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Contents

1. Awareness

The philosophy of Zen and the practices which go with it aim at enlarging our awareness. That is to say awareness of ourselves *and* our environment. Zen is an exercise in self-knowledge in which concentration is the most important method. When we consciously try to direct our attention to what we are doing, we will realize how it is often difficult to concentrate. We are frequently distracted. And just how frequently that happens says a lot about our mental condition. It is not a problem if, from time to time, we are distracted but if it happens often, then it is good to do something about it through training. Zen is a method through which we can learn to control our attention and improve our concentration. Zen is about learning to think what we chose to think so that we are more easily able to do what we want to do. But it is also about knowing that we cannot always think what we want to think and with that, understanding more who we are and what we are able or unable to do.

Often, we are only aware of a small part of our environment. There is nothing wrong with that so long as we do not imagine that it is otherwise. If we accept that we do not know everything, we will experience fewer problems than when we imagine that we know it all. The more we are aware of our environment, the more we will be able to live and work in harmony with it. Zen means practicing awareness. Take a good look around you and try to see, to hear or to smell what you would otherwise not have noticed. That is Zen and this perception exercise is a genuine Zen practice. In the Zen tradition there are many stories about Zen teachers whose perception is razor sharp and who continue to practice refining it further. It is known that the monk who leads the meditation in the monastery often concentrates on being able to hear the ash from the incense stick fall on the small dish below it.

Zen masters also try to hear from the sound of the bell being struck who is approaching for a personal meeting. Although the ritual of striking the bell is completely fixed, there is still always some difference between the way in which one or another person strikes it. It is a difficult exercise because the bell is struck only twice before the student enters. But trained Zen masters can hear the difference. On one occasion, the doorbell rang when a journalist was visiting a Zen master at his home. The journalist noticed the look of joy on the master's face and asked him if he had an appointment and knew who it was. 'No', said the master, 'I'm not expecting anyone, but I can tell you that it's an unusually enlightened person.' At the door was a nine-year old girl collecting money for the local theatre company.

These stories are intended to stimulate us to perceive more. Not so that we start priding ourselves on our powers of observation, but so that we can live in harmony

with our environment and so use our energy in the most optimum way. Our awareness will grow rapidly through systematic, daily practice in improving our perception.

2. Breath

At Ryutaku-ji, a Zen monastery east of the city of Mishima (Japan), sutras are chanted for an hour every morning by the Zen nuns, Zen monks and lay students. These sutras are partly philosophical texts attributed to Buddha and partly a form of prayer. What is unusual about the recitation at Ryutaku-ji is that one particular short sutra is recited thirty-three times in succession, in a gradually increasing tempo and volume. The last of the thirty-three recitations is shouted as loudly as possible: a remarkable deviation from the usual, steady sutra recitation that is common to other Zen monasteries. It is an effective way of warming up, which in the winter is also a good way of coping with the cold mornings.

Zen training extends the breath. It is the intention to recite as many syllables of the sutra as possible in one breath. Sutras have no melody so you can breath in at any moment. The recitation precedes meditation, but in essence they are the same practice. Also during meditation, the Zen practitioner tries to let the breathing become deeper and more restful. This reduction in the breath rate occurs spontaneously in more experienced Zen practitioners because in the course of time, Zen practice extends the breath. Working on one's physical condition supports this process. In the Zen monastery this takes the form of chopping wood, farming, gardening and sometimes also running.

Zen practice is not some competition to see who can achieve the lowest breath rate. It is about training the mind and body to function in an integrated way, to be able to remain relaxed during the stressful moments of normal daily life. For managers, this ability to maintain a restful, deep breath rate is particularly important: something that any experienced manager will acknowledge. There is a relationship between literally extending the breath on a physical level and, in the figurative sense, extending one's mental capacities of patience and endurance. A good physical condition is an important basis for this psychological stamina and can also prevent bodily tensions. It is only possible to achieve really good, great things in life if one has mastered balanced, deep breathing.

Concentrated recitation of sutras gives the Zen practitioner a sweet taste in the mouth: the same sweet taste that he, literally and figuratively, experiences after an intensive period of meditation in which he has managed to bring the breath to a deep and restful rhythm. The experienced manager knows this sweet taste of satisfaction after achieving a challenging goal. The effort does not waste energy and strength: on the

contrary, it awakens mental and physical energy. The recitation of sutras, meditation, sport and also management have at least one important thing in common: they are all opportunities to develop one's condition and the harmony of body and mind.

3. Ethics

At the heart of Zen is a faith in the essential goodness of people. This is really the heart of the Zen teaching. The insights that are gained through meditation are transmitted from one teacher to another from heart to heart, so to speak. Zen has no dogmas and no scriptures. The art of Zen consists in letting the good in ourselves and others emerge with the help of meditation and concentration.

In meditation we give space to emotions. We do not express them, but simply observe them. Through doing this we become more aware of our previously unconscious feelings and therefore also more aware of ourselves. We are then better able to steer our thoughts and actions. During meditation we try to concentrate, for example, on counting the breath. It is evidently very difficult to sustain full attention on that counting. There are many distracting thoughts which are triggered off by unresolved emotions. By giving these emotions more space during meditation they will be less disturbing to us afterwards. Through this we experience that, if we meditate regularly, we sleep better. But not only do we sleep better, actually everything goes better if we are not troubled by an excess of emotions that cloud our vision of ourselves and the world around us.

When we find that during meditation we are unable to think as we would like to think, the distracting thought contains a lesson. It lets us see what our emotions are. In daily life it is exactly the same. Whenever we cannot carry out some specific task with full attention and conviction, then there is something to be learned from the discrepancy. Apparently there is some 'double intention' at work which disturbs our actions. Through systematically observing these distracting thought processes through meditation we come closer to our true nature. That demands the necessary effort. Discipline is the great challenge here and a good Zen teacher can be a support. Daily meditation and closely examining our own behaviour is the Zen method to rid ourselves of old, unresolved emotions and act freely.

A manager who is trained in this way to work on herself and her behaviour knows, from a deeper self, the right course of action. And what's more, she will also be able to motivate the people around her to clear thinking and focussed action.

4. Balance

Money is a symbol for energy. Where our money goes is also where our energy goes. You could perhaps even say: where our money is, that's where our heart is. It is therefore good to take a close look at our expenditure and see if it also tallies with our real aspirations. Many people put aside savings in case the day comes when they have to tighten their belt. There is nothing wrong with setting aside some funds in reserve, but sometimes we are so hard at work saving that we have no time to enjoy life. That is why there has to be a good balance between saving up and using energy. Some people or companies are too kind and give more away than they ask in return. Here also the balance is missing. Being kind is very good, but when there is no proper balance, then it is difficult to sustain being kind to others in the long run. If you give a lot, you may also ask a lot. Always asking for too little is therefore just as unwise as always asking for too much: both cause tension in ourself and in the relationship with our environment. When you are aware of tension, it is good to check if your balance between receiving and giving is in order. Awareness and openness help to improve the balance and let energy flow.

To some people this may seem contrary to the idea that the spiritual person should work 'for no reward'. In a certain sense this is true. The sum of a life well lived is in order. Someone with good intentions who gives a lot will actually always receive a lot. However, getting too much from someone else seems seldom to lead to happiness. It is not long before the feeling of indebtedness arises. For this reason, if we have ample reserves of energy, it is better to teach those around us how they can also let their energy flow better. We recognise this idea in the analogy that it is better to teach people how to fish than just to give them fish. Giving them fish makes them dependent, but teaching them *how* to fish helps to make them independent. A good ratio in the balance sheet of cost and expenditure is a requirement for us to be able to contribute to our environment in the long term.

