insight I think I have made thanks to my
story collection. The process of assembling the collage is like following a river, as opposed to
digging a canal. However, the editor does not need to follow the river passively and she is
more or less its source. I have let the collage happen but at the same time it is very much
about me or rather my engagement in its construction. If it is of interest to anyone but me is a
question to the readers of this text. I cannot say before I hand it over to others and get their
reactions and hopefully comments.

Every one would do the collage differently. Another person, interested in similar things, and
partial to similar methods, would collect different stories and would definitely not use the
same starting lines or story topics that I have chosen. Each study of this kind is unique, just as
each visual arts event is unique and as every entrepreneurial event is different. In this collage
I have expressed a part of my creative energies. Whether I have done it in an interesting and/
or beautiful way is quite another question and not for me to answer. What I can say is,
however, that it has actualized a certain current of my creative energies. And it is an
entrepreneurial event, for I have creatively worked with others in order to explore and extend
the boundaries of existing understandings, using as one of the media networks and
communication with other people. The other major medium I have used here is the
unraveling, exploring text, a quest undertaken in order to gain insight in social phenomena.
This is characteristic of a part of research in social sciences. It is an entrepreneurial event as
well as a research method.

Furthermore, the method is not only in itself entrepreneurial but particularly useful for
studying entrepreneurial and other creative organizing processes. As I said before, creating a
narrative collage is suited for the exploration of imagination. It can be used in many different
contexts where imagination plays a key role. In organization studies, which are my own field,
there are many such contexts, for example: the study of symbols and archetypes, organizational legends, innovative potential embedded in current structures etc, and of course creative organizing processes.

Bengt Johannission (forthcoming) proposes enactive research as a suitable method for gaining insight into entrepreneurship. The method is similar to ethnography, except that here the researcher himself initiates an event and through his participation in the creation gain an insight combined with authorship. Self-knowledge is necessary as a starting point. The researcher is strongly present throughout the process but should not dominate it. The event is not about the researcher but about the creative act. All human faculties of the researcher are engaged in the process, not just the intellectual but also the social, imaginative, reflective, emotional etc. The creation process is a collaborative construction of a new reality and therefore corresponding quite well with social constructivist epistemological perspectives. Enactive research differs, however, from typical social constructivist methods in that it is a quest for the unique, the new, and not an endeavor directed at linking the described phenomena and ideas with existing contexts and institutions. The researcher and the entrepreneur both seek to transcend institutions and to offer their creations to others. Another important characteristic of the enactive method is that it merges the perspectives of the actors and the perspective of the researcher. It is a method based on experience that presupposes the direct creation of the experience by the researcher herself.

The narrative collage is a kind of enactive research. Instead of enacting events or ventures, the researcher enacts the creation of fictive stories. Instead of working within the medium of social reality, the researcher works in the medium of co-authored imaginative fiction.
However, it holds all of its distinctive features, as listed by Bengt Johannisson, as well as shares its interactive character.

Bengt Johannisson (2005) places enactive research among other qualitative traditions, by pointing to its qualities. Its aim is movement, the role of the researcher is to take initiative, the type of interaction is based on experimenting and the result is an event. In the case of the narrative collage, all the above qualities describe the research process quite well, except for the last one. The aim if the study is narrative movement, to make stories happen. At the same time, the aim is also to gain understanding of not only the stories themselves, but the collective unconscious the symbols and archetypes that they use are embedded in. The researcher takes the initiative and the role as a leading author. The interaction is experimenting – the stories are told in order to free oneself from one’s experience, to actively make sense of the experience, to see what would happen if a different way was taken from the starting point. The result is, however, a collection of stories, and not an event. Maybe, however, if the stories are handed over the readers who are free to read them re-assemble them any way they please, it turns into an event.

The table below presents narrative collage as a research method to ethnography and enactive research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research method</th>
<th>Aim of study</th>
<th>Role of researcher</th>
<th>Character of interaction</th>
<th>Result of study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnography</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Observer</td>
<td>Reflexivity</td>
<td>Story (realistic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enactive research</td>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>Initiative taker</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative collage</td>
<td>Narrative movement and understanding</td>
<td>Initiative taker – main author</td>
<td>Narrative experiment</td>
<td>Story (fictive)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I have put ethnography into the table as an example of a more classical qualitative research method to compare with the two more innovative ones. The aim of ethnography is to gain understanding. It is in part the same aim as that of the narrative collage. Through both methods it is possible to map and explore cultural contexts and networks of meaning. The ethnographer should, however, play a more reflexive role in the research process. There are many variants of ethnography and in some of them the ethnographer is much more active (see e.g. Van Maanen, 1995), not to mention self-ethnography (Alvesson, 2003) where the ethnographer studies himself in the field. What I have in mind here is the classical ideal of ethnography, where the researcher is not a participant but an observer, more or less an outsider. The interaction is based on reflexivity, the researcher observes and reflects upon the meanings of the observed. The result of the study is a story – ethnography is characteristically reported as realistic prose (although there are, again, many other genres and styles of writing, see Van Maanen, 1988). Thus the end result of ethnography and narrative collage may be somewhat similar, even though the collage is a piece of fictive, not realist, prose. I believe that ethnography and the narrative collage are related and belong to the same interpretive research tradition. They can be used jointly to explore cultural contexts of organizing.

The narrative collage is an experiential method for gaining insight into social phenomena. There are several levels of experience in the process: my own – the collage as a whole, the authors’ – each individual story is a creative experience of the author, the protagonists’ in the stories, and hopefully, the readers’ when they get to read the complete text. Experiential
learning takes place not just at every individual level but in the interplay of them, in the layering of the narrative reality. The text is a story about stories about stories etc., and it is told in with the hope of inviting the reader to telling his own story. But at this point I, the author, lose the control over the text and hand it over to the reader. I cease to be the main author and start being one of the protagonists in the collage. The closing line of this text is, for me: “Once upon the time there was an author who offered a text to the reader.” But it is neither the opening nor the closing line from the reader’s point of view. The collage is now ready to be re-collected.
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