The Seventh Applied Precept:

I bear witness to the elevation of the self and the denigration of others by myself and in the world, and aspire to meet others on equal ground.

Traditionally: Not praising self at the expense of others, or,
Not Praising yourself while abusing others

You are sat in zazen in the zendo. Your mind flicks around the others present. How come everyone seems so much better at this than you, their posture more stable, their concentration implacable? *OR…* How come nobody else here really *gets* it? Their sloppy posture, constant fidgeting, and even their strained efforts at concentration — ridiculous! And then you remember Barry's dictum: *you can't do it wrong!* You see you've been judging yourself against the others the whole time: so who's the failure now? This is our entry point to this precept. Diane Rizzetto:

> In this precept we explore what prevents us from meeting others on equal ground. I do not mean equal talents, abilities, strengths or weaknesses. Rather I mean equal as human beings. This precept reveals the realm of competition, and how we often view life as a game of winners and losers… WUTWYD, 80-81

With this precept we'll continue to explore and deepen the themes we began to develop last time. How does our habitual judgment and ranking of ourselves and each other affect us? Is this 'natural', something we 'just do'? Or can we see it as part of the script by which we learn to be the social beings we are?

> Measuring ourselves to others is not just limited to speech… It also includes the actions we take with people. For example, we avoid, ignore or exclude others in our activities. We put ourselves above others not only as individuals but as as groups; no matter what side of an issue they are on, we may claim a superior, enlightened view. When we speak or act in this way, clarity, discovery and true dialogue are lost.   p. 81

Clearly, and as we looked at last time, our preconceptions and assumptions about both ourselves and others have a key role in forming our sense of who we each are in our relationship to each other: what we can call, in the widest sense, our identities. In fact, what kind of relationship is even possible, while we (often without even being aware of it)

are constantly judging and ranking? It is an obvious point, but one that needs stressing: I don't make up these criteria out of the blue, they are always social, collective. They reflect the aspirations, assumptions and prejudices of my society as a whole, and of the tensions and resistance to those norms inherent in this society. But I begin the practice of this precept, as always, in the immediacy of my own experiencing and awareness:

> *Stop. Look. Listen*. Notice the ways you measure yourself to others. As with the other precepts, study your actions, words, body and thoughts. You no doubt will find that there are certain favourites, and some that are finely tuned for certain people and situations. When you do this inquiry it's imperative that you work with the situation at hand.It can be any situation in which you catch yourself falling into measuring…

> Watch how your thoughts create a story about people rather than letting them reveal themselves. At some point you'll be able to catch it every now and again before you begin to do it.

> Now experience what it's like to engage without the story. This needn't just be with new people, but can be with your partner, your kids, anyone you've known for a long time.

> Try meeting them as if for the first time — as strangers… Turn your attention to their physical characteristics. What is the colour of their eyes? Look at their faces as if you were seeing them for the first time.

> Listen to what they're saying and how they're saying it — the words, the pauses, and the voice intonation…

> As you find your thoughts going off into a story line, return again and again to the person in front of you, while staying in touch with the feelings or sensations that may arise. p. 86-8

So this is work we begin off the cushion, in the reality of our everyday lives. Observe and become aware of our experiencing as it happens. But we can take this experiencing *back* to the cushion, as Rizzetto invites us to 'deepen the inquiry':

> Now you can ask yourself…what is the worst thing that could happen if I wasn't better than . . . ? Relax and settle into the question like an old sweater. This is the place of the dead spot. Don't push or demand an answer, but try to maintain openness so that the answer simply rises forth into your consciousness… this type of question is really an invitation for us to listen deeply. It is not a demand, and above all it's not a test. The answer may come immediately, or it may take days, weeks, months of bringing our attention over and over to what it feels like when that possibility arises. p. 88

The 'worst thing that could happen' will take us in the direction of all that we are turning away from, avoiding. What we fear about the world and fear in ourselves: shame, vulnerability, lack of control, loss, sadness, despair. And yet it's only by way of this recognition that our responses find the space to soften, transform.

> Listen to and feel your feelings and body sensations. Whatever your experience is, just let it rise naturally, breathing in and out. Let the thoughts about your experience melt into the experiencing itself as you breathe. In this place without comparison, you stand alone and present to the fullness of all that you are. p. 88

Note the relation between *listening to ourselves* and *hearing others*. To meet *you* 'on equal ground' I have to be prepared to meet *myself*. In judging, in ranking us in relation to each other, I hold you *separate* from me, but I also hold me separate from *myself*. One of Diane's students practices in the following way:

> I made a practice that every time I found myself sitting with a group of people — in the train on my way to work, in the meditation hall, in a meeting at work — I would go around the room, person by person, and observe how I experienced myself in relation to that person… What I realised… was that whether I experienced myself as better than or less than, the comparison always put me absolutely at the centre, in my own mind, of what everyone else was doing. As long as I was measuring I was leaving others out. p.89

This is an excellent practice, one we can return to as the months (years…decades…) pass. But I think this student's response only goes half way. As long as I'm doing this, I'm creating and reinforcing an image of *myself* as false and as frozen as that I have of *others*. I do not place myself as I *am* at the centre — myself in '*the fullness of all you are*' to borrow Diane's phrase — but I leave *myself* out, a surely as I leave out others. We can't ever truly meet, because *neither* of us are really present to experience. This is at the heart of two themes we'll explore through practicing with this precept. We'll stray into philosophy and psychology, sociology and politics. But this begins and ends in the intimacy of our experiencing of ourselves, of each other. What is human *relationship*, really? What does it mean to *recognise* each other? How does any of this relate to my ideas about you, about myself, and likewise to *your* ideas of self and other?