There is a story about a Zen teacher who does not thank a generous sponsor for his donation towards the building of a new meditation hall. The sponsor is most surprised by this, but the Zen teacher lets him know that he should be grateful for the fact that he is in the position that he *can* give. In essence, energy is not something we can possess. We can actually only pass it on and the more we pass it on, the more alive we will be. If we always consciously and freely let energy flow, then we will find that giving is as rewarding as getting. Giving and taking are then precisely in balance.

5. Intention

Many if not all of our actions are determined by the preceding thoughts. Those thoughts are largely influenced by previous experiences, which are in turn influenced

by yet earlier experiences and so on. This is why psychologists often look for the cause of mental problems in the patient's infancy. It is frequently the case that children exhibit the same thought patterns as their parents. The parents' attitudes to life are usually unconsciously passed on to their children who, in turn, pass them on to a following generation. Our real intentions are therefore often buried under the memories of many years, even though they have all that time been determining our actions.

Families in which the basic idea exists that money leads to happiness will maybe buy lottery tickets from one generation to the next. Or they will continually try to avoid paying tax. Conscious and unconscious intentions penetrate and colour even the smallest details of our daily lives. In a well-known Zen story, a samourai tells his liege, who as is customary walks behind him carrying his weapons, that he has the feeling of being threatened. He is disturbed because, apart from his liege, there is nobody to be seen. After the samourai has been in a bad mood for many days following this mistake, the liege owns up to him that it perhaps was not such a mistake after all. He admits that he had been harbouring the thought that he could have attacked his master in the back. From this it may seem that the samourai was clairvoyant, but that that does not have to be so. If we just look clearly at people's behaviour then we will often be able to deduce their intentions. The samourai made a drama out of the event in order to teach his liege an important lesson. He had of course already many times intuited the thoughts of his student, but wanted to give him the opportunity to chose to confess.

It is advisable to take a close look at our own intentions, because that is a prerequisite for being able to assess the intentions of those around us. For this investigation we can start in the here and now with questions such as: Why do I do the things I do? Why is it that I invest in this and not something else? Why am I now reading this? Why do I have certain friends? Why do I eat and drink these particular things? What am I trying to achieve and why? Why do I conceal information from someone? Why do I always make that mistake? Why do I take these risks? Why do I love these people? Why am I good at that?

The choices that we are continually making in our life and in our work are ultimately determined by our intentions. It is not so much our expertise as our intention that determines if we make the right decisions. The more we are aware of our deeper intentions for both the short and long term, the more we will be able to act in accordance with them. This will let the energy flow better, in ourself and in our enterprise.

6. Insight

The emperor of China (600 A.D.) had become curious about the monk from India who had established himself in his country and who drew so many followers. This monk, who was called Bodhidharma, would come to be known by many as the first Zen teacher. The emperor summoned Bodhidharma to his court to investigate his insight. He asked him: 'What in your view is the highest wisdom?' Bodhidharma answered: 'I do not know.' The emperor felt that he was not being taken seriously and demanded threateningly: 'Who do you think you are?' Whereupon Bodhidharma again replied: 'I do not know.' After that he made his departure, realising that he had incurred the wrath of the emperor.

From this story we can draw at least two lessons. The first is that it is not entirely without danger to share insights too readily. If we want to stay in touch with our environment, it is often better to pass on our insights more gradually. This is a lesson that is acknowledged also by many management consultants. If we are asked for advice about a problem that has just been defined, it is usually unwise to immediately present the solution. If we do that, it will seldom lead to any follow-up. Equally important is that the advice will probably not be taken seriously. To have an insight is one thing; to have that insight accepted by others is quite a different matter. Bodhidharma was clearly not looking for a commission from this emperor, but at the same time it seems that he also let the opportunity go by to impart knowledge to him. He will have had his reasons, of course.

A second lesson would perhaps be that the highest truth is unknowable and that, in essence, we do not know who we are. Bodhidharma seems to have been not only ahead of his emperor but also ahead of his time. Western philosophy has taken another fourteen centuries to develop the postmodernist view in which the legacy of Bodhidharma is, in a sense, elevated to the starting point: truth is unknowable. A wise manager is therefore one who knows that he also does not know. This is an insight which we do not need to share with everyone, though. It is better not to, even. But at the same time it is good not to lose sight of it, for only then do we keep an open mind for possible new insights. And that is fourteen hundred year old post modernist Zen. What's the right thing to do? Who knows? !

7. Mountains

A well-known Zen saying is: Before you start practicing Zen a mountain is a mountain, when you start practicing Zen a mountain is not a mountain anymore and when you are advanced in your Zen practice a mountain is once again a mountain. This does not sound logical, but yet it is quite easy to explain.

For someone who has never studied mountains, all mountains are the same, whereas for someone who has, no two mountains are the same. But for someone who has become expert and then moved on from that particular subject, all mountains once again have in common that they are just mountains. There is still a big difference in the understanding of mountains between those who know nothing about them and those who do. But someone who has subsequently become more objective about the topic knows that, while all mountains are just mountains, each one has its own peculiarities.

This applies not only to mountains but also to everything in life. A practiced Zen manager is more conscious of the fact that things are as they seem and at the same time, they are not what they seem. An experienced and successful manager knows all the management problems and knows that in every organisation the problems are essentially the same. But as soon as we have too much experience, we have to watch out that we do not become too distanced. Otherwise our involvement can diminish and with that our understanding for the people who are overwhelmed by a mountain of problems. This frequently occurring phenomenon is responsible for those in higher management making the wrong decisions. These experienced managers probably correctly see the overall problems and solutions, but have insufficient attention for those employees who are caught up in the problems and have lost any objectivity. It is then easy to end up talking at cross-purpose and misunderstanding each other, even when both views are valid.

Zen is training in continuously being aware of the relative validity of all opinions in order to see, from within all these relative truths, the whole structure. Through this we will discover that those who are struggling up the mountain of problems are just as right as those who are standing on the top. And so in this way a Zen manager is not only *above* the problems, but if required, very much in the middle of them. This demands an open and flexible mind and to keep the mind supple, the Zen manager trains through daily meditation. This mental capacity makes him as well as a successful manager, also a happy and respected one.

8. Character

One of the Ten Commandments says that we should not make a graven image of any creature above in heaven, below on earth or in the waters under the earth. In short, we should not make a graven image of anything. This commandment is in some cultures the reason to forbid figurative representation in the arts, as well as photography. However, if we interpret this commandment as a metaphor it could very well be a Zen

rule for managers. This rule is actually a whole teaching in itself: that we should not let ourselves harbour the belief that our views and opinions are unchangeable. In answer to the emperor's question about who he was, Bodhidharma said that he did not know, and in doing so showed that he had no fixed idea of himself.

A young Zen teacher once asked his Zen master: 'Do you think that you will still be teaching Zen in another ten years?' The master replied, 'No idea.' Then the young Zen teacher said: 'That's exactly what I thought. While it's true that you are a wonderful Zen teacher, I feel that you could just as well be running a restaurant or baking bread.' The master agreed that this was indeed the case and in turn asked the young teacher: 'And you?' To which the student replied: 'No, I wouldn't want or be able to do anything else. I have the feeling that being a Zen teacher is my life.' However ten years later he was working on a farm. He had not been able to support himself as a Zen teacher because he had kept so few students.

In this story, it is all too easy for us to identify with the older Zen master, yet that is precisely the pitfall which proves, rather, that we are the dull student. Once again, we imagine that we already know who we are. We think that we are the Zen master and that we have his flexibility of mind. But to truly have an open mind and no 'graven image' of ourselves and our environment means continually questioning where the master is within us, and where the student. For everyone has a flexible side, but also everyone has they're fixed preconceptions. And it is precisely through not imagining that we know it all that we are better able to see who we actually are.

