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AUGUST 1973
The Meaning of Alienation and the Struggle to Learn to Relate

by

Lawrence H. Kopman

Department of Education

A Thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Toronto

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated with love, respect, and a great deal of appreciation, to Barbara, my partner.
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Abstract

Alienation, a pervasive contemporary problem, has been studied for many years by scholars who represent numerous and diverse disciplines. The issue has been associated with a plethora of sociological and psychological ills. But "alienation" as a concept has not been defined clearly. Separation of some sort seems to be the only theme that binds the various usages of alienation into a single concept.

Few studies of the topic have been attempted in psychology and research into interpersonal alienation hardly exists. The main intent of this dissertation has been to clarify the meaning of peoples' struggle to learn to relate. A process of understanding had to be developed to elucidate the meaning of this particular form of separateness.

Mainstream psychological research stresses the differentiation between subject and object, but this kind of split, within and between people, is frequently used to define alienation. A method could not be employed that took only a traditional objective stance. Relational understanding needed to be added to empirical knowledge. Thus a second goal of this study has been to further the development of intersubjective research. As an ideal model, Martin Buber's conception of an alternating dialectic between I-It and I-Thou modalities of knowing was employed. To satisfy the empirical goal, a system of interpretation was used. From this process of understanding, eighteen inter-related variables emerged. These aspects of the experience were common to each participant in the study.

These variables were further clarified through reflecting on the philosophical anthropology of Martin Buber and the psychosynthetic model of Roberto Assagioli.

The dissertation ends with a discussion of some implications for: an understanding of interpersonal alienation and the struggle to learn to relate, intersubjective research, work with alienated people, and education.
Chapter I
A Beginning

I welcome you to a record of a journey. The participants in this study and I have been travelling through hell, heaven, and many awarenesses that exist between the two. We are grappling with the bleakness of excessive separation, fear, and despair, and are hoping to realize our dreams for intimacy, love, joy, and meaning. This first chapter is a guide, a map of our voyage.

My personal concern with alienation and relationship goes back a long way. It stems primarily from two areas. I have found it difficult to relate closely to people, and, have observed that too many others seem caught in a similar dilemma. Furthermore, I feel frightened that, with the mushrooming and powerful technologies we are developing, our very survival might depend on people's willingness to relate to one another with patience, understanding, tolerance, respect, and love. My decision to write a dissertation about the meaning of alienation and the struggle to learn to relate has felt right in my heart and mind from the beginning.

I was lost as to where and how to begin. However, I had been educated to start any research with a review of the literature, and this appeared to be a logical choice. There was little pertinent work reported about how people learn to relate intimately with each other. In contrast, I was surprised and overwhelmed by the massive number of studies reported under the heading "alienation". Chapter II is a summary of that literature search.

Generally, I was surprised that none of the research I studied had asked the people involved: "What is it like for you to feel alienated?" Many people, particularly
from a sociological perspective, argue that alienation results, at least in part, from the objectification of people that occurs within a capitalistic political-economic system. But, I thought, this treatment of human beings is also occurring in a great deal of the social scientific research. Almost all the work examines people from the stance of an external "objective" bystander. Are we not adding to the problem, I wondered, by attempting to cure separation with even more distancing? With time, my position mellowed. I now think we need balance in our research. I have come to realize that there is a need for both objective and intersubjective studies into alienation and relationship. I still maintain; however, that before alienation, or any other human condition, can be objectified and measured (for that is the aim of much of the research), we must clarify the meaning of the concepts used from within the reality of human experience. It would be very useful for us to work to understand human experience and not just measure it.

My own field, psychology, has for the most part ignored the empirical study of alienation. Its research scope has been severely limited by the polarized nature of its largely experimental methodology. A significant part of my challenge was to develop a process that would make sense of the experience of human alienation. I realized, after I began to interview people, that to understand alienation better, it would also be useful to study the correlative struggle to relate. That is, I felt that an inquiry into alienation alone would not suffice. There would have to be a concomitant study of relationship. Again, I was uncertain about how to proceed. My history had not prepared me for this task very well, I thought.

The third chapter is a summary of my process of learning to understand alienation and relationship more clearly. I explored a number of books that are critical of traditional research methodology and, suggest the contemporary need for fresher, more personal approaches with which to view human experience (Giorgi, 1970; Glaser, 1978; Glasser and Strauss, 1967; Keen, 1975; Kocklemans, 1967; Maslow, 1966; Shotter, 1975; Valle and King, 1978). But a precise methodology kept eluding my
grasp. Now I realize that processes of understanding need to develop jointly with a grasp of the experiences represented by the people or in the text involved. I began interviewing individuals who seem sure that their difficulties in relating intimately had been and still were important concerns for them. This decision raised several challenging and often frustrating problems.

The most difficult theoretical question I faced was the perennial one of the subject-object split. How could I make worthwhile sense of an ordeal that had been so problematic for me, yet avoid having my preconceptions distort the accounts of others? My goal was to become involved with the participants and still be able to claim that my interpretations of their experiences were relatively empirically faithful readings of their representations. As an ideal model, the means I eventually chose to solve this dilemma comes close to the alternating dialectic proposed by Martin Buber (1970, p. 101). Briefly, I worked to "know" the people in the study by relating to them the best I could, and was careful also to ground this understanding in interpretations of the interviews that were reasonable accounts of those records.

Practically, in Chapter III, I sketch the nuts-and-bolts details of the process, from my initial struggle to relate to the participants to a written interpretation about each. Additionally, in this chapter, I introduce the people in the study, and give a brief report concerning how they entered my life. Then I talk about my use of interview schedules. Finally, the bulk of this section is a description of my movement from "open-listening" to "systematic note-taking" (my way of proceeding relatively logically and methodologically in order to keep my anxiety down to manageable levels) to the writing of the interpretative essays.

I call Chapter IV "Reflections on my Process of Learning to Understand." I kept a continuous record of my experience of working on the third chapter. This considerably enhanced my grasp of both the process and my understanding of the phenomenon. In fact, these reflections helped me to realize that the method and the phenomenon were becoming one and the same; both were my struggle to reduce alienation and learn to relate.
To give more insight into how these interpretations were formed, I have placed these ideas between the description of the process and the essays. My thoughts concerning the first participant have been excluded at his request (I explain this later). I do not offer reflections about the process of understanding the last participant, because these became a repetition of what I had already written. Chapter IV then, is composed of my reflections while interpreting the tapes and verbatim transcripts concerning the relational journeys in the interviews of the second and third persons in the study.

Chapter V contains the four interpretive essays that I have mentioned. They include summary statements of the meaning of alienation and relationship in the lives of three of the four participants. The first essay is about my own relational difficulties and accomplishments. My original strategy was to place an account of my personal journey first, to make my preconceptions about the topic somewhat more visible. Now I realize that, since the interpretations have been formed dialectically between the participants and me, the more significant question is whether or not the essays are relatively faithful readings of the original interviews. I discuss some precautions I take to maximize this goal of fidelity. Chapter V is written in four parts: Five A, B, C, and D are interpretations of the experiences of Larry (me), Bill, Tim, and Lise respectively. All the interpretations help to form the summary of the phenomenon that is the next chapter.

Many similarities among the interpretative essays kept occurring to me as I worked with them. I recorded these insights continually in a section of my diary. With these notes as a base, I wrote Chapter VI. It is a summary interpretation of the meaning of alienation and our struggle to learn to relate. Here I became even more aware of the extent to which I had been involved in a dialectical process of understanding between the participants and me, and, for the first time, I write from the perspective of "we". In a way, this research project had finally become "ours". The shift from feeling obsessed with my conditioned role of "empirical researcher" to
becoming a person involved with others in a similar quest for understanding and meaning was joyfully liberating for me. I realized I could be "relational" as well as "empirical". This mix had been my goal from the start. I felt less alienated, and more compassionately in touch with both the participants and myself.

In order to make the synopsis more manageable, I broke Chapter VI down into eighteen brief sections:

A: A Synopsis of the Process
B: Some Consequences of Negative Relational Memories
C: Diminishment of Trust and Self-Worth
D: The Perception of Feeling Powerless
E: Alienation: A Strategy to Reduce the Pain of Disconfirmation
F: The Withdrawal of Emotion
G: Fantasy and Idealized Concepts Replace Intimacy
H: Habituated Manipulative Roles as Attempts to Satisfy Needs
I: The Potential for Confirmation is Reduced
J: The Significance of a "Critical Turning Point" (in five parts)
K: A Model for Relationship
L: More Positive Personal Identities
M: More Realistic and Satisfying Interpersonal Relationships
N: Changing Views of Responsibility
O: Changes in Interpretation Occur Dialectically Through Time
P: The Significance of Feeling Confirmed by Others,
Q: Social Support

During the course of this study I have been reading in several disciplines. Recently, some works by Martin Buber and Roberto Assagioli have been most relevant to my understanding of how people relate. In Chapter VII, I discuss the previous two sections in the light of my comprehension of these two scholars. This kind of reflection
is assisting me to make more clear, precise, and practical sense of the phenomenon. Buber's ideas have been useful particularly to my interpretation of the interpersonal world (or interhuman as he would call it); whereas, Assagioli's wisdom has been of great value to my grasp of the intrapersonal realm.