If I ask 'who am I?' I might think the answer will be in terms of what makes me special, unique, separate. But to have a sense of 'self' at all I need to have a sense of 'other': no 'me' without a 'you', and in fact no 'me' without 'us'. The moment I start thinking about or describing myself as an individual I can only answer in *social* terms, about my relationships with, and my similarities to and differences from, *other* people. So, if I ask you 'who *are* you?', any possible answer you can give presupposes the existence of the society of which we are a part. My identity as 'me' is created largely through this-not-that choices. Do I 'identify' as male or female, gay or straight, parent or child, Black or White…? My unique and intimate relationships also have this binary form: I am Gracie and Flo's *father*, Gaynor's *husband*, Pat's *son*… We make this relationship active when we *recognise*

each other's role in it — yes, I am the child to the parent you are! This is a first sense of recognition: we can call this *recognition as*: I will behave towards you as a child to its parent, I will accept from you what I recognise as a parent's actions towards their child. These 'identities' shape the possibilities of each relationship, they form the ground, the basic rules we know to follow, or wish to challenge. We might remember the *sankharas* again here: those ways of seeing, feeling and thinking that shape us and which are in the same moment shaped *by* us. So we are not talking about a set of consciously held ideas so much as a field of reactions and responses. In one sense these form our social 'roles' with respect to each other, what hold us together —for example as 'parent-and-child' — but also what keeps us separate — *I* am the 'child', *you* are the 'parent'. They place limits on how we behave towards each other, and while some of these are necessary and welcome, others are stunting and harmful: if our relationship only ever stays within strict constraints it will be incapable of growth, change and any real intimacy. How fast, how tightly do we hold to these roles? *All identity is relationship*, and all relationships bring identities with them. These identities are a part of the stories we tell, stories we tell to ourselves and to other people. It's both the good news and the bad news that these stories don't always corroborate or reinforce each other fully, but instead may conflict or cancel. As parents, we have all already been children, and perhaps in the eyes of our own parents, still are. The different roles I have as part of different relationships may well grate against as much as confirm each other. 'Who I really am' may be a very different person in my own mind from the reality of me as I take part in the life of the world.

Practice Question: what relationships *frame my different identities?*
How do the different aspects interrelate?
Would other people see me the same way?

Recognition = *Mis*recognition?

In *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity* the contemporary philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah agues that our sense of identity is always both mistaken and necessary. That we collectively construct beliefs and practices around what it is to be a 'woman', or 'English', or 'White', or 'working class', or 'Buddhist', and so on, and that while we can only function as a society with and through these ways of thinking and acting, they all actually involve distortion, inconsistency and sometimes downright lies about both ourselves and other people that have far-reaching and often very damaging consequences. Appiah uses religion, nationality, race, class, and culture as his axes of analysis, while allowing gender an important place that runs through all these discussions as perhaps *the* basic polarity of both social and psychological identity. From birth onwards we experience gender both as it is mapped onto our own body, and through evolving relationships with our parents, siblings and friends. Appiah's list is by no means exhaustive, and our sense of self evolves as multidimensional: in practice we have not *an* identity, but multiple aspects of identity that may reinforce, cancel, or simply lie alongside each other. So the major part of what makes me '*me*' turns out to be the sets of relationships, real or imaginary, that I have with other people, and the place I hold in turn in *their* networks of identity. It's this *reciprocal* nature of identity that's important, because so much of our reaction to other people is

governed by our own sense of who we are in relation to them. And that we react most negatively towards them (often apparently irrationally so) when they appear to challenge our sense of *who we ourselves are*. Following Appiah we might say that this is actually because they appear to challenge our sense of who we *mis*-recognise ourselves to be...

Which is actually quite a Buddhist conclusion... I am not an innately *separate* self, and I am not finally *known* to myself. What I think of or act out as my identity is the play of difference and sameness in my relationships in the world. But the delusion that you and I are *actually* what I believe you or myself to be has dangerous and far-reaching consequences when we, inevitably, *mis*-recognise each other.

*Practice Question: In what situations have I become aware of this misrecognition of myself? In what ways do the stories I tell about what it is to be **me** as a man, as a woman, as English, as straight or gay, as 'White'.... just not add up?*

Better Than You

All identity is relationship: if this play of identity were merely *neutral,* simply about our *difference* as a way of constructing ideas of self and other, then perhaps there would be little problem. We looked previously at how the way in which our identities are made is reliant on *judging*, and how this judgement implicitly or explicitly *hierarchises* each and every one of those identities. This is the case whether it's just our own view as to Harry's less than responsible approach to his social commitments, or on the wider stage of our governments' holding all Afghans or even all Muslims jointly responsible for 'their' attack on 'our' country. It's this idea of *judging* as the establishing of *hierarchical ranking* that this Seventh Precept brings to the fore.

Is life itself a perpetual struggle of all against all? We are constantly assured that it is, and from almost all quarters. From the foundational texts on the 'social contract' that implicitly underlies the existence of our society (such as Hobbes' *Leviathan*), to a typical nature documentary showing us graphic images of hunter and prey, or the 'battles' between males for dominance and control over the females of their 'harems', competition as expressed through status hierarchy is presented as both natural and normative. From the point of view of such thinking our alliances, co-operation and collaboration can only ever be contingent, tactical exceptions to the general rule. A classic example of this might be Richard Dawkins *The Selfish Gene* (1976), an anthropomorphising of the genetic basis of Darwinian natural selection to implicitly explain and justify social inequality of all kinds while masquerading as serious and objective science. Yet even in the decades following the publication of *The Origin of Species* itself, attention was already being drawn the the *inapplicability* of Darwin's thought to the development of human societies. Modern anthropology has consistently found basic *equality* to be the founding principle of most successful human societies, to which the highly hierarchised 'civilisations' of very recent times provide partial exceptions that witness the *failure* of the internal mechanisms common to all societies that keep inequality and hierarchy in check. Rizzetto's example of

the Tasmanian community re-enactment is such a mechanism, working so that the individual placing themselves 'above' others can:

> acknowledge their fallibility openly so they can put it into perspective, even laugh at it. This is… a very sensible way of dealing with our behaviour. Instead, many of us measure ourselves as *less than* or *better than* others, often taking action that has hurtful consequences that can reach far into the future. (p. 82)

I can't help hearing an echo here of something I sometimes find in Joko's talks, and often find in Zen more generally: the idea that *I* came up with this self-defeating strategy, or at the least wittingly *chose* to follow it. What the Tasmanian example shows is that all our responses are *community* driven: *we* as a community choose to react in terms of reaffirming hierarchical judicial ranking — despite the dire consequences for us individually and collectively — rather than being able to opt for a more intelligent resolution of the problem. What *I* want, believe, say or do as an individual is of limited consequence if others assent to our constantly reiterated attempts at ranking. What drives this process? We'll explore this at length in terms of the Second Precept (which following Diane's sequence we'll study *fifth*…), for now we'll merely comment that inequality is both the origin and outcome of dominance structures, inequality as the result of a society's losing control of its ability to limit the share of its wealth held by individuals or groups within it.