Many managers boast that they are a good judge of people's character and can sort the wheat from the chaff. They imagine themselves to be born leaders but it remains to be seen whether, with this attitude, they will hold their position.

9. Quality

Quality is the relationship between subject and object. This is perhaps the best definition of quality that there is, even if it is rather abstract. The good thing about it is that also the observer becomes involved in the judgement of quality. Whether a book is good or not depends on the relationship between the reader and what is being read. For example a book can be very suitable for someone with a background and experience in the subject, while for someone else it may have little value. We know this also from the saying that one should not 'cast pearls before swine'. When we start judging quality, it often becomes clear that the judgment rebounds on us like a boomerang.

For this reason, appreciating art might just as well be called ‘self-appreciation’. People who are able to appreciate all art are probably able to value themselves throughout the most diverse circumstances. Art reflects the different aspects of life: modern art often deals with the chaotic side, whereas classical art has tended to represent order and harmony. Both aspects are reflections of our day-to-day lives. Sometimes art embodies peace, sometimes violence; but are these not in fact also the extremes that we recognise in our own emotional experience? Those who regard one piece of art more highly than another say more about themselves than the art they are judging.

Managers especially are busy judging the quality of the people they work with. And here the same applies: what the manager says about the staff applies to himself. A good manager will be aware of this and try to take account of it. A less able manager will spend a lot of time looking for staff that they regard as having the right qualities. This may work well in the short term, but a wise manager will give more attention to people’s potential growth and spend time on helping them to develop their qualities. For an organisation, this approach is much more important in the long run.

In the Zen tradition, anyone with some determination and the willingness to learn can become a Zen teacher. That is how it is now and how it has always been. At the gate to the monastery you will not be asked about academic qualifications, religious convictions or for personal references. You will be tested on your determination and if you endure that test, then you can begin your training. For every person has many qualities but the art is in being able to see them and develop them.

10. Example

In a Japanese Zen monastery, the monk or nun sees the master usually only when he is in his formal role. And at those times the master conducts himself impeccably. Zen masters are famous for their mindful manner of walking, bowing and speaking. It is impressive to see them in action. The walking is perhaps the most extraordinary because the role of dignified and solemn Zen master is acted out while, at the same time, the whole thing seems unusually supple and relaxed. It is precisely this combination of theatre and authenticity which has such an intriguing and above all inspiring effect.

This method of setting an example is of great importance in many forms of leadership, education and upbringing, but it has its limitations. In his formal role, the Zen master can perhaps sustain the delicate balance between ritual and reality, but how does he deal with it in the many hours when he is not performing his duties.

Whenever it becomes for him more to do with theatre than reality, he will probably experience a lot of stress. It is an open secret that even Zen masters can have a stomach ulcer. Besides this, there can be another sort of tension: between the role-playing and the inspiration that it should give. If the master plays the role *too* well, the student can experience the distance as being so great that he or she becomes frustrated.

If managers are particularly good at something, then it often seems to them that those around them are not good at it. If the boss is good at taking decisions, then he often complains about the indecisiveness of his staff. If the strong point of the group leader is having an intuitive feeling for how things are going, then it often seems that his colleagues are 'far too analytical'. If the management is distinctly optimistic, then they cannot understand the 'negativity' of the staff. A Zen master once discovered that due to a mistake he had accidentally made in a letter to his students, a number of them were unexpectedly able to correct it perfectly. The manner in which they did that pleased him so much that he decided to let it happen more often, in order to stimulate the students to do it better.

A colleague of this master understood this principle well and said that as a result he would be absent more often than was strictly necessary and that this would increase the independence of his monks. These are useful lessons for Zen managers. It is not the worst managers who dare to make mistakes or who are absent more than necessary. Precisely by *not* always being creative, energetic, decisive and so on, can these talents unexpectedly emerge round about you.

11. The Best Decision

Zen has two main schools and in one of these, the Rinzai school, the students under the guidance of their teacher occupy themselves with the study of *koans*. These are seemingly irrational, hardly solvable questions which often conceal a symbolic meaning. A well-known koan is the question why Bodhidharma, the first Zen teacher, traveled from India to China. This koan symbolises the question of the meaning of life. The student, spurred on by his teacher, will try every way possible to find the right answer to his koan. At a certain moment, after sometimes wrestling with one question for more than a year during which the master has not accepted any of the answers, the student will give up. 'I'm too stupid' or 'I just can't make it clear to the teacher' are the thoughts which come up then. Curiously enough, it is often the case that the student comes up with their best answers after these intense feelings of

failure. At such a moment, he lets go of reliance on his knowledge and sees reality as it is, instead of through the tinted glasses of his preconceptions.

Through years of koan study, many students learn increasingly to appreciate the game: living with a question and finding more and often better answers. During meditation also, the student repeats his question without consciously looking for an answer. And every time that he feels like giving up, after many 'wrong answers', a new insight can dawn. Deep 'eureka' moments only occur, however, after we have really intensively worked on one question.

As well as the formal Zen koans there are also the everyday ones. Questions which can preoccupy us for weeks, months or even years. As long as we can postpone the idea that we have found *the* answer, we can have new and often better answers. This seems to contradict the idea that the first response to a problem is often the best. Perhaps this is often the case, but if we have the opportunity, why not look for possibly even better solutions?

If we have enough time, it is therefore good not to draw conclusions too quickly or always strive for quick solutions. A Zen manager trains herself in learning to see, as quickly as possible, as many answers as possible. If we are not trained in this way, then finding even five different answers within a couple of minutes is too many. Once we are trained, we will often be able to come up with three times as many answers in the same time. We learn to brainstorm with ourselves and so we are able to make the best possible decision.

12. Paradoxical thinking

In the west it is often though that practicing Zen means that you try not to think of anything. To a certain extent this is true. The exercises consist mostly of something which seems like 'thinking of nothing', for example concentrating on counting your breathing. The observer may imagine that this is intended to empty the mind of thought and that is also relatively true. For it is precisely the thoughts that arise when we try to think of nothing, or almost nothing, which are very valuable. With training, our deepest thoughts and feelings seem to reveal themselves at precisely these moments. This important paradox is the foundation of many Zen exercises, such as 'thinking of nothing'.

To be able to see the overall picture, we need to be open to the opposite of our own view. This must have been the exercise that a Zen master had in mind when she was consulted by one of her students who had become involved in a conflict. After the

student had thoroughly explained his view of the situation, she asked him to present his opponent's view with just as much passion. At first, this cost him a lot of effort, but having started it became easier. By the time he was finished presenting this 'case for the opposition', he saw that the whole conflict could easily be resolved.

This is also the purpose of studying, for example, the koan 'What is the use of a bucket which has no bottom?' A factory owner who had worked on this koan for many weeks told his teacher that he really could not make anything of it. The teacher knew how much effort the man had been making with his koan study and therefore helped him a little to reach a solution. The koan means something like: 'What is the value of something that has no use?' An even more practical translation might be: 'What is the value of the non-functioning machine in your organisation?' The following week, the elated factory owner returned to tell his story. He had gone with this question to a number of his employees and had discovered that in one of the warehouses there was a lot of faulty, old computer equipment and other machinery had been dumped. He had cleared this out and by doing so had solved a pressing storage problem in an easy and efficient manner. He admitted, also, that for more than ten years, he had never actually bothered to go into that warehouse.

