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

Disavowal of vulnerability

Judging You, Judging Me

You are sat in zazen in the zendo. Your mind flicks around the other people here with you. How come everyone seems so much better at this than you? They sit firm as mountains, 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!' and you're suddenly aware that *you've been judging* the whole time! This ping-pong of 'I'm better than you/you're better than me' is our entry point to this precept. As Diane Rizzetto writes in Chapter 7 of *Waking Up*:

> 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… WU, 80-81

This precept invites us to explore the causes and consequences of our insistent judging of 'self' against 'other', and as always we begin with our awareness of our own experiencing: just noticing our constant *comparing*, whether on or off the cushion:

> *Stop*. *Look*. *Listen*. Notice the ways you measure yourself to others…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.
>
> 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. (WU 86-8)

Becoming aware of the vast *range* of our judgements is itself shocking: from those that arouse our anger, contempt or a smug superiority, to those habitual and reflexive ones we don't even notice, or would not even recognise as *judgements*:

> 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)

So all this is work we do both *on* and *off* the cushion in the everyday reality of our lives. Observing and becoming aware of our experiencing as it happens, or as how we return to it in memory. 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. (WU 89)

The criteria by which I judge you will say a lot about what's important to me. Even when we first meet I'm already assessing you, making judgements: is it your money that will impress me, your style, your 'taste', your intelligence, your sexiness, your happiness, your kindness? Which of these do I find inviting, or perhaps even threatening? Do I see you as competitor, an ally, or an irrelevance? Can I become more aware of making these judgements as they happen, moment by moment? Do these judgements (good or bad!) prevent my *recognising* you as an other, as an equally real and vulnerable 'sentient being'?

However, useful as it is I think that Diane's student's response here actually only goes half way, I think he's mistaken. The 'me' he sees himself placing at the centre is an image of himself that is as false and as frozen as the image he has of others. I don't place myself *as I am* at the centre, but rather a separate image of myself as I fantasise I am or fear I might be. In judging, in ranking us, *I hold you separate from me*, but *I also hold me separate from myself*: we can't ever truly meet, because neither of us are really present to our experience. To meet you 'on equal ground', to enter into relationship with you, I have to be prepared to meet myself. So *why* do I judge you, and in judging you also judge myself? If relationship is what we truly *are* (insofar as we are truly anything at all), why stymie ourselves here by withdrawing our real presence into judgement even before we've started? What are we afraid of? Diane Rizzetto suggests we investigate by sitting with this exact question:

> 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. (WU 88)

Can we *stay with* these feelings and not turn away from them, not *dissociate* from them or *distract* ourselves? The first step is to become better aware of these responses—our body sensations, emotions and thoughts—and come to experience through them our *shared* vulnerability, and so to soften, to transform. It is slow and patient work.

> 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. WU 88

If we can see this process through, we arrive at *not-knowing.* Here we can meet more openly all we fear about the world and about ourselves: on the one hand experiencing our vulnerability and lack of control, on the other all the delusions we cling to that try to shore up our sense of a self that is righteous, invulnerable and in command of itself and of the world. Regardless, relationship still calls us, because relationship is our home. We feel the pain of exile, even if we fear to take the leap into the shared *not-knowing* that is the only space where true relationship is possible, and where we may actually meet on equal ground, and so come to recognise ourselves. In not-knowing, can we become *curious* about our judging? We judge because we have from our beginnings been judged, and so have learnt to judge in turn: that judging is *what we should expect* and *what is expected of us*. The catch, of course, is that *in judging others we open ourselves to the inevitability of our own judgment and punishment*. What if we were able to let go of that expectation? What if we can 'hold' the fears that drive us to judgment, hold them in a bigger container ('A B C') that is our *not-knowing*? If we can *let go* our expectation of judgement, then we can come to see that these judgements that separate us from each other and from ourselves are nevertheless trying to ward off exactly that which they themselves bring about: the pain of isolation and exclusion that we call *shame*. We fear the judgement of others, and if we do release ourselves from judging and from judgement, it is only to take it up again a moment, an hour, a day later.

The History of Shame

Shame is the emotion we don't want to feel. Shame is a pain more painful than pain itself, it is 'my' deepest and darkest place, and I don't want to go there. We touch into shame and rebound from it in in our social dis-ease, whether we experience it only as the mildest embarrassment or crippling humiliation. We have many names for our reflexive attempts at dissociation from the experience of shame, we might call this: *pride*, *honour*, *self-righteousness*, *machismo*. We are social animals, and it is in the mutual recognition of relationship that is itself the experiencing of ourselves as *not-separate*, that we find the

sense of home that is essential to us all. Shame is both the fear and the experiencing—in the deepest possible sense—of being made *homeless*. Shame is the suffering we feel at a judgement that denies us recognition by those who *matter* to us: by those close to us as family, friends, and community, but also, as we saw for instance in the case of the Windrush Scandal, the more mediated but equally essential recognition offered by the State and our wider society. While *shame* is the emotion of experiencing *broken* relationship, *shaming* is the act of breaking itself, and when we are shamed by others (or for that matter by ourselves) we become *shameful*: full of shame. Shame is the experience of exposure to the objectifying gaze of others, and hence 'my' shame is always in a sense also *public*. And yet when shame takes hold, and if I really experience it *as* shame, it feels absolutely and indisputably *private*. Shame is *mine*, and *I have only myself to blame*.

For an individualising *morality* this makes shame centrally important: it's the mechanism by which I am brought to see I have done wrong, and will hopefully make me change my ways! Whether it is the fear of being judged by God or simply by my human community, I will learn to accept my responsibility and attempt to atone for my fault. Buddhism itself has in general followed this path, where shame is seen as a wake-up call that is *good* for us. *Shaming* helps us maintain our place in society by aligning our behaviour within what is socially acceptable: we feel shamed when we are judged by others or judge ourselves to have behaved unacceptably. Ideally this is win-win: shame saves me from becoming an outcast, and our society is strengthened as a result…unless… what I want, or who I truly feel I am (or am even regarded as) is at odds with the normative values of my society: unless I'm *different*.

