The Sixth Applied Precept:

I bear witness to the reality of blame and the avoidance of responsibility in myself and in the world, and aspire to speak of others with openness and possibility.

Traditionally: Not Discussing the Faults of Others

The Trouble With Harry

To begin her investigation of this precept, Dianne Rizzetto returns to a moment of coming to awareness:

> …I catch myself dropping a comment to my husband about someone we both think is *not very reliable*. I question, How do I know what this person's been up to since we last met? Why do I choose to freeze his image in my mind by faulting him as *unreliable*? (WU, 64)

No big deal, but she's made a judgement on someone and doesn't really know why. So she gets curious: what was really going on? We might begin our own work with this precept in the same way, seeing where our awareness leads us, and getting curious:

> A good way to explore this precept and how to use it for everyday decision making is to try out the following exercise for a week or two. …
>
> *Stop*. Take inventory. Take one week to begin noticing the obvious and subtle ways in which you talk about others—overtly, surreptitiously, covertly. Keep a journal.
>
> *Look*. Focus in. Choose one or two specific ways in which you talk about others and where and under what conditions you do it.
>
> *Listen*. Hear your words as you speak … Pay close attention to the tone of your voice, noticing what happens to your voice and your word choice when you stop simply sharing information and begin discussing faults…
>
> *Experience*. Notice if there seems to be any emotional charge present. You might notice it makes you feel good to talk about someone else. Maybe it relieves some bodily tension … Sometimes people say they feel physically bigger, stronger …Your body sensations are a good indicator here. If you're feeling some tightness… there's a good chance that your comments are fuelled by some negative feelings. Continue looking, listening and experiencing in this way until you clarify the emotion. For example, you might notice there is some jealousy feeding your comment. (WU, 74-5)

'Harry can't be depended upon…' She rephrases this *general* statement about Harry as something more *true*: 'it's been *my experience* that Harry can't be depended upon…' Now it's about *relationship*, and about her perception and interpretation of what she sees as his unreliability. I like Diane's use of the word 'freeze' in her description of what's going on here—by solidifying a complex and ever-changing living being into 'undependable Harry'

she creates a fixed identity for him, turning him into something permanently separate, limited and *other*. Having identified him she'll be expecting and looking for the signs: 'look, I told you he was like that! It's *always* the same way…' This is why she asks us to stay close to our *experiencing*. It's really hard to step back from our judgement once we've made it: my *samskāras* (those 'mental formations' of which Buddhism speaks, that both form how I see the world and are reciprocally formed by that seeing) will cause me genuinely to *see* Harry and to *hear* his words in a particular way that give rise to confirmation bias. But if I am able to become aware of the difference in my own emotional response between saying 'Harry is…' and 'in my experience Harry is…', then my assumptions and actions may begin to unfreeze, to transform.

Diane's section 'Deepening the Inquiry' goes on to invite us to ask the kind of questions we are already becoming familiar with: what am I adding, how does talking in this way affect my own *self-image*? She asks us to make an important imaginative exchange:

> Now try seeing yourself in the other person, and honestly try to find examples in yourself where you have been like the person you are discussing… "how am I undependable?" Watch for situations where you may not follow through. In other words look at your own behaviour. The idea is to keep an open awareness about your behaviour without judgement or even trying to change it, although that may happen quite naturally once you become aware of your actions. What is your experience now? How do you feel about this other person? About yourself? Perhaps you feel less judgemental of her, or perhaps you notice some guilt or other feelings arise. (WU, 77-8)

We bring this back to ourselves, experiencing our own resistance to our feelings: our desire not to feel bad, and especially not to feel bad about ourselves. In this *seeing of other as self/self as other* we come close to what makes true relationship possible. She continues:

> …if, right in this moment, I do not find fault with Harry, what's the worst thing that could happen? Stay open. If any feelings, emotions, or bodily sensations arise, label them and rest with them, breathing in and out. Allow yourself to enter into Just This. This particular question brings us to the core of our behaviour and if we stick it out, we can find what fuels it. In other words, what we get out of speaking ill of others. (WU, 78)

Rizzetto points to the way our responses to others always show us something about ourselves: our deeper assumptions, fears, and demands that the world should be a certain way, and instead to allow ourselves to sit with these as koans about ourselves. She gives the example of one of her students raging that his sister "…is such an irresponsible screw-up…" because she repeatedly requests money from him. Working with his anger he came to realise that his words…

> …were spoken as a reaction, and he had just frozen his sister in a negative way. He asked himself the very simple but powerful question: How do I think she should be? … the *should-be's* (sic) of our thinking are our requirements… She should always take

> care of herself and be self-sufficient… he found that he often included himself in that judgement. So when he needed to ask for help, he noticed that he often felt uncomfortable. He found to his surprise that the way he valued most people and the extent to which he was open to them was the degree to which they matched his requirement… he found that he believed that he and everyone else *should* always be able to take care of themselves—to be self-sufficient. …Such beliefs are what we hold on to dearly because they make us feel safe and in control…