This practical example is also a symbol for what happens during koan study or meditation. Through our attempt to focus only on counting our breath, we delve deeply into the cellars of our mind. What we find there, if we are honest, are many worthless thoughts: opinions that once served some purpose but which have long ago ceased to matter. They only take up mental space and get in the way of new, creative thoughts. For this reason, it is good that we regularly concentrate deeply on nonsensical koans and the pointless counting of the breath.

13. The Workplace

Zen monks spend a large part of the day and night doing meditation. Besides this, they chop wood for the daily hot bath and grow their own vegetables. But most of their time, after meditation, is put into cleaning the monastery and its grounds. Sons of Zen priests who are going to succeed their father train for a number of years in a teaching monastery somewhere. And yet even after they have finished their training and returned to their own temple, they spend the first years doing almost nothing other than cleaning. So a well-known saying in Japan is: 'As clean as a Zen temple.'

As a variation on this theme, a western accountants company had posters made with the text: 'A clean desk is almost Zen.' The management hoped that these posters would encourage the staff to keep their workspace clear. It is good to do that because a clean work environment is a symbol of a clear, open mind. This has nothing to do

with some attempt to keep the mind empty. On the contrary, it is to do with making the mind receptive. In the west, this insight is not yet widely acknowledged and people are surprised to students in the grounds of a Zen meditation school sweeping up the autumn leaves. They often say: 'What a pity to get rid of the beautiful, autumn leaves!' What they are missing is that, at the same time, a couple of hundred meters further away, the falling leaves which land on old layers of rotting leaves are not nearly so striking as the freshly fallen leaves in the cleared Zen garden.

Zen is in Asia almost synonymous with clean and creative. The Japanese Zen garden is a conspicuous example of this. Or perhaps we should say an *inconspicuous* example, only to be appreciated by those with the sensitivity to see its subtlety. Each part of the garden fits together perfectly, even the blossom, which has just fallen. As sweeping leaves is to the garden, so meditation is to the mind. And so the Zen master who gave the tree a good shake just after the monk had been sweeping did not make the garden a mess, he made it more beautiful.

The manager who is inspired by Zen will create an atmosphere in which it is pleasant to work. A good balance is the aim here – between control and spontaneity, between culture and nature, between traditional and innovative. The Chinese understanding of the relationship between people and their work and home environment (Feng Shui) can help to stimulate awareness of this subject. Zen temples and Zen gardens were established by wise and creative people and the inspiring environments that they made have led, in turn, to new creativity. These gardens and temples are visited to this day by thousands of people who come for rest and inspiration. Our own living and work environment is of the greatest importance. Every space can be improved and this is often possible even with limited means. These are investments, which sometimes bring returns for generations into the future.

14. Energy

While the monks are making long pilgrimages, chopping wood or working in the garden, many Zen masters occupy themselves with calligraphy and with advising people outside the monastery. Both the calligraphy and the teachings of a Zen master are highly valued in Japan. So these activities also often mean an important extra source of income for many Zen monasteries. And yet, to this day, a Zen master who did things differently is held in high esteem. He preferred to work in the garden than to do calligraphy. When he became seventy years old, the monks hid away his gardening tools because they felt that he had worked hard enough and from then on should be able to enjoy his old age. But from that moment on, the master stopped eating, because he held to his basic principle: a day without working is a day without eating.

In the west we can recognise the same sentiment. The Zen story contains, as well as an obvious work ethic, another message. While calligraphy is also work and is regarded as the appropriate work of Zen masters, the story of this master bears witness to the idea that daily *physical* work is just as important as eating every day.

The lesson here for everyone, manager or not, is that you actually cannot do without daily physical effort. Every experienced gardener or athlete knows that physical exercise gives much more energy than the effort it costs. Meditation also gives energy, but some people draw from this the wrong conclusion this that meditation makes physical exercise unnecessary. The Zen story shows us that we should not do one at the cost of the other, something which medical science confirms time and time again. The Zen manager behaves accordingly and is in that respect an example to those around her. She tries to encourage them, in an appropriate way to engage at least a few times each week in intensive physical exercise. If she succeeds in this, it will be quite apparent that the energy in the organisation is flowing better.

Many people who ask a Zen master what they should do to have more energy will get another, more surprising piece of advice: get up earlier in the morning. This is surprising because it would seem that *more* sleep would be the obvious solution to a lack of energy. However, from the perspective of Zen philosophy and practice, that will seldom be recommended. Sleeping and eating have in common that less is better than more. Getting up early, in particular, gives a lot of creative energy. A Zen manager eats 20% less and sleeps 20% less and as a result has at his disposal 40% more time and energy.

15. The Goal

The goal and the path are two sides of one coin. It is important to realise that. One does not exist without the other. Some say that Zen is all about the path and not the goal. That is true, because Zen is focused on living in the here and now. If people are too preoccupied with all the ambitions they are striving after then they lose sight of the flowers that are in bloom today. But it is a great mistake to think that, because we practice Zen, we should never again have a goal. If that were the case, the beautiful Zen gardens of Japan would never have been created. No, the setting of objectives is in fact the condition for progress. At the same time, the ability to forget those objectives is the condition for seeing that today the sun is shining. Calmly and carefully reflecting on the goals we are trying to achieve often gives so much peace of mind that this actually helps us to be able to enjoy the path. The restlessness that

striving to meet objectives causes does not come from having those objectives, but from not being fully aware of them.

There was once a monk in the temple who started boasting about not having any more goals. As a matter of course, the monks are given new responsibilities each term and there is a certain hierarchy in these responsibilities. You can only become leader of the meditation hall after a number of years. When the Zen master heard about the monk who claimed to have no more goals, he decided not to give him any new task. After this happened for a second term, the monk was unable to contain his irritation and went to speak to the Zen master. The master reminded him of his announcement that he had given up striving after goals. On hearing his own words again the monk understood, from then on, how inseparably the goal and the path are bound with each other.

Practising Zen teaches us to become less attached to the goal and to enjoy the process. And this is exactly why the Zen philosophy and practice is so important for managers. In modern organisations, the importance of the goal is often so heavily stressed that the people in the process are forgotten. A manager had only been practising Zen for a couple of weeks when he came back to see his teacher. The teacher asked him: 'What effect has your daily Zen practice had on you?' The manager replied: 'On the way to work now I see the trees beside the cycle path, which I didn't use to notice.' 'Very good,' said the teacher, 'you're on the right track!' Two months later they saw each other again and the teacher asked once more what influence the Zen practice had been having. Now the manager answered: 'Recently I've been enjoying the trees also when I'm going home *after* work!'

16. Happiness

Everyone wants to be happy. Managers who know this, understand others better. People are essentially at one in their striving for happiness and differ only in their opinions about *how* they can achieve it. That there are so many different notions about how to achieve happiness is above all because people are frequently working in an unconscious and therefore unclear way. Many people have all sorts of 'clever' ideas about when they will be happy and how they are going to get themselves into that situation. These ideas are often only partly thought through because they have to be kept concealed. If we shared our 'clever' ideas, then maybe someone else would become happier from them and that thought is in itself enough to make some people unhappy. In this way the search for happiness remains very half-hearted and ineffective.

If we are aware it should be otherwise, then we can try to have more understanding for our own thoughts as well as those of other people. This is a difficult task because we tend to project our own feelings of distrust onto others, doubting their honesty. That is why whoever is honest about their ideas concerning the way to become happy will, by definition, be distrusted by people who are not so honest. It is also not easy to talk about these essential matters because they are tied up in our minds with a web of fanciful ideas. This is so complicated that many people can not work it out by themselves, let alone that anyone else can understand and share their thoughts and feelings. That is why the manager who can always bear in mind that everyone in their own way is trying to find happiness will have more understanding for other people and their sometimes, at first, incomprehensible ways of thinking and behaving.

