CHAPTER 16

EAST MEETS WEST

The Development and Methods of Crucible Research

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The institutions and structures of economic markets are in crisis, and along with this has arisen a call for innovative approaches to business education, business and leadership. Even conventional, influential world bodies are calling for radical change, and recognizing that this needs to take place in the actual mindsets of managers and business leaders. For example, the

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World Economic Forum 2009 Report raised the following call for action: "It is time to rethink the old systems and have a fundamental rebooting of the educational process."[1] Gary Hamel, in a seminal *Harvard Business Review* article, called for a "retraining of managerial minds."[2] Some radical institutionalist and Buddhist economists argue that these problems can only be solved through the transformation of the deeper structural relationship of institutions and culture. According to Joel Magnuson, this can only happen when a deeper, evolutionary transformation of human consciousness takes place.[3] Along with other wisdom traditions, Tibetan Buddhism has predicted this state of affairs through what has become known as the *Shambhala* prophecy:

> There comes a time when all life on earth is in danger. Great barbarian powers have arisen. Although these powers spend their wealth in preparations to annihilate one another, they have much in common: weapons of unfathomable destructive power and technologies that lay waste our world…. Now is the time when great courage—moral and physical courage—is required of the Shambhala warriors, for they must go into the very heart of the barbarian power. To dismantle the weapons, in every sense of the term they must go into the corridors of power where the decisions are made. The Shambhala warriors have the courage to do this because they know that these weapons are … mind-made. Made by the human mind they can be unmade by the human mind.[4]

The Shambhala warriors train in the use of two weapons: *compassion* (the recognition of our pain for the world) and *wisdom* (the experience of our radical inter-connectedness with all life.) Within this prophecy lies a possible approach for meeting the economic and institutional crisis: the powerful transformative potential that is at the heart of Buddhist practice. It was this understanding, along with the fear that seemed to rule much organizational life in the United Kingdom and which has since accelerated, that led me to create the Crucible Research team in 2002 to explore the possibilities of introducing secular forms of Buddhist meditation into organizations. I created this team as part of a research project at the Centre for Communication and Ethics in International Business (now the Centre for Transformational Management Practice) at Ashcroft International Business School, Anglia Ruskin University.

In this chapter, I discuss the inspiration and theoretical framework behind the project and set out the basic principles, as well as the empirical findings and problems that we encountered in carrying out the work. The underpinning methodology was that of action research, and in keeping with its methods, I also describe the ongoing projects and initiatives that have since flowered as a result of the initial project.

ORGANIZATION AND POWER

Organization can be said to be the set of institutions and practices of collectively engaging in the sourcing, manufacturing, and exchanging of goods and services that enable human beings to survive as a collective. This process has become globalized through new technology and consumer capitalism. One of the outcomes of new technology throughout the globe is that there is less and less need to relate face to face; relationships at work are increasingly mediated through technology and monitored through managerial systems such as performance management which bear little relationship to the tasks and the consequences of the tasks that are carried out. Within these systems, accountability is not registered through the effects of one's actions on others, but by reference as to whether one has met the abstract criteria of, for example, a competence-based system, where one's actions are reduced to a limited number of "excellent behaviors."

This condition is reflected in the way in which offices and daily work life are spatially organized. People can be linked up world-wide with China, Hungary, or America, for example, yet fail to keep in contact with those people with whom they are physically sitting. Because technological tools remove the sense of physical contact, the sense of working together physically as human beings, as a community or embodied collective is also decreasing. This encourages an alienation from bodily and sensory experience and overreliance on one's intellectual concepts about how the world is. While we toil in front of a computer screen, we may lose physical contact with, or even conceptualization of, the product that we are manufacturing or exchanging. The products of our efforts become less tangible; they are merely recorded on the virtual world of the computer and beamed across the world through e-mail. Actual things become figures on a screen. Achievement is reached through manipulation of these figures. As these figures lose connection with the material world they become meaningless; an extra 0 on the spreadsheet, a bit of fudging on the management accounts does not seem very important. This can lead to loss of an ethical accountability for the effects of our actions. Viewed in this context, ethics may become merely a question of how the organization presents itself to the outside world and how its members can avoid blame for their actions.[5] This danger was pointed to quite clearly several decades ago by the philosopher Habermas, who showed how the "systems world" could take over from the "lifeworld."[6] My team members and I developed *Crucible Research* to see how we might impact this situation.

Au: Overreliance is one word in Webster's.

The Workings of Power

We inferred that this state of affairs must have something to do with the workings of power. But this was not power relations as traditionally understood in the form of overt economic or social exploitation. These relations of power seemed invisible. There was no place to voice any resistance to demands communicated from senior management. A body of management theorists in the United Kingdom and Europe have shown how power relations are maintained through the way that people internalize systems of knowledge so that they are no longer able to question what is happening.[7] These studies draw in particular on the writings of the French philosopher Foucault, who showed, through his notion of disciplinary practices, how power relations are maintained by documenting and then measuring human behavior in specific spheres of activity. From this perspective, power works through the ways in which knowledge is classified, codified, recorded, and inscribed.

For Foucault, power exists everywhere and comes from everywhere and acts as a type of relation between people, a complex form of strategy, with the ability to secretly shape another's behavior. Foucault did not see the effects of power as negatives that exclude, repress, censor, mask, and conceal, but rather, as a producer of reality. Power, for Foucault, was both constraining and enabling. Foucault was most well known for his use of the metaphor of the *Panopticon* to describe the workings of power. This was an architectural design put forth by Jeremy Bentham in the mid-nineteenth century for prisons, insane asylums, schools, hospitals, and factories. This was to replace the dungeons that were used to control individuals under a monarchial state. The Panopticon offered a powerful and sophisticated internalized coercion through the constant observation of prisoners, each separated from the other and allowed no interaction. From this structure, guards could continually see inside each cell from their vantage point in a high central tower, unseen.