If *our* society has, in effect, chosen to allow the overlaying of an unlimited competitive ranking system onto the necessarily and increasingly co-operative nature of our lives, valuing some people and activities more highly than others and placing the ability to define and control that ranking system within the hands of a relative few, then all our interactions become potential exercises in *dominance*, in the attempt to gain, retain or extend our status and access to resources. While dominance hierarchies within most mammal species are based solely on individual physical strength and the ability to subdue a single opponent, those within modern societies are based largely (and even increasingly) on parental wealth and cultural capital. As Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett have demonstrated statistically in their seminal *The Inner Level* (2019), this 'heritable' dominance, allied with the myth of *individual* unaided achievement (and hence that my material worth — wealth — in some way corresponds to my worth as a human being) leads to individual competition whose ferocity is proportional to the levels of inequality across society as a whole. The myth of the 'self-made man' is the alibi of privilege: no wonder it is so relentlessly promoted by those such as Donald Trump. While I may dream of winning the lottery, in practice I will be more concerned with the gains and losses to be had relative to my immediate peers, while still envying those who have more, and feeling both fear and contempt for those who have less.

Hence our tendency to 'elevate self and denigrate others' is neither some personal eccentric glitch, nor our inevitable 'human nature'. If it is perhaps observable in *some* form at all times and in all places, it is today one of our defining attributes as a society. It is hence a directly *political* act we execute often unawares, and almost always without reflection. It ties us to an *agonistic* understanding and way of life: that our existence is a

permanent struggle of all against all, that the 'game of life' can only ever produce winners and losers. If we *do* treat our lives as the struggle of all against all, then only my direct or indirect *domination* of others can appear to guarantee my *control* over my own life. We can see the way this plays out across society — I will look towards the favour of 'superiors' at all levels who have the ability to promote my cause, and will join in the denigration of 'inferiors' to try to demonstrate my alliance with those 'above' me.

But, it might be objected, isn't this just the kind of behaviour we all learn in the playground/schoolyard? Exactly so. And Wilkinson and Pickett point to research showing that the bullying our children experience at school is proportional to the levels of material inequality within our society — children who grow up in more unequal societies experience levels of bullying as much as ten times higher than those in more equal countries. This also varies proportionally over time as individual nations experience increasing or decreasing levels of inequality, and hence is nothing to do with any notion of a distinct 'national character'. Our children are simply responding to the practices of the state of the society in which they find themselves placed.

We have an apparent vested interest in supporting those in power, and of demonising not only those whose object to that dominance, but whose mere existence gives the lie to the beneficence of the existing social order. We can return to our discussions on the previous precept here — by judging others in a way that 'freezes' them (*reifies* them) — we expose them to a generalised personal shaming *of themselves* — the poor ashamed *of themselves* for being poor, as it is our collective story that they have only themselves to blame. And so on with every other group we can *identify*, which is to say *fabricate* through the way we see and understand the world (back to the *sankharas*…) We all experience this from *both* sides: although I am White and educated I will still find contexts in which I am 'merely' a *woman*, or *disabled*, or *gay*, or *trans* or…. (or *young*, or *old*, or not conventionally '*good looking*', or *short*…or…) Or simply in some way, *less*. And find myself experiencing the personal or collective shame of being held to be so. Internationally this plays out as 'my country right or wrong', as the paramount nature of the 'national interest', as seeing any and all resistance to 'our' control as a 'threat', as a general hostility to 'foreigners', 'outsiders' and 'economic migrants'.

Practice Questions: *Return to our practice of noticing the experience of being situated on* either *side of these inequalities. How do I think they are experienced by the person on the* other *side? How is the experience of crossing from privileged side to less privileged, and vice versa?*

Recognising the Human

Of course I as an individual don't have to consciously *believe* all of this, I am caught up regardless in the pattern of the insecurity of perpetual implicit and explicit judgements of hierarchical ranking. Back to my experience in the zendo: the degree to which I feel *superior*, *inferior*, or even assertively *equal* to my fellow students reflects my general level of social anxiety and insecurity around judgemental ranking, whether that shows up as self-deprecation, narcissism or anything in-between. What *may* ameliorate this is, of course,

getting to know, *recognising* others as more than place markers for my own success or failure, more than competitors I must get ahead of or fall behind, more, in fact, as *fully human being*s.

I say *recognising* here in a second sense rather than the one we introduced earlier. This second is the sense in which Diane Rizzetto defines this precept: meeting others on equal ground. 'I do not mean equal talents, abilities, strengths or weaknesses. Rather I mean equal as human beings.' (P. 80). If in one sense recognition is *mis*-recognition, an attempt to limit, define, to *make an identification* (and the resonance with police usage here is intentional and revealing), this second sense is of an opening, a freeing, an embracing of the unknown and unknowable possibilities of *relationship*. A reminder of the Sixth Precept, and its aspiration to relate 'with openness and possibility'. To *recognise* each other in *this* sense is not to assign each other to a biological species, but as being an equal centre of subjectivity, a true other to whom *I* am an other, an other that is at the same time their *own* centre of subjectivity. A centre of subjectivity in that, like me, they have a sense of self, of their own vulnerability, of their having intentions, desires, fears. That, like me, they have a sense of their own continuity with a past, and with the possibility of a future. That you and I are, in these respects at least, permanently and definitionally, *equal*.