So how does his sister's inability to 'look after herself' make him feel *unsafe* and *out of* control? To move towards an answer we might ask about the other aspects of their relationship: Is he the one who 'can' and she the one who 'can't'? What about their parents' attitudes towards him and towards her? How does his sister think about herself? How is her experience as a woman in a world of very real inequality of opportunity and with the contradictory expectations placed on her (have a career—or at least hold down a job—while being a homemaker and a perfect mother, but who also 'looks after herself' and stay sexually attractive to her husband) relevant here? How does all that figure in her own aspirations, and her sense of success or failure? This specific *belief* of her brother's simply brackets all of this out: she *should* be able to…*period*! As long as he maintains this belief he can avoid asking, let alone answering any of these questions, although they can't *not* have been lurking on the fringes of his awareness: so is that the point, that he can protect himself from having to answer them? Partly, I think. We could argue that this is just a part of the mental laziness we all share: easier to ignore them! But there is something more significant going on here, a question of *identity*. His belief *divides* the world into two kinds of people: those who *can* and those who *can't*, those who are *my* kind of people and the *other* kind. Separate. His sister's problems cancel this neat division of humankind: his own flesh and blood, his parents' daughter, the sister with whom he grew up! How can she be one of *those* people, the *others*? By being the person she is, she invalidates his view of 'how the world is', and hence too his view of *who he himself is*. Identity is always *relational*. And so the real damage is to his sense of self, and the result is a fear that displaces itself into anger: how *dare* she be like that!

Mistaken Identity?

Identity is *relational*, and also *multiple*. So, would it change our *own* preconceptions about 'unreliable' Harry if I tell you that yes, he has spent time in prison? Or is actually a full-time carer for his disabled child? Or that he is Black? Or that all three of these things are true? I'm guessing that for each of these possibilities, very different individuals and back-stories will appear in our minds. In *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity* (2018) the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah agues that our sense of *identity* is both *necessary* and *mistaken*. We collectively construct relatively fixed beliefs and ways of behaving towards each other around what it is held to be a 'woman', or 'English', or 'White', or 'working class', or 'Buddhist', and while we can only function as a society with and through these ways of thinking and acting, all involve distortion, inconsistency and sometimes downright lies about ourselves and other people that have far-reaching and often very damaging consequences. 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. Which of these we see as more important than others, or as in some way *defining* 'who I am', or 'who you are' may well shift according to time and place. 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 adds to this religion, nationality, race, class, and culture as his other axes of analysis. So a major part of what makes me 'me' (both for myself and for others) turns out to be the set of identities that I have for other people, and the place I hold 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. We react most negatively towards them (often apparently irrationally so) when they seem to challenge our sense of who we ourselves are. Following Appiah's thinking that identification is always in a sense *mis*-identification, we might say that our negative reactions are actually because in our (*mis)identifying* them, they challenge our sense of whom *we (mis)identify ourselves to be*… which is quite a Buddhist conclusion. I am not an innately separate self, and I am not finally *known* to myself. We *mis*identify each other and ourselves, and the delusion that you and I actually *are* what either believes ourselves or each other to be has dangerous and far-reaching consequences. Hence Diane's student's belief supporting his sense of his own identity as 'someone who can look after himself' (and hence being safe and in control), depends on his identifying *others* as *not* being like him…

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 through this-not-that choices: do I 'identify' as male or female or non-binary? As gay, straight or bi, as parent or child, as Black or White…?

Many of my unique and intimate relationships presuppose *complementary* identities: I am Gracie and Flo's father, Gaynor's husband, Pat's and Norman's son, Barry's student… We make these relationships active if and when we recognise each other's role in them: yes, I am the child to the parent that you are! This is my identity within our relationship: 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 within relationship help shape what is possible for each of us and for the relationship itself, they form the ground, the basic rules we know to follow or wish to challenge. We might remember the *samskaras* again here: those ways of seeing, feeling and thinking that shape us and which are in the same moment shaped by us. These are not a set of consciously held ideas but rather a field of reactions and responses. They are the patterns that hold us together (for example as 'parent-and-child') but *also* what can tend to keep 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 limits are necessary and welcome, others are stunting and harmful: if our relationship only ever stays within strict constraints it will be incapable of the growth and change essential to real intimacy. How tightly do we hold to these roles, how tightly do we hold the other to theirs? Both the identities we claim and those that are thrust upon us always tend towards fixity, towards becoming 'frozen', to use Diane's word. The very way we use our

words actually encourages this: *as if* our words really named fixed qualities in things, and in people too insofar as we treat them *as* things. 'Unreliable' may come to seem a synonym for 'Harry' himself, or even his unique identifier: '*that* Harry…Old Unreliable'. We can relate this too to our need to *know* and to *control*, and to our fear of *not-knowing*. What's one of the very worst things we can say to our most intimate others? —'I don't know who you are any more!'

Hey You! Stop!