For an individualising *psychology* shame encompasses even more: for fear of feeling shame (being judged and so shamed by others) I will learn to strive and to achieve, to acquire skills, learn to work hard, and find my place in the world. In this view my judging and being judged are simply a part of this learning process: life is a perpetual school assessment where I am seeking to improve my scores, and no-one wants to sit in the corner wearing the Dunce's Cap! It's actually *good* that shame hurts, that it's painful, because that is what gives it its power to make me change, improve, progress. The problem here is that those who do not 'succeed' are in this view condemned to permanent shame: they have been found wanting and must suffer the consequences. This is the *winners*' view: the view of those who feel (or try to persuade themselves) they are winning at life, and therefore that they are themselves in a position to judge, and of course to award themselves a favourable verdict. Feeling shame never did *me* any harm, and so the others too *deserve* their shame, and it is right they feel it. But…'methinks they do protest too much': even as a 'success' I can never truly feel secure, and so be free from the fear of shame. My success is only ever provisional, and in the next moment the judgement may be reversed: I lose my prestige job, the business deal goes sour, I fall out with my trophy partner or my dutiful, perfect children. I can never succeed *enough*. The 'success' I experience in this sense is only ever really that of an identity, of an image or idea, and only my repetitive judgements of others as lesser, as failing, as 'losers', or simply as *failing more than me*, can maintain this image of myself. My winning is hence actually just another form of losing… The *morality* of shame did at least aim to bring us all together (albeit, as we'll explore, at significant human cost), but this *psychology* of shame belongs to a society that is fragmented, atomised, with all in permanent competition in a game that can never be won.

As with all ideology, and whether presented as morality or psychology, it is taken for granted that we feel shame 'naturally' and in terms of individual responsibility. Until very recently shame has been discussed only from the point of view of the individual experiencing it, and as felt in direct response to recognising their error or failure. But this individualising is itself both the precondition and the outcome of shame, our emotional response to the breaking of mutual relationship. For shame to be experienced there is always a judgement and a judge—a shame-*er*—even if *I* am my *own* shamer judging 'on behalf of' what I imagine a public judgement on me would be.

It was only in the 1980's that *toxic* shame began to be talked about: that shame could be both chronic and highly damaging. John Bradshaw's *Healing The Shame That Binds You* from 1988 was one of the first books to widen awareness of what happens when our shame becomes generalised in exactly the way we have explored previously in relation to judgement and identity: that '*I*' come to see myself as globally bad, worthless, unlovable, a failure. Such shame was called 'toxic' to distinguish it from what was still thought of as the 'good' shame of 'I feel bad about doing a bad thing'. Over recent decades the pendulum has swung, and shame in general has gained a very bad reputation in popular psychology, against which there has in turn been a backlash. An example would be the hugely respected Theravada scholar and teacher Thanissaro Bhikku's 2017 piece for Tricycle Magazine called 'Why Shame Gets A Bad Rep (But shouldn't)': a re-statement of the classic Buddhist version of an individualising morality.

Only very recently has the fully relational nature of shame begun to be better understood, and hence too its fully social and political nature. I think the key work here is David Keen's *Shame* (2022), to which I'd add Cathy O'Neil's *The Shame Machine* (2022). While Keen's more academic book explores the 'politics of shame' in contexts ranging from civil war and famine to the 'War against Terror', O'Neil provides sharp analysis of the social and specifically commercial uses of shaming: *shaming us to sell us things*. Both authors show how shame is always actually relational: a *practice of power*, a coercion or self-coercion based on the avoidance of experiencing the emotional and existential pain of the fear or reality of exclusion. They show us how shame is itself *violence* by another name.

The Power of Shaming

In our previous commentary we looked at how Hegel uses the 'dialectic of the Master and the Slave' to demonstrate that my own sense of self depends crucially on *mutual* recognition. *Shaming is the denial of recognition* and hence in itself a practice of power over a disrespected other. In Hegel's 'no holds barred' version of the story, the Master's power depends finally on his ability to *overwhelm* the other by physical force, and to coerce them to obedience under the threat of death. Because *he* will risk everything, even staking his very life to win, in the Master's own eyes he himself is a hero. The Slave's fate is one of accepting not only the shame of *losing* the fight, but also the added shame of not demanding death rather than defeat. They must make a life for themselves within that failure and within having been found lacking…*within their shame*. So for the Slave, their Master's judgement on them—as trial by combat—is the ultimate shaming. The Slave has become shameful *in themselves*. Is this really for what they have *done*, or for what they have been shown to *be*? Can we tell the difference? Does it even matter? *Responsibility* and *blame*

are secondary here: both judgement and shaming are fundamentally about who is strong and who is weak, about the continuing exercise of *power over another*. By shaming his Slave the Master makes them suffer pain—shaming hurts!—as a reminder of his dominance.

In our own society we do not face the fictive one-to-one struggle of Master and Slave. But insofar as our State and its laws are grounded in a coercion underwritten by the threat and reality of violence, we each share in the humiliation of the Slave's defeat: we have *all already* been judged and found wanting. For each of us our true and unlimited interconnection and interdependency as *not-separate* now come to be experienced instead as only an *individualised dependency*: what am *I* permitted by society or by the State, and what not? Hegel asks: what does the Slave actually *want*, *desire* most of all? He suggests that it isn't their 'freedom', but in this closed and individualised universe the Slave wants first of all a slave of their own, an *other* to subdue and so experience for themselves something of the power their Master exercises over *them*. This applies directly to each of us: your shaming of me shows me to be *weak*, as would your physical domination of me. To demonstrate that I am truly *strong*, I must show that another is weaker, and that I can come to dominate them. To show that I am strong I *shame someone else*… We *all* carry the Slave's debt of shame, our debt not to any individual Master, but to the world that is our shared society, and society's embodiment as the State. We repay this debt largely in our conscious and unconscious shaming of others, both collectively and as individuals. We might remember Diane's words quoted earlier: *'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.'* In a society where *physical* violence is only permitted on the part of the State itself, shaming remains a widely acceptable form of psychological, and in extreme cases, existential violence.