Au: IAP and APA prefers 19th, 20th, 21st (as in century) be spelled out.

My earlier study of eight organizations considered the human resource practice of *competence-based appraisal systems*.[8] It showed quite clearly how the micro politics of power spread throughout organizations through these systems such that employees were "divided" and partitioned into isolated cells. Those with access to the documentation were those with power in the organization, so that filling in a person's appraisal became a vehicle of this power. And further, employees' behavior became governed by the criteria by which they were judged in these appraisals. Thus the appraisal form came to have significance not merely as a document of measurement, but it actually defined the conduct and behavior expected of employees. As the language in which this was expressed was generally that of encouragement, there was little room for expressing resistance, so

individuals suffered from an internal dysfunction of feeling powerless, yet ostensibly being "empowered." These human resource systems are the products of a universalized managerialism that, at the time the study was carried out (1996), was just beginning to be taken up in both the private and public sector, championed by the growing number of management consultants who could sell such systems to an entire organization. The method has since proliferated throughout many more organizations—from private to public—even down to primary schools.

Since these systems offer recognition and reward based on prescribed behavior, then employees tend to internalize the behaviors and take them for granted as a normal part of reality. Those employees not behaving in this manner become emotionally or even physically excluded from the organization. Under these conditions, it is not possible to express resistance and therefore take responsibility for the consequences of one's actions, since the power relations are not seen or experienced. Thus, employees are placed in the situation of being told that one thing is happening, while often something else is taking place. This is the classic double bind of the wounded infant with an inconsistent mother. In order to make sense of the organizational stories, employees have to deny the reality of what is happening, so that they can feel that they are contributing to the organization. It is this dysfunction between what is said and what actually happens that leads to increasing levels of fear and depression in the workplace. It is in this denial that isolation and madness abound. It is perhaps this spawning of such systems that is reflected in the statistics in the U.K. that one in six workers suffers from depression.[9]

A Buddhist Understanding of Power

Buddhism does not historically offer a social critique since its main objective is the relief of individual suffering through enlightenment. In this sense, all the world is considered to be conditioned, and suffering arises from our ignorance of the true nature of reality. Human beings exist in a continual state of *samsara* which can only be relieved when they can see through into the true nature of suffering. One of the causes of this suffering is the illusion of a separate self, which is driven by the three poisons of greed, hate, and delusion. It was on his night of enlightenment that the Buddha saw through into the conditioned interdependence of all things. He released himself from a fixed sense of a self that constantly grasps to meet its individual needs and does not understand the interconnected nature of existence.

Au: The prefix *post* does not require hyphen in APA, unless base word is capitalized, an abbreviation, a number, or more than one word.

Several commentators have noted how the Western postmodern mindset is constructed within an economic system that has growth and profit as

the prime goal. As Loy pointed out: "A modern corporation tends to function as a socially constructed vehicle of *institutionalized greed*."[10] These corporations are coconstructed within the context of managerial ideologies that serve to break down resistance, so that employees learn to serve the needs and desires of an invisible elite. By their divisive and hidden nature, such managerial ideologies lead to an isolated sense of individualism with an emphasis, above all, on personal achievements of wealth and status. By their nature, they encourage behaviors that Buddhism (and indeed other religions) would say point to greater suffering. It is precisely this emphasis on individual greed that creates an environment of fear, rather than one that enables wise action.

Au: The prefix *co* does not require hyphen in APA.

Buddhist practices have evolved to breakdown this overemphasis on the attachment to the self. Buddhism can be conceived of as a set of practices, a methodology, through which one can gain a greater sense of interconnectedness and "transcend" an isolated sense of self. It offers an invitation to experience oneself in greater and greater depth and to experience how that sense of self is a mere construction. Throughout its long history, Buddhism has developed a subtle system of meditation practices that vary across the different Buddhist traditions. At its heart, however, is the intent to inquire into the conditioned nature of the human mind and transform the three poisons of greed, hate and delusion that are said to cause suffering. In all Buddhist traditions, meditation is part of the threefold spiral path of meditation, ethics and insight. By spending time in meditation, one develops insight into the way things are, leading to more ethical behavior since one understands the interconnectedness of all things. Ethics in Buddhism is considered to be related to the quality of the mental states with which one acts. If one acts in anger or anxiety, then one is likely to cause harm to oneself or to the other. More ethical behavior leads to deeper insights into the nature of reality. This is an ever-unfolding and deepening path, leading ultimately to full enlightenment.

Through meditation, individuals learn to loosen their connection to the self by recognizing that things are interdependent. With this realization, individuals can let go of grasping and act from a place of love, rather than from one of self-interested power over others. Furthermore, since Buddhism maintains that the world is socially constructed, it implies that when an individual succeeds in transforming him or herself, the world is also transformed. This would equally be the logical endpoint of a Foucaultian analysis, except that Foucault does not offer solutions or methods of collective practice, although in his later work, he focused more on theories of the self. It was on this theoretical basis, supported by our own meditation practice, that the Crucible team felt that Buddhism potentially contained both a philosophical and practice-based possibility for resis-

tance to and emancipation from the managerial ideologies that function through the imposition of power described above.