Note, though, that this precept is, initially at least, not so much about my criticising *you*, as of our sharing a fixed, 'frozen', image of *someone else*. Diane has frozen Harry by passing *judgement* on him. She doesn't do this on her own: there's a third party here too. Diane's husband only gets a passing mention in the vignette, but his role is in some ways the most important of all, one central to the nature of judgement itself. There is an assumption in making any judgement—an assumption bordering on a demand—that we *all* will, that we each *must* agree with it. Diane knows her husband will agree about Harry, and their own bond as a couple is actually re-affirmed by *othering* Harry in this way. All judgements are in this sense *collective*, in that they come with the implicit or explicit demand that 'we' all tacitly or actively agree. In our law courts the judgements passed both presume and require our acceptance, but we can see the same process all across society, and even in how something like stand-up comedy works to offer us an interesting barometer of the edges of the acceptable, of what can successfully *command* our agreement. The observational comedian must set up an 'isn't it funny that life's like this!' scenario, and then riff on it. *If* that is the way we in the audience see the world then we fall about laughing…if *not*, then she bombs. *She* may see the world that way, but that's only her view, not ours! Judgement, whether legal or personal, always tacitly demands a *general* assent: the verdict reached is just 'how things are', 'common sense', or the 'Will of the People'. Judgement hence *requires* us to think of identities as relatively stable, and of course judgement itself *has the effect of further* fixing, 'freezing' these.

Most aspects of our identities (both those we choose and those we are assigned by others) are to some degree fluid: the 'Black' or 'Brown' woman who 'passes' in some situations but not in others, my becoming a parent, step-parent, or absent parent… my getting married, getting divorced… Most of the day to day judgements passed on us are fleeting, or minor. But in relation to the State and its legal system it is actually essential that I have a *single*, *fixed* identity on which binding judgements can be passed, and to which all my other partial and passing identities can be subordinated: in a sense it is this identity which underlies and guarantees the others. My legal identity is closely controlled: my birth or immigration must be properly registered, and my National Health Service record will become a part of it, as will the contributions and claims I make in relation to the National Insurance (Social Security) number that allows me to have a job. To drive a car this identity is required, and my driver record will note any transgressions; I need it too to get a passport to travel abroad, and my leaving and entering the country noted. I require it to have the right to an education, and even to be allowed to open a bank account or borrow money… and so on, and so on. This identity is not just a name. We can talk about this in terms of my *personhood*: what is required for me to be recognised *and treated as*

on the one hand holding enforceable rights, on the other simply entitled to the respect of and equal treatment with others in terms of opportunities and resources. Personhood is at once a legal status, and an index of my social and self-existence.

This identity tells me who I am and sets limits on who I may become, and so in important ways defines my sense of self and my self-experience. It makes me a 'subject' in a double sense. The *subject* of a sentence is the one at the centre: the one who 'is' or 'does' something. '*I* hit the ball'. But we also speak of me being 'a *subject* of the King', or '*subject* to the law'. In our modern nation states these two senses are intimately related: it is by first being *subject to* the law—and so to the State's potential coercion or punishment—that that same State will help *enable* me as the *subject* of my own actions, and even of my aspirations, hopes and fears. The State will monitor my education and healthcare, ensure there are safe roads for me to drive on, protect me from various kinds of harm, establish a currency and the rules of owning property. But for me to be allowed to participate at all the State requires that I be *identified*, and that having been so identified, I may be held *responsible*, held to account to the law itself. Under such alibis as 'terrorism' or 'money laundering' the State keeps our identity under ever closer scrutiny: the increasing use of 'facial recognition' (in our terms not so much 'recognition' as facial *identification*) is merely one more example, if an important one. The philosopher Louis Althusser famously suggested that it is actually in the policeman's archetypal hailing: 'Hey, You! Stop!' that we find what *creates* us ('interpellates' in his vocabulary) as a *subject* in both senses. So to be *identified* in this way is always also to be *individualised,* as both the *subject* who intends and acts, *and* the subject who will be held responsible (blamed!) for these intentions and actions. But as we have already seen, to identify is always also to *misidentify*. My self-sense, my self-image, my sense of what I am, is based on an *individualised misidentification*.

This is a 'subjectivity', an individualised sense of my 'self' as being a unique and permanent identity that has become fundamental to us, so 'natural' seeming that we barely notice it: it is *who I am*. So if you tread on my foot and I pull away and go 'ouch!'… that's a simple animal reflex. But the sense of *who I am* (and so also who *you* are) transforms this: 'how *dare* you do that to me! How careless of you, how *inconsiderate*! You *make* me so angry!' Perhaps we come close here to the meaning of the famous story of Yün Men's enlightenment: having returned for the third day in a row demanding instruction from his teacher Muzhou—and not to be denied—Yün Men forcefully puts his foot in the door… which Muzhou then slams on him, breaking his foot! 'At this moment he experienced great enlightenment'! *Pain*, in this particular case cancels *person, identity*…