We might insist that surely our system of laws as embodied in and executed by the State is the very opposite of the struggle of the Master and the Slave, and that in fact the State itself is presented as our *protection* from it. Indeed. But as we examined in relation to our ideas of truth, our system of law is ultimately grounded precisely in the State's willingness to threaten and/or use unlimited physical violence, up to and including its killing us. This is the sense in which *all* judgement, all law, is finally that of the Master. Just as the Master commutes the threat of death into slavery, so the State's sovereignty over our life is commuted to the ability to deprive us of our various real and symbolic freedoms: of movement, association, time, and all the rest. Coercive control is exercised on our right to speak or to be silent, and even in the identification and individualisation of each of us as we potentially come 'before the law'. Beyond questions of 'fairness' or 'truth' in any individual case, we need to understand how the system itself—legislation, policing, legal procedures and the prison system—creates both the *distinction* between being inside society or exiled to its margin, and plays a major part in *producing* the individuals it is identifying and judging. The rules of the game are always and can only be set by those 'in authority', and so the system of judgement is always first a practice of power. In our system of the social distribution of blame, legal judgements displace blame from the judge to the judged: no blame is to be placed on society (on 'us'), but all must be born by the accused, who is now made uniquely responsible as an individual. In our reassuring sense of superiority as the 'law-abiding', 'we' feel we share in the judge's mastery as being righteous, powerful, and safe *inside* society. Who would *not* want this, when the alternative

is to be one of 'them': the 'criminal' cast out as shameful, powerless, vulnerable, and exiled to the margins?

The judge is insistent that I am being punished *only* for what I have done, and in no way for what I *am*. This is paradoxical: the deed is in the past, it has long gone, but I as a person am held to remain permanently identical to the individual committing it. In fact this ambiguity within the nature of judgement—being judged for what I *do* or what I *am*—is there from the very beginning in the story that lies at the root of Judaeo-Christian myth, and hence of Western culture as a whole: Adam and Eve's Expulsion from the Garden of Eden. This is the *first* judgement, the great judgement that inaugurates law itself. God's commandment (*His* setting of the rules) is broken, and He judges, determines, and *pronounces* sentence, a sentence which is itself the *shaming* of Adam and Eve *for ever*, in an act we might call the primal shaming of humanity. From now on Adam and Eve are denied their recognition with God, and obedience is all that can take the place of relationship. They are *othered*, and cast out of Paradise with both the symbolic and literal threat of violence: the angel carries a sword. Is the eating of the Apple an isolable event—something Eve *does*—or rather is it something she *is*… a part of her nature? Or is her nature changed by the apple's eating? It's unclear, but what *is* clear is that there is no expiation possible, and no resolution to be had in *this* world. Why would an *event* need to be punished *forever* down the generations, why would the daughters of Eve's daughters need to suffer for her 'crime', and in addition be held by it in subservience to their menfolk? Judgement seems inextricable from shame, and both from their beginnings reveal themselves to be *primarily* practices of power and coercion. Eve is not *expelled* from society (in a sense it is the Expulsion which *begins* society itself in this story), but by being judged responsible for humanity's Fall her burden of shame is used to assign her a fixed and inferior place. That she must now obey Adam is *itself* shaming, and she must obey him *because* of her shame, her shamefulness.

This isn't a question of theology, but of the form of judgement itself. We pointed earlier to the way in which in Zen terms it's only by abstraction, by arbitrarily cutting out from the infinite flux of lived relationships something we then view as an isolatable *event,* that we are able to assign guilt and responsibility to an identified *individual*. Judgement requires us to treat both as absolutes, as truly true or really real, even though we all know that these ideas are, finally, only useful fictions. Hence, the technical distinction between punishing the crime and punishing the person is only ever *relative* and rarely holds in 'life as it is', in fact it *cannot* hold true except in unusually clear limit cases. However much our laws or our own judgements would wish to present themselves as objective and rational (and however much those involved or we ourselves sincerely strive to make them so), both in myth and reality they are always inseparable from shaming: in the Expulsion from Paradise, and so too in our own overcrowded prisons. *Shame is not a reasoning process but a set of conditioned emotional reactions* that depend on the underlying symbolic emotional logic operating within our culture. Whether in the petty day to day shaming I do as a 'private' individual, or that done more damagingly at the hands of the State, shame adds its emotional charge to our judgements, and in doing so tends to further fix or freeze the identities of both judge and judged. *Blaming becomes shaming* when our judgements are used to *deny recognition* to the other. While we might imagine that shame *follows* our judgements as some kind of misdirected excess of blame, we might better see our shaming

as *primary*, and that our various kinds of judgement—individual, collective, official, legal—serve as the pretexts or alibis for this more general process of social control. We talked of the Master's victory over the Slave as '*trial* by combat'. We should remember that this is no metaphor. Violence lurks within every judgement, no matter how we temper it, no matter how we attempt to qualify or deny the simple conclusion that 'might is right'.

Learning Shame

Jessica Benjamin developed her insight that our sense of self is always relational, by putting together Hegel's idea of mutual recognition with contemporary understanding of child development. Likewise, we can see the *failure or breaking of recognition* with our caregivers as what gives rise to our first and damaging childhood experiencing of shame. We remain so vulnerable to shame because it is an emotion we come to know from our infancy, as we first begin to experience ourselves *as* selves in our growing relationships with our caregivers. At the time when we are just coming to understand how utterly dependent we are not only physically, but also emotionally and even existentially on the moment by moment goodwill of these first others, the *loss* of mutuality, of recognition, cannot be experienced as other than catastrophic and traumatic. My experiencing of a loss of recognition that shames me may be in my repeatedly being told (or shown by word, gesture or facial expression) that I am 'bad', 'stupid', or 'disgusting', or it may be in my carers' *turning away* from or ignoring me, of my being unable to get their attention. But it may also be in something less obviously damaging. Psychoanalyst Philip Bromberg argues that if our thoughts and emotions as emergent independent selves are consistently *not* affirmed and validated by our caregivers, the result is *developmental trauma* that produces deep shame:

> A failure of responsiveness by the mother or father to some genuine aspect of the child's self, not necessarily open disapproval or abusiveness…but a masked withdrawal from authentic contact that leaves the child experiencing part of herself as having no pleasurable value to a loved other, and, thus, no relational experience as part of "me"….The child's own need for loving recognition becomes despised and shame-ridden. The need becomes a dissociated 'not me' aspect of self that, when triggered, releases not only unmet hunger for authentic responsiveness, but a flood of shame. *Awakening the Dreamer* (2006), 139-40

Note that this doesn't require that my parents have any *conscious* intention to shame. In whatever way, I am shown that I have no value as an equal subject/self within our relationship: that I really don't *matter* to you. These are our first experiences of shame and being shamed, and to lose or be denied the recognition of our our nearest caregivers may well be experienced as life-ending and world-ending. Shame is the overwhelming experience of not *mattering*, of being 'nobody'. In my imagination I become witness to my own casting out from family and society: because I have never been truly *met* by an *other*, I do not really exist myself. If these ruptured relationships are not well enough repaired, then my experience of shame not only remains traumatic, but becomes chronic as

developmental trauma. Bromberg is clear that far from being exceptional, t*his is something that to one degree or another affects all of us*.

We learn shame as children by being shamed ourselves at the hands of our parents and peers, and by seeing others shamed. Alongside *the experience of shame*, we witness and learn the *power of shaming:* that shaming hurts, and that we may use its power to try to *control* the other. As a society we have rejected the right of parents to be physically violent towards their children, an advance which has had the unintended consequence of only increasing the significance of shaming our children. Shaming is both a substitute for and displacement of physical violence, it can hurt more, and for far longer, even a lifetime. (Just to be completely clear: this is absolutely *not* an argument for allowing our children to be hit, smacked or otherwise physical assaulted…quite the reverse.) In shaming others we come to share the Slave's response to their own shaming at the hands of the Master: *to shame others is to claim the position of the parent-as-Master, to be shamed is to be given the position of child-as-Slave.* In shaming others we *claim the power of status, authority or group membership by denying it to another*. Shaming is always a practice of power.

Is this what binds us together as a society? While we are not (at least for the most part) literal Masters or Slaves, I emphasised previously how every day of our lives we find that we come to occupy both positions in our shifting and complex engagement with family, friends, work, organisations and authority. We live in a society of powerful and competing interests, with structures that establish status and hierarchy through *privileging* or *othering* specific groups or individuals. We live out and share unequally in the violent consequences of the violence of inequality within our society. Shaming repeats at the level of society what we first experienced traumatically as infants at the time of our coming-to-be: the denial of our recognising and being recognised as a self-in-relationship. Shaming returns us to the position of the infant denied not only *care*, but the mutuality that is the foundation of our existence as (relatively) independent beings. Shaming is always both the demonstration and the exercise of power over another.

Losing Inequality

If judgement and shaming are to a greater or lesser extent features of every society, it is only within a society whose founding myths (delusions?) are of 'self reliance', 'equality of opportunity', and that 'you can achieve anything if you try hard enough', that the 'elevation of the self and the denigration of others' takes on its obsessive and particularly aggressive contemporary form. If the primary social function of shame is to 'keep us in our place' within society, then in a society of true permanent competition for status our place can *never* be secure, and hence the competitive shaming of others becomes integral both to maintaining our own status and seeking to advance it. If all *status rankings* are permanently open to challenge, we are obliged to fight the war of all against all to maintain or increase our status: '*keeping* my place' requires me to '*put* you in your place'.

The myth of the 'self-made man' is the alibi of existing privilege: no wonder it is so relentlessly promoted by those such as Donald Trump or Elon Musk, and now even seems to be accepted as truth by those politicians who would see themselves as centre left. The result is individual competition whose *ferocity is proportional to the levels of inequality across society as a whole*. Looking beyond our own society, contemporary anthropology has

consistently found the *limiting of inequality* to be a founding principle of most successful human societies. It is the failure of the internal mechanisms that normally keep inequality and status hierarchy in check that have allowed the extreme and rapidly increasing levels of political and material inequality characteristic of contemporary societies to develop, even societies classed as 'democratic'. This failure is not, however, as a result of the social fluidity that we collectively assume as an item of faith, but rather of the inbuilt and opposite tendency of capitalism to *concentrate* wealth in the hands of ever fewer individuals: wealth in our societies is in reality only a little less 'heritable' than was that of feudal aristocracy. Hence, as has been repeatedly demonstrated by economists and sociologists, perhaps most notably by Thomas Picketty in his magisterial *Capital in the Twenty-first Century* (2013) and *Capital and Ideology* (2019), our individual status within Western societies is still based largely (and in recent decades ever increasingly) on our parents' own wealth and cultural capital. While we in the West might feel smugly superior in imagining that we have left behind all 'magical thinking', it is this basic mismatch between our fictitious and endlessly intoned beliefs ('you can make it if you really want to') and our very different social reality that makes shaming within our societies so universal and competitive. Hence our tendency to 'elevate self and denigrate others' is neither personal eccentric glitch nor our inevitable 'human nature'. If it perhaps exists at all times and in all places, it is today one of our defining attributes as a society.

Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett have demonstrated on the widest possible statistical basis in their seminal books *The Spirit Level* (2009) and *The Inner Level* (2019) that inequality correlates precisely with poor individual and public health, poor education, and with unsafe environments and fractured social attitudes and behaviour. It is not simply that the poorest suffer more in highly unequal societies, but that *everyone* does. In reality all our lives are necessarily and increasingly *co-operative* in nature, yet our collective magical thinking ties us to an *agonistic* understanding and way of life: that our existence is a permanent struggle of all against all, and that in the 'game of life' my 'winning' requires you to 'lose'. What I as an individual might want or believe, or what I might say or do to resist this, is of limited consequence if all or most others constantly compete over wealth and status ranking, and that frequently I find I have little other option myself.