Due also to this complexity, there are very few really happy people. It should be discussed much so that it becomes less of a taboo. It is already difficult enough *without* this taboo. If we compare the world's great thinkers, we discover a number of striking similarities in the methods they have recommended. An interesting central thought is to be found in an ancient Buddhist text, which says: if you are not happy now, you never will be. Perhaps this proposition could be very useful to managers, especially by practising yourself in experiencing happiness, here and now!
By practising being aware of our happiness for a few moments each day, our general happiness can immediately become greater.

This approach seems to the 'clever' people far too simplistic and therefore for that reason alone untrue. But those who apply the method will notice that it works. In the Christian tradition one also finds this formula in the saying: 'Count your blessings.' Daily meditation gives us the mental space and discipline for this openness to happiness that surrounds us to be experienced more enduringly. In this way we can let our experience of happiness today grow and share it more with others. A happier manager is a better manager.

17. Coincidence

A good manager stimulates the people they work with to think more about how they can improve their functioning. This optimum functioning is an important common goal for the individual and the organisation. Sometimes attention is given to this, but seldom in a systematic way. If it is even attended to at all then this is usually solely with the aim of dealing with a specific problem. In most cases this leads to improvements which are short-lived and not very far-reaching. A good manager, therefore, will encourage people both explicitly and in a more general sense to think more about their own optimum functioning. If one can generally stimulate employees

to have fresh insights, then this can have a positive effect on the way they function in many different situations, inside and outside work. An enjoyable and also useful ploy is for many colleagues to read a book, which need not be work-related, in their leisure time and to discuss the book together during breaks.

So also can a course in philosophy lead to more improvements in an organisation than a work-related training. A lot of time is wasted due to the fact that many people think too emotionally and not logically enough. We recognise this problem more easily in others than in ourselves and therefore some training in logical thinking can be an important contribution towards practical cooperation. Learning to think and reason logically can help us to recognise where our emotions and sensitivities lie: where logic ends is where the personal begins. It is not that this personal realm is either positive or negative, it is rather that we can *discriminate* between our own personal sensitivities and a logical thought process. In this way logical reasoning can increase our knowledge of ourselves. In an organisation this enables us to more clearly communicate our view to others. People who are not good at thinking logically are often unable to understand why other people cannot follow their reasoning. But that is logical.

There are many examples of illogical reasoning. One of them has to do with coincidence. At all levels in an organisation you frequently hear it said that ‘there is no such thing as coincidence’. But if you think about this logically then this opinion (which is sometimes quite incorrectly attributed to Zen) is untenable. And the opposite, that ‘everything is coincidence’, is equally untrue. People who have had no training in logical thinking often use statements of this nature. In one sense it is the easy option: you suppose that you have an explanation and therefore do not have to think any further. However, an illogical thought-process like this can easily lead to confusion. It is clear that this contributes very little towards a well-functioning organisation. Some philosophical training can prevent too much energy from unnecessarily being wasted through illogical thinking and work methods.

18. Subtlety

In response to a question from the Zen master Joshu, a monk gave the same answer on two separate occasions. The first time, Joshu reacted by telling the monk that he had got it completely wrong; the second time, he was full of praise for the same answer. What was going on there? We cannot be sure exactly what happened then, but in view of the fact that Zen is about the here and now, it is more important what we can learn from this story today. It could have been simply that Joshu thought differently about it the second time or it could have been that he had respect for the monk’s steadfastness.

But there is another possibility that is often overlooked: that there was some variation in 'the same answer'. Can we actually say the same thing twice? We can perhaps use the same words, but repeating them with exactly the same accentuation is more difficult. In essence, we can never really say exactly the same thing twice. The subtle differences between the times that 'the same' is said are therefore of great importance. The way that we greet each other may consist of the same words, but someone who is experienced in Zen sees it as a challenge to hear more in those routine exchanges.

There is a lot to infer from the way someone shakes hands, especially if we notice a difference between today's and yesterday's handshake. You sometimes hear people reproaching each other for having said one thing yesterday and now a different thing today. If that seems to be the case, then of course it is worth asking what happened, but it is a mistake to imagine that people can, in any case, say the same thing today as yesterday. It is of great importance for a manager to be able to hear the differences. Sometimes there are differences to be found in the non-verbal communication, sometimes in the words themselves. It is the differences that are interesting because in them the development is to be observed.

Sometimes the Zen master will ask a student to repeat precisely what the student has just said. In doing so, he listens particularly to the differences. There was a couple once, who came to consult a Zen teacher because for quite some time they had not been getting on with each other. The teacher spoke first to the woman and it seemed to him that she was not the cause of the problem. Then he asked the man the same question: 'What would you want to change about yourself?' The man's reply was: 'If there was some reason I should change, then perhaps it would be that I shouldn't work so hard.' The Zen teacher asked him to literally repeat his answer, so the man said: 'Perhaps I should not work so hard.' The teacher then asked him if he was conscious of the difference between his first and second answer. He was not. But when the teacher pointed it out, the man remembered exactly what he had just said a few moments earlier. While only a few minutes into the meeting, the teacher then said to the man: 'You are the problem in the relationship. Because of your success, you imagine you know it all and so you don't have to change.'
A Zen manager notices the difference between the one time and the other that he hears 'Good Morning.'

19. Condition

Body and mind are seen as one in the Zen tradition. Taking care of the body is just as important as taking care of the mind and therefore in a Zen monastery, the cook is regarded as one of the most important functions. Many companies could learn a lesson from this. It seems all too often as if the canteen and the food it serves are the

last items on the budget. If there is anything done about sickness prevention at all, it is seldom that any attention is given to the canteen food. The question is whether it might not be precisely *there* that investment would bring the highest return. In order to support themselves, many Zen monasteries in Japan run a restaurant which serves vegetarian meals. These restaurants are often counted among the best restaurants in the town. The age-old diet of the Zen culture is apparently very healthy.

The Zen tradition is known in Japan, not only for its fine cooking, but also equally for the upright posture in which the monks sit to meditate. The leader of the meditation hall regularly comes past to help straighten up the backs. Sometimes he places a stick against the spine to see if it can be even straighter. In no other form of meditation is so much importance attached to this. However, it is more than just tradition. Precisely because of this emphasis on correct posture, Zen practice is an excellent method of avoiding back complaints. Through daily practice of Zen meditation we strengthen the muscles of the spinal column in an unusually effective way. For a manager, having strong 'backbone' is most important, both literally and figuratively. And as well as the personal benefits, encouraging others to take up Zen practice can effectively reduce sickness absenteeism.

Bodhidharma, the first Zen teacher who established the first Zen temple in China around 1500 years ago is often also regarded as the founder of the eastern martial arts. He taught the monks of Shaolin Temple how to defend themselves on the basis of the Zen principle of non-aggression. The Shaolin Temple still exists today, but under pressure from the political powers the monks' training is no longer aimed at achieving enlightenment. Now, the aim has become control of the body and meditation is practiced solely to achieve perfect physical control. But originally, this impressive acrobatic tradition came about as an offshoot of the Zen training. So it is that throughout history, many other impressive offshoots such as the traditional Zen garden as well as the modern art and architecture of Japan have developed because people trained themselves in control of mind and body. In the Zen tradition, control of the mind leads to control of the body. And this integration leads in turn to control of the quality of our daily actions.