Windrush

If we doubt the importance that Althusser gives to this unique identification as a foundation of our subjectivity, then we might consider how catastrophic the *loss* of this identity is, both materially and emotionally, even existentially. This has been demonstrated only too vividly by the ongoing scandal of the 'Windrush generation': those who arrived in the UK from Caribbean countries between 1948 and 1973 as British subjects free to live and work here permanently (a right lost to those arriving after 1973). In 2012 the UK government announced its 'Hostile Environment' policy which tasked the NHS and all employers, landlords and banks with enforcing new immigration controls aiming to make

the UK unlivable for undocumented migrants, and so to force them to leave. Many of the Windrush generation had 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 had itself destroyed many thousands of landing cards and other now essential records. Once falsely identified as 'illegal immigrants' these citizens lost all access to housing, benefits, healthcare, and even their own bank accounts. Many were placed in immigration detention, while others were actually deported to countries they had left as infants, and of which they had no memory.

Aside from the material consequences of ceasing to exist as a *citizen*, can we recognise the existential dimension of this *double* loss of subjectivity? I find myself outside the protection the law offers to each subject, and neither am I able to act as the subject of my own life: I am denied the *agency*, the *doing* that makes 'me' real, that makes 'me' me. In a country and community in which I have lived as a citizen my whole adult life I am suddenly told that I have *never* been a citizen of this place. My previous experiencing of life is now erased, redefined as an intentional deception on my part. This is to be denied the *recognition* of my State absolutely: I do not *matter*, and when society looks at me it no longer sees me as an independent human subject with desires, needs and vulnerability. Now, if it still takes notice of me at all, it is solely as an identity to be processed. My efforts to reclaim my subjectivity will involve a Kafkaesque series of slow-motion double-binds demonstrating to me that I am lacking, incapable, powerless. Even if I am 'allowed' to remain in what were once my comfortable and familiar surroundings, I now find myself *dis*-abled in almost every respect.

Even when revealed as a 'scandal', even when the government itself officially acknowledged the 'mistakes' that had been made and financial compensation had been legislated for, the harming was compounded rather than repaired by a response so glacially slow that years later many claims still remain unresolved. Here a government cancelled its responsibilities towards certain of its citizens by substituting one judicial identity for another—'illegal immigrant' for 'citizen'—and so used every means available to make clear to them that they did not *matter*, and that it would not offer them the most basic *care*. Further, that its *recognised* citizens must now *shun* those so reclassified, wherever their legal status was involved (work, healthcare, education, housing…). This was not simply the loss of their identity, for all its material and psychological consequences, but rather a social death, to accompany making their material lives a living hell. By *(mis-)identifying* them as 'illegal immigrants', and so denying them full *personhood*, the British State refused to *recognise* them.

We can return to Diane's angry student to see the inverse of this process: how the otherness of identification can be transformed into the very different otherness of recognition as relationship. Having come to understand his belief that, regardless of the circumstances in which they find themselves each and all must take full and sole responsibility for their own lives, as being his *own requirement* the brother can now probe further by including his *own emotional responses*:

> Then my student… (asked) the question: what's the worst thing that could happen if she didn't take care of herself? …out of his experience bubbled up the word *sad*. He began to realise that it was not just his sadness and fear that he was touching, but

> also his sister's sadness and fear and perhaps the sadness and fear of all those people who have come to be in the position of not being able to take care of themselves—the homeless young man he passed on the street the day before, the orphans begging in a Third World country, the helpless looks on the faces of starving people that appear on magazine covers and television news… It wasn't just about him, and it wasn't about his sister's faults. This understanding came from just one moment of an open heart. (WU, 70-1)

This moment of an 'open heart' is a moment of *non-separation*. Will this insight allow him to recognise his sister 'with openness and possibility' and so rebuild their relationship? How would that change *her* life? How far will the offering of recognition to all these other others, even if only at first in his imagination, change his life and so change his sense of self? We don't know… But rather than this insight being something that is purely 'his', the answer will come in terms of his practising *relationship with others*.

Recognition

What is it to come to *recognise* someone as 'not me' but 'like me'? Strangely, to answer this we have to ask how we first come to have a sense of self in the first place, how we *become* something that recognises itself *as* a 'self'. Which came first, the chicken or the egg? We tend to assume the 'self' comes *before* relationship, that relationship is the meeting of pre-existing individual selves, but the reality is not so simple. Early psychology and psychoanalysis certainly imagined the infant as developing his (and almost always 'his') self-sense largely independently of others and his environment, his mother effectively a passive milk-machine at the beck and call of—as Freud famously calls him—'His Majesty the Baby'. This is the sense of us as being each born *separate* into a world *external* to us, but of which we are the very *centre*.

However, this began to change with the work of Melanie Klein and the 'Object Relations' school of psychoanalysis, recognising the central role of caregivers in the development of self. The British paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott is perhaps the key figure in further developing this aspect of Klein's work, and in 1960 memorably wrote, 'There's no such thing as a baby…' clarifying that 'There is a baby and someone. Meaning of course that whenever one finds an infant one finds maternal care and without maternal care there would be no infant.' But it is in the 'relational turn' taken by psychoanalysis since the 1980's that a new idea of how we become ourselves only *in relation to another* takes shape. Further, that this is not simply a stage we pass through, but of the nature of relationship itself. Within Ordinary Mind we have a particular connection here, as one of the central figures in the development of relational analysis, the psychoanalyst and feminist theorist Jessica Benjamin, has for many years been the partner of my own teacher, Barry Magid.