The 'poor' are told to be ashamed of themselves for being poor, as it is the *collective* story we are told to tell that they have 'only themselves to blame'. And so on with every other group we can *identify*—which is really to say *fabricate*—through the way we see and understand the world. By judging others in a way that 'freezes' them (and hence ourselves too as 'others'), we expose them to a generalised personal shaming, a shaming they are then obliged to accept as the 'truth' about themselves.

We can see the way this plays out across society as the kind of bullying behaviour we all learnt in the playground/schoolyard. So are we just behaving 'like children'? Wilkinson and Pickett point to convincing research showing that the bullying our children experience at school *is proportional to the levels of material inequality within society*, and that children who grow up in more unequal societies experience levels of bullying as much as ten times higher than those where there is greater equality. Our children are simply responding to the state of the society in which they find themselves placed. Inequality literally breeds shame into us.

Increasing material and status inequality amplify the 'shame deficit' I discussed earlier: the debt of individualised social shame we all experience. It is not simply in *explicitly* shaming others that we attempt to prove our own strength and social status at the expense of others, but our *implicit* competition also increases both our individual and collective debt of shame. The more my sense of 'success' depends on having 'more' or 'better' than 'you', and the more we individually and collectively compete (or even feel unable to compete), the greater the pain of collateral shaming for those 'left behind'. The car you drive, the brands you wear (or your children do), the gadgets you own, the foods you eat, where you holiday. Do you replace things with the latest upgraded model, or only when they break? Are you 'platinum' or 'budget'? These are sources of pride in the status we feel they confer, and when we *can't* afford or attain them they are sources of shame. There is money to be made—a great deal of money—in selling us status and with it the illusion of freedom from our shame. Except that this freedom is only ever momentary, and only ever lasts until we are made aware that our freedom is mysteriously still just one more purchase away. It is the system of commodities itself that produces the specific shames it offers to save us from. Advertising ruthlessly and relentlessly targets us and we respond with feelings of need, because carrying my debt of shame I both feel and know that I am essentially *lacking*. This fundamental sense of being lacking is displaced onto this or that object or service I can buy, but because the commodity system is constantly reproducing the sources of potential status and shame, any 'gain' I make is immediately invalidated by shame induced by the next 'opportunity' to buy…

Cathy O'Neil's *The Shame Machine - Who Profits in the New Age of Humiliation* (2022) is a well-researched and highly readable account of the details of this mechanism in the twenty-first century, and includes her own experience of weight- and body-shaming. The impossible competitive personal ideals set by our cultures of 'beauty' or 'fitness' tell us that to be anything less than 'perfect' is to be failing, and hence shameful. In our world of *individualised* shame, this failure is 'mine' alone: 'I' am solely responsible and vulnerable to the greater shame of being seen as one of life's losers. Choosing from the infinite variety of diet books, diet plans, and diet foods I can buy, I am promised that with *this* purchase I will 'succeed', despite everything I know about my past (shaming) 'failures': if this were actually true the highly lucrative diet industry would collapse immediately. In failing to address the actual causes of our shame-created problems, all such symptomatic approaches only further *amplify* the cycles of shamed consumption, to the huge financial benefit of those best-placed to profit from it, but to our ever-increasing personal and collective vulnerability to the shaming exposure of our (imaginary) lack. The individualising of shame within capitalism is both motor and alibi: I *must* compete through both my labour and my consumption, and my inevitable failure ever to succeed *enough* is individualised as adding to my unique debt of shame, a debt I must strive ever harder, but always unsuccessfully, to repay. Individualising 'failure' as shame—'the poor have only themselves to blame'—deflects all criticism and even the recognition of the system's internal contradictions: spiralling inequality is a 'feature' not a 'bug' of capitalist economics.

Throwing Like A Girl

Is there nothing that is *not* included in the field of potential shaming? Perhaps not, but shame is nevertheless far from being randomly generated. In our society the poor are always shamed for their poverty, the rich rarely feel shame for their wealth. Am I more likely to be shamed for being 'too' thin or 'too' fat? To be old, and particularly to be frail, is shaming. To have any kind of disability is shaming. To be chronically ill, is shaming: if we are now beginning to speak about 'the big C', we still hide from dementia as if it were contagious. Anything that may be identified as *weakness* of any sort is potentially shameful, and hence any deviation from the *norm*, or even from what is seen as the *ideal*. This extends to every aspect of life, and to the granular detail of that life, even down to the precise form of the gestures I make or my facial expressions, and including the way I walk or sit. Shame has a strong role, for example, in forming our gender expression, where from the first, our shame avoidance motivates us to walk, talk, and sit 'like a boy' or 'like a girl', or else to face the censure of being shamed. Let's say I'm a boy, and I get told 'you throw like a girl!'. Is this merely an observation of the throwing of a ball? It actually expresses the whole of our 'practice' of gender: my throw is shamed because it is weak and inaccurate, and my throwing action itself resembles our shared idea of 'how girls throw a ball'. So this remark challenges the identity I hold (I am a boy!), with an equally fixed, stereotypical and symbolic alternative identity: 'but really (in this respect at least) you are a girl!'. I'm a fraud to boot, for being unable to show that I am *truly* a boy. There is a clear implication that I am thereby *lesser*, *weaker*, *less powerful*… try reversing the slur and it just doesn't work in the same way. This is *gender-shaming*: By misgendering me I am moved from dominant to subordinate. To regain my place I *need* to, I *must* learn how to appear to 'throw like a boy', or know myself to be, at root and in my heart, to be a failed boy—a non-boy—and hence, a girl. And so to live in shame. Will this single event change my life? Will I diligently practice and discover my hidden talent to become the England Men's (or Women's?) next star fast bowler… or will I instead never leave my bedroom again? Or just cheerfully *return* the insult and hence 'play the game' of competition for status?

Is this still shaming as *social control*? Yes in that it reinforces the dominant 'practice' (in the sense of our actions and feelings as well as our 'ideas') of gender within our society. It tells me to know my place and respect the status quo, and that to unintentionally or intentionally diverge further from accepted ideals and norms will come at a cost. Good thing or bad thing? Society trying gently to pull me back into line, or distort us all into caricatures of our assigned gender?