It is this fundamental equality which is at the heart of the 'problem' of the 'dialectic of Master and Slave' explored by the philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Hegel at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Slavery was both materially and intellectually very much a present force in Hegel's world, but rather than addressing the real ills of his day specifically, his writing aims at better understanding the nature of human subjectivity itself and of the contradiction inherent in all domination and hierarchical ranking, a problem potentially present in all human relationships. It is ridiculous to try to summarise here this argument that Hegel evolved over many hundreds of pages (does anyone remember Monty Python's 'Proust Summarising Contest'?), but, broadly, the paradox is as follows. Wanting power and security, the Master enslaves the *other* by force, who henceforth becomes his Slave. His own material needs are entirely provided by the Slave, but only because he wields the power of life and death over this other. This is what makes him 'The Master'. The Slave no longer has any right to anything, he is wholly dependent upon the Master's demands, even his whim, for his very life. He no longer can manifest even his *will* in any independent way. And. Yet. The Master is now also dependent upon the Slave, both materially and psychologically. Materially he is dependent on the slave's labour, and on the Slave's compliance, forced as it is by the threat of violence. His power over the slave is finally entirely negative: 'do this or I will kill you!' He is no more *human* in the Slave's eyes than a wild tiger or an earthquake. Equally, the Slave is not human in the Master's eyes, he's simply a piece of clever livestock you force to *your* will. Yet to *be* the 'Master of the Slave' (in a way different from being, say, the *owner* of a cow…) he needs the Slave to *offer* him *recognition* as to his (the Master's) being *truly human*, he needs there to be exactly that *relationship* between them which is in reality entirely lacking. Any recognition the Slave can offer is worthless — and in fact meaningless — because the Slave is by definition not an equal *subject*. *Only* an equal can offer this recognition, and by enslaving the Slave, the Master has rendered this impossible…

This is a hugely powerful way of stating the mutual necessity we all have of each other: 'I' am meaningless, inconceivable, impossible without 'you'. To be me, to be *real*, in this sense, I require you to be real also, to be 'like me' but *not-me*, to be the *other* that *shows me I am me*. To the extent I control or dominate you, you lose your independence from me, and hence I lose my own being, my own chance of being truly seen, recognised. Is it any wonder that control, domination bring with them an often crippling insecurity and anxiety that demands always more and more again? A bigness, that in Hannah Arendt's phrase, is always finally impotent? Once more, far from being some annoying and unhelpful quirk, we see that the 'elevation of the self and the denigration of others' touches into the heart of what is at stake in being human.

> *Practice Question: How do these two very different senses of 'recognition' show up in my intimate relationships?*
> *Can I see elements of both?*
> *And in the my relationships in the wider world?*

Maybe I could be the U for U, and U could be the U for Me too…
(Arrested Development: 'U', from *3 Years, 5 Months and 2 Days in the Life Of*)

Psychoanalyst and feminist theorist Jessica Benjamin has taken Hegel's dialectic as the starting point for her understanding of the nature of *relationship* in the sense we have begun to develop above. Rather than our 'self' being a separate, independent and permanent 'thing' — or merely an unhelpful 'delusion' — Benjamin uses a contemporary understanding of child development to explore how it is that I come into being as 'me', and the dependence of that sense of self on the necessity of there also being 'you'. She charts how from our earliest years it is only through our growing awareness of the *other* in open and active mutual relationship that we learn what it is to *be* a 'self', *this* self. In the beginning it is in my relationship with my 'mother' or other close caregiver that I come to have a growing awareness of 'you': your simultaneous separation and similarity as a centre of intention and of action and reaction, and so come to be reciprocally aware that 'I' have a sense of 'me' that is like 'your' sense of 'you'. I become aware that 'we' engage, interact, relate, and by doing so come to *recognise* each other. I experience your pleasure in *me*, *your* pleasure in *my* pleasure, and *my* pleasure in *yours*. I learn too that you can be hurt, as can I, and that we are alike in this sense too. We are *different*, but *alike*, and we *matter* to ourselves because we each show the other that they *matter* to us. There is joy and delight in our relating, and sadness, anger and perhaps despair when as it must this recognition falters and, temporarily, fails. This mutual recognition, this shared *mattering* is in a sense always provisional, always found and lost and (hopefully) found again. And when recognition *does* falter and is lost, how do I *experience* this, whether I am an infant or an adult? To use Philip Bromberg's terms: in relationship we come to share self-states and by doing so affirm our *pleasure* in each other. But if this consistently *fails* to happen, the result (as we saw with our previous use of Bromberg) is my experiencing a chronic shame: a *global* judgement of my *not* mattering, a not mattering I interpret as my worthlessness, unloveableness or badness. Even of my own *non-existence*.

So our mutual recognition is not a single or simple *event*, but a permanent and evolving process of relationship *between* us that embodies the deep paradox of what it is to be a 'self': that a self alone is inconceivable, that self is *always* relationship. As we have explored above, to be a 'subject' in this sense is to experience myself as *sharing* a world with others able to interact with me as we each intentionally affect the world outside, and each experience our vulnerability in that world. Only thus can 'I' ever come to see the world as actually *existing outside* my fantasies, wishes and imagination. Your otherness from me actually depends on me realising that we are fundamentally alike: sentient beings with both agency and vulnerability. This is the basis of our mutual recognition, a recognition that is constantly reinforced or challenged. If I feel like I'm only an object to you, a mere 'thing', then I can't be 'me', and so I will experience my subjectivity as challenged or denied (and so in one sense non-existent). If I feel that you are only an object to me, a thing to be used or ignored at my whim, then there is no actual 'you' to confirm me as 'me'. You see the problem? Only if we can recognise each other as true *subjects* can we ever be sure of our own subjectivity. That requires that I understand both that we *share* a sense of agency, and hence that we can *affect* each other, and that we acknowledge that we share too the experience of our own *vulnerability*. This mutual recognition is about connection, and the delight, the pleasure, the fun, the joy of connection, of meeting an other who is *like*, but *different* from me. This isn't just some technical process or concept: this is what we *are*.