Benjamin uses contemporary understanding of child development to explore how I come into being as 'me' only *in* and *as* relationship. Rather than our 'self' being defined by our *separation* from others, Benjamin explores how it is only through our open-ended and active mutual relationship with our care-givers that we learn what it is to be a 'self' at all. We do this through developing a sense of the 'otherness' of the other, an otherness which

paradoxically *shows me what it is to be a source of intention and agency*, and that I am *like them* but *not* them: *I* have intention and agency too. I see that *like me*, they too are vulnerable, can be hurt, can feel pain. Sometimes, *they* hurt me, sometimes *I* hurt them. We come to *recognise* each other together with ourselves. Benjamin draws here on her own experience of being a mother, but also, and perhaps unexpectedly, on the work of the nineteenth century philosopher, Gottfried Wilhelm Hegel.

Hegel asks about the nature of human subjectivity, using a thought experiment drawing on the traditional idea of the 'State of Nature' imagined to exist before any society develops: a war of all men against all men, in a world 'red in tooth and claw'. In this perpetual struggle for survival, one man subdues another with such overwhelming physical force that the victim is convinced that simply to stay alive he must now and forever obey the victor as a *Slave*, and so take the victor as his *Master*. From now on this Master's material needs are entirely met by the Slave; the Slave has no *rights*, and no right to anything, he is wholly dependent upon the hope that by continuing to fulfil the Master's wishes he will not be killed. He has no opportunity to *act* on his *own* intention, but has become merely an extension of his Master, he is the Master's *instrument*, to be used to the Master's ends. Hence the Slave has no independent *subjectivity*, and has become, both for the Master and for himself, simply another *object* in the world. And yet… The Master himself has now become dependent on the Slave, both materially and psychologically. He is dependent on the slave's labour and on the Slave's forced compliance: 'do this or I will kill you!' In his complete victory over the Slave, the Master's *mastery* paradoxically collapses in on itself: *because* he has deprived the Slave of their subjectivity, he is no more truly in a relationship where he is 'Master' than he is in a 'relationship' with the spade he forces the Slave to dig with. Precisely *because* the Master has enslaved him, the Slave is in the Master's eyes no longer truly *human*: there is only his control and instrumental use of another *body*. In order truly to *be* the Master in his own eyes, to experience himself as Master, he requires the Slave's *recognition* of his mastery. In reducing the Slave to the status of a mere object, he makes such recognition impossible., but it is exactly this recognition that the Slave *cannot* offer him that is paradoxically the *one and only thing* that would truly confirm the Master's mastery to himself, to *show him who he is* as 'Master'. By winning, the Master loses: only the *recognition* of someone *we ourselves recognise* as another subject, another self both 'like us' and 'not us' can 'show us who we are' in this sense, can confirm to us our own existence. Without *mutual* recognition the self-sense to which the Master aspires is not an affirmation of his *being*, but, in the terms we have been developing in these commentaries, simply a self-*identification*, and so also a *mis*identification: 'Master' is in reality only one pole of the complementary relation of Master-and-Slave. He wishes to experience his mastery as making him a self-unto-itself, *singular and separate*, but instead it merely confirms his relational dependency on the Slave's coexisting. 'Mastery' reveals itself to be a self-defeating project: the greater my sense of self-sufficient (and so *separate*) individuality in the degree of apparent control over a world of others I see only as objects, the more impossible mutual recognition with others becomes, the mutual recognition without which *recognition as myself* is also impossible.

Although beginning from entirely different assumptions, Hegel's argument runs interestingly parallel to Nagārjuna's demonstration that a world of fixed and separate things each with their own 'essence' is *logically impossible,* and that therefore things don't

happen to be *empty*, to be *not-separate*, but that they logically *must* be in order to exist at all. Hegel demonstrates entirely independently of Nagārjuna that this is true in regard to our own *subjectivity*: our sense of being a 'self' having personhood and agency. The idea of a truly 'separate' self turns out to be simply non-sensical and self-contradictory.

Curiously, this failed relationship of Master and Slave also closely parallels the earlier psychological vision of the relation of 'His Majesty the Baby' to his mother: the imperious infant attempting to bend the (passive) mother to his will. Mutual recognition is absent from both accounts, because of the absence of mutual *care*. Benjamin maps in detail how the evolving relationship between mother and child, showing how this mutual sense of self develops as *play*. From the early months onwards, play between mother and child involving rhythm and reaction begins to allow the child to experience herself *as* a self that *intends* and *acts* towards her mother, a mother who also *intends* and *acts* towards her. In making faces, performing nursery rhymes, playing 'peepo', each shows they can both *affect* the other and *be affected by* the other, and that they can and do bring the other pleasure and take pleasure themselves in the pleasure they bring the other. They *share the delight of sharing* this mutual recognition. It is centrally important that we recognise and give due weight that this happens through mutual 'joyous affect', through the *sharing* of *pleasure*. This is the space Benjamin calls the *Rhythmic Third*, a space that is not mine, not yours, but is the space that is *us,* and that *out of which we emerge as you and I in relation*. In the shared rhythm, the invented game, we co-create the experience of mutuality itself existing as the space that *forms* us, but is not 'owned' by either.