In the final chapter I offer some summary statements, and suggest a number of practical implications that stem from this study. Specifically, I comment on the meaning of the phenomenon as I am now viewing it, and, discuss how this understanding might apply to research, education, and counselling.
Chapter II

Alienation in the Traditional Research Literature

I needed a place to begin, and discovered that the studies under the heading "alienation" best approximated my concern. This chapter is my reaction to that literature.

I was surprised and overwhelmed by the massive quantity of work. Feurlicht (1978) demonstrates the wide interest in alienation by pointing out that the phenomenon has attracted:

some of the most influential thinkers of all time (Rousseau, Hegel, Marx) to some of the greatest writers (Goethe, Kafka, Camus, Mann), to the founders of modern sociology (Durkheim, Weber, Simmel), to some of the most brilliant minds of our time (Lukacs, Adorno, Marcuse, Arendt), to leading contemporary sociologists (Merton, Bell, Shils, Nisbet, Lipset, Mills, Feuer, Gehlen, Schelsky, Dahrendorf), to theologians (Tillich), to psychologists (Freud, Horney, Schachtel, Fromm, Laing, Keniston), to philosophers (Fichte, Heidegger, Sarte, Buber), to art critics (Read, Rosenberg), to literary critics (Trilling, Frye, Howe), to historians (Hofstadter, Hauser), to Marx scholars (Lefebvre, Petrovic, Tucker, McClellan, Avineri), and to pioneering empirical researchers (Seeman) (p. viii)

In a relatively recent review of studies in alienation, Ludz (1973) cites 519 references, although many scholars in the Feurlicht (1978) article are omitted. I was amused that in spite of the Lee (1972) suggestion that the term "alienation" be allowed to requiescat in pace" (p. 121), several hundred articles have been published since the Lee 1972 moratorium.

I felt reassured that I was working in an appropriate area of inquiry after Schacht (1970). In a meticulous analysis, he concludes that although the contemporary usages of "alienation" have little in common, "one can be reasonably sure that the matter under consideration is some sort of separation" (p. 241). Because
of my own experiences, I knew my concern was the separation experienced between people.

In social science research, "alienation" often refers to the separation that exists between people and some aspect of the social structure. For example, Lystad (1972) includes the separation predicated on political, economic, age, class, and deviant aspects of society. Feuerlicht (1978) specifies other varieties of separation that exist within the social structure and says,

Blacks, Jews, the old, the young, the workers, the sick, the deviant, the poor, the intellectuals, and the hippies, are or can be alienated respectively from the whites, the gentiles, the young, the adults, the capitalists, the healthy, the normal, the wealthy, the nonintellectuals, or the squares. (p.106)

Schacht (1970) concludes that, "There is almost no aspect of contemporary life that has not been discussed in terms of 'alienation'" (p. lix).

The list of negative correlates attributed to alienation is long, regardless of the source of the separation. Britt (1974) includes "authoritarianism, conformity, prejudice, political apathy, privatization, psychosis, and suicide" (p. 4). The Josephsons (1962) offer a different and even longer list:

loss of self, anxiety states, anomie, despair, depersonalization, rootlessness, apathy, social disorganization, loneliness, atomization, powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, pessimism, and the loss of beliefs or values. (pp. 12-13)

This listing of the suffering that results from alienation creates the impression that almost every complaint that people make could be caused by alienation!

I found the history of the term "alienation" informative and complex. Modern interest in the concept grew with the 1932 publication of Karl Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts. It was Marx, according to Israel (1971), who first brought alienation into sociological theory (p. 5). Marx was influenced by many scholars including Rousseau and Hegel.

Rousseau (1960) argues that society differentiation into classes is the ground for competition and hostility among people. He believes that the solution is for people to give up their competitiveness and to cooperate as a community (pp. 174-185).
Hegel (1967) believes that people have become separated from both culture and their essential natures. The solution, to Hegel, is for people to sacrifice their individuality to achieve unity of spirit within the state (p. 509). Hegel (1967) also argues that people are able to partially overcome their sense of separation through work, since they can transform nature through it, and thus enlarge their subjective world. He claims that, "labour, which ensures for consciousness the inner certainty of its own self ... by the process of cancelling and enjoying the alien external reality,—existence in the form of independent things" (p. 259). Thus, Hegel sets the stage for Marx's view of the importance of work.

Marx (1964, pp. 106-146) argues that alienation stems primarily from the nature of work in a capitalistic system. Because of various social conditions, people do not experience themselves as active creative subjects. Instead they feel like commodities, objectified cogs in an impersonal machine. Work becomes only a means to satisfy other needs. Marx states that when people become alienated from their work, they become alienated from their own selves and simultaneously from other people. They perceive themselves as dehumanized, things in relation to other things who must follow the social order. The solution, for Marx, is a radical change in the political-economic system.

I was fascinated by Marx's analysis. My memories of being treated like an object, a replaceable cog in a machine, fill me with anger and disgust. I feel helpless and sad knowing how often people I love are stuck in jobs in which they must struggle to feel like valued human beings. At the same time, I think history demonstrates that a change in the social order does not necessarily alter positively how people relate to one another. I felt that something was missing; something still felt dissatisfying as I studied Marx's analysis. Regardless, his influence on the study of alienation has been tremendous. Durkheim (1951), Merton (1949), and Fromm (1955; 1965) are examples of the many sociologists, inspired by Marx's discussions.

Durkheim (1951) describes anomie suicide as a form of alienation that results
from the obscure norms in society. He argues that people become alienated from a
society that has unclear norms and thus does not set clear limits for individual
behaviour (p. 246). Peoples' needs seem unlimited, and they live in a state of perpetual
unhappiness. They live for the future and exist always in an anxious, excited, and
impatient manner since "there is no other aim but to outstrip constantly the point
arrived at..." (p. 257).

Merton (1949), like Durkheim, views our alienation from the social structure as
a cause of many individual problems. To Merton, people who become alienated from
the goals of a social structure and/or the means of legitimately achieving their goals,
are ones who potentially could manifest many and various forms of deviant behaviour.

Fromm (1955) perceives alienation as central to the understanding of the
character of the modern individual. As do Marx, Durkheim, and Merton, he believes
that the social structure gives rise to alienation. Fromm argues, very similarly to
Marx, that a capitalist economic system eventually leads to people treating both
themselves and others as objects which can be used, manipulated, and eventually
discarded, as can any other object. He calls alienation the relationship between people
as objects. Fromm paraphrases Marx's idea that in a capitalist economy a person
becomes a commodity, a personality package to be sold on the market like any other
commodity. He claims it is a
mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien... 
estranged from himself... out of touch with himself as he is out of touch
with any other person. He, like the others, is experienced as things are
experienced. (1955, p. 120)

There are many correlates of alienation, according to Fromm, and they include:
Solitude of God and State, egoism, conformity, the need for immediate gratification,
Anxiety and hostility toward work, powerlessness, helplessness, nothingness,
Solation, destructiveness, etc. Schacht (1970) criticizes that although Fromm has
helped to make alienation a household word, he uses the concept in so many ways that
he has confused the meaning of the word (p.140).
Fromm (1965) offers a solution to the problem of alienation. A person can "relate himself spontaneously to the world in love and work, in the genuine expression of his emotional, sensuous, and intellectual capacities..." (p. 161). He suggests that, in spite of our insecurities and isolation, we can choose to relate to the world through positive love and work.

These sociological approaches helped me to understand how our culture sets the stage for people to become alienated from themselves and others. Further, I was clarifying some of the questions that were most meaningful to me such as: How do people actually describe their difficulties in relating to others? What does the experience of alienation mean to these people? How do people learn to relate?

I turned to more recent scientific studies of alienation. The social scientific articles concerning alienation, instead of grappling with the problems, I found most important, moved instead toward organizing and objectifying the previous sociological research.

Melvin Seeman (1959, 1975) has been particularly influential in the recent work. Ludz (1973) claims that Seeman "has served as a guideline to all social scientists who have dealt with alienation since his 1959 article" (p. 31).

Seeman (1959) claims that the concept of alienation has dominated the literature and history of social thought. He argues that it has been used in five ways, and sets himself the twofold task "to make more organized sense of one of the great traditions in sociological thought; and to make the traditional interest in alienation more amenable to sharp empirical statement" (p. 783). From a social-psychological perspective he believes alienation has meant one of, (1) powerlessness, (2) meaninglessness, (3) normlessness, (4) isolation, and (5) self-estrangement. Seeman (1975) adds (6) social isolation.

To fulfill the empirical aspect of his goal, Seeman incorporates Rotter's internal vs. external control of reinforcements into his six aspects of alienation, so that he can give these aspects "sharp" operational definition. This choice, he states, allows for
the development of a closer bond between two languages of analysis—that of learning theory and that of alienation . . ." (p. 785). Thus, for Seeman and a great number of social scientists since, alienation has been reduced to six operational definitions which are informed by a section of the alienation literature and by Rotter's locus-of-control concept.