Buddhist Meditative Practice and Its Potential for Emancipation

Simple awareness practices form the basis for meditation. Awareness practices support the individual in recognizing how the mind is, at any moment. This leads to the meditative state known as *mindfulness* which is a natural mental state that is available to all. It is not a trance-like state, as some may believe. Mindfulness is most simply and profoundly understood as an awareness of how the mind is—not as an abstracted experience, outside of the physical, social or historical context in which it occurs. This involves recognizing how the mind is *in the actual context that the mind finds itself*. It is grounded in that situation. If one understands mindfulness as being grounded in this way, it becomes clear that the ground is of great importance to the effectiveness of the practice or inquiry.

In such a model, the individual is challenged to acknowledge that his or her behavior always contributes to all conditions that make up the situation as it is. It means taking a step towards taking fuller responsibility for the situation, in that the individual is located in an inter-penetrating and interdependent field of human activity. This practice takes effort, and is often met with resistance, as the practice breaks down the "ego" or the conditioned self. This resistance may manifest as either of the twin poles of restlessness or drowsiness, as the mind seeks to stay in its state of ignorance.

Au: The prefix *inter* does not require hyphen in APA.

As an outcome of meditative practice, an opening takes place that enables the individual to look more deeply into the conditions in which he or she finds herself. It is, of course, one thing to experience this on the meditation cushion, but another to be able to apply it in an organizational context where one is subjected to the strong collective conditioning forces explored earlier. However, if meditative practice can lead to greater awareness of the conditions in which one finds oneself, it holds the possibility for breaking through the conditioned channels of power described above when applied in the workplace. The challenge for the Crucible team was to see how we could find a way of translating Buddhist meditational practices into a language and form that could help individuals surface their internalized patterns of power, and to "see through" the conditions of power in which individuals found themselves. If this were possible, we felt that it could empower employees to become fully grounded and take responsibility for their own choices.

THE FOUNDATION AND METHODS OF THE CRUCIBLE RESEARCH TEAM

The History of the Crucible Team

The origins of Crucible Research go back to 1999 when I collaborated with Patrick Dunlop, then Chairman of the Cambridge Buddhist Centre, who was an experienced meditation teacher of some 20 years. The Cambridge Buddhist Centre is part of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (now the Trinatna Buddhist Order), which is one of the largest Buddhist organizations in the United Kingdom, with many smaller centers throughout the world. At the time, I was Director of the Centre for Communication and Ethics in International Business at Ashcroft International Business School, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, U.K. (now the Centre for Transformational Management Practice). Patrick and I carried out a number of different projects with schools in the Cambridge area. During this time we began to meet with Richard Huson, who became the third member of the Crucible team. Richard is also a very experienced meditator and meditation teacher. In addition, he had been a practicing psychotherapist for over 10 years. The three of us met periodically over a period of 18 months to discuss the application of meditation to educational and other organizations, resulting in the production of a joint conference paper titled "Unity in Diversity and Diversity in Unity: Consciousness and Myth in Organizational Life."[11] At this time John Wilson joined the team to take up a PhD scholarship at the Ashcroft International Business School in Anglia Ruskin University. He had recently returned from San Francisco where he had spent 8 years establishing a Buddhist center in the Mission district of the city.

Au: In APA , use numerals when talking about time: 2 decades, 10 years, 2 centuries, 4 months, 6 weeks, 4 days, 17 hr, 3 min, 5 s, 0.22 ms.

By the autumn of 2002, the four team members had come together, dedicated to seeing whether and how they could develop a shared language and methodology that could be taken into the business context. In March 2003, the team received funding from Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, to see whether these practices could cross cultures, and from this arose a further collaboration with the East/West Research Institute of the Buddhist college in Budapest (now the Budapest Buddhist University, the only state-funded Buddhist university in Europe).

Through our dialogue and practice, the idea of *alchemy* emerged—interestingly two of us came up with this idea spontaneously and separately. This idea had three benefits: it could relate to Western understandings and origins; it carried with it the notion of transformation; and the process of alchemy itself was mirrored in the *action research* methodology that the team had adopted. The process of alchemy, though traditionally associated with the West, is equally part of many wisdom traditions and is

an innate part of esoteric Tibetan Buddhist practices. Here was an intricate set of interconnections that carried a symbology transcending both time and space and East and West.

Method: Action Research

The traditional "scientific" modes of inquiry were not appropriate for the types of inquiry implied by the Crucible intent. Action research was ideal, in that its methods bridge the gap between theory and practice by emphasizing the experiential basis of knowledge and practical application of understanding. In action research, the intent is to study human situations in order to enhance the quality of action within them. The approach is flexible and takes account of the process of research as it unfolds. The theoretical connections between action research and Buddhism have been explored by Richard Winter, who acted as adviser throughout some of the project.[12]

Action research engages with an on-going situation in order to improve the understanding of those in that situation and, if possible, bring about change through collaborative action. The aim of the method is to describe what is learned from the process of change as it occurs. It is a method of encouraging positive change in the way a group of people work together. As much as possible, it places the power within the collective of the group. The group actively participates in all aspects of the research; defining the problem; setting aims; designing the intervention; assessing the results; setting modified aims. That is why the crucible was such a suitable metaphor to use for our team, since what happens in the alchemical crucible is an on-going process of transformation.

Just like in a crucible (where the alchemist also changes), the researchers are equally participants in action research. This means that the facilitation within the Crucible team is also subject to action research and therefore is self-evaluative and questioning. As Buddhist meditation traditionally is a personal and individual affair, combining it with an action research method meant that this provided a vehicle for a collective reflective process.