Recognition, Relationship, and the Third

This is the space in which I come to awareness of a 'you' that is *separate*, *other*, a centre of intention and of action and reaction. And that in *also* having intentions, action and reaction, *I* am 'just like you'. It is in becoming aware of *you* that I come to develop a sense of *me* that is like *your* sense of *your* self. I become aware that you and I interact not as *objects* but as *subjects* who each recognise the other. I experience your pleasure in me, and experience too your pleasure in my pleasure and my pleasure in yours. I learn that just as I can experience hurt, you too can be hurt: that in this too we are alike. We are different, 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.

It in in this space of the Third that we can in fact negotiate our *ruptures* and *repair* them: a space in which we can trust each other to fail and then recover our mutual trust. The child is too tired, the mother has an actual life of her own beyond the child…relationship stumbles. But in *re-finding* the space of the Third the relationship renews as stronger and more resilient than before. Each experiences the *otherness* of the other, but also each knows they *matter* to the other. Hence this temporary rupture is no catastrophe, no ending to relationship: this problem is, finally, no problem. The restoration of recognition, the repair of our relationship, is itself the source of pleasure, of joy. We experience that we both rely on the *affirmation of the other* as independent centres of feeling, thinking, and intention.

As relationship between carer and child develops, so beyond the bonding of rocking, singing and playing together of the Rhythmic Third, there emerges the dimension

Benjamin talks of as the *Moral Third*. This is a space of the evolving and shared framing of our particular relationship that she calls *lawfulness*. I do find this term problematic as it suggests an absolute and pre-existing standard which would be the very opposite of the openness and possibility of relationship: one that comes from outside in the same way as does legal judgement and identity. However, Benjamin is actually referring not to 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. This relies on our shared and developing —if usually unarticulated—sense of what is to be encouraged, permitted or forbidden *at this point* and *for us*. It's not only the rules of the game that we know and share, but that these rules are always evolving, and so we have a way of continuing relating to each other even when the rules themselves seem to have broken down. Benjamin's use of 'lawfulness' emphasises that these are not *my* or *your* rules, but those of the 'Third' space we come to *share* together. As the model of the Rhythmic Third developed in our early play shows, this is always a space 'under development', and as relationship grows the Moral Third too develops and changes. As it *matters to each of us* that *each matters to the other*, we move beyond the *contractual*, and into something more open, more flexible, and more responsive to our real lives as not-separate. We move into the space of our shared possibility as 'not-knowing'. Our use of language itself expresses this: the language of relationship will differ subtly but importantly from that of identification. In thinking about the previous precept we introduced the idea of performative speech: 'I arrest you in the name of the law!' Philosopher Stanley Cavell has contrasted this to what he calls 'the expressive utterance', what in our terms is a *bearing witness* to the truth of this moment *for me*, and in its sharing, *for us*: 'A performative utterance is an offer of participation in the order of law. And perhaps we can say: A passionate utterance is an invitation to improvisation in the disorders of desire.' (*Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow*, 2006, p. 185). Discussing Cavell, Imani Perry adds 'It is a statement that is not assured on the basis of convention. Rather, it is based in the hope that it is 'inviting an exchange' rather than 'invoking a procedure'. The passionate utterance is a disrobing. It is an attempt to chart new territory or enter into the wilderness with another person.' (*Vexy Thing*, 2018, p. 203). I find this a very beautiful description of our deepest moments of relating, of relationship.

Relationship, however, is never just about 'you and me'. Even our very first relationships with our caregivers are never untouched by the world 'outside', and so from the first the self we begin to come-to-be is fully social. Our carers (mother, father… grandparents…) themselves grew up in a family or in 'care', they have (or don't have) partners, jobs, money, friends; they have desires, aspirations, fantasies, and responsibilities that extend beyond their child. Identity has a central role even in these relationships: mother has to learn to identify as 'mother' and so identify her child as 'child'—as *her* child, her responsibility. Mum and dad have 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 their life as a whole, a life that has been and will always be so much more than this one role of parent. Present too and helping or hindering are all the emotions, understandings and myths about what she as a 'mother' 'should' feel or think or do, about what he 'should' feel or think or do as a 'father'. Worse, if they try to conform to this identification (behaving as the person they

imagine themself to be as a 'mother' or 'father') then they miss the multiplicity they themselves have always been, fail to recognise themselves. This complementary identification of each other as parent and child is the condition of possibility of parenting, but will also potentially block true mutual recognition within that relationship, and so threaten to rupture the relationship itself: I can never really meet either my own expectations or yours as to how I 'should' or 'must' behave, and vice versa.