Am I reading too much into a trivial event? Psychologist James Gilligan, whose authoritative writings on violence came out of decades spent working with men incarcerated in the Massachusetts prison system, goes so far as to suggest that shame is the primary causal factor in almost all violent crime, and that gender has a central role in this shaming. Gilligan argues powerfully that male shaming is experienced as a symbolic feminisation and emasculation, and that male violence is the response to this. To carry on living while so shamed is really experienced as not to live at all, to be already 'dead'; our own physical death or even taking the life of another coming to seem an acceptable price to pay for escaping this shame. Such violence always carrying the symbolic message that 'I am not a woman!' The gendered and/or sexualised nature of shame is complex, but the

basic equation is: masculinity = virility = strength = the ability to dominate through violence = control = violence displaced onto shaming others. By contrast: being shamed = lack of control = weakness = impotence = femininity. My shame is a demonstration of my lack of *potency*, of *potential*, of *power*, and the sexual metaphor is explicit. Rape, torture and murder all seek to make the same basic point: I am strong, potent, and definitively *male*. I am *Master*.

Where does that leave me if I actually *am* a woman? There has only recently begun to be significant research into the forms of shaming experienced by women as the 'marked', 'other', term of the gender binary. If we are all asked to play an un-winnable game in the 'competition of life', then undoubtedly the extra rules imposed on women make that game still harder: be (the right kind of) mother, have a career, have the (conventionally defined) 'perfect' body, always appear happy, and always be available (to men and all others who expect your services). To be shamed for not being a 'real' woman is not to be shamed for my lack of potency in the world, but rather for not behaving as a man might want me to. As, unlike a man, I cannot reassert my challenged femininity through physical violence (which would show me as still *less* feminine), different strategies emerge: *internalising* our shame and acting it out primarily towards ourselves as self reproach, self-censorship and self-limitation, which may damagingly result in depression, eating disorders or as self harm, for example as cutting. Unsurprisingly, our self-policing and policing of others through shame often focus on the female body.

Is my 'throwing like a girl' about what I *do* or what I *am*? Clearly, it is both, and inseparably so. And anyway, what *is* the actual problem here? This 'problem', is simply the expression of the symbolic logic of gender that underlies the still remarkably patriarchal nature of our society. It suggests that I probably couldn't hurt you if I hit you (which is true…), and that this is something I should be ashamed about (which I'm not, though to be able to say that *honestly* has taken some work…). Shaming is both a *displacement* of physical violence (I shame you to show my superiority *without* having to hit you), and by being a *symbolic assertion of superior strength*, shame claims my ability to physically overwhelm you through *actual* physical violence… I could: 'have'/'take'/'do' you… again the sexual metaphors are explicit.

9/11

Our attempts, both individual and collective, to avoid or erase the symbolic violence of shame may themselves lead directly to further and more damaging acts of physical or psychological violence. We can see this played out on the international stage, with consequences as disastrous as they are tragic. In the aftermath of the attacks of 9/11 and at a time when cool heads were much needed, President George W. Bush addressed Congress: "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." A binary and truly global judgement that did not allow for nuance. Given the entirely predictable long term outcomes, and given that the only real 'success' of the War on Terror was to remove from power the US's own pick for ruler of Iraq, it's hard not to see the invasions of both Afghanistan and Iraq, despite and alongside more complex economic and geo-political issues, as attempts to displace the experience of shaming that 9/11 induced in those responsible for keeping America safe, and specifically

in their President. The symbolic gendering of the 9/11 attack itself added to its emotional impact, resulting in an even more highly charged reaction within the United States. The destruction of the Twin Towers, that central phallic embodiment (look! *we've* even got two!) of the United States' global economic dominance and exceptionalism, was experienced as both a symbolic and actual *violation* of the never-challenged territorial *integrity* so fundamental to the US's self-myth, a *penetration* of its defences that was hence too an *emasculation*. The shamed response to this symbolic feminisation was a reassertion of masculinity-as-violence: to *return* the shame on a global scale. The gendering of this reaction extended to the co-option of the actually oppressed women and girls of Afghanistan as an additional alibi for this punitive shaming: as so often before and since, male aggression cloaked itself as the virtuous defence of powerless femininity. Hence too the ritual sexual shaming and actual sexual abuse practiced at Abu Ghraib prison, which as we now know were not the exceptional acts of 'bad apples', but the expression of a shame culture sanctioned by authority. That the 'War on Terror' was targeted on what were seen as *weaker* others who were in no direct way responsible for the 9/11 attacks, but were still 'Muslims' and 'Arab-looking' is again characteristic of shaming as a violent *displacement* of emotion. Likewise, the fact of how little thought was given to the 'beyond' of this temporary conquest: what should happen *after* the shaming, after the punishment had been meted out. The most cursory reading of Afghan history shows that that no conqueror has succeeded in establishing more than a temporary presence there, and that all have been ultimately ejected through simple and sustained attrition. Hence the point, and really the only point (as later in Iraq), was that of a *punitive* violent shaming to soothe the emotions of the humiliated.

Twenty years later Western forces beat an ignominious retreat from Afghanistan, and the 'reconstructed' Iraq still suffers endless internal troubles: these facts should shame the invaders far more deeply than did 9/11 itself. It should show us that a response in the same terms as that of 9/11—more than a million actual human lives taken in reaction to a symbolic gendered shaming—was only ever going to be counterproductive to its stated aims, and that the dissemination of Western values (had that actually been the point), could never have be done down the barrel of a gun. Such is the outcome of a reflexive violence in response to being shamed, exactly as James Gilligan had described in detail in the case of the individual prisoners he worked with in Massachusetts prisons. The counter-productive irrationality of the American response to 9/11 betrayed the workings of shame across governments, news media, and (very much divided) popular opinion. Too often we find ourselves witnessing or even applauding this affirmation of the powerful and the power they exercise on 'our' behalf.