It was this type of conscious embodied reflection that we felt was lacking from organizational life and decision making. By setting up a model of collective reflection, we support one another both in reflecting on and changing our actions, even when we are unsure of the outcome. Action research provides an excellent model for this reflection at a collective level, combined with the individual practices of mindfulness and awareness that underpinned Crucible's methodology. In their common cycles of reflection (action research at a collective level and Buddhism at a personal

level), there is opportunity for tackling both the subjective and objective conditions of the power condition, as described by Foucault. We felt that this could be ideal in organizational contexts, in that a process could be set up that might be self-sustaining. This would mean that the community would have the opportunity to constantly develop and inquire into its own functioning. Often, change programs do not sustain themselves when individuals who have undergone such training find it impossible to maintain that change after returning to their own setting.

Research Design and Context

Our project aimed to develop and pilot a collective method of working that could be used to help organizations to surface and meet the hidden dimensions of power. One of our hopes was to enter organizations as consultants, but this proved difficult in the initial stages, so instead we ran a series of trials and workshops in various contexts from which, in action research manner, a collection of concepts and practices emerged as a Crucible method. Further projects and initiatives emerged both during the project and after that were directly informed by the people and practices involved in the original project. Table 16.1 indicates the initiatives that were set up as part of the original project, along with those that emerged afterwards. Much of our work addressed the idea of building community, whether this was in a business, spiritual, or educational context. All the original workshops had a planning day, the workshop, debriefing, reflection, and sometimes questionnaires distributed either among the team members and/or with the participants.

The Emergent Crucible Method: Ethical Inquiry

During the initial two years of discussion, we developed a Crucible process based our understanding of Buddhist meditation. This process underpinned nearly all of the workshops that we carried out in the different contexts. While the process appears simple, it is based on a subtle understanding of human consciousness and many years of collective sustained practice. We called the process "ethical inquiry," following from our understanding of the threefold path. The underlying conceptual and working principles can be summarized as follows:

Au: Threefold is one word in Webster's.

1. Establishing the Reflective Ground

The reflective ground refers to the physical as well as the emotional space in which the inquiry takes place. Participants are helped to be aware

of the space. The space is recognized as being significant in terms of it being the space where a sense of awareness and kindness will be evoked. The space—and in particular the ground—brings and holds those there in relationship to one another. This may be achieved in different ways, one of which is a walking meditation. This has the effect of slowing down mental, physical, and emotional processes, so that people can become aware of their feelings in relationship to themselves, to others, and to the context in which they find themselves.

2. Establishing the Crucible Through Encouraging a Sense of Embodiment

In this stage an awareness practice is used to encourage the individuals to be as present as they are able to be. The term "crucible" is used to delineate the space or ground in which fundamental change may occur, just as the crucible was the container for transformation used by the alchemists. The crucible or ground of transformation is created through attentiveness to how things really are, which is also the underlying method of Buddhist meditation.

This crucible is established through a strategic positioning of the team members, so that they sit in the four corners of the space, in order that they can evoke and then hold the energies of transformation that the process initiates. In terms of field dynamics, this meant that participants would not look to one person as leader but instead were encouraged to draw upon their own personal processes and reflection and to meet different parts of themselves that might be held back under normal organizational group processes. This is an important element in the Crucible process, as it prevents the usual authority projections from taking place, so the individuals can begin to surface emotions in a safe context.

3. Reflection

Reflection is a process in which participants are encouraged to reflect upon some aspect of themselves in relationship to their workplace and work. For example, in a business school the team has asked questions such as "What brought you into education?" A fairly simple question in itself, but when asked in the context of the reflective ground, then a person's deepest values may emerge. This can then be offered to the rest of the group through a process of dialogue.

4. Dialogue

This may take place in one large group or small groups, once the reflective ground has been established. The inquiry takes place in the actual situation, by which we mean taking into conscious account the ongoing dynamics of the emotional/ethical situation as it is, and using this as

Table 16.1. Birth, Development, and Unfolding of Crucible Research Work

1994 -7	Bronwen Rees carries out research on power and gender relations in eight large U.K. organizations			
1999–2002	Bronwen Rees, Patrick Dunlop and Richard Winter set up meditation for schools project in Cambridgeshire, U.K.			
2002	Creation of Crucible Research			
2002–6	*Workshop activities funded by grant*			
	Business *Action research* projects Cornwall Business College (6 month intervention) Ashcroft International Business School Workshops for staff. Workshops for students. Right livelihood Project Cambridge Buddhist Centre.	**Spiritual** *Building community* Cambridge Buddhist Centre (x3 weekend). North London Buddhist Centre (x3 weekend). Western Buddhist Order National Convention (x5 short workshops)	**Therapeutic** *Inquiry* into the Underworld (x3 weekend)	**Cross-cultural** *Hungarian Crucible team formed* 3 workshops in Hungarian Buddhist University. One weekend workshop in Nagykovácsi, near Budapest, Hungary.

2006 onwards	*Later unfoldings*			
	Business programs Contributions to Buddhist Economics conferences and programs. Teaching Buddhist Economics at Ubon Ratachani University Thailand. Keynote speech on Crucible Method at Second Buddhist Economics Conference in Thailand. Centre for Transformational Management Practice created from Centre for Communication and Ethics in International Business. Creation of journal *Interconnections*	**East West Sanctuary** Centre for Intellectual and Contemplative Inquiry set up in Hungary called East West Sanctuary. Series of meditation workshops. Development of foundation training in Buddhist psychotherapy. Workshop on creation of European Buddhist University. International seminars at EWS on sustainable business published in *Interconnections.* Setting up of "ethical inquiry" programs for young people working on community projects. Development of "holonomics" program. Creation of "eastwestinterconnect" webpage	**Research** PhD thesis "Ontological Inquiry" by John Wilson Development of holonomics at EWS Development of "engaged Buddhism" programs at EWS. International expert community writers developed through *Interconnections.*	Hungarian business consultancy set up. Coworking between East West Sanctuary and Buddhist University

much as a ground for inquiry, as trying to change it. Thus, if emotions such as fear or anger were present, the dialogue surfaced this, to see how it is affecting the more "objective" or "rational" elements of the situation. These are considered to be as important to the dialogue as is the actual intellectual content. It should not be thought that a perfect, reflective ground has to be established before the inquiry can progress.