Rupture and Repair: The Moral Third

If our mutual recognition is a source of shared joy and delight, then any faltering in this relationship will be a source of pain. But precisely because this recognition itself depends on our being *separate* centres of intention and desire, of being alike in being *other*, breakdown is in reality a necessary part of the process of recognition itself. As *inter*dependent but relatively *in*dependent subjects, we will inevitably to some degree misunderstand, disagree, contradict, frustrate, annoy, enrage each other. Being embodied, mortal, finite, will aggravate this mightily…and yet all this *too* is what we share, the very basis of our recognition of each other. Recognition of each other and ourselves in our mutual subjectivity, and (mis)recognition of each other as specific identities inevitably co-exist. Even our first relationship can never be pure, untouched by the 'real' world. From our beginning, when the preverbal child 'knows' literally nothing, their carers (mother, father…grandparent…) are a fully social beings with or without a partner, with or without a job, capital, friends; they was raised in a family, or in *social* care, and had and have desires, aspirations, fantasies, responsibilities. The 'mother' has to *identify* the child as child, as *her* child, *her* responsibility. Has to try to understand, and perhaps will panic over and be perplexed by what this tiny being needs, wants, enjoys. How to achieve the (nearly) impossible and integrate caring for this infant into her life, a life that is so much more than this one role of 'mother'. All the emotions, understandings, myths about what a child of *this* age can or might or should or should not be are present, helping, hindering, as they recognise and misrecognise each other moment by moment. Present too and helping or hindering are all the emotions, understandings, myths about what the self she identifies with as a '*mother*' can or might or should or should not be… Worse, if she tries to conform to this identification (behaving as the person she imagines herself to be as a 'mother') then she misses herself, *she* too misrecognises her*self*…

So, *recognition* in that first sense of *recognition as* — although inevitable — is always also *misrecognition*. In this sense of recognition we remain *separate*, and in the deeper sense, mutually unknown and unknowable, perhaps even unknowable to ourselves. It is here that Benjamin's re-theorising of recognition as *intersubjectivity* or *mutual subjectivity* provides an antidote: in reality we are mutually *necessary* for either of us to be ourselves. The *other* is not an intrusion into, a distraction from, or a challenge to my own subjectivity. The *other* is the precondition to me being myself. This is no philosophical abstraction, but our directly experienced reality, as Benjamin shows in the development of an embodied understanding as *play*. From the early months evolving *play* between mother and child involving rhythm and reaction shows the child herself *as* a self that intends and acts towards her mother, a mother who is herself a self who intends and acts towards her child in turn. In making faces, performing nursery rhymes, playing 'peepo', each shows they can affect the other, and be affected by the other, in the *delight* of sharing this mutual confirmation. This is the space Benjamin calls the *Third*: the shared rhythm, the invented game, *mutuality* itself, existing as the space that links us, not simply 'owned' by either.

This space of the Third is also the space of rupture and repair: a space we can share, a space of shared understanding and acting, but also inevitably of shared misunderstanding and breakdown. A space in which we can trust each other to fail and then together to recover our mutual trust. The child is too tired, the mother has an actual life of her own beyond the child…relationship stumbles. But re-finding the space of the Third the relationship renews as stronger and more resilient than before. Each sees the *otherness* of the other, but that this is no catastrophe, that this problem is not finally a problem, because each knows they *matter* to the other. Each experiences the other as a being fundamentally like, but also different from themselves. And the restoration of relationship, the repair of recognition, is itself the source of pleasure, of joy. We rely on and need the affirmation of each other as independent centres of feeling, thinking, and intention.

As relationship develops with the child, so beyond the 'Rhythmic' third of rocking, singing, playing together, there emerges the ethical dimension Benjamin talks of the *Moral* Third*: a space of a shared understanding of '*lawfulness*' within our relationship — a usually unarticulated but shared sense of what is to be encouraged, permitted or forbidden within our relationship. This not in the sense of an abstract 'justice' or punishment, but rather the mutual possibility of admission of hurt, the acknowledgement of harming and having been harmed, which then offers the further possibility of reparation and restoration. So we do not only know and share the rules of the game, but we have a way of continuing mutual engagement even when the rules themselves seem to have broken down.

As we move into independence and adulthood, all of our relationships, trivial or profound, will share aspects of both senses of recognition. And with genuine relationship we still have always to find that Third, the space of shared understanding, of how to be with each other and what to expect, of what is allowed and what is not. I can never be purely an *absolute* 'other' to you, or you to me. Alongside the many identities we each assign ourselves and the other, our shared relationship has an identity too: we are 'lovers',

'coworkers', 'friends', we figure as a substitute 'parent and/or child', a'victim and/or rescuer'… these frame how we can invent, develop, maintain, enjoy and delight in our relationship. Misunderstanding about the (inevitable) misrecognition this framing involves will add to our relationship's stumblings, breakdowns, and our needing to find new ground on which to rebuild, reinvent or renew our relationship as stronger, deeper. This requires our ideas of identification — both of self and other — to be flexible, subject to permanent investigation and revision, even a source of *play*. 'We' are more than our ideas of self and each other, we are a possibility, an opening into new worlds. We may find new 'Thirds' in unlikely places: laughing at the same joke, a shared look of response that shows you and I are thinking, feeling *alike* about this situation, this *shared* self-state. Or gratitude offered and accepted, even a freely given and received admission and apology. I *matter* to you, you *matter* to me. You show me *that* I am, and *what* I am. As I do you. For recognition to be maintained and reaffirmed, to be restored when as it must it breaks down, then no roles can be permanently defined and breakdown is accepted as part of relationship itself… It's *this* sense of recognition that the Sixth Zen Precept talks about in terms of meeting 'with openness and possibility', *this* time is not *last* time, or *next* time. I refuse to let my (mis)identifications of you or of myself determine what happens, however they may position us.