I am uncomfortable with the degree to which the research in alienation has shifted in the direction of Seeman (1959). He builds a model of six types of alienation based on previous theory, and, defines each type operationally, utilizing the locus-of-control concept. His hope is that social scientists could measure the experience of alienation within a number of preconceived categories. I am bothered by the fact that this is an attempt to objectify and measure the problem. I have trouble conceiving of Seeman's approach when objectification seems to be so crucial to the problem of alienation.

Several scholars criticize Seeman. Ludz (1973) argues that Seeman's six variants of alienation do not include every experience that could be subsumed by the term. In fact Ludz claims, the six are in reality a manifestation of predetermined principles in Seeman's mind. He says,

Seeman's variants do not result from a comprehensive listing of all the phenomenon that are called alienated . . . the differentiation of alienation into 'powerlessness' etc., is determined by some separate set of principles held by the author . . . (p. 31)

Lewis Feuer (In Burrows and Lapides, 1969), argues that there are as many varieties of alienation as there are human experiences, and for that reason "Alienation has a way of eluding a fixed set of dimensions . . ." (p. 91). Feuer then demonstrates that for each of Seeman's operational definitions, the exact opposite interpretation could be true when viewed from within the experience of the individual. For example, Seeman's definition of meaninglessness has to do with low expectancies concerning the ability to predict outcomes of behaviour. Some, like Karl Popper, argues Feuer, "find themselves alienated in a world of social determinism" (p. 91). These people
would feel less alienated in a far less predictable social world. Similarly, other-directedness, according to Feuer, does not clarify alienation in terms of self-stranglement because it does not elucidate how the individual experiences inner-directedness or outer-directedness. Outer-directedness could result from genuine love of others, which would not experientially feel alienating, or from a hostile attempt to manipulate others. Alienation in terms of inner- or outer-directedness omits the important emotional component. Feuer argues that

what is omitted is the quality of the feeling experienced toward the self, others, family, God, nation, or tribe. To describe an emotional vector, the kind of feeling and its intensity are dimensions as well as its direction. A man who follows the Golden Rule is, from one standpoint, other directed if he does so from the dictate of conscience, he is inner-directed; but if he acts from motives of calculation, probably it would be most accurate to call him narcissistic. (p. 93)

Feuer offers other arguments that Seeman's operational definitions for powerlessness, isolation, and normlessness can either define alienation or non-alienation depending upon the actual experience of the individual.

Since the early 1950's social scientists, in the behaviourist-experimental tradition, have been attempting to develop scales to measure alienation. Among these, for example, are (Dean, 1961; Nettler, 1957; Strole, 1956).

Strole's scale is frequently employed to measure Durkheim's anomie concept. It is based on only five items, which have been criticized because they do not control for an agreement response set or for the possibility of measuring general dissatisfaction rather than alienation per se (Ludz, 1973, p. 34).

Nettler's seventeen-item scale proposes to measure "... the feeling of estrangement from society" (p. 672) and includes items such as "Do you enjoy T.V.? Do you think children are generally a nuisance to their parents? Do you read Reader's Digest?" (p. 675). It is difficult to understand exactly what these items really measure. Is a person who doesn't read Reader's Digest or enjoy T.V. alienated? An equally or even more plausible interpretation would be that the individual is involved in far more rewarding activities such as relating to friends or enjoying literature.
Dean, utilizing Seeman's classifications, attempts to construct scales to measure the powerlessness, normlessness, and isolation components of alienation. Powerlessness was measured by items such as, "We are just so many cogs in the machinery of life" (p. 756). Items like this have been criticized by Feuer (In Burrows and Lapides, 1969) in much the same manner as he criticizes Seeman's original classifications. Feuer claims, for example, that "The human switch or lever can... be as alienated as the human cog" (p. 94). An example, reasons Feuer, is that the superpowerful Stalin was exceedingly alienated from both mankind around him and his original political aspirations. Similarly, Dean's normlessness and isolation items can refer to either alienation or non-alienation depending, again, on the experience of the individual.

Feuer grants that these scales have been useful in some ways but concludes that:

one cannot help wondering whether even the best scales can be adequate to measure alienation, which, after all, is in many instances a complex and multifaceted emotional, moral, and intellectual phenomenon... (p. 105)

Lodz (1973) supports Feuer's opinion and claims that, "we do not yet have a comprehensive measurement model for alienation" (p. 33).

Before alienation can be adequately measured, its clarity as a concept must be refined. One must know what it consists of before it can be measured. As Feuer is suggesting, an understanding of the actual experience of human alienation in combination with the theoretical analytic-empirical information would aid in this task.

At this stage in my research I was certain that I wanted to understand the experience of feeling alienated from others. I still was not clear about how I would do so. I looked to scientific psychology but became clear quickly that my own discipline has ignored the phenomenon of interpersonal alienation. The introductory psychology course at the University of Toronto, for example, suggested Kimble et al 1980) as its text. This overview of the field of scientific psychology makes no reference
alienation, estrangement, interpersonal distance, separation, isolation, social
alienation, loneliness, etc. A sample of texts I chose in social psychology supports the
same conclusion. Hendrik (1977); Newcomb et al (1965); Smith (1974); Strickland et al
1976; all discuss interpersonal attraction, social distance, social attachment (binding
and imprinting), etc., Only Smith (1974) mentions any form of alienation (the
Keniston, 1965, study of alienated youth in America). Further, in the list of
"psychologists" interested in alienation that Feuerlicht provides above, only one of six
again Keniston) is a psychologist. Five of six are psychiatrists/psychoanalysts.

Feuerlicht (1978) underlines the lack of attention that social scientific research
gives to the alienation that one individual experiences in relation to others.

interpersonal alienation implies the feeling of being a stranger to everybody,
of either not being able or not wanting to maintain or gain a warm
relationship with other people. This type of alienation is generally
overlooked by social critics and scientists . . . (p. 77, underlining added)

Schacht (1970) argues that the term alienation is not frequently used to connote the
separation in the relation between people and concludes, "As long as the reference is to
interpersonal relations, the term 'loneliness' is better suited to its explication" (p. 157).

But I have experienced interpersonal alienation and loneliness and they are very
different. Alienation is the experience of not knowing how to relate, whereas
loneliness seems to imply a lack of relationship. Laing (1967) speaks to this essential
difference.

The distinction between the absence of relationships and the experience of
every relationship as an absence is the division between loneliness and a
perpetual solitude, between provisional hope or hopelessness and a
permanent despair. (p. 32)

I decided that I would study the human experience which was best called interpersonal
alienation. The question, of course, still remained: How?

As I approached the data collection stage of my research, I realized that
alienation, as a concept, has had a long history in the literature of many and various
disciplines. Generally, the word connotes some sort of separation of a person from a
thing, society, group, or another person. There have been dozens of negative psychological correlates attributed to the phenomenon. The term was popularized in the social sciences with the work of Marx. Although scientific psychology has tended to overlook the phenomenon, many sociologists have theorized about it extensively.

Seeman attempts to organize the literature, and operationally defines six aspects of alienation. Others have tried to make alienation more amenable to experimental research by devising tests to measure the construct. Seeman's work and the attempts to design tests have furthered research in the area, but classify and objectify the concept rather than understanding the actual experience of the alienated individual. Classification and objectification seem to be aspects of alienation. Social science has ignored the problem of interpersonal alienation or relegated it to the phenomenon loneliness. Although loneliness is an aspect of interpersonal alienation, I decided that interpersonal alienation is more inclusive as a human experience.
Chapter III
My Process of Learning to Understand

3.1. A: Initiating the Process

I realized that there was little empirical study into the human experience of feeling separated from others after I reviewed the scientific research literature in alienation. I decided to make more sense of the struggle to relate by talking to people to whom it seemed clear that their difficulties in relating intimately had been an important concern for them. This decision created some challenging research problems.

My own difficulties in learning to involve myself more closely with people was a significant motivation for this inquiry. I wondered how I could study an experience that had been so problematic for me. How can people seek to understand any human experience without unduly distorting their perceptions toward their entrenched preconceptions? A proposed system to overcome this dilemma is to temporarily suspend all preconceptions by emptying the mind. The final stage in Husserl's (1931) phenomenological method, for example, is a shift to "Immanent Being" (p. 152) by means of the transcendental-phenomenological reduction. This state of mind, Husserl espoused, asks that the consciousness of the perceiver be temporarily emptied of content, and therefore able to encounter the phenomenon "in itself" (p. 53). As interesting as Husserl's method sounded, I could not realistically work within the curtailed consciousness that I understood his method required.

My hope was to enter into relationship with some people who were aware of, and willing to talk about, their suffering from excessive alienation. I thought that the best
would be to clarify my preconceptions and observe, at least to some extent, I enter my biases into my understanding. Giorgi (1970) argues that all researchers have preconceptions and they "should permit these views to enter into the public aspects of science . . ." (p. 130). This approach seemed realistic and honest. The problem was that I had decided to work to understand by relating in this manner, but I felt uncertain about what it meant to relate. This clarification was one of the goals of the study. Regardless, I needed to proceed.