CRUCIBLE IN ACTION: THREE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ACCOUNTS

The Crucible team carried out its work in business, educational, and spiritual contexts, each of which had slightly different aims. While the exercises changed from one context to another, the process outlined earlier underpinned our work throughout. What follows are three descriptions of our work: one in a business school, the other in a cross-cultural context, and finally some of my own reflections on the Crucible journey.

Account 1: Cornwall Business School

We carried out an intervention in Cornwall Business School that culminated in a two-day workshop with the senior managers and new dean. We had been invited by the new dean to establish new ways of working with the senior management team as the Business School was expanding. I spent 3 days over a period of 6 months interviewing all the senior managers about their roles and their perceptions of how the Business School should be grown. We decided to set up a 2-day program in order to improve communication and build a supportive team for the new dean. This program took place over the summer holiday. It was quite a high risk for the new dean to take, especially as the methods we were using were highly unusual at that time for this type of environment.

Twelve managers were present. We began sitting in a circle, and then set up the reflective ground through a walking meditation. People were invited to begin walking swiftly throughout the room, in any direction. Gradually participants were asked to slow down, and begin bringing awareness to their breath, to their environment, and to note the movement of their feet on the floor. They were asked to reflect on the nature of the foot, to note the contact with the ground, and to place each foot with a feeling of compassion and gratitude for how much, and how long, it had sustained the individual. This process took about 40 minutes, until there was a general settling of energies. The workshop was taking place in one of the offices of the business school, and there was some embarrassment

at first, especially from one of the male managers, who appeared to be walking in a very rigid way.

This was followed by the reading of a poem. One of the members of the Crucible Team then opened a dialogue and reflection on what we felt we were doing at this particular place and this particular time—and how we had gotten here. Each participant was asked to reflect on a moment in his or her life when he or she had felt most excited and inspired. This was shared within the group, and some very moving personal accounts emerged. For example, one woman shared that she came from Spain, and how her parents had fled from the Spanish Civil War, bringing her as a baby with them. The rest of the group, even though many had worked in the college for decades, were very surprised to hear this and other stories. Despite working together for such a long time, they had not shared this type of personal information, and they considered that it deepened and enriched their understanding and communication. It was very moving to hear what had brought this set of people into an educational environment and to learn about their inspiration to teach. The day came to a close with a meditation on the body, bringing people further into contact with their embodied sense of themselves sitting in a particular moment in time and space.

The second day again began with a walking meditation. Participants reflected on how they felt and on what their expectations were for that day. Unlike Day 1 which had focused on personal histories, Day 2 focused on the conditions and obstacles found in the workplace. This was more discursive, using flipcharts. Participants were asked to reflect in small groups on what they perceived as obstacles to meeting the aspirations that we had explored the day before. A member of the Crucible Team sat with each of the groups. At this stage, the energies in the room became more heated. This grew in intensity as we joined together into a plenary group, sitting once again in a circle. Real grievances about communication and expectations emerged at this point, some in relationship to the new dean. As a member of the Crucible team, I was grateful to feel the presence of the other members of the team who were able to encourage and sustain this level of disclosure. As the discussion unfolded, it became clear that much of this was about misunderstandings of the real obstacles faced at different levels of the school's hierarchy.

In the afternoon, the discussion focused on distinguishing between those issues that could be dealt with within the school itself and those that were outside of the collective control of the group. This enabled the team to work together as a whole and to surface both new and long-standing resentments that had affected communications.

In following up, we learned that as a result of this program, the Business School was embarking on a series of communication exercises, as the

managers felt they had benefited from the two-day program. This was encouraging news.

Account 2: The Cross-Cultural Challenge

From 2004-8, the Crucible team expanded its activities to the international arena and formed a collaboration with the Budapest Buddhist University who were interested in the Crucible methods and in developing their own methods for business. The Budapest Buddhist University is the only state-funded university in Europe. It was set up in 1989/90 by Dr Mireisz Laszlo and others in a window of opportunity when the Berlin Wall had fallen. At this stage, any religious and spiritual institutions were given the chance to register. Since that time it has expanded and now has about 200 people registering per year for a degree in Buddhist studies. It has developed its own MA, and an MA that will be offered in English. There are about 25 teachers, some full or part-time, and among its studies it also teaches four Eastern languages.

Initially, the U.K. team ran a workshop for people interested in our methods, translated by Dr Tamas Agocs, head of the East West Research Institute at the Buddhist University. The following is an account of the first workshop. There were eleven participants from different backgrounds: Some participants were students at the Buddhist University; others were business consultants interested in how the practices could be used; and yet others were psychologists seeking new methods.

We followed the usual Crucible method of a walking meditation as described earlier and then carried out a communication exercise where participants were asked to sit opposite one another in silence and experience the other person energetically. This was followed by a talk exploring the use of the Buddhist symbol *The Wheel of Life*, where participants were invited to compare the different realms with their own work environment. The six realms of the Wheel of the Life are said to represent different states of mind, and they can be loosely compared with organizational cultures.