'Hitting Down', 'Hitting Up'

The underlying symbolic emotional logic of our present patriarchy works always to reaffirm the direction of flow of shame from centre to margin, from the better resourced to the less-resourced, from powerful to powerless. Shame flows always downwards, from higher to lower status. My shaming of others attempts a resolution of the 'Slave in search of a Slave of their own': I *identify* a cause for my failure, someone to take the blame and to be held responsible, and so displace both the shame and the pain of experiencing it

downwards onto an *other* of *lower status*. So, if I feel shamed by my boss, I come home and, without 'meaning to', I shame my child. We all 'hit down': this is the direction of shaming. Do we ever 'hit up' by shaming? We *all* try, sometimes. I think of Greta Thunberg's memorable address to the United Nations: "…how dare you!" It was, however, because she had become momentarily and fashionably newsworthy that she was invited to speak. This produced a kind of temporary fold in the structure of power that for a moment let a child, and a female child at that, *have a voice and be heard*, and so reverse the flow of shame on the international stage, however partially and briefly. Mohandas Gandhi's Salt March of 1930 made a similar fold in the structure of power: it shamed the British government in India by exposing the lie of its being a *benevolent* colonial administration. Physical violence had established and sustained British rule in India since the time of Clive, but by this point the government felt unable to risk the shame of repeating the murder of the many hundreds of unarmed protestors killed by its soldiers in the Amritsar Massacre just a decade earlier. The Salt March succeeded in *shaming up* by showing both that British rule relied (shamefully) on the use of violence, *and* that it now felt unable to continue its use of violence in the same way and so was now (shamefully) *weak*. But for the Salt March to *matter* still relied upon Gandhi already being a well-known public figure, and so *having a voice*. 'Shaming up' requires our appeal to a *moral* authority both we and the other see as in some way higher than the threat or reality of physical violence or the 'might is right' embodied in the law, in wealth, or other positions of respect or authority. We appeal to 'God', or to 'justice', to 'humanity' or even to 'reason' itself. 'You *say* you are righteous/just/reasonable…, but your *actions* show you to be the opposite!' You *say* you care about your children's future, but your decisions are bringing about its destruction… You *say* we are valued citizens of your Empire, yet you exploit us as your slaves… This was the strategy of the Hebrew prophets themselves: Idolater! Hypocrite!

Perhaps the pre-eminent examples of this are the Civil Rights Movement of the '50s and '60s in America, and the global women's movement of the '60s and '70's, both decades-long struggles that relied on diverse strategies, a wide popular base, and sustained campaigning and organising. To pick only one moment: the unprovoked attack by state troopers on the 1965 Selma to Montgomery march for voter registration proved a turning point in shaming the Federal government into the passing of the key Voting Rights Act of that year. Such examples expose the lie of governments failing to maintain the illusion of abiding by their own stated values, and what happens when the *appearance of consent* breaks down, and the choice becomes one between direct violence and political change.

It is the *directionality* of the flow of shame that explains an apparent paradox: behaviour that is apparently 'shameless', and its exploitation by populist politicians. Living as we do in our culture of largely disavowed shame (shame that is really collective, but that we each experience as individualised), we are always seeking release from it. To see what is generally recognised as 'bad behaviour' paraded on the public stage, and for those doing so to exhibit no signs of shame, *can* offer a deep sense of release from our own shame: I too can escape the weight of my burden, I *could* do that and *they* are already doing it for me! This has long been the privilege of the 'edgy' comedian and the bad-boy rock-star, and in a way is not unlike the catharsis offered by Greek drama. More recently though, shamelessness has entered mainstream politics, preeminently, of course, in the figure of Donald Trump.

To tell lies, and to be found out and show no shame about it, this we say is shameless. But to *adopt* shamelessness—to appear to be *without* shame—is also to be strong. Why? To say the *wrong* things (racist, misogynistic, xenophobic, ableist…), and to be called out for it and to show no shame, is to claim I have a *more-than-moral* strength, that I refuse to obey exactly those rules society has set for itself to *allow* for the social shaming of powerful individuals within it. To resist *moral* authority becomes, in this sense, to resist 'the system' itself, to push back against the 'elite' by 'sticking it to the man', while at the same time *being* the man himself. What's the difference between a homeless guy behaving this way and a president? Simply but massively importantly: money and the influence it buys, political power. I simultaneously *embody* the corrupt and self-serving nature we ascribe to politicians, and give a knowing wink about it: *I* have the strength not to hide it! Strangely, in this way for my supporters I gain a kind of *hyper-morality*, that of the avenging angel or even the messiah himself… And yet *the direction of shame has not been reversed or even challenged*, but flows downwards all the more unchecked onto the usual suspects, those groups conventionally defined as weaker and more vulnerable than 'us': women, non-Whites, the poor, the homeless, those who break the laws that will now be even more rigorously enforced on those powerless to resist them. *Strength* itself is the paramount, and perhaps even the only value to be respected, and so the strength embodied in shamelessness is finally revealed to be nothing but *fear of the shamefulness of appearing weak*. If we look to Trump's own biography we see exactly the domineering and distant father shaming his son in order to disavow his own weakness, a shaming that would itself become that son's guiding image of what it is to be 'strong': the fragile and insecure strength of the Slave-become-Master whose one overwhelming drive is the fear of being shamed for being weak. But without our *shared* experience of shame, and our collective willingness to do almost anything to avoid experiencing it, this could never have become an effective route to power. This is the game we all play in endless variations on the theme.

ABC

As already acknowledged, I realise that none of this is how we are normally led to think about shame. But in most respects shame shows up in our lives less as 'the still small voice of conscience' than as a practice of power. We need to understand shame not only from the position of the individual person experiencing it, but instead as fully relational: the denial of mutual recognition that breaks relationship into the twin identities of shamer and shamed. Shaming is violence by other means, a displacement from our own experiencing of shamefulness onto another who will be seen as weaker or of lower status, a displacement that thereby closes off our ability to meet with openness and possibility, to meet on equal ground. We have looked at how this works in relation to judgement, blaming and the assigning of responsibility, and so at shame's central role in reproducing social attitudes and practices.