So in order to clarify some of my preconceptions, I began to keep a journal. I recorded my memories of relationship, as well as recent struggles and triumphs in getting close to people. First, I noted the details of actual interpersonal situations. Afterwards, I reflected on my emotional reactions, thoughts, behaviour, body awareness, fantasies, perceptions, etc. I then searched for common threads of meaning within this diary.

As I worked to understand the experiences of the participants, I kept these changing reflections about my own experiences close at hand. My hope was that with this procedure I could at least become clearer about how some of my views were influencing my understanding of the participants' experiences. For example, for many years I have thought that the alienation of our time reflects a split that has evolved in our consciousness. My belief helps me to make sense of my experience of reality. Although I am now changing rapidly, thank God, for years I have felt trapped within my personal and exaggerated experience of subjectivity. Too much was going on in me: I was not communicating with or understanding other people enough. As a response, when I was an undergraduate psychology student in the mid 1960's, I instinctively rebelled at the obsession with objectivity that was occurring in my classes. From my own struggle, I realized that an overemphasis on this kind of view forces people back into the polarity of their own subjectivity. If I must make you object, I as a consequence turn myself into subject. As you can see, I negatively evaluate the extreme distinction between subjectivity and objectivity. I get angry if I
think any philosophical stance distances people from one another. This kind of view
defends my sense of right world order. I want to learn to understand and care more
about people. I am less interested in measuring and evaluating them. And I realize
that measurement is important. I would not be enjoying these eyeglasses I am
wearing without measurement. But it has gone too far in the social sciences.

I also have some entrenched preconceptions about societies' role in maintaining
this split consciousness. The realities of materialism and technology do not seem to
hold interhuman relationship as a priority. My experience leads me to believe that the
maintenance of power, and the accumulation of the objects that signify this power
have become more important than the concern for the welfare of people. These kinds
of values support manipulative inauthentic behaviours among people. Fromm, as I
have discussed, expresses the view that authentic responses to others could, we are
conditioned to believe, potentially reduce our market value.

I could go on and on here. It is obvious that I hold some strong biases. I know my
tendency will be to understand the participants with these biases as a horizon. As I
have said, my intention is to work to keep these, and other biases in mind, as I
interpret the participant’s experiences.

3.2. B: The Participants

I interviewed four people who were willing to discuss their difficulties in
relating closely to others. All four believed that, although alienation had been
particularly problematic for them, they were learning to relate in a much more
satisfying manner. Every participant gave me permission to include data from the
verbatim transcript of the interview and from my analysis of the transcript. This
verbal agreement was recorded in each interview. The first participant later changed
his mind.

He was a man I had known for several years. I observed that he had had a great
deal of difficulty relating closely to people, and that he believed he had been
progressing in his relationships. I interviewed him and transcribed the recording.

Since his was the first interview, I spent months working to make sense of his experience. Finally, I arrived at an interpretation that seemed to fit the data of his talk quite accurately, and I telephoned him to ask if he would mind responding to it. For reasons that make sense from his perspective, he said that he did not want anything about him to appear in the study. I felt shocked initially. I reacted as if years of work had been destroyed. In fact, by the time I called him, I was close to completing all my interpretations, and therefore had already arrived at a general sense of the phenomenon. Although I do not refer to him directly, my interpretation of his experience fits the summary interpretation in Chapter VI very well.

I interviewed Bill, the second participant, two years ago when he was forty-two. We met at a beach while we were sitting with a group of mutual friends. I described my research to him in very general terms. Bill said that the experience of alienation was central to his life, and that he would be happy to participate in the study. At his suggestion, we met at his home the following Sunday and recorded an interview. I met with Bill again recently to discuss some ideas in the interview that I found confusing.

The third participant, Tim, was twenty-three when I interviewed him two years ago. We were both members of a group being interviewed for a job. As we walked toward the subway afterwards, and talked about our interests, he said he was experiencing the phenomenon I was studying. At Tim's request we met at his school to talk further, and we agreed that he had suffered a long history of difficulties relating to people. Like the first two participants, he believed that he was learning to relate. He chose to meet at my home for a taped interview. I met with him again recently to discuss my reflections on our original discussion.

Lise was the fourth participant. She was forty when I interviewed her about a year and a half ago. We had met several years earlier, but had little contact since that time. She was working on a temporary assignment where I was studying. I had just finished deciding how to select the next participant. Lise sat down beside me and,
after a brief conversation, said she fit the participant criteria well. She asked if we could conduct the interview a week later at her home. I would have liked to talk with her again about my interpretation of her experience but have not been able to locate her.

3.3. C: Interview Schedules

I was uncertain how to begin the first interview, since the phenomenon was still vague to me. I had recently reviewed the research literature concerning alienation and that concept seemed like an appropriate starting place. I began a little awkwardly with these words:

We have been talking about the experience of not being able to relate very well. We have both called this experience "alienation". I want to determine what this experience means to you. I do not know quite where to begin but what comes to your mind when I use the word?

In retrospect, I realize that I did not need to use any conceptual label. I could have simply asked him about his experiences in relating to people. However, during the course of the interview we talked primarily about his memories and recent experiences of relating.

As I studied the first interview, I realized that it would be useful to have a more detailed and specific interview schedule as a guide, in order to make the subsequent analyses more manageable. I did not stick to any schedule religiously, since each participant led the discussion to different aspects of his or her experience during various segments of the interview. Nevertheless, I kept an interview guide in sight to allow me to hold the discussion, at least loosely, within the boundaries of the phenomenon as I was understanding it. I worked to upgrade the usefulness of the schedule after each interview. Appendix A is a typical interview schedule; the one I used during the fourth interview.
D: My Struggle to Understand

The process of making sense of the meaning of each participant's journey proved to be more difficult than I had anticipated. My goal was to arrive at an understanding of each relational history that was faithful to what the person was saying. In retrospect, through trial and error process, I followed a sequence of steps which were approximately the same for each participant. The stages of the process were:

1. The Interview
2. Open Listening to the Tape Recording
3. Systematic Note-Taking
   a. location on transcript and tape
   b. initial interpretation
   c. reflections on the initial interpretation
   d. reflections on the interview itself.
4. A Interpretative Essay about each Participant's Experience
   a. Larry (myself)
   b. not included (as participant one requested)
   c. participant two, Bill
   d. participant three, Tim
   e. participant four, Lise

1. The Interview

Initially, I talked with each participant informally, without tape recording our conversation. I wanted to create an atmosphere of trust, and hoped to communicate that I had also been working to learn to relate more closely to people. I did not want to create the impression that they were research objects and that I was the uninvolved expert. If the participant and I agreed that we were discussing a similar experience, and if he or she still wanted to be involved, I invited each one to select a location for an
that would be most comfortable. Two chose their own homes and two chose

2. Open Listening to the Tape Recording

I listened to each tape ten or fifteen times. I held back my impulse to take notes and analyze the content of the interview. Of course, it was impossible not to analyze, but I tried to keep this activity to a minimum. When I began note-taking prematurely, the process was slowed down. By the time I was halfway through listening to the tape, I had forgotten the beginning. I hoped that by listening as openly as possible, I might maintain a feeling for the whole interview. Further, I wanted to hear the tones of both the participant and me, in order to get a sense of the "mood" of the interview. After I thought I had a grasp of the content and mood, I proceeded to analyze in a more methodological fashion.

1. Systematic Note-Taking

Following a number of starts that proved unfruitful, I eventually organized my note-taking under four categories: (a) location on transcript and tape, (b) initial interpretation, (c) reflections on the initial interpretation, and (d) reflections on the interview itself. (Since the actual notes in this systematic note-taking come to more than three hundred pages, and, are to a large extent in my own code, I provide only a sample of this work in Appendix B).

(a) Location on Transcript and tape. I numbered each sentence in each transcript. In the first column of my notes, I recorded the exact page and lines of the segment I was working with. This procedure was very useful for later reference. Afterwards, I realized that it was also convenient to note the number on the tape-recorder counter, so that I could refer quickly to our voices when this seemed necessary.

(b) Initial Interpretation. This section was the most challenging. My goal was to interpret the meaning of each participant's experience, but I was still confused as to
what it meant to interpret. I began by summarizing essentially what was said by the participant. Afterwards, I realized that I was involved in impulsive inferencing, but I felt satisfied eventually that I had found a balance that I could justifiably call interpretation. Let me clarify this difficulty and eventual solution with an example from the interview with Bill.

105. (And it's the fear that if you trusted somebody enough to relate closely that would happen again?) Probably, yah. And ah, now I see logically that the ultimate separation would be that the person would die. 106. And, that has happened to me once. I got close to somebody once and was quite excited about it and he drowned on the 108. weekend. He went away on the weekend and drowned. And ah...

