

OMUK Precepts Group

Prison Face: *Before We Begin*

Please read all these commentaries in parallel to Diane Rizzetto's chapter on the relevant Precept in *Waking Up to What You Do*. (See booklist below). Our approaches are complementary, and I've allowed myself the liberty to roam freely here partly because her way of working is so tightly focussed. Read either one first, or both together.

We are going to cover a lot of ground, and much of the argument here will be sketched out rather than patiently worked through. Interpretations are my own, but following the best modern research I can that's broadly consistent with Zen, whether that's historical, sociological, psychological, philosophical or whatever. Some might very legitimately take issue with my presentation, I'm not in any sense trying to give a full and rounded appraisal of conflicting views. But, everything I say here presented here as a fact is true to the best of my ability to establish it. I'm happy to discuss anything you'd like to follow up.

As we go through I'd like you to *keep* asking the practice question: *what's my reaction to reading this?* In fact, *take it as another form of zazen*. Just as kinhin puts zazen into intentional *motion*, so Precept practice is zazen with conscious and intentional *thought*. Please take a little while, or a long while, to feel and think through what your body feels and thinks in response. Some of this is shocking, *should* be shocking. You *may* feel, 'yes, this is what I intuitively know, but written down'. Or... 'how could anyone take this rubbish seriously, this has *nothing* to do with the way I think about Zen!' Or... 'there's a lot here that's interesting, maybe a little challenging...I need to sit with it.' Whatever your response, it's important that you are aware of it, because *that response is itself a major initial part of your Precept work*. All of the Precept work is about becoming more aware of my selfworld, my 'self centred dream' as the Practice Principles put it. And also becoming more aware of the ways in which 'my' selfworld is *shared, social*, from top to bottom, inside and out. The paradox is that while we all imagine we are separate unique selves, we all imagine it in pretty much the same way... But it's the experience of 'my' selfworld that's the point, and to do that experiencing I have to come back over and over again to what I'm feeling, thinking, right *here*, right *now*, in response. This isn't something abstract you're learning for a test. It's life and death.

So this isn't finally about mastery, or understanding. It's not about being smart, or good. The Precepts are ultimately about *caring*, how we show or fail to show care for each other and for ourselves. Just as parenting manuals can enlighten and intimidate in equal measure, thinking about the Precepts can be double-edged. As parents we read the books, but then finally have to *just do what's needed* in each moment. Our practice is rooted in awareness, and in not turning away from reality as it presents itself to us *here* and *now*. And this always has to include thinking, planning, preparing, over and over again. And then... we are where we are... so what do I *do*, now? So this is a practice for a lifetime, but it is also always a practice in *this* moment.

Overleaf is a short booklist, and a 'Concordance' of Rizzetto's chapters with the Precepts themselves: she doesn't take them in order...

OMUK Precepts Group Booklist

Only the **Rizzetto** is in any way 'essential', it's your *own* experience and practice that is the heart of what we are doing. But for those who wish to hear different voices on the Precepts and gain a broader context, these may be useful:

'Infinite Circle' contextualises the Precepts well in relation to other aspects of Zen Practice, and is (relatively) short... Glassman was one of the key figures in the development of social practice within Zen, and the founder of the Zen Peacemaker's Order.

Reb Anderson is a hugely experienced and well respected teacher at the heart of the American Soto Zen tradition...

Robert Aitken was one of the most significant of the first generation of American Zen teachers.

Jay Garfield is the most respected and influential contemporary philosopher to engage directly with the Buddhist tradition.

Diane **Rizzetto**: *Waking Up to What You Do*, 2006, Shambala, ISBN-13 : 978-1590303429

Bernie **Glassman**: *Infinite Circle* 2003, Shambala, ISBN-13 : 978-1590300794

Reb **Anderson**: *Being Upright*, 2000, Rodmell Press, ISBN-13 : 978-1930485013

Robert **Aitken**: *The Mind of Clover*, 1988, Northpoint Press, ISBN-13 : 978-0865471580

Jay **Garfield**: *Buddhist Ethics*, 2022, OUP USA, ISBN-13 : 978-0190907648

Rizzetto: Concordance with the Precepts

1st Precept:	Chapter 12
2nd Precept:	Chapter 9
3rd Precept:	Chapter 10
4th Precept:	Chapter 5
5th Precept:	Chapter 8
6th Precept:	Chapter 6
7th Precept:	Chapter 7
8th Precept:	Not covered specifically
9th Precept:	Chapter 11
10th Precept:	Not covered specifically