Inevitably, all our relationships will involve both identification and recognition. Identity frames how we can invent, develop, enjoy and delight in those at once deeper and more spontaneous moments of our relationship. It is here that Benjamin's understanding of recognition as *mutual* subjectivity is crucial: we are *mutually necessary for us to be ourselves*. *Rupture* is essential to developing relationship: *only by the resistance of you feeling differently, thinking differently from me do I experience you as the other whose reality confirms my own existence to me*. The other is not an intrusion or a challenge to my own subjectivity, but rather the precondition to me being myself. So for relationship to continue to develop requires our ideas of identification—both of self and other—to be *flexible*, subject to permanent openness, to be forever a source of play. I matter to you, you matter to me. You show me *that* I am, and what I am. As I do you. In our Zen terms: not-separate.

I Am Multitudes: 'Self States'

Failing, getting things wrong, misunderstanding are all in the nature of relationship, as too is the pleasure of our pleasures shared. To recognise each other is to take each other whole *as we are* in *this* moment, *this* place. Our whole-ness paradoxically includes too our brokenness: that as embodied beings our vulnerability is not simply to something that comes from *outside* us. My relationship with you, the 'other' other, is mirrored in my own *self-otherness*. I am not 'one': a single univocal and undifferentiated whole. Rather I am a fractured, fragmental and potentially infinite play of forces and connections manifesting, to use a term coined by another key figure in relational psychoanalysis—Philip Bromberg—as my varied momentary 'self-states'. Bromberg used the idea of self-states to develop an alternative model of the self as a shifting and discontinuous series of relatively self-coherent, relatively independent self states in various degrees of dissociation from each other, the relations between which it is the task of analysis (and in its own way, of our practice too) to explore. Because these self states are discontinuous and it is through dissociation that we move between them—a bit like using the clutch to change gear in a car—we are normally unaware of their differences, and I construct my life story around this shifting self that nevertheless always 'feels like me'. But if I choose to pay attention I can come to be more aware of these internal fractionings: in my different self-experience as 'work-me' and 'family-me', as the cigarette I reach for while 'giving up', as the experiencing of my own aging body, in the anger or desire that rises unbidden… Bromberg argues that in relationship, in moments of recognition, we actually come to *share* 'self-states' and by doing so creatively affirm our pleasure in each other. In laughing at the same joke or a shared look of response that shows you and I are thinking and *feeling* alike about this situation, we are *sharing* the same self-state, and in doing so we find new 'Thirds' (in Jessica Benjamin's sense) in unlikely places. As I recognise you as being same-but-different with me, I need to recognise too that I am also same-but-different with

myself. 'My' self states interact with 'your' self states to change us both: they *inter-are*, to use Thich Nhat Hanh's term. It is in the experiencing of these very intimate encounters that we can come most directly to insight about what relationship is, and what it opens onto. But we may then begin to relate these to other, seemingly very different experiences of the same-but-otherness of others.

Animal, Vegetable, Mineral…

Given the examples I have been taking, it might be easy to think that relationship is *only* with those humans I hold dear and close. This would be a serious misunderstanding, and perhaps especially so when we come to think about relationship as *care*, and so might mislead us into thinking about it as 'the bonds of love' or something similar. Relationship, in the strict terms I am talking about it here is both vast and wide. Relationship may be in the recognition of a shared smile as I pass you as a stranger, or a shared life together. Relationship does not *preclude* money changing hands, or employment or contract. Jessica Benjamin writes not simply of relationship in general, but specifically of the analyst-patient *relationship*. Philip Bromberg points to the sharing of self-states with his patients: *relationship*. There is no question either that there is any real 'equality' between parent and child other than what emerging *relationship* brings and makes possible in the recognition of our shared embodiment and vulnerability. Relationship is the possibility of possibility breaking into the known, the identified.

So is relationship then about the 'simply human'? Zen traditionally talks of 'sentient beings', without getting too specific. Does relationship, inevitably, recognise the species bar? Do we want to argue that the relationships humans have with animals are not 'true' relationship, but simply projection or playacting on our part? How anthropocentric! Although always potentially subject to the extremes of sentimentality, there is also a serious argument that by being 'beyond' our familiar prop of verbal language, our animal relationships offer us a different and even purer experience of relationship. If this is true of our animal familiars, our cats and dogs, it is also true, perhaps differently again, with our relationship to the wild. I remember with absolute presence the time suspended in our mutual recognition: across an open, wide winter field, simply sat, the hare observing and assessing me, eye to eye with each other. This was twenty years ago or more, and yet this presence is still active in me, in how I am in this world. Need we *stop* here? Our house and garden plants: those that we care for and which respond to this care, those that we simply encounter and in however restricted a sense *recognise* as other. Even the landscapes we find ourselves a *part* of, for a moment or for a lifetime. The possibility of possibility, vast and wide.