It was simple for me to summarize our words, but not very useful. I wrote in my notes, for example, that: "Bill states that he realizes that death represents the ultimate separation, and claims that he once felt excited about getting close to somebody who later drowned." This summary is relatively accurate, but conveys little more meaning than the original transcript.

In my attempt to resolve this dilemma I then drifted past interpretation into inference. I said in my notes that the death of Bill's friend added to his anxiety about close relationships. For me to assume that he felt anxiety is inferential since it is not in the data of his talk, although this speculation may be logical from a clinical viewpoint.

Bill talks throughout the interview about his memories of interpersonal closeness that eventuated in various forms of personal loss. In the example above, his voice sounds very sad as he describes a rare incident of personal intimacy. Bill repeats that his friend went away and drowned. Within the context of the whole interview, an interpretation that fits the data is Bill's hypothesis that he cannot trust intimacy, since his memory is filled with the sadness of the losses that occurred whenever he managed to get close to someone. This interpretation is more than a summary in that it clarifies the meaning of Bill's report of his experience. It does not run past the line
towards inference since the interpretation makes sense within the context of the whole interview.

To give credit, my reading in some literature that I would call hermeneutic (in the most general sense) helped me to resolve my confusion about the differences among summary, inference, and interpretation (Buck-Morss, 1981; Gadamer, 1973; Giddens, 1977; Rabinov & Sullivan, 1977; Sullivan, 1980). I kept hearing two particularly important messages. First, I realized that in an interpretation, each part must make sense within the context of the whole, and that the whole interpretation has to be adequate to incorporate the meaning of each part. Second, and it was very liberating for me, I began to understand that a "valid" interpretation per se does not exist. The most I could hope for was a reading of the data that made sense when compared to the text (in this case the tapes and transcripts of our talks). With these ideas in mind, I proceeded to work on the interpretive essays.

(c) Reflections on the initial interpretation The work in this column of my note-taking was easier than in the previous one and was quite enjoyable. I recorded my thoughts, feelings, fantasies, questions, and whatever else came into my mind about the initial interpretation. Repetitive entries, in particular, became very valuable in writing the final interpretations.

(d) Reflections on the Interview Itself Since the research was concerned with the meaning of the struggle to learn to relate, I thought it would be useful to reflect on how the participants and I related during the interviews. This last column also proved to be very useful.

4: An Interpretative Essay About Each Participant's Experience

I accumulated between fifty and one hundred pages of notes concerning each participant, but was not sure how to make organized sense of this material. At the suggestion of one committee member, I wrote an interpretive essay about each participant. For example, using my notes as a guide I wrote an interpretation of Bill's
representation. I then compared this interpretation to the original tape and transcript of our interview. My first essay seemed incomplete, flat, and unfocussed. I re-wrote the interpretation, and compared it to the original interview again. I realized that through this dialectical relationship between written interpretation and original interview new material would probably keep emerging ad infinitum. After the fifth rewriting I felt reasonably satisfied that the interpretation was a relatively faithful reading of the original and decided to stop. I followed a similar procedure while writing the other interpretations.
Chapter IV

Reflections on My Process of Learning to Understand

I kept a reflective record about the process I detailed in Chapter III. Much of this material was stored in sections of my systematic note-taking, but some was written in my personal diary. This became a useful comment on both my own process and the meaning of the phenomenon. This chapter is a summary of my records. I decided to place it here, instead of after the interpretive essays, to provide an insight into the process that eventuated in the final interpretation of each participant’s interview.

The first participant’s data is omitted because of his request. After reviewing my process of interpreting of Bill and Tim, I found further reflections on the final interview redundant.

4.1 A: Reflections on the Process of Interpreting Bill’s Experience

I sensed Bill’s sensitivity to criticism from the beginning. I was careful to respond to him acceptingly. Bill says of his experience of me: “Oh, non-judgemental, for sure. Non-critical, as an equal.” He claims that my acceptance of him was very important to him and says, “Just the acceptance, I think. I feel accepted, and so I don’t have to be defensive. I feel trusting.” I realize how quickly he would have withdrawn from me if he perceived me as critical. My acceptance of him was a necessary condition for us to relate. I paraphrased his responses relatively accurately, and the excitement I frequently heard in his voice led me to think he thought I was listening and cared about him. Regardless, I have learned at least as much about alienation and relationship from mistakes I made during the interview as from my more positive interactions.
I am clearer about the crucial difference between acting out the role of "researcher" and responding as one human being present to another. For example, I pressured Bill sometimes to talk about my convenient but preconceived conceptual boxes, and cause-and-effect categories. In the first two pages of the transcript, for example, I respond often to his descriptions of his experiences of feeling alienated as if they were an "it". Rather than staying open to what he was saying, so I could hear, feel, and understand the quality of his talk in a more personal way, I unnecessarily drag him back to my preconceptions. Bill talks about his relationship with D., and risks telling me how crucial and fragile is his trust that D. will not leave him when Bill shows weak sides. A responsive person relating to another person in a research capacity might respond: "Your hope that D. won't run away when you show weak sides sounds very important and frightening for you." Instead, Larry, "Mr. Researcher" blurts out, "Alienation for you then is . . ." I wanted the security of fitting Bill's experience into my own categories of understanding. Bill tells me how his father was not "touchable". In retrospect he tells me something very important. He is sad that he did not feel very related or connected to his father. I respond: "So that's another factor then? Your father was never around." I am looking for causative links for his "alienation" and working to force his experience into secure, manageable cause-and-effect sequences. I would have liked to ask him: "What is it like for you to remember that your father was untouchable?" My concern for the thesis seemed to interfere with my concern for and understanding of Bill.

I am glad that when I met Bill again I was more present to him. I feel happy that, working as both researcher and counsellor, I have learned to relate more spontaneously and humanely within the role defined by the task. I enjoyed being able to confront him, and communicate simultaneously that I was accepting him, as a person. I believe Bill knew that I was accepting him although I was challenging what he was saying sometimes.

My process of interpreting Bill's experience also helped me to understand more
about the struggle to learn to relate. Hour after hour I took notes, studied, and wrote. Time after time I brought the writing back to our talk with the same result; that is, a repetition of Bill's story without much penetration into the meaning of his experience. I did not understand how I was blocking myself, and I felt frustrated and self-critical.

I was not penetrating his meaning deeply enough because I was not involving myself in his life story. I was keeping myself too separate and therefore unrelated to him. In Martin Buber's idea of "the between" (1970, p. 66), (which I will discuss in detail in Chapter VII), I located my problem. I had been reducing Bill to my research object unnecessarily, and not coming to a sufficient relational understanding of him. This reduction is a necessary aspect of knowledge. I believe now, that no meaningful understanding can take place without including the relational moment. A dialectical alternation between relating, and conceptualizing the knowledge that results from this meeting, is necessary to understand a person. I decided to work to encounter Bill through the tape and transcript of our discussion, and conceptualize my understanding alternatingly in simple terms. I kept the diagrams in Figure 4-1 in front of me to help me remember my intention. Both poles of the dialectic are important to fruitful understanding. As I proceeded to the next interpretation, I was determined to improve the quality of both my contribution to the relationship and the metaphors through which I was communicating the understanding that resulted from these encounters.

I felt ready to summarize my understanding of Bill's experience. But almost everything I wrote sounded forced and lifeless to me. I was not communicating my sense of the spirit of Bill's difficulties in learning to relate. I was alienating myself from you, the reader, in much the same way that Bill said he was separating himself from people. I became so identified with trying to be a "good writer" relative to a "critical reader" that I felt insecure, inhibited, and tentative about communicating my understanding. The reader became threatening to me, and I held back my feelings and fantasies about Bill, because I feared your rejection and harsh criticism.
My wife Barbara, confronted me by saying that my writing sounded shallow and pretentious and, "not at all like the Larry she knew." She was right. I followed her suggestion and imagined I was writing to some people towards whom I felt close and trusting. I became able to relate my understanding of Bill more easily. I began to write with greater simplicity, clarity and honesty. I felt confident enough to include more of my feelings and fantasies about Bill's experience. I learned that to relate my understanding to others, I needed to enter into an alternating dialectic similar to the one I had used before.

Figure 4-1: An Alternating Dialectic between Relational and Conceptual Understanding (Based on Buber, 1970, p. 10)
Reflections on my Process of Interpreting Tim's Experience

When Tim and I had finished the interview, I thought I had listened to him relatively carefully and non-judgementally. I was curious to hear if the taped and transcribed records of our talk reflected my attempt to relate, or if I appeared to be reducing Tim to a research object. I decided that I related to him by being both as caring and open as I possibly could at the time, and also by guiding him back to the categories that I thought were most central to this research. I felt far more self-critical when I reflected on my presence with Bill. I recognized and accepted that I needed to be both a responsive person and an objective researcher. This awareness has helped me to feel more confident about myself and my work. I felt reassured to find Lifton (1974) referring to this kind of interview as a "shared exploration" that, he says,

requires, in other words, a combination of humane spontaneity and professional discipline. Needless to say, one's way of combining the two is always idiosyncratic, and always less than ideal. (In Sullivan, 1980, p. 58)

I agree that this combination of discipline and spontaneity must be imperfect. But, I am realizing, it is the overall spirit of the interview that determines whether significant human understanding can occur. I also appreciate that this attitude is difficult to maintain. It requires staying open to the records of the interviews.