Putting Me In My Place

This formulation of relationship and recognition offers us another insight into the nature of shame: shame as the denial of the mutual recognition of our subjectivity. Even within our first relationships there is always implicit behind '*I matter to you*' the global '*I matter to (all) the others in the world*'. I matter *in general*, *absolutely*, I have a place in the world, which our mutual recognition affirms. I *exist*. Over time, what begins in intimacy as true for 'you and me' assumes a *global* value. As a child, to lose the recognition of my caregivers is catastrophic, and experienced as a truly global loss. How may this happen? Being repeatedly told or shown by word, gesture or facial expression that I am bad, stupid, disgusting; being turned away from or ignored, or unable to gain their attention, or as Bromberg says, my not being recognised as a source of *your* pleasure, that you take no delight in our relationship, and so being shown that I as an independent subject/self have no *value*, that I really don't count, *don't matter* to you. (Or by contrast: that I actually encounter in you *no* resistance to my actions, wants or whims, which undermines *your* reality to me — your separate subjectivity — and so your acknowledgement of me no longer has value as recognition of me — back to the dialectic of the Master and Slave…) These are our first experiences of shame and being shamed: to *lose* recognition, worse, to be *denied* it, is life ending and world ending. If these ruptured relationships are not well enough repaired, then my experience of this shame remains traumatic, and becomes chronic. Bromberg is clear that this developmental trauma is something which affects *all* of us, to one degree or another — for some it may form a crippling backdrop to forming and maintaining relationships, for others merely a dark corner of self whose effects can be seem only in our reflexive responses and occasional harming of self and other. But for all of us, this is something we carry with us out into the world.

Shaming is a vulnerability we all share, and shaming is a technique we all have at our disposal, one we too often use reflexively. In a social world where physical violence is only permitted on the part of the state itself, shaming remains a central tool of establishing dominance within hierarchical ranking. We shame and attempt to shame each other as individuals, but also as groups, as identities. As we explored previously, we ally with *some* others by sharing our shaming of *other* others — 'them' — whoever 'they' are. Shame cascades downwards and outwards in our culture from the wealthy, the White, the educated, the able… Shame is *institutionalised* as the exercise of dominance and the denial of intersubjective communication, of relationship. Almost all relationships and encounters contain elements of inequality, from the utter dependency of the infant on her caregivers, through the negotiated inequalities inevitable to friends, lovers and partners, to our standing before 'authority' itself in the form of state or other institutions. True recognition — recognition of our mutual subjectivity as equals — does not and cannot depend in itself on this wider and more relative sense of equality. Nevertheless, in *this* encounter, does one of us feel that their gender/race/education/wealth/sexuality/age/physical ability entitles them to a position of power or authority or superiority, consciously or otherwise, in relation to the other? Does this block entirely our ability to recognise each other as true *subjects*, fully human and vulnerable? If we *fail* to do this then we fail in our mutual humanity. So, what if your response to me is shaped by my being 'only'… a woman, Black, disabled, neurodiverse, 'uneducated', 'lower' class, '*poor*', or being on the 'wrong' side of any other binary pair? And if in our encounter *you* are perhaps a police officer? And if perhaps you are carrying a gun?

Just as our individual *developmental* trauma is not primarily a matter of specific events but of habitual responses we are exposed to, so we can talk of the ongoing social trauma that our struggles with dominance and hierarchical ranking generate, and the relationship of this to those durable binary inequalities to which we keep returning. We have always to keep in mind that recognition (in both senses) and shaming are implicitly social not individual judgements: it is not important that you as an *individual* find me lacking, bad, wrong, but that you implicitly claim this as a *universal* judgement on me (or even simply that I understand and react to it as such). The farther from the centre of power I find myself placed, the less effective the alliances I can make, and so the more catastrophic the shame, the denial of recognition. Without recognition, and the possibility of relationship that this implies, I become invisible, I really don't know I exist. The stories I invented as a child to explain this (I am bad, unloveable) become secondary, as even are the related stories I tell as an adult (I am unworthy, incapable, I will never succeed): I am *lost*, I am *shamed* until that recognition is restored. I experience the withdrawal of your recognition — the recognition that is my guarantee of our mutual existence — as a *loss of self*. And because this is not simply a matter of individual psychology but of the leading of our actual lives in society, the real consequences become complex and dramatic.

Windrush

The 'Windrush generation' are those who arrived in the UK from Caribbean countries between 1948 and 1973. Many took up jobs in the nascent NHS and other sectors affected by Britain's post-war labour shortage. `Those who arrived at that time were British

subjects free to live and work permanently in the UK, a right lost to all *new* arrivals in 1973. Commonwealth citizens were further affected by the government's 'Hostile Environment' policy announced in 2012, which tasked the NHS, landlords, banks, and employers with enforcing immigration controls. It aimed to make the UK unlivable for undocumented migrants and so to force them to leave. Many of the Windrush generation arrived as children, and so when queried under the Hostile Environment policy lacked the documentation to prove their right to remain in the UK, in large part because the British government has itself destroyed thousands of landing cards and other (now) essential records. Each individual questioned was then required to *prove* that their residency predated 1973 by *themselves* providing at least one official document from each year they had lived here: several decades worth in every case. Having been given no reason to retain irrelevant and obsolete documentation from decades long past created a huge, and in many cases, impossible burden on people who had done nothing wrong, but who were presumed guilty until they could prove themselves innocent. Once falsely classed as 'illegal immigrants' they lost all access to housing, benefits, healthcare, and even their own bank accounts. Many were placed in immigration detention and threatened with forcible removal, while others were actually deported to countries they hadn't seen since they were children.