Mastery and Judgement

If the very idea of relationship with the non-human feels challenging, it is no surprise: traditional Christian accounts of human relationship to nature have ranged from simple 'dominion' to, at best, 'stewardship', while Western science and philosophy have both made absolute the judgement of separation between rational 'man' and brute matter, where the latter includes all living species, *bar one*. Our ever-deepening climate catastrophe points only too clearly to what happens when the entire world is seen merely

as raw material to be transformed in the service of ever greater capital accumulation. As Hegel shows us, this struggle for *Mastery*, whether over human or non-human others (including myself), is the *inverse* of recognition, of real relationship. It is the attempt to realise that essential separateness that Nagārjuna shows us to be logically nonsensical.

The struggle of 'Master' and 'Slave' is not a mere thought experiment, but the ever-repeated acting out of non-relationship in our thoughts, words and actions. Master and slave stand for the positions of *dominating* and *dominated* that we each and all adopt or have forced upon us in endlessly varied configurations and in all aspects of our lives. Without genuine recognition, within Mastery 'I' can only experience myself as *lacking*, and so attempt to see, think and act 'as if' I were a separate being whose only strategy is to gain and hold *control*: control over the other, and control over the world itself. Sadly, I may not recognise that this sense of lack is caused by the struggle itself, and instead conclude that the problem is that my Mastery is still not complete enough, not far-reaching enough, not *total* enough. As we progress with our work on the precepts, we will encounter over and again the drive towards Mastery, and its consequences for both 'Master' and the world in general. In Mastery we literally *objectify* the other, we treat them as an object, reducing their ever changing multiplicity to a frozen identification, and all unawares do much the same to ourselves. Relationship having become impossible, the attempt to control is all that remains to us… Diane is right to have got curious about her judgement on Harry, not because it's 'bad' to have made it, but as the kind of granular example of where our judgements can and do lead us: of the whole 'regime of judgement' by which our society functions.

The struggle for Mastery is where Diane's student's anger at his sister began from: it is what underlies the specific *belief* that he and everyone else should always be able to take care of themselves and be *self*-sufficient. Where did this belief really come from, and what effect does it have, and on whom? Rizzetto says 'such beliefs are what we hold on to dearly because they make us feel safe and in control', and that's certainly true. But *why* would a belief that we are all separate and must look only to ourselves for support make us feel *safe*? Why would we believe for a moment that we have as support only what we can 'control'? In a world of impermanence, of interdependence and Interbeing, such an attitude of universal 'self-reliance' simply makes no sense. So why believe this? Where does his idea of 'self-reliance' *really* come from? Is this 'his' idea at all, or merely one of our 'common notions' taking up residence in him?

In *blaming*, our judgements separate us, returning us, now limited in our becoming, to the courtroom and the contract. In blaming we deny the *mutual* self-as-other we always are, and imagine ourselves instead as an entirely *separate* self who judges an *other* who is to be judged and punished. *But in blaming the other we open ourselves to the inevitability of our own judgment and punishment*. To position myself as judge and avoid the judgement of others I must struggle to find arguments and justifications, to solicit the complicity of others. Even as children we come to learn the tactical value of our *knowing*, of our being 'good' and being 'right'. We want always to occupy the 'moral high ground', a metaphor itself derived from war. But for me to be good and right requires that you be, in however small or great a way 'bad' and 'wrong', always: and so truth, virtue and justice become just so many weapons in our armoury, to be deployed in judgement as and when the opportunity arises.

It is these ways of thinking and acting to which relationship—our actual relationships—always gives the lie. In our mutual recognition this precept finds its true scope: to 'speak of others with openness and possibility' is to offer them relationship, and in doing so to offer it to each other and ourselves also. In relationship we allow ourselves the possibility of exploring our *co-responsibility* with each other and with the world, a co-responsibility that is not the abstract holding to account of a court of justice or legal contract, but a frame of understanding for how we move forward together. To do so is always to *share* in responsibility, to see that this is to do with *us* and not simply me or you, even though we must also be ready to see that our harm, our suffering, may fall much harder on one of us than on the other. We can, and must and do bear witness to all this—as listening, as passionate utterance, and even in our silence.

This leaves us, though, with one supremely important question to answer: who *matters* to me enough that I recognise them, relate to them as an equal *other?* And hence which *other* others do I place *beyond* mattering to me, do I regard as irrelevant, or exploitable, or dangerous? Who (human and other-than-human) is *in* our tent, and who do we leave *outside,* or even fight to keep them there? Or can we think and act *beyond* inside and outside, without falling into benign but finally meaningless affirmations of the value of all beings, all things? This is the question we'll explore next, in our work with the Seventh Precept.

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Openness and possibility are the characteristics of not-knowing. Relationship too, when it is recognition, when it is meeting, when it is mattering, is the same not-knowing. Not-knowing is not the same as not thinking, and our thinking too may be an aspect of our meeting and mattering, of our *caring*. Relationship—human, and other than human—is where we most directly and immediately encounter the openness of the world and of ourselves, a world whose infinite differentiation is not separation, whose unfolding is our own unfolding.