After the workshop, we received a variety of diverse comments below are some of the written comments from the participants. They were selected to reflect the range of responses to the possibility of using such methods in their own work.

> Crucible is a good term because it is a melting pot for the values of different cultures. I think the method works.
>
> I liked the Crucible workshop; it came to mind very often during summer. I was fascinated by the communication exercise. All lecturers were very interesting personalities. All methods seemed very helpful … I would like to

participate in developing such workshops for use at school, for both children and adults.

It helped me see how to apply Buddhist practices in daily life; this is what I was wanting. The wheel of life is a good image to use, the teachings are universal, they should be made more accessible to people.

The above comments showed to us that the method we had developed had possibilities for use in cross-cultural contexts. We were pleased with the understanding that participants demonstrated after only a day, although some people were already familiar with meditation, so it was an easier process than in the business school context.

A further set of comments raised many other issues, highlighting the challenges of working in a cross-cultural arena:

This was not what I expected. I think this is about popularizing and selling out the Buddhist teaching. I think Buddhism is much more valuable than that, it should not be turned into a customer's product. It is better if it remains accessible just to a favored few.

I would be cautious about implementing such methods in schools and at companies. This should not be conceived as Buddhist missionary activity. All such practices should be done on a voluntary basis.

I think the method has a lot of potential, but there are some conditions that must be met. Team cohesion is very important. An external observer should be asked to report back on joint procedures, in order to ensure safety.… An oriental authority should be consulted. We should not advertise ourselves as Buddhists, as it would arouse suspicion.… Participants must be solicited on a voluntary basis. We must expect assaults from the professional community, so we should justify ourselves by doing scientific research. Some famous professionals should be included in the project.

These comments raise important issues of the translation of Buddhist practices into different contexts and their effectiveness in addressing issues of power. In a few countries in Europe, Buddhist practice has become a respected intellectual and experiential ground of knowledge and practice. There are several Buddhist monasteries in the United Kingdom and many different Buddhist traditions. The call for "famous professionals" perhaps shows Hungary's youth in this area, as well as a continuing Hungarian hope that Western Europe would bring riches. The comment about the need for acclaimed psychologists for professional backing-up/validation of our practices, with the simultaneous call for an "Eastern authority," indicates again a difference in educational histories. Hungary had been for many years subject to Soviet educational systems, and people were perhaps accustomed to holding the teacher in great authority without challenging him or her. The Crucible method of shared leadership could be seen as confrontational in this context. In summary,

the workshops in Hungary raised as many questions as solutions. However, after the initial three workshops, a Hungarian team was created, and a later consultancy created that worked indirectly with notions of awareness and mindfulness in business. So, we could so say that an indirect and later flowering of the project unfolded through integration into the different country and context.

Account 3: My Own Journey

Much of my own work in organizations had been concerned with issues of power, particularly in relationship to gender, which had been the focus of my doctoral research. This work emerged from a theoretical background of critical theory and Foucault's understandings of power. While these theories formed some valuable insights into the nature of power at work, I had become increasingly frustrated by their abstract and often very obscure nature. It was this that led me into creating the Crucible team. This provided my own ground for transformation, since I was engaged in introducing new and challenging methods into organizations to see if this could tackle issues of power, and also in bringing together a team of people who had no knowledge or experience in the business environment. Not only that, but all of us in the Crucible team had different experiences and had developed different meditative and therapeutic approaches. The setting up of Crucible was a slow and sometimes difficult process. Every time that the team met or carried out a workshop, part of our practice was to reflect as individuals and as a team. The work itself was creative, but also challenging to all of our ego structures.

As a woman academic in a business school, I have experienced much of the work as a struggle: a struggle to overcome my own personal conditioning in stepping forward; a struggle at times to lead the Crucible team; a struggle to introduce countercultural practices into a business school that largely makes its money from a curriculum based on managerial ideologies, as described earlier in this chapter. Every time I came up against my own resistance I learned to reflect more deeply on my own internal conditioning. One of the most difficult experiences was conducting the workshop within my own business school. There were roughly 70 participants in a long, narrow, echoing room. I was frightened that my colleagues would think I was some type of "woolly and pink" woman. A couple of my colleagues did actually walk out. However, when reflecting in small groups, most reported back on their love of education, combined with their feelings of frustration at being unable to share this with others.

Au: The prefix *counter* does not require hyphen in APA.

On the other hand, much of the process has felt deeply meaningful. For example, I led a 2-year series of action research workshops with my

team of researchers. This was largely discussion, but was always preceded by a meditation sometimes led by me, sometimes by John. I vividly remember one occasion when I was sitting in my office with three other researchers at the business school. I led a short meditation. Voices echoed outside, as students and staff moved up and down the corridors. For some reason, after the meditation, instead of dialoguing, we all fell, quite naturally and spontaneously, into a long, shared silence. I felt the tears welling up from my colleagues as the collective weight of our practice jostled with the activity and noises outside. The practice had opened us to one another in a way that contrasted starkly with the realities of the workplace. It was as though something missing and unfelt had entered as a presence between us and had enabled us intuitively to relate to one another in a different manner. There was no need for words.

Carrying out this work has transformed me and the work that I do. Since the time when I was developing the Crucible Method and Team, I have been invited to Thailand to teach Buddhism and Buddhist economics at a university. Here again, the principles of Crucible are evoked, as I am a woman and not a born Buddhist.