Aside from the obvious injustice, can we begin to understand the shaming of this denial of recognition? In a country and community in which I have lived as a citizen my whole adult life I am suddenly told that *now* I do not exist as a citizen of this place, and in fact have *never* been a citizen of this place. My previous experiencing of life is now erased, redefined as an intentional deception on my part. My official 'home' I am told is now several thousand miles away and I am forced to leave my job and not allowed to look for another, neither will I be entitled to the 'universal' healthcare that for the past 75 years has been a cornerstone of what we think of as the best of being 'British', and in which I or my family may well have worked as a valued contributor to society. Even my driving licence is revoked: I may no longer legally get behind the wheel of my car. This is to be denied recognition at every level: I do not *matter*, I do not *count*, and when society *looks* at me it no longer sees me (if it sees me at all) as an independent human subject with desires, needs and vulnerability, but solely as an identity, an object to be processed. My efforts to *reclaim* my subjectivity will involve a Kafkaesque series of slow-motion double-binds in pursuit of obligatory but non-existent documentation, requirements seemingly designed to reinforce the shame of being lacking, incapable, powerless. *Unrecognised*. I may, at the whim of the authorities, be handcuffed and placed on a flight to my 'original' home. At best I may be allowed to remain, but what were once my comfortable and familiar surroundings have become an administrative limbo that dis-ables me in almost every respect.

Even when recognised as a 'scandal', even when the government itself officially recognised the 'mistakes' that had been made, even when financial compensation was legislated for, the harming was compounded rather than repaired. Repeated denial, talking over the voices of those directly affected, an apology that was no apology, an attempt at reparation that was not carried through, and always more broken promises. Ever more people sucked into its vortex as fresh challenges were made, and the

consequences to children and wider family and community ties worked through. The 'Hostile Environment' which led directly and inevitably to the scandal remains in place — and has actually been made even more aggressively punitive — as a specific challenge to the recognition of all non-white individuals and communities in Britain. In terms of our mutual recognition and of social cohesion, it has been a disaster.

Whether ending in deportation or in the grudging admission of a 'right to remain', or even that *after all* they were really citizens all along, the experience of those caught up in the Windrush scandal embodies the horror of having being refused recognition by the state and so implicitly by *all*, lived out both psychologically as shaming *and* in the denial of all rights to continue their lives as citizens. My shame is made visible to me at every turn: I have been forced against my will from one side to the other of the binary inequality of citizen and non-citizen, shamed for a vulnerability of which I could have had no knowledge. Even if you wish to you *may not* recognise me: not offer me a job, rent me a home, whatever. Suddenly I find myself as the *other*, cast adrift from my own identity, and from all I most firmly knew to be myself.

> *Practice Questions*: *How do I feel reading this, feel in my body, my emotions?*
> *Do I feel frustration, anger, or that this was 'unfortunate'?*
> *Can I imagine how I* would *feel if I were one of the 'Windrush generation', denied all rights?*
> *Can I relate* their *experience to any closer to me and my family or friends ?*

The Limits of Humanity

Trying to understand and empathise with the catastrophic consequences for those caught up in the Windrush scandal, we may get some momentary glimpse of the extent and depth of our dependency on the recognition of 'society', the *collective* other, and that we cannot separate out the individual psychological consequences from the social and existential reality of our recognition or its refusal. Those caught up in the Windrush scandal were blameless: innocent victims of a government's self-conscious display of its punitive credentials, a display in which it was exactly the power to punish the innocent that was the point. Or rather to punish those innocent of what was alleged against them, but 'guilty' of being Black, of being *other*. Rather as in the United States there is expressed the danger of being found to commit the 'crimes' of 'running while Black' or 'driving while Black'. It's also not irrelevant here that those of Afro-Carribean heritage in the UK, despite having made enormous contributions to our collective culture (music, art, literature…), besides often having been care workers or involved with other essential services, tend to be among the poorest of those in our minority communities. And hence from so many perspectives, shame-able. But what of those who are in fact 'guilty as charged' — the inhabitants of our prisons (disproportionately many of whom are, of course, and not by chance, also Black)?

We have already explored how we can best think of *truth* in relation to the precepts, how truth is always relational, contextual, and the harming we do when we lose sight of this. How the juridical model identifies and assigns responsibility to individuals as (permanent) 'criminals' whom it then isolates and shames while equivocating over

whether they are to be 'rehabilitated' or punished. As the society which has produced the crimes of which they are convicted is, in its own public opinion, *blameless*, it is the individual who must carry the burden of shame for us all, as the scapegoat, the *other* other. In the terms we have elaborated in discussing this Seventh Precept, our own *relative dominance* (however minimal) is made more secure by *their* being shamed. Our own *(mis)recognition* by the state and the 'law abiding' is paradoxically affirmed by this identification and recognition (in the first sense), and the consequent denial of recognition — in our second and more profound sense as being fully *human* — to those we thereby shame further. Within a society that defines itself by mutual competition, and where the creation of yet further harmful inequality has come to be seen as in some ways the highest aim and achievement of our society, hierarchical ranking and the struggle for dominance are the everyday means by which we experience this society reproducing itself through us, *as* us, and in which we reproduce *it*.

The personal, as we used to say, is the political. Our speech is innately political, and only the more so when we fail to recognises this, and only the more potentially harming. An understanding of 'emptiness' and of the emptiness of that emptiness, far from *transcending* this state of affairs only confirms it to us more fundamentally. But that equally this emptiness points towards the possibility of an always relative (but no less real for that!) *liberation* into the openness and possibility of relationship, of meeting each other in our infinite vulnerability as simply human.

'Simply' human. If democracy, either as a formal political system or as a more general principle of social life still has meaning for us, then we must remember that 'vulnerability' was from the beginning the very last human quality that might qualify us to participate. In fact our philosophical and political traditions of the 'human' are themselves founded on limitation and exclusion — participation has always been a very specific right. So, *where* and *how* do we draw the lines of our *thinking*, of our *practice* of inclusion and of exclusion, of our *othering*? For the Greeks, to be fully human was to be *rational* — simple and obvious enough, we might think. But this was to be understood in a particular sense of to be able to think objectively and independently of any personal material consideration. To stand outside, to be autonomous and self-willed. Clearly, slaves were simply property and worked to provide material necessities of their masters, and would be duty bound to support them, having no voice and, as slaves, no independent will — and hence could not be considered rational. Women bore children and had to supervise the home, and were as dependent as slaves on the will of their husbands and fathers — and so were similarly clearly not 'disinterested' enough to qualify as rational. And so on… Non-Greeks were simply 'barbarians' and had no right to participate anyway… So for the ancients the answer to the question of who counts as *fully* human was clear: only 'my' fellow property owning citizens of independent means who are able to command and live by the labour of others are 'my' true equals as rational, and hence *full* humans.