20. Learning

To learn means to be open. If we are open then we automatically gain new insights. An open mind is a learning mind. A student once came to his Zen master with a problem. After the student had presented her with his problem he went on to say that he probably knew what she would advise him: more meditation. The Zen master confirmed his guess and suggested that he should meditate for two periods of twenty-five minutes every day instead of one period. The student then asked her if she really

believed that this would solve his problem. She nodded and he went away and did as he had been advised. After a couple of weeks he noticed that the problem was indeed resolved and he returned to visit the Zen master. He told her that he had meditated twice a day and that the problem had been resolved. 'But,' he asked, 'how can it be that a bit more Zen has solved my problem?' The Zen master answered: 'To get to the bottom of that relationship of cause and effect, I suggest that you meditate for *three* periods of twenty-five minutes every day.'

This Zen master was trying to make it clear that through meditation we get insight into the relationship of cause and effect. By becoming better able to see through our emotions, problems can often almost 'solve themselves'. This is of course relative, because although meditation is natural, it also requires effort and discipline, as everyone who meditates regularly knows. In particular, it is not always easy to make time for meditation but if we do, it gives us so much insight and energy that we come away from the meditation cushion much enriched. The feeling can be compared to the refreshment we feel after intensive physical exercise. When we start to exercise, our body feels stiff and wooden, but if we persist then everything begins to flow and to feel better. By the time we are having a shower we feel great. Just as with physical exercise in which the muscles and joints seem to fall into place, so during meditation, the fragments of each day's experiences seem to come together. Through sheer hard work we become stronger, but if we do not take the time to exercise and to meditate we will end up stiff from the one-sided effort. And this stiffness makes us unnecessarily vulnerable.

Meditation is integration of what we know. This integration is a precondition to be able to continue to learn more. Integration in this context means not only intellectual assimilation, but also being able to put into practice what we know. This is the difference between knowledge and wisdom. The Zen master had another student, a maths teacher, who complained to her about the lack of interest shown by 'the dumb half' of his class. In order to bring about a change, she advised him to put into practice the most basic starting point of mathematics: 1 = 1. Startled, he asked what she meant by this and she replied that he should not promote one student at the cost of another. During the following period of meditation, he saw that he himself had encouraged the level of interest of more able half of the class by giving them much more attention. The other students whom he had ignored had lost interest. Many managers know the phenomenon of highly motivated and less motivated colleagues and therefore it is often wise to do some extra meditation. During meditation, we may realise our own influence on our environment.

21. Flexibility

You would be inclined to think that a sick heart beats irregularly, but according to the experts it is in fact a *healthy* heart that is irregular: it adjust easily to continuously changing circumstances. The unhealthy heart, on the other hand, has difficulty adjusting. It beats in too fixed a rhythm and has become insensitive to the changing circumstances. An inflexible heart, such as this, is often the result of our attitudes.

Our body is partly the product of our thinking, certainly as we get older. Not only the wrinkles in our forehead but also the way in which lungs, heart, back, stomach and not least, bowels function reflects our thoughts to a large extent. This relationship is now, in this time of so many stress-related disorders, more apparent than ever before. It is the emotions and particularly the *excess* of emotions that most influences the flexibility of our thinking. In this way, emotions also influence the bodily functioning, both in the short as well as the long term.

During meditation, we take the time to process the excess of emotions. That way we can prevent being preoccupied by pleasant or unpleasant thoughts while the actual current circumstances demand another reaction. With an excess of emotion, our thoughts and bodily functioning hobble along after the present reality and we are unable to react promptly and appropriately. If this only happens occasionally it may not be so bad, but a chronic excess of unresolved emotions leads to misunderstandings and sometimes to all sorts of stress-related sicknesses.

We can compare the relationship between thinking and bodily functioning to the functioning of an organisation and the management. When the management (thinking) becomes set in its ways then the organisation starts functioning less flexibly and it is not long before it becomes unresponsive and ‘diseased’. Nowadays society acknowledges this problem and seems to solve by having people, especially those on the higher rungs, changing their jobs at an ever-increasing tempo. In this way, the flexibility of an organisation and its management will be kept healthy, but not necessarily the flexibility of the people themselves. They retain their fixed opinions because, due to the ever-faster whirling management circus, the inflexible attitudes of individuals is not so conspicuous. So what seems to be a functional solution organisationally is often far from suitable for the people who have to work in such a constantly changing organisation depriving them of the necessary calm and growth. The high level of sickness leave seems to be an unavoidable symptom of the accelerating pace of society. The interest among management circles in spirituality is therefore quite logical because many spiritual practices are essentially a training in mental flexibility. Good, systematic spiritual training keeps people mentally flexible. People who have trained themselves in this way have less difficulty in accepting changing circumstances and it is therefore less necessary to constantly have people changing jobs.

22. Compliments

The age-old Japanese Zen tradition has many interesting aspects which are worth maintaining. We have already mentioned the emphasis on sitting with a straight back during meditation through which the time spent on mental training is simultaneously used for strengthening the spine. The special ceremony for drinking tea is another such interesting cultural element and there are many other examples which could be discussed. However, not *every* aspect of the Japanese Zen tradition is universally applicable.

One of the tradition in the Rinzai school which seems may be in need of renewal has to do with the sort of response that the Zen master gives to a student who is trying to answer a koan. The Japanese Zen masters are trained to emphatically shake their head in negation when they yet again are presented with an incorrect answer. They must certainly get strong neck muscles from this vigorous rejection, which is actually intended to spur the student on in his efforts. Their verbal response is also intended to be encouraging, but does not always come over that way. 'You don't understand it at all!', 'Far too intellectual!' 'You've got to do much better than that!' and other such reactions are common and usually further reinforced with a suitably surly, almost angry, look in the eyes.

A teacher who had come to the west understood that this tradition of negative feedback perhaps would not work so well there and took the opposite approach. To almost every answer, he said something like: 'Very good!' 'Please continue,' 'You're making progress' and so on. He came to have many students and they made good progress in their spiritual development. Surprised at the positive effect of this method, he advised managers whom he trained to do the same with their colleagues.

'Give at least five deliberate compliments every day,' was his advice. At first, many managers noticed that they had a lot of difficulty following it. This is probably not surprising because also in western culture people who, like the traditional Zen teachers, go around looking angry and dissatisfied are taken very seriously. We are generally a bit scared of people who look so grim and we are inclined to try a bit harder to keep on the right side of them. So many people react in this way that the 'sourfaces' are almost automatically promoted. In this way, quite a number of malicious bosses have, by accident, floated up to the top. It is therefore not surprising that so many of the current generation of managers have difficulty with 'management by compliment'. However, we can conclude that an enormous untapped energy field is being overlooked.

The experience of the Zen teacher who had come to the west was that those managers who started systematically giving more compliments were soon much more able to motivate people than before. It is really only in societies in which scarcity of resources is predominant that the primitive method of causing anxiety in people can work to motivate them with any degree of certainty. It can also work, of course, in prosperous societies with certain people and circumstances. But on the other hand, it is clear that the authoritarian style of management has only a limited function in an environment where people are enabled to work on their own self-development and the unfolding of their talents. Perhaps it is true that *only* compliments and positive thinking are not enough, but a ratio of 80% deliberate compliments versus 20% corrective feedback seems like a good rule-of-thumb.

23. Meditation

Meditation can be compared to looking in a mirror. If you look briefly, you can see whatever you want to. You can see that you are beautiful, or too fat, or too thin. If you take a longer look, then you will see more and more of yourself and the picture will become more complete. Then you see the attractive *and* the less attractive sides of yourself. It is also like this with meditation. During meditation, we meet ourselves, we are confronted with our own preoccupations and these can be both positive and negative. Often, a person's state of mind is written all over their face when they are sitting meditating. When we have had a good day, then during meditation we will tend to find ourselves recollecting the positive feelings we have had. By giving space to these emotions in meditation we resolve them and therefore to avoid that due to too much excitement we are unable to sleep.