The work further precipitated me to set up the East West Sanctuary in the center of Europe—a physical manifestation of the principles of Crucible. Just as the research itself addresses issues of internalized power, so my work actively engages me in looking deeply into and changing the conditioned habits that would otherwise keep me repeating the same actions. Throughout this process, I repeatedly meet my own terror as I plunge more deeply into contexts with which I am unfamiliar. In accord with the hermetic statement "As above, so below," my external activities are equally reflected in the internal process. An important practice in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition is for practitioners to go to cremation grounds and meet their fear of death. The transformation required for me to reconcile these different worlds internally has at times necessitated such an experience, albeit in a different context. Despite this, I am still employed at the business school and find my place within it, even as I challenge its structures. The process has left me more open, more in contact with my colleagues, less fearful, and freer to be creative within different conditions. I would like to think that the process has helped some of my colleagues feel freer and more able to challenge their own particular conditioning.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS

Our project set out to develop a method of working that could break through the micropolitics of power as described by Foucault. We had felt that Buddhist practices, since their nature was to explore and break down

conditioning, might help to shift this cycle. Our project, which lasted for several years, has many interesting theoretical and methodological implications, some of which are summarized below.

Method: Embodiment

In the first 2 years, we created a method that we used in all the different contexts. While there were differences in our approach and participants had different expectations and levels of experience with some of the methods (i.e., in spiritual contexts some people were used to meditation), our aim in all of these was to encourage a collective sense of responsibility and awareness of how each person was being in the group. In other words, meditation and communication exercises were used to invite people to explore their embodied sense of who they were in different contexts. I had noted earlier that the lack of physical context with the environment and one another had, in my judgment, allowed the entry of those abstract systems of knowledge that Foucault had observed to be part of the processes of power. This was particularly evident in the groups that were already preexisting, such as the Cornwall Business School and the North London Buddhist Community. By opening a relationship with how things were really being experienced and allowing them to be voiced, the method was strong enough to sustain and improve these situations. By becoming personally embodied—present to the situation in all its conditions including one's own emotional states—it was possible for transformation to take place.

Resistance and Transformation

One of the aspects of power as described by Foucault is its diffuseness. It is not visible, and therefore there is no possibility of resistance, except through surfacing its tentacles. Crucible's ideas had been to provide a container where such processes could be unearthed, surfaced, articulated, and from that point, hopefully transformed. It was a point from which resistance could be made visible. For example, in the Cornwall Business School, resistance emerged on the second day. The deepening of the meditative process allowed this to happen. Meditation can be considered to be a process where the light of awareness is brought into areas of resistance. At this point a transformation occurs. By collectively bringing into the light areas of concern in the different communities we worked in, transformation was effected.

Unfortunately, we did not have the possibility of working for a sustained period with these processes to see the kind of long-term transformation that would be part of a future research agenda. To do so, would have been to have worked more explicitly with the notion of the three-fold path, as mentioned previously. Over time, the workshops would have given rise, we believe, to more ethical behavior, and this would have increased insight. What our workshops highlighted (in both of the business and educational contexts) was the entrenched nature of current managerial practices. As one of our team noted in the workshop at Anglia Ruskin University:

> How is it that there is so much powerlessness in the face of the passion for education? How is it that all members of staff retire to the sanctuary of their own classrooms without feeling confident to discuss this issue with their colleagues? How is it that we are all educators here, yet all feel unable collectively to carry out this task?

To us, this seemed to exemplify the way in which power divides and excludes at an unconscious level, according to Foucault. Despite this, the workshops and my own personal journey showed that when there is an opportunity for insiders to look more deeply into what is happening, there is a chance for something new to emerge—even if this is initially not long-lasting. The meditation with the research group, for example, definitely enabled some changes to be made later. One of the researchers later went on to make substantive changes in his own practice, and within his own workplace, which was a large corporation. Indeed, he succeeded in developing a center for innovation and sustainability, which he attributes in part to some of these workshops—at least as a starting point. Working consciously with structures of power gives individuals opportunities to make individual and conscious choices, even if they challenge the status quo.

Cross-Cultural Context

The cross-cultural aspect of our work highlighted some very important distinctions and similarities. Despite the differing comments that we received, the initial projects showed that meditative practices have the capacity for crossing cultures and inviting real dialogue. We would like to have spent more time on these projects, as the method could be translated into the context of international education where difficulties of cross-cultural issues are becoming more urgent. As these practices cut through the purely discursive or conditioned nature of our perceptions, I believe they hold an important key in a globalizing world.

Collective Leadership

One of the principles of our method is that of collective leadership. This was by no means an easy task. What is needed is an approach which allows each individual's creativity to enhance rather than distract from the creativity of the others on the team, as well as the overall performance of the team. As Patrick wrote in 2004 on a Crucible questionnaire:

> My understanding of the basic principles at work in Crucible are to foster awareness and its application in organizational settings. In a way this is awareness as the quality of an individual being seen as part of a group or collective. That individual's awareness is at the same time something which arises in dependence upon a group or collective. So there is a tension and an interplay between these two elements which we could in a creative sense term the mutuality of diversity and unity.

For many people, the shared leadership was experienced as an exciting part of the workshops. In one of the spiritual settings, in a workshop of some 35 people, one person commented that it was like having "four very different archetypes" in the room. Personally, there were several occasions where I was very grateful for the support, when I felt that the tensions of our work were growing. This was particularly important for me in the workshop held at my own university! It was not always necessary to have all four of the team members present, but there was clearly a different resonance when this occurred. Collective leadership was not easy, but it contained possibilities for personal and hence group transformation.