This was still the de facto assumption at the beginning of the modern period of European history, and part and parcel of the unlimited admiration of the ruling elites of Europe for all things 'Classical' — whether as philosophy, drama, art or architecture. Every attempt to

contest and extend this definition of the fully human (and with it aspects of the franchise) has been met with continued internal opposition: other ethnic groups lacked intelligence or morality or both; women were too emotional, physically frail and intellectually weak; the working class was venal, stupid, and entirely bound to self-interest, in that actually earning a living by one's own labour did not allow time to cultivate 'correct' understanding. Every extension of the formal franchise has had to be justified in terms of the *competence* and *rationality* of those who would claim it as a right. Writing in the seventeenth century the British philosopher John Locke was unusual in his hesitant but genuine *inclusivity* in linking participation with being able to be held responsible for one's actions: all who can be *judged*, (because held to be to some extent rational) should *themselves* be allowed to judge, should be allowed some form of political participation. All who can be held responsible (because they have the capacity to understand their own actions), demonstrate capacity to share in judgement of all. But even Locke specifically *excludes* madmen, lunatics, fools and idiots, because they are held to lack this capacity to think *for themselves*. They can never be other than the responsibility of their parents. And of course this is the exact self-same argument advanced by (White, educated, property-owning) menfolk for the benevolent care of all their irrational 'children': all those who found themselves identified as women or slaves, as black, brown, or in any way 'other', and hence could be counted as The. White. Man's. Burden. I *allow* you that are you are 'human' in the sense of belonging to the same species, but I cannot *recognise* you as fundamentally equal, as being a human subject who validates *me* as human, and whom I validate as a human subject in return.

We tend to talk of lack of recognition in this sense as 'de-humanising', and while I think this is both true and useful, it can also mislead. It's been importantly remarked of the millions of enslaved Africans and Black Americans who worked the plantations of the United States and the Caribbean, that they were valued specifically *for* their *human* talents and abilities. Obviously! But equally obviously, not valued for their *subjectivity*, for themselves as selves. So clearly this isn't a simple either/or: we are once more in the presence of a dissociation that brackets out all empathy and leaves the curiously vulnerable empty shell that is the mark of the bully, the torturer, the 'impotent bigness' of Hegel's 'Master' — someone who can stand in front of you and tell you to your face: your vulnerability to my every whim gratifies my own sense of self-importance, it shows to me my power over the world, and indeed in *terms of your ability to labour* you are clearly human and I value you for it (I can make money from it…), but with regard to any right to respect and self-determination you figure to me as no different from my cattle or my dogs!

All this might give us pause. Is there an alternative to the endless and self-defeating struggle for mastery over others in an effort to prove we ourselves finally exist? The development of an *Ethics of Care* over recent decades offers us a way of thinking this truly radical possibility. What if the qualification for full participation in the life of society were not our competence and rationality, but instead the vulnerability that as utterly interdependent embodied beings we share with every other? That our real vulnerability is not simply that 'in the end we are all dead', but extends to the emotional and physical experience of loss, of the suffering and inconvenience of being real bodies that sweat and

piss and shit, and that require bathing, feeding, shelter. What if we took this reality seriously, and began with considering the care that each of us needs, and each of us can offer? What if we began not with what 'I' believe 'I' can get for my (separate) self, but with the concrete reality of our actual and possible reciprocal relationships as these extend outwards to all? This is the argument made by philosopher Joan Tronto in *Caring Democracy* (2010). To take this idea seriously we would have to examine 'with openness and possibility' what realities underly and result from our agonistic and dualistic thinking. How do we ensure all find a voice, the most vulnerable as well as the most powerful? How do our current ideas of public and private affect how we value different kinds of care, and how can we better meet the real needs of all? How can we make our 'shared humanity' more than an alibi for actual inequality and marginalisation, and replace our individual and collective othering with the recognition of infinite difference within and between each of us? As Tronto says: 'Rethinking care on such a broad scale requires not only that we reassess human interactions, but also that citizens think, as democrats, about their location in a global society and on an increasingly fragile planet.' (CD xiv).

All these are issues of our collective, shared and social reality. I could not, in even a million lifetimes, have built Stonehenge, or the RMS Titanic, or this computer on which I write, let alone the satellite networks on which we all now depend for communication. Our triumphs and disasters are collective as much or more than they are individual. Our reach as *social* animals stretches to the moon and beyond. But beyond this, I could not have given birth to myself, cared for myself as a child, taught myself a language I didn't hear around me, or have offered myself the care necessary to save my life when sick. I wouldn't be 'me' or *anyone* without all of 'you'. So I start right here, I tend my own garden. But this is not the limit of my world, or of my vulnerability. It should not be the limit of my caring. If my reach as an individual embodied being is indeed limited, then we might remember that within our Buddhist tradition the story is told how Avalokiteshvara, the Hearer of the Cries of the World and the embodiment of infinite care, burst apart in the attempt to heal All Beings, but reappeared in new form having a thousand hands and eyes better to care for all. *I* am one when seen as an individual, but together we *are* Avalokiteshvara.

All our care begins in awareness, and one way we exercise, or fail to exercise care is in the *drawing of our lines* (aka 'the walls of our mind') in our thoughts, our words, our actions. The emptiness of emptiness cautions us against *how* and *where* we draw lines, but does not erase or invalidate our need to draw them. We need to ask *what*, or *who* is being excluded or othered by the drawing of *this* line *here*, and to what end and with what result, whether or not this seems simply self-evident ('natural'!), or is the outcome of deep reflection. The three speech precepts we have been studying are our invitation to become more deeply aware not only of our speech, but aware too of its *origins* in our social world and its *outcomes* as our actions in that world, and by so doing to become more aware of what we truly ourselves *are*.