A human encounter occurs within the relationship itself. The spirit of a communication transcends the words. A reader knows very little about the quality of interaction in the transaction: "How are you?" "I am fine." These words could connote a communication that is sarcastic and hostile or one that is loving and supportive. It is difficult to sense the relational quality from the words on a page. For these reasons, as I worked to understand the participants, I found myself increasingly favouring the original tapes over the transcripts, and in future research I would pay even more attention to tapes than transcripts.

As I listened to the tape of our conversation, I felt satisfied that I had conducted the interview in a spirit of acceptance. I allowed Tim to control the conversation to a
large extent. At the time, I sensed that he would have quickly retreated into his shell
if he thought that I was being critical, and Tim says as much near the end of the
interview. I was interested in Tim and wanted to learn as much as I could about him.
I decided, for example, to allow him to finish his talks about Christianity, without
interrupting him much. Tim says that he was very relaxed during the interview, and
that he felt listened to rather than judged. As I discuss in the interpretation, Tim tells
me that our relationship was, in fact, representative of the deepest he knows with his
contemporaries. From Tim's perspective he was talking about Christianity to
someone who was not rejecting either him or his message. Actually, much of our
interview consists of Tim telling me the story of his faith and me listening acceptingly.
This is one of the structures within which Tim risks relating, as I have learned.

I initiate the interview by presenting alienation as an "it", a thing that occurs in
time and space, rather than asking him about his experiences. Regardless, Tim takes
over and puts us both on the right track from the start. He listens very carefully to me
throughout the interview. This becomes evident since he corrects me whenever I am
not focused in my comments or questions. For example, I respond to Tim's summary of
his experience of fearing rejection: "you relate best to people now when you ... express
yourself as a Christian, and, somebody is willing to listen and accept." Tim replies
sounding exasperated. "Phew! I didn't say I would relate best in that particular
situation. What I would say is that's the deepest level in which I can relate." In
retrospect, our relationship is representative of the most intimate Tim says he enters
into. It is important to him that I hear him correctly.

I listened to the tape of the interview dozens of times. I carefully analyzed the
verbatim transcript as I described in Chapter III. Although I had almost memorized
several sections of our discussion, I still did not feel I had much understanding of Tim's
relational struggles. I continued to analyze and re-analyze, hoping to penetrate the
meaning of Tim's story. My strategy failed. I realized that I had again forgotten to
relate to Tim through the representation of his experience. I needed to constantly
remind myself that Tim was a human being who was taking a big risk relating to me in the "deepest" way he said he could. I began to pay more disciplined attention to our emotions, body experience, imagination, and fantasies, as I read about and listened to the records of our talk. I taped posters on the wall to remind me to relate to Tim, the human being, rather than analyzing the "research subject". I wanted to get a glimpse of Tim's world by trying to meet him rather than by only analyzing his words.

As I worked to deepen my understanding, my frustration mounted. I started to think that I had chosen a difficult if not impossible task. I returned once more to Martin Buber's argument that genuine meeting, or knowing through relating, takes place "between" people rather than within either person. I began to draw diagrams similar to those in Figure 4-2. This time I saw my process differently.

As I recorded my process of working to get a clearer glimpse of the meaning of Tim's experience, two events kept recurring. I wrote about either (1) my subjective experience of myself and Tim, or (2) my objective analyses of Tim's experience. I still did not feel I was getting to that relational space "in between" (Buber, 1970, p. 66). Encounters with my wife, Barbara, and with Martin Buber (1961; 1966; 1970) led me to take another step toward resolving my dilemma.

I had been verbally agonizing for several weeks about my difficulty in encountering Tim. Finally, Barbara confronted me forcefully with: "Larry, you are not Martin Buber!" I realized that I had been impeding my understanding by sticking too closely to an idealized concept of my potential for relationship. I decided to relate to Tim as myself, Larry, and then work to conceptualize my understanding in the simplest, most honest terms I could. After this difficult but necessary change in attitude, I began to understand Tim's story in a new and, I believe, more meaningful way. I held Buber's ideas as a model of the kind of person I would like to become, and at the same time, I allowed myself to be Larry.

Buber's conception of a "dialectical alternation" (1970, p. 101) between I-Thou and I-It has been an extremely useful model for this work, and I discuss this idea in
Chapter VII. Nevertheless, I was trying to live up to an image of what Buber might expect from an I-Thou encounter rather than responding, listening, and understanding as myself. I have learned, that responding as oneself is the heart of any potential encounter. Buber makes this clear in one of his delightful Hasidic tales:

When Rabbi Noah, Rabbi Mordecai’s son, assumed the succession after his father’s death, his disciples noticed that there were a number of ways in which he conducted himself differently from his father, and asked him about this. “I do just as my father did,” he replied. “He did not imitate, and I do not imitate.” (In Friedman 1973, p. 46).
My goal became to work to understand Tim by meeting him as myself, and then conceptualizing my understanding in simple terms. I felt satisfied with my process, and thought I could write an interpretation of my understanding of Tim's experience easily and quickly. To my frustration, I had as much trouble with this interpretation initially as I did writing the interpretation of Bill's experience.

I wrote a detailed interpretation of Tim's journey, but felt dissatisfied with it. I sensed that the spirit of my understanding of Tim was missing. It sounded dry, flat, and lifeless. I realized that I had fallen into a trap similar to the one that had previously snared me. I also knew that Buber described real meeting as ineffable since an encounter "between" is both fleeting and undescrivable. I felt stuck once more, and could not conceive of a way to communicate my understanding.

The solution resembled the previous one. My first draft lacked life because I had conceptualized my understanding only for myself. I forgot that I wanted to relate what I knew to other people. I taped another poster on the wall to remind me of my relational goal and started to rewrite. I have stopped counting the number of times I have been challenged by this work to learn, or remember, to relate. I started to imagine that I was talking to a person who was genuinely interested in my perceptions of Tim. My sentences sounded more alive and I wrote more clearly and quickly. I felt satisfied and excited that through my process of understanding and interpreting, I was learning a great deal about the meaning of alienation and relation.
Chapter V

Interpretations of the Experience of Alienation and Relationship

An interpretation of my personal experience of alienation and relationship forms Part A of this chapter. The next three sections are interpretations of the experiences of Bill, Tim, and Lise. I originally, placed my own account ahead of those of the participants to allow my prejudices concerning the phenomenon to become more manifest. I realize now that, since all the interpretations have been formed dialectically between the participants and me during the course of this project, the more significant question is whether or not the interpretations are faithful readings of the original interviews. Because of this goal of fidelity, I made sure that each interpretation was critiqued by departmental committee members, colleagues, and friends. Further, three of the four participants responded to an interpretation that was just prior to the final one presented in this chapter. Each said that it was a good reading of his or her experience, and corrected me if they thought it necessary. Although any interpretation could be deepened and expanded ad infinitum, I am confident that the ones I present in this chapter bear a high fidelity to the records of the original experiences.

5.1. A: An Interpretation of my Personal Experience

You will notice, as you read chapter five, that the structure of this account of my own personal experiences is different than the structure of the interpretations of the participants' representations. It is shorter and more abstract. It is a subjective interpretation and not an intersubjective one. I found it difficult to maintain distance
from my own story. It was easier to reflect about the other participants when I had a record of their interviews in front of me. Perhaps it would have been useful to interview myself. I could have been a participant in one chair and an interviewer in another. I certainly would have enjoyed the exercise! But as a compromise, my goal became to relate an account of my journey to you that felt honest to me.

As I explained in Chapter III, I kept a journal of both my memories and recent experiences of relationship. I began by describing actual interpersonal situations, analyzing them, and reflecting on their meaning. I hoped to keep this changing account close at hand as I struggled to understand the participants. I planned to interpret my journey in the same way as I had theirs. Of course, as I have discussed, it would not be the same. But this strategy changed dramatically in the spring of 1984. Like each participant, I went through a dramatic critical turning point that brought the meaning of my reflections into much sharper and organized focus.

Until recently, I had felt too distant from people. I was not "touching" or "connecting with" others often enough. I did not feel close to people very often. I frequently felt lonely and unhappy. I was struggling to understand my situation, and in my heart I longed to relate. But people seemed "out there", and I felt trapped "in here". I was interested in other people's lives, but was stirred too infrequently by my cognitive speculations about them. I knew the despair of feeling stuck inside myself too well. I wasted a lot of energy in passive reflection. I remember thinking typically to myself:

What does he or she want from me? Why do I rarely know what I really want? Why does life have to feel so damned absurd and empty. Please somebody, anybody, teach me how to touch meaning!