Ongoing Unfolding: The East West Sanctuary

While the initial program was to find ways of interpreting Buddhist ideas to improve the quality of organizational life, the project later unfolded in unexpected ways, and in Tibetan and action research fashion, the seeds that have been laid are now taking root in different contexts. One of the understandings in Tibetan Buddhism is that teachings themselves may be hidden and only emerge when the time is ripe. This may be several centuries later. So, while we employed the scientific method for the purposes of Western research, our understanding reached deeper and further into the recesses of human wisdom, and thus we ask the reader that the flowering of our work can be interpreted in different ways!

In keeping with the principles both of Buddhism and the underlying action research method, the work has taken another unexpected twist: the creation of the East West Sanctuary, Centre for Contemplative Inquiry, based in Budapest, Hungary—a symbolic and concrete manifestation of

the potential of the East and West coming together not only in terms of the East and West (Buddhist ideas and practices and Western philosophy and psychology), but also in term of East and West Europe. Hungary lies at the heart of central Europe, but has had a history of occupation, beginning with the Turks in the fifteenth century, then the Austrian Empire, followed by the Russians. Nevertheless, it has preserved a rich tradition of culture and wisdom, and draws its strength from its ability to look both East and West.

The vision behind the East West Sanctuary is to bring together Buddhist practitioners and researchers from Eastern and Western Europe dedicated to finding ways of translating Buddhist ideas into contemporary culture and society. This takes the form of international dialogue seminars using some of the methods of Crucible Research, which are often published in the journal *Interconnections*, published by Anglia Ruskin University. It works closely with the Budapest Buddhist University and is now engaged in joint research and teaching programs.

REFLECTION AND A WAY FORWARD

The work undertaken by Crucible Research in both the United Kingdom and Hungary was complex. At one level, it began as the simple application of meditation procedures in order to develop community in different contexts, but at another level, it represented an attempt to bring together different ontological and practical ways of working together. The work raised real issues: how can individuals bring together different methods (Buddhist meditation and modern Western psychology); how can we preserve the integrity of work without being drawn into the imperatives of globalized organizations? Can this effect long-term transformation? What are the ethical implications of introducing potentially transformative practices into organization?

On reflection, it is not surprising that we met with limited success in the business organizational context, as what we were doing went against the prevailing tendencies within business practice. Crucible did not offer solutions to problems, but rather attempted to encourage deep questioning of people's values and goals. What we were trying to offer has the potential to challenge the culture of organizations, just as spiritual practice—the background that all the team shared—is orientated towards a thorough revision of fundamental values. We now feel that we had a degree of naïveté in anticipating that such an approach would be welcomed by organizations. What we offered at the time was potentially disruptive. With hindsight, it is not surprising that we were unable to find commercial organizations willing to work with us, despite our efforts.

However, in the current climate, organizations are beginning to notice what they need is radical change, and thus the methods that have been developed may well be more welcomed now. Indeed there are several well-documented examples of the use of mindful practices or contemplation in organizations.[14]

The approaches used by Crucible, although based on mindfulness and awareness, drew on Tibetan Buddhism and alchemical processes of transformation. This is a more radical approach than many mindfulness practices and is at once the strength and weakness of the work. The collective, participative approach of mindfulness combined with ritual added a depth to our work that has greater potential for transformation, but also is more difficult to implement. Tibetan Buddhism has a subtle understanding of the mind that moves beyond cultures and time.

The work has now flowered into different contexts (see Table 16.1), and, in particular, is being developed as "*holonomics*" at the East West Sanctuary. The ideas are beginning to spread in ways that we could not have envisaged at the start of the project, which bears witness to the strength of the nonrational process itself. The work has unfolded and moved into different directions. To us, this shows us the power of the nonrational when it is allowed to come into consciousness and flow freely. This experience takes us back to the original Shambhala prophecy and to a deeper resonance with the forces of change that surround us currently. The ancient earth of Hungary provides the bedrock for this emergence. Hungary, geographically and historically, offers a bridge between the traditions of the East and the traditions of the West.[15]

Its potential strength lies in the possibility of finding ways of relating that go deeper than that of language, since the awareness practices work at emotional, bodily, and intellectual levels, and therefore of finding ways of communicating that undermine the common Western drive towards a task-based outcome. Relationship is privileged over outcome. Diversity is welcomed in an open approach that encourages a mutual exploration of experience. Transcendence is seen as a transcendence of self and a heightened and ever-growing understanding of the interpenetration and connection of our lives. Hopefully, this can penetrate deeper than the rhetoric of globalized consumerism and foster a united sense of community.

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NOTES

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12. See, for example: John Heron, *Co-operative Inquiry: Research into the Human Condition (*London: Sage, 1996); Richard Winter and Carol Munn-Giddings, *A Handbook for Action Research in Health and Social Care*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2001). Professor Richard Winter has acted intermittently throughout as mentor and adviser, and has himself written on the theoretical and methodological connections of Buddhism and action research. See, for example, 'Buddhism and action research: towards an appropriate model of inquiry for the caring professions in *Educational Action Research* 11, no. 1 (2003).
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14. There is a growing body of practices of mindfulness in organizations, especially in the health sector. See, for example the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice based in Bangor, Wales, U.K. http://www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness/ . Much of this work is based around the groundbreaking work of Jon Kabat Zinn.
15. Katalin Illes and Bronwen Rees, "Unlocking History: The Shadow of Hungarian History," *Journal of Eastern and Central European Management,* 2001. For further development of these ideas: look at eastwestsanctuary.com and eastwestinterconnect.co.uk

Au: The superscript for note 13 was not found in the original Word document.