In fact meditation could also be compared to cleaning your teeth. By removing the remains of the previous meal, you are better able to taste what you eat the following day. Many people feel the need to meditation only when they are having a difficult time because then they want to get over the bad experiences as quickly as possible and make way for what they hope will be more positive ones. But if we continue with the comparison to cleaning the teeth we realise that also even after a delicious meal, we still have to clean our teeth. Whether it has been a delicious meal or not, the remains do not feel pleasant the following morning.

Just as it is good to look in the mirror and clean our teeth every day, so it is also good to clean and polish our mind. After that we can start fresh again. During meditation we clarify unresolved emotions and so avoid that they disturb our view of reality. Many managers have difficulty with meditation because they prefer *not* to wash away their positive experiences. They enjoy the feeling of walking around flushed with the previous day's success. This means that their staff will have to work unusually hard to

live up to their manager's optimistic attitude. But of course, in the longer term, this will not work, particularly because the manager's excessively positive outlook is only being continuously confirmed by the increasingly hard working staff. In conclusion, the tension in such a department becomes too great despite all the efforts of the staff. Seeing the world through rose-tinted glasses has its repercussions, and such a manager will soon have to change job to avoid becoming the victim of his own behaviour. Although he may be able to avoid the 'boomerang' by changing job a number of times, he is heading for a burn-out.

Everyone knows this boomerang effect. Just when something very positive comes up, there is some misfortune round the corner. The opposite can also be true, which we know from the saying 'every cloud has a silver lining'. This is often the case because after a misfortune we are more alert and that can bring happiness, or to put it another way: we see the chance of happiness better.

We can avoid too extreme swings in our mental and emotional development by in general being more alert and attentive. Resolving our past positive and negative experiences gives us a fresh, clear glimpse of the here and now. In this way, daily meditation enables us, through our own energy and in a natural tempo, to let our talents grow and bloom.

24. Martial Arts

Zen and Aikido are like brother and sister. Aikido, a strongly stylised Japanese martial art, is in many respects a physical expression of the Zen teaching. It is primarily concerned with bringing your own mind and body into harmony, rather than defeating your opponent. From that harmony there is the maximum flow of energy and this means that sheer muscular force is seldom sufficient to get the better of someone who has trained in Aikido. We see this principle everywhere in society. David defeated Goliath and small, innovative companies cause tremors in the foundations of multinational corporations. The question is whether you can let energy flow and this is precisely what Aikido and Zen have in common: they aim to free the mind from blocks. This is also the relevance to management. A good manager is able to get the energy flowing in the team he leads. When the energy is flowing well and there is a creative, cooperative spirit, then that team will flourish in many different ways and deliver an optimum contribution to the company as a whole.

Many businesses and managers use the market pressure to camouflage or compensate for the blocks in their own ranks. In this way, you create an organisation based on 'muscle-power'. If we make 'beating the competition' the central policy, then many internal shortcomings may be obscured. Furthermore, this attitude will soon come to

determine the character of the whole company. The feeling of competitiveness will also arise among the employees. This makes working in such a company a war with, above all, losers. Although nowadays there is a great deal of talk about 'Quality' and 'Client Satisfaction', it remains the question whether these worthy aims are *actually* at the heart of an organisation.

So it was that the director of a large company consulted his Zen teacher with the request to help him do something about the dissatisfaction among his employees. 'I just don't understand it, we're doing very well in the market. People are proud to come and work for us and are well paid. But once they've started, then despite the good working conditions, they seem to be dissatisfied.' The Zen teacher said: ' I think that I can help you, if you can tell me exactly how dissatisfied the staff are. You should therefore do employee satisfaction research just as frequently as you do market research and bring me a report in six months.'

Six months later, the director came back to the Zen master and offered to renovate an older part of the meditation hall in gratitude for the advice he had been given. From the various employee satisfaction enquiries that had been conducted among the employees it was clear that there was a marked improvement, while at the same time, customer satisfaction had never been so high as during the previous months.

25. Dealing with conflicts

A manager who had been practising Zen for some time went to see her Zen teacher because of the frequent arguments in the team she supervised. As a result of this quarreling in her department, the rate of sickness absence was high. The staff were all trusted employees who had worked there for many years. Talking to them had helped a bit, but not much. The teacher advised her to buy a large glass jar and to fill it with swets. 'On the jar, write *Stressballs*. Tell the staff to take one at the moment they begin to feel some irritation. They also have to stick to the rule that they are not allowed to speak until they have finished sucking.' This idea went down well in the department and soon a lot of Stressballs were being eaten. However, after a couple of months the consumption of Stressballs dropped by 50% and so did the sickness absence.

It sounds too good to be true but it was with good reason that the Zen master in question was famous for his advice on conflict situations. His success was easily explained by the fact that he knew that people had to be motivated, in some creative way, to build in a moment of reflection before saying or doing something.

Those who meditate regularly know the effectiveness of these moments of reflection. Meditation is, in practice, often just a period of reflection. If we meditate we are actually preparing ourselves for whatever follows. This may seem to people who do not meditate to contradict the idea that during meditation you are not meant to think of anything. But precisely through the attempt not to think about, for example, a difficult meeting you can start thinking about it differently. In other words: you try to distance yourself from your current preoccupation and through doing that it often becomes clear that the conflict you have been wresting with was only imagined. Everyone knows that being able to distance oneself is synonymous with getting more of an overall view. So in this way, meditation helps 'automatically' with the resolution and prevention of conflicts. A Zen manager will be able to apply this experience in a way that is appropriate to the often hectic working conditions he faces.

It is *silence* which has such a beneficial effect because we become less fixated on the rational arguments which often only serve to reinforce duality and our own limited vision. A relaxed, creative silence increases the feeling of oneness. We experience in that silence a connectedness that often transforms a conflict into a possibility to intensely improve a relationship.

26. Time

In one of the famous Zen monasteries of Kyoto, a monk had the important job of secretary for one year. This is an important role because the secretary manages the diary of the Zen master. It is regarded in the monastery as a post of honour, but it is even more than that. You are the Zen master's assistant and if all goes well you should be able to learn a lot in that position from the intensive cooperation with your teacher. At the end of the year, the Zen master asked the monk what he had learned.

The monk told him that one thing in particular stood out. Of all the many guests who had visited the Zen master that year, it was the director of a company with more than 20.000 employees who always arrived on time and who never seemed hurried. This was in marked contrast with many of the other guests who gave the impression of being rushed. Furthermore, the monk had noticed that the director did not wear a watch or bring a diary. He had planned there and then the new dates for following visits and those appointments had never subsequently had to be altered. This was also noticeably different from many of the other visitors who were forever wanting to change their appointments.

The Zen master smiled when he saw the look of surprise on the monk's face and told him that it was precisely this director who was one of the few external students who meditated, on average, more than twice every day and was making good progress with

his koan study. In addition to this, the company he led was flourishing. The monk asked the teacher if he had an idea how this could be possible, to which the Zen master replied: 'A good Zen manager is in command of his time and is not controlled by the time. A clock is handy if an appointment has to be made, but an hour means for the one person something quite different for the other.'

If we are thinking clearly, then we are easily able to remember ten times as much as when we are only vaguely attentive. We do not even have to think especially quickly for this, it is more to do with the clarity and purity of our thinking. If we are in command of this, then we do not constantly have to check our own thoughts. Through indecision, you will become only tired and insecure. Many people train themselves to be well qualified in some profession and of course that is worthwhile. But when they are unable to manage their own thought processes then, despite all their expertise, they will be exhausted at the end of the day's work. This tiredness is not so much from the work itself as from all the thoughts which revolve around it. This is the difference between an *apparently* successful and a *genuinely* successful manager. The one becomes exhausted by work and the other does not. In addition, he takes good care of himself and his family and devotes time for that.