After years of habit I had confused relating with a pernicious kind of subjective reflection that lacked adequate active relational expression. I was subject primarily; the other was object primarily. This approach to existence was creating a wall, a barrier between myself and others. My sense of self had also become fractured in a parallel manner.
The split between others and myself was a reflection of my inner alienation. For example, I was constantly acting out roles that were attempts to manipulate people. In this manner, I was separating myself from the person who now relates, at least more frequently, in more authentic and meaningful ways. During my recent critical turning point experience, I felt paralyzed by my heightened perception that almost every thought, feeling and communication I observed in myself was aimed at convincing someone that I was lovable, and therefore should not be rejected. I was terrified (not always that consciously) that my world would crumble if I were rejected by a person on whose love I believed my life depended. I was afraid to stand on my own two feet and take responsibility for an authentic response to the people in my life. By playing parts like this too often, I alienated myself from an identity which I could respect. I did not feel that I knew who I was.

The sense of being present to another human being alluded me. Obsessed with the fear that the disappointment and hurt I remembered from past relationships would be repeated, I allowed my deep-seated fear of abandonment to bind me to my history. I realize now that to respond authentically to the people who were most significant to me meant to contact the hurt and rage that had been fermenting inside me for years. I also became aware how my constant cognition and habitual role playing were a defence against allowing too much of this terrifying emotion to surface. I did not have the courage to respond to others with my powerful emotions or negative thinking, so I found ways to withdraw into myself. I became alienated and lived with the pervasive despair and meaninglessness that I have now come to associate with this experience.

As this research progressed, my attention to the problem of alienation became almost obsessive. I felt even more separated than usual from people and from my own sense of identity. My disconnection from others, myself, and meaningfulness became almost unbearable. I felt I needed to be alone, and at the same time could not tolerate my own company. I wanted to scream and cry all at once, but held in these emotions. I
felt humiliated to admit, that although I had been studying the subject for years, I
could not relate worth a damn. In fact, I believed I understood much less than when I
began. I felt trapped. I wanted to give up this work but was terrified that I would be
abandoned by everyone that I tricked into loving me if I did. I would be a failure. I
would confirm my own sense of worthlessness. My tension continued to mount. I
thought I might go mad. I felt terribly vulnerable, frightened, and very alone.

A few people had been confronting me with my refusal to assume responsibility
for taking better care of myself. I did not understand what they meant. For instance,
to me as an approval seeker, responsibility meant pleasing others until they seemed
satisfied or I felt exhausted. But others seemed insatiable, and exhaustion was my
constant and dreaded companion. I was not ready to change, and I privately resented
those who seemed to be demanding so much.

My tension continued to mount even further. I felt like a bubble expanding to
the bursting point. I struggled to maintain my sense of integrity. I held on for all I
was worth. I exploded. I wrote in my diary, May 30, 1984:

To relate is to be human. Not perfect, but human. I feel a little more human.
Closer to myself; closer to others. Closer to meaning. To spirit. To be
ordinary. Nobody special. Just awareness. As awareness I can face
separation again; as awareness there is no separation. Just awareness.
Being, and being with being. Relating. Meaningfulness. Life.

After years of struggle and study, I was tasting what I had been only thinking and
dreaming about. I allowed a great deal of my suppressed emotion to surface. I allowed
myself to be angry with others. I also cried with others. I reached out to people in a
much more authentic, compassionate manner. I felt blessed, peaceful, and complete.

The abruptness of my fall magnified my terror. The beauty of this liberating
experience did not last. My glimpse of heaven was rapidly followed by what seemed
like a small encounter with hell. My familiar sense of self became too thin. I
panicked. I felt as though I was walking a line between the reality I had grown to rely
on, and another very threatening reality. This was all too unknown.
As I became more grounded; I was able to reflect on the roller coaster I had ridden. I was somehow given a vision of exaggerated forms of alienation and relationship that brought the fragments of my story into much sharper focus. A great deal of denied emotion surfaced. Some of these feelings were painful and threatening; others were warm and beautiful. But they all needed to be ventilated. I believe that I had to let go of a great deal of energy in order to become a little more present and free from my unresolved history. I was left with a altered understanding of the meaning of alienation and relationship. But my newer sense of relational reality demanded much more courage.

I have seen that to relate with greater meaning, I would have to respond much more authentically to people than has been my custom. This means I need to take responsibility for my anger, hurt, and vulnerability, as well as my gentleness and understanding. I do not think I have the courage to relate in this way. But, the alternative seems worse. I can choose to alienate myself from others, my own valued sense of identity, and life in general. I believe that the alternative to relationship is meaningless and despair. But I hear myself drifting into the alienating role of perfectionist! I guess as long as I go easy on myself and choose to journey in the direction of relationship I can live with myself, grow in myself and find greater meaning. I admire those with more courage than I. On that same day in May, 1984, I wrote in my diary, "My God! My heart reaches out to Abraham who offers his beloved and long awaited Isaac to the Lord. I stand in awe of Christ who willingly offers His Body for Truth". I am gaining a tremendous respect and appreciation for those people who have the courage to respond to Truth as they are called to hear it.

Furthermore, from my bout of exaggerated alienation, I feel sensitized to those souls who are so terribly separated from others and themselves, that they live in what must feel like a perpetual hell. What courage this existence must take!

As time goes on, I am able to perceive my critical turning-point experience more clearly. I will still relate sometimes, through a part of me that fears abandonment. I
will still manipulate others for their love and approval, but I also feel more able and willing to respond to people, including myself, in a more authentic, human way. I am left with a model, a direction for the potential for relationship. I have an image to work toward that feels comforting and challenging.

5.2. B: An Interpretation of Bill's Experience

Bill's struggle, his need to feel confirmed, is the most consistent theme in his talk. When I listen to his memory of past relationships I imagine Bill's voice summarizing his present perception with these words: "I wanted to be confirmed. I wanted to feel loved for who I am. I longed to feel free enough to be spontaneous with somebody important to me and hear them say that although I might not approve of your behaviour, you are okay with me." He looks back and reasons that, because he felt he was not accepted, he separated himself by withdrawing from others physically and psychologically. He felt he could not control the pain of human relation, but could retreat inside himself and therefore attempt to control by withdrawing. Bill found it very difficult to be self-confirming, since he had learned to have little self-worth and perceived himself as bad. Although he longed for the confirmation that could result from authentic human interaction, he felt terribly threatened. He expected past rejection to repeat itself and that the pain of feeling unvalued and unloved would be just too much to bear. Bill has had a number of important experiences that have allowed him to change both his perception and behavior. In particular, he is now involved in a relationship that seems to be the most confirming of his life. His view of himself and other people (in both his past and future) is slowly and steadily shifting.

Bill perceives his early relationship with his mother as a significant cause of his later interpersonal difficulties. He talks in detail about his mother's constant attempts to control him, but only indirectly alludes to her expressing affection for him. He reads control in everything she did and he shares many painful situations throughout our talk. Bill remembers that when he showed anger his mother would
shake him physically, and he mimics her yelling at him loudly to "stop it up! Stop it up!" [60-63] (These numbers refer to the line or lines in the sample verbatim transcript, Appendix C). He ascribes great power to even her 'dirty look' and similarly interprets it as an admonishment to "shut up! Don't, don't go on!" [75-8] Among several other negative memories, he says he felt humiliated, bribed, and belittled [335-340]. Bill believes that he learned to feel like an unloved bad boy, because he craved love, a craving that was met with harsh criticism. He remembers experiencing his mother's affection as unpredictable [69-72] and recalls that "my mother used to say that we won't love you if you're bad... The love was always conditional... I never felt that there was a constant stream of love. It wasn't 'you're bad but we still love you', but 'you're bad'" [128-132]. Bill remembers wanting to be loved for being himself even though his behavior was sometimes "bad". He has no memory of feeling confirmed as a valuable person by his mother, but instead perceives her behaviour as a message that she did not value him, and that he was bad in his essence.

Bill explains that he removed himself from the hurt of his mother's disconfirmation by withdrawing into his inner world. With a sad voice he tells me, "the only thing I could do in relation to this [was] to sort of sulk, not sulk but withdraw into myself" [82-83]. He reasons that, though unable to control his mother's behavior, he could control the painful consequences by withdrawing. He remembers that, as a young child, he withdrew when faced with anyone he thought might cause him to feel bad about himself. This strategy appears to have stayed with him to the present.

He represents his memory of his relationship with his father in similar negative terms. From Bill's description of his father as untouchable [137-140]. I get the same sense that he wanted confirmation but instead felt a loss of personal value. Bill recalls not even being allowed to touch his sleeping father when he needed to be awakened. He perceives his father as not being there for him since the social mores of the day, the "Wasp attitude", dictated that mother was in control of the children [141-144]. Father was "taboo" [138]. Bill seems to be saying that because he was just a little boy he was
not valued enough to relate to his father by even touching him. Bill’s recollection of their infrequent encounters is consistently one of criticism. As a typical example, Bill imitates his father’s loud voice calling him a "stupid klutz" [431-433]. Bill values intelligence highly, and this example is typical of his opinion that aspects of himself that he values were not appreciated by important people in his early life. He would have liked to touch his father and have his father touch him. Instead, like his mother, his father was distant and is remembered as critical of Bill’s essential worth. Although Bill does not say that he withdrew in relation to his father’s disconfirmation, I imagine that would be how Bill would remember his reaction.