So what of the 'voice of conscience'? Only by understanding better shame's role as a social practice of power can we come to distinguish and experience *our own* breaking of relationship in a truer light. Under the weight of our unrepayable debt of individualised shame why would we *choose* to accept true responsibility or *not* try to shift the blame onto someone else? I saw this with every session of my eleven years working as a prison

chaplain. To shame those we imprison is shameful of us precisely because it makes it impossible for those held to fully experience or process either what they have done or its consequences: being shamed blocks our emotional responses into defensive self-justification, numbing out, self-harm, violence, or other form of displacement. The same pressure (if normally in milder form) applies for us 'on the out', as our work with the remaining precepts will explore.

We cannot entirely avoid shame and shaming, just as we are all a part of killing, delusion, inequality and the rest. We cannot avoid judging, but we can attend to our judging, and become better aware of the shaming that accompanies it as its shadow. It is *not* that we simply need to be more 'objective' in our judgements and more rigorously exclude emotion: this belief is itself a major part of the problem. 'Emotion' and 'reason' are not in conflict here: our emotion is an important part of how we *value* people and things, of how they *matter* to us, and of how we reason about them. Problems arise only when we either imagine that we *can* exclude emotion, or we allow strong emotions to *overwhelm* our ability to think. Shame, along with anger, fear and sexual desire are all very capable of this: we can surely all think of instances in our own lives when we felt more than able to justify to ourselves what was (in the cooler light of day) completely unjustifiable. One important aspect of our practice is developing the capacity to hold emotion in our awareness—to become A Bigger Container for it—instead of reflexively trying to discharge it in dissociation, distraction, flight or violence (including shaming). Another aspect is becoming better aware of our tendency to indulge in the fantasy of our own neutrality, objectivity, our supposed ability to see things 'as they really are'. We are embodied, deluded beings, we never cease to be such, but not all delusions are equal…

There is an important strand of contemporary legal theory that explores exactly this in relation to law itself: if we acknowledge, as we have to, that our laws and legal system are grounded in and sustained by their claim to the exclusive right to violence, then perhaps the only way to address this within society is for the law itself to become more self-honest and self-aware in its actual practice. Only in this way can the law's emotional investment in cruelty, in punishment as revenge, in the self-assertion of strength as domination, in the fear of 'the masses', and in its deference to the powerful and wealthy be generally acknowledged and debated, and perhaps even at least partially remedied. If this were carried through, then perhaps we would find that we did indeed no longer need prisons in any form we would recognise. And we need also to come better to understand how all these features also show up in and as *ourselves*. Each of us are a part of this system (or perhaps we might even call it an 'economy') of judgement and shame that fabricates blame and responsibility along with the individuals to be identified, blamed and held responsible. This is something that happens every day in our courts of law, but also in our own kitchens, offices, factories, schools, hospitals, and (a very obvious place to start!) on our journeys as road-users.

It's only in this way that, given the emptiness—or as I would prefer to say, the non-separation—of all beings and all things, we can come to our own understanding of what within the context of the precepts, *self-responsibility* for our thoughts, words and actions means for each of us. The development of an ethical way of perceiving and being within world, of a 'style' that is able to make a genuine response specific to the time and place of *this* encounter, *this* state of affairs. As caring members of this society, as Zennists, as

practitioners of Ordinary Mind, as members of *this* Sangha… how far do we develop a *shared* style with each other, a *common* response?

I am not *alone*. On the cushion, in the kitchen, at work: I am never 'alone'. The experiencing of shame, and even the spectre that is the fear of it, is one of the primary routes by which I come to feel isolated, *separate*. Isolated as an individual, but perhaps also as 'my' group, my 'identity': the frozen states (always threatening to thaw into something more human) by which we build and maintain in-group and out-group, just as we build and maintain 'me' and 'not me' within each of us. We shame others, and are complicit in the shaming of others, not simply because we have been shamed, but because our shaming is a reflexive and almost unconscious practice of power within our individualising and hyper-competitive society. Those *others* to whom we would pass on the shame we have provisionally contained as 'not me', we collectively treat with vindictive contempt or patronising concern: the 'illegal' immigrant and the prisoner are there to carry our own shame off from us, as the biblical scapegoat carried sin off into the desert. But in our case it is not to the desert, but to the confinement of human lives immobilised and left in a suspension that we, in our shame, instead name as our over-generous indulgence of them.

Jōko Beck talks of our 'turning away' from our direct experiencing of this present moment, and of our *wanting* to turn away. It's in our turning away from the experiencing of shame—or even the *fear* of experiencing shame—that we feel this most immediately and most directly. If it is through meaningful connection, the establishing of mutual recognition in relationship that we can move beyond shame, then we first have to meet our shame, and sit *with* it. To turn *towards* 'my' shame, is hence to turn towards its healing. On the cushion I can begin actually to experience this shame intimately, and to resist the distraction offered by the many stories, the narratives I weave around it. I can learn to hold it and allow it to fade, dissolve, transform, or simply to lose its ability to move me reflexively towards denial and the harming of both self and other which follow. As Diane Rizzetto points out, shame is finally only an embodied physical experience like any other, and her favourite practice question is highly relevant here: *what's the worst thing that could happen?* But we do need first to be able to see shame for what it is: we are all masters of evasion, displacement, substitution, anything rather than directly *experiencing* our shame. Are we 'A Big (enough) Container' to *hold* our shame, and so to shame ourselves and others less? To do so is to begin to offer *recognition* to ourselves, which we do only in taking ourselves *whole*, the 'good' and the 'bad'. But to recognise ourselves is also to recognise the other, and in recognising the other I recognise myself. No me without you. As Barry Magid says: 'you can't be yourself by yourself'.

Over and again as we move from one to another of these commentaries, we will encounter shame and its effects, whether that is in connection with the expression of our sexuality, of our distractions or substance abuse, of the causes and consequences of inequality within our society, of our anger, and as an expression of violence itself. Our coming to awareness of each of our judgements that consign others to the prison of shame is a step towards the possibility of real relationship, and in this sense towards the possibility of possibility that is the liberation of All Beings.