27. Rituals

In a Zen monastery there are hundreds of rituals. These can be very difficult for the newcomer who is still unfamiliar with them and he will perhaps wonder if it is all really necessary. However, after some time the benefits become appreciated.

In short, the function of a ritual is to heighten the quality of a relationship. This can be the relationship with an object, with your deeper self or with other people. Drinking tea, for example, in a Zen monastery is surrounded by a number of rituals. These rituals are the origin of the rich culture of the tea ceremony in Japan which to this day provides work for many thousands of people. In this 'culture of tea', the ritual of the Zen monastery is extended to become a complex art form, in comparison to which the original ceremony is quite simple. But it is very effective. This is apparent in the example of a monastery in Japan where Zen meetings are held every week for visitors.

Meditation (zazen) was followed by the ritual of drinking tea. The cook who prepared the tea was frequently asked for the recipe because everyone found it to be of excellent quality. The cook would give them the recipe, but time and again they would check to make sure they had got it right. In fact the recipe was quite simple but at home it never tasted as good as in the monastery. After a while, it became clear to the cook what the reason for this was. The tea in the monastery did not just taste so good because of the care with which he prepared it. It was as much to do with the

ceremonial care with which it was served and drunk. If we get rid of the ritual, the tea will not taste so good.

Everywhere that people are seriously concerned with achieving quality the importance of ceremony and ritual is acknowledged. Top athletes are a good example of this. Almost all of them have developed deliberate rituals around their preparation for a big event. Managers who want to improve the quality of their organisation will be well advised to optimise a number of rituals. Drinking coffee or having lunch together can be such a ritual. It is often the case that managers who have just started working for a company join in, but after a while stop because they are too busy. They underestimate the possible importance of these rituals. Many meetings also have a ritual character and those who are aware of this will be able to lead them more efficiently. It is definitely not the case that a ritual becomes more powerful the longer it lasts. A brief ritual can be very effective. The most important point is that everyone is clearly aware of what the ritual is for and actively participates in it.

28. Imitation

As well as many poetic koans, there are a couple of gory Zen stories which students have to make sense of. One of these is the koan in which a monk has one of his fingers cut off because he has been aping his teacher. This Zen teacher would raise one finger in answer to a question. As soon as he heard that his student was imitating him he summoned the student and chopped his finger off. As the boy ran off screaming, the teacher called after him and the boy turned round. At that moment the teacher raised his finger and the boy was enlightened. Later, when the old teacher was on his deathbed he told that he had learned his one-finger Zen from his own teacher. The question that arises from this story could be put in the following way: what did the boy realise at the moment that the teacher called him just after his finger was chopped off?

This koan may appear to be irrelevant to managers, but appearances can be deceptive. Is it not the case that many organisations are full of imitators? And is the copying of successful behaviour not praised in many books on management as an effective method of becoming successful oneself? What lesson can be drawn from the apparently inconsistent behaviour of the Zen master in this story? The student was punished severely for aping his teacher, while later the teacher himself admitted to having learned the method from his own teacher. There is, however, a difference between imitating someone and learning something from someone. Imitating someone who is successful can certainly contribute to success (as current studies also confirm). But if the intention is too egotistical then the success will not lead to happiness.

We can learn a lot from this koan by examining what we ourselves have copied from others and with which intention. We can observe this also in the people around us. Who is imitating whom and why are they doing that? In many management teams the behaviour of all the members is conditioned by the same way of doing things. The question is however who in such a team is actually being themselves. Or is what they have in common that they are often successful and rarely themselves? In this respect there is an interesting aspect of the buddhist 'catechism' in which everyone is called upon to express the wisdom of the Buddha, but that no two people may do this in the same way. This points to a style of management in which it is not the achievement of success that is central, but the authenticity of the person. The existence of the buddhist tradition for more than 2500 years is evidence that this approach works and probably brings more people happiness.

29. Writing

In Kyoto, many monks were students of a famous Zen master (Roshi). Four of them were very able students who had each spent more than ten years in the monastery. It was clear to everyone that these four would one day receive the title of Roshi. It turned out that the youngest of the four was the first to be given this title. Shortly afterwards, two more of them also received authorisation. The fourth left the monastery a year later without having become Roshi. Nobody understood why this gifted monk had not been considered worthy of being appointed to the role of Zen master. However, almost ten years after he had left the monastery, he was eventually given the title. Nobody knew why this had taken so long but rumour had it that this eloquent monk had been disinclined to follow the tradition of committing his thoughts to paper.

Of all the things we can do, it is writing which can most clearly reveal our thinking. That is probably why many people find it difficult, but it is also why it is a requirement of most educational courses to write a concluding thesis. In order to achieve the highest grade, even in a physical sport such as Kendo (Japanese fencing), it is obligatory to write an article about the sport before one can be made a black belt. Writing acts as a mirror which we cannot 'talk our way round'. This could be the reason that ther is so much written about Zen, contrary to the idea that the Zen teaching is transmitted 'outside the scriptures'. Those who write about Zen often do so to make accessible their own thinking for themselves and their teacher. That some of these written exercises in clarification are also published should be regarded as a byproduct of the essential process of writing as such. Here we find once more the

important Zen principle of attending to the process rather than the result. If the quality of the process is high, then the result will reflect that.

In this light, it is perhaps not so surprising that one of the four experienced monks delayed himself so long. This problem is also well known in the academic world. Approximately one quarter of all students have a great deal of difficulty writing their final year thesis and half of this group end up failing entirely to qualify because they are unable to put their thoughts on paper. If we recall the metaphor of writing as a mirror, it is perhaps more accurate to say: they do not dare to put their unclear thinking on paper. But those who have discovered during their training in a monastery or at university how much clarity writing can bring, are inclined to continue writing even after their training is completed.

A well-known Zen teacher in the most northerly part of Japan (Hokaido) was regularly visited by managers from Tokyo. Because they had to travel more than 700km to visit him there, the teacher asked them to write to him every week. He had to regularly encourage most of his manager students to maintain this writing discipline. An exception to this was one of the most successful managers who had started to enjoy the new habit so much that he asked if he could just carry on with the writing, after a year in which he had not missed a single week.

30. Enlightenment

A Zen teacher was asked once: 'What is enlightenment?' She replied: 'Enlightenment is nothing other than honesty. Honesty with respect to yourself, your deeper self the people around you and the world in which you live. That is why enlightenment is such a difficult matter. Many people think that honesty means that you dare to say what you think, but that is almost the opposite of honesty. Honesty is, rather: acknowledging how difficult it is to always be honest and seeing a challenge in working on this. That's why it's often said that if you meditate regularly, you are already enlightened, because you show by doing it that you want to work on your honesty. Those who say that they are not yet there, and at the same time, work hard towards realising the ideal are acting honestly!'

This explanation of enlightenment makes it clear why the world of business and the world of spirituality are seen by many people as being different and irreconcilable. From a dualistic perspective, you would not be able to do business and at the same time be honest. If we thoroughly examine this belief which many people have, consciously or not, then we realise that it is no more than a preconception. It would be valid only if business was understood to mean always having the most advantage. However, when balanced win-win situations are sought after, it is possible to be very

honest in the world of business. Then enlightenment and doing business can go hand-in-hand. Someone who strives for enlightenment will strive for maximum openness and honesty and it is a rule of conduct for Zen managers to put this into practice. The more we are honest, the deeper our meditation will be and so, in this regard, daily meditation can function as a compass.