Bill remembers his grandfather as also behaving critically towards him. Although Bill communicates respect for his grandfather, I sense that he thinks that his grandfather is yet another early cause of his feeling separate from others, and alienated from his sense of personal worth. Bill explains that his grandfather was a rough, tough soldier; whereas, he was a sissy [823-824]. He is saying that, relative to his grandfather, he did not feel like much of a man. Of course, he was not a man but a small boy, although this fact does not seem to alter his perception. Bill also remembers his grandmother reprimanding his grandfather because of his bad treatment of Bill. Once more, his sense of his history is that he was not valued for being Bill. Again, in this memory, Bill believes that he learned not to value himself, and that he needed to withdraw from others in order to protect his diminishing sense of personal worth.

Bill’s descriptions of significant early models of relationship are essentially the same as his memories of his direct encounters. He stresses that his mother often criticized his father, and that she had a great deal of control over how his dad felt about himself. Bill believes that his father was an unhappy person [452-454] who lost his sense of personal worth relating to Bill’s mother. He argues that his mother still "puts him [the father] in the doghouse. He doesn’t know why he’s in the doghouse: he waits until she lets him out of the doghouse" [448-449]. Bill talks as if his father’s self-worth
is totally dependent on his mother's behaviour. He sees his mother in control of his father, who waits for her signal to feel valuable enough to come back into her good graces. Bill's memory of the relationship of his grandmother to his grandfather is almost identical. She was constantly critical of him, so he surrendered his identity and acted like "a bad little boy" in relation to her [461-463].

Bill's perceptions of his earliest memories of relationship are remarkably consistent. One person gives power over to the other and consequently loses control. The one who does not have the power is dependent on the other for his or her sense of personal value. Since the individual in control is usually perceived as critical rather than confirming, the powerless person loses his sense of self-worth and experiences himself as a rejected, bad person. Bill remembers early relationship as threatening, painful and disconfirming in the extreme. Rather than being open, trusting, and authentic with others, he is ready to withdraw at the least sign that this painful memory might repeat itself. Bill summarizes this perception of relationship, and his opinion that he formed it early in his life when he says:

at one point in my life I thought that the worst thing that could ever happen to me would be that I would be powerless and my parents would have control of me again and that they would not treat me nicely. Once they had power over me I would lose myself [783-788].

He perceives these memories as power struggles in which the confirmation that he longed for was so painfully absent, and the criticism so consistent, that he feared he would lose any sense of personal value; that is, he feared he would lose himself.

Even fate added to his perception that a close relationship would lead to a sense of painful personal loss. Bill recounts only one early situation in which he succeeded in getting close to someone his own age. It was a wonderful, warm experience which culminated in the shock of the boy drowning one summer weekend. I think that Bill was holding back tears as he recollected that, "it was a very awful feeling that I opened up to somebody, trusted somebody, and they went away and disappeared" [114-116]. In the context of the whole interview, I imagine Bill perceiving that confirmation had
been ripped away from him once again. This memory must have been further proof that close relationship leads only to painful loss, and therefore it is safer to withdraw into one's inner world. The world of human relationship cannot be controlled, therefore it cannot be trusted.

He rationalizes that his early family situation might account for the lack of peer confirmation in his history. Bill says that because his family moved fifteen or twenty times before he was nine, he never experienced a trusting peer relationship since he "never learned that somebody is constantly there" [97]. After our talk last week I thought that by the time he was a boy of seven or eight he might have felt so angry that other boys might have sensed it and stayed away. Regardless, he again presents the dream that never materialized; his fantasy that he wanted a relationship in which another human being would affirm his worth with some constancy.

Bill is aware of the similarity between his childhood and adult relationships, and in particular, believes he learned to react to others as he did to his mother. Shortly after his important 1971 turning-point experience [I will describe this in detail below] he met M. Bill says he valued M. highly, and reasons that M. was interested in him because of the strength Bill had developed after the changes he had made. Although his experience had dramatically improved his view of himself for a short time, the reality of a relationship brought him back down to the ground, and Bill's familiar perceptions returned. M. would not value him as a whole person because Bill had to manifest consistent strength to gain M's affection. He argues very matter of factly that "I wasn't allowed to be sick. I had to be strong. If I wanted his affection I had to be strong. And I was hooked into him because he was very much like my mother" (497-499). Bill views his early thirties as similar to his childhood. Certain behaviour, but not all, was valued by the person in power. He did not feel free to be the whole Bill since he believed his weakness was unacceptable to M. Again and again I am hearing Bill's wish to be able to be relatively honest with another person and feel that he will be accepted. I sense that his longing for confirmation is central to his sense of meaning.
I hear in his talk the threatening expectation that people are more apt to control and use others than confirm them. Bill reasons that when a person feels confident and good about himself, people turn up that "want to undermine" these positive feelings [600]. He fears that he might become "captured by people" who want to "pin the butterfly down" [247-251]. Captured prisoners and pinned down butterflies become objects that can be easily used and exploited. Neither are valued in themselves or they would be set free to unfold their natural potentials. His lack of trust in other people is obvious, and the primary defence that he presents is to separate from potentially dangerous others by withdrawing into himself. [The quality of this withdrawing becomes important to the meaning and I will discuss this below.]

Bill's withdrawal strategy, which he presents as intentional, is what he means by "alienation". It consists of an action that removes him from the disconfirmation of potentially painful criticism. Alienation is an active control tactic that keeps him separate and safe. He is aware that he seeks superficial relationships and says, "I don't like to get too deep with anybody. I guess I fear losing my soul if anyone gets too close" [23-25]. To get "deep" with another human being means risking disconfirmation. If that fragile "butterfly" is rejected instead of confirmed, the loss would be the worst imaginable. One of the most terrible events that Bill could experience would be that someone "might suddenly see the real me and not like it" [48-49].

Specifically, he alienates himself most frequently by retreating from criticism. Bill says, "I am really alert for any negatives that put me down because I watch for that with people. If there is the slightest criticism on my person, I use that as an excuse to cut off" [208-211]. But criticism of his person is perceived, most likely, in even ambiguous interpersonal situations since only obvious approval is acceptable to him. He explains that "it's like a parent... if I don't get approval then, then I, I felt an implied, I felt criticism..." [157-158]. The control that this fear of criticism has over him becomes even more apparent when he talks about his strategy of only accepting
temporary work. It is his belief that in this kind of situation no superior will be able to act too critically towards him [867-869]. Bill must experience negative personal criticism as devastating. It is as if he is saying: "My sense of self is already so negative that I cannot stand anyone verifying my already low opinion." Who needs proof that you are unworthy when you already feel that way!? Although Bill does not make the statement directly, the interview as a whole suggests that he sees his history of not feeling confirmed as being the reason he learned not to value himself.

During the original interview, Bill presents a struggle to work through the self-fulfilling prophecy created by his negative self-concept. Because he does not value himself he finds proof of his unworthiness in others. He seems to look for verification of his self-concept by reading criticism into even ambiguous interpersonal situations. When he inevitably discovers this criticism, he alienates himself, and within the safety of his withdrawal, devalues himself even further.

Bill's description of his experience of withdrawal provides a clue to his motivation to risk change. He says he feels safest when he is not relating [426-427], but he experiences this safety as painful and unsatisfying. After alienating himself, physically and psychologically, he says, he usually feels sad, mopey, alone, isolated, and he experiences himself as an outcast [437-440]. He then reinforces his already negative self-image by calling himself unlovable and unworthy of love since no person "could like, a bad, well, no one could like a bad little boy . . ."[439-443]. Bill seems aware that although his withdrawal strategy allows him a measure of control over his painful reaction to perceived criticism, it does not satisfy his need for confirmation. Throughout the interview, he sounds and looks happiest when he talks about risking relationship and receiving some kind of confirmation from the other person that he is a worthwhile and lovable human being.

He describes a time in 1971 that is critical to his struggle to learn to relate more meaningfully. What I find so interesting is that he finally experiences the kind of ideal confirmation that he craves, except that it is not perceived as coming from a
human being, but from an external source. He talks about a chaotic, anxious, and depressing period that paved the way for a temporary shift in his self-concept. Bill says his "emotional state had been so churned up that it led to a rebirth of sorts" [1043-1045]. He describes three separate "paranoid and anxious" [1003-1004] reactions after smoking "excessive" amounts of marijuana. He talks as if his controls were not working efficiently enough to keep him feeling safe, and he allowed people to penetrate his barriers too deeply. Somebody was "raiding my fridge, overstepping the bounds of my hospitality." [1006-1007] and "I was about to tell her I was gay, and ah, I guess she felt something in the air. We just both went paranoid" [1023-1025]. Bill explains that following these episodes he felt terribly agitated and depressed, until he woke up one morning and perceived himself