
Untie the knots

Mondo with Roland Yuno Rech – Pegomas, November 2011

In the *Shobogenzo Zuimonki*, Master Dogen quotes the words of a wise man: « *In order to remedy the disorders of political life, it is like undoing a knot on a string, a rope: don't hurry. Untie the knots only after having examined it thoroughly.* »

This quotation brought up the following question during the mondo:

Question: *It is about the knots you mentioned. It came to my mind while you were talking: Why wouldn't all the knots dissolve at the same time, all these knots that come regularly, and so that afterwards we would be in peace?*

Roland Yuno Rech: If one practises zazen deeply, at the very moment of this deep practice there are no more knots. And they dissolve at once since they have no substance. It is only when we cultivate them, that we continue to pull.

Question: *Yes, they show up in the daily life, but in zazen, all right, I agree.*

R.Y.R.: We put energy, we produce a contradiction, a conflict, we don't longer harmonize with the reality, and as a result we produce knots. In zazen we put all our energy in the practice of the present moment, body and mind in unity, and there is no more energy left to produce knots.

The trouble in daily life is that our old mental habits come back; they reappear, even though we have experienced something else in zazen. Often it is not sufficient because there are old influences, *bonno*, old karma, that have left a sort of mark upon us, even though without substance - that's to say that if it can be transformed, it can be abandoned, but nevertheless, it still has a phenomenal existence, impermanent.

But all the same, it comes back, it keeps happening. Then, the only thing to do, is to practise constantly, as long as possible, the *gyoji*, that's to say to get back to the practice of the states of mind of zazen in the daily life, as often as possible. It is what I call, a sudden awakening followed by a gradual practice. In zazen there are some moments of total unity with vacuity, with the reality as it is. At this point there are no more knots, there is nobody that does zazen, as you mentioned earlier, no one to produce knots. But it doesn't last, that's the problem.

On the other hand what can last is the practice that – each time we practise in the daily life, not only when sitting in zazen, but by being totally one with our body, in our action or activity of the moment - establishes again the contact with the reality as it is, returning to a normal condition. And it contributes to wipe away the marks connected to our former mental habits or old karmas.

But it is true that it is not enough to understand something at once. Of course, if the understanding is deep it makes it easier to wipe away the marks or the footprints. The deeper the understanding is, the less useful is the process of getting back to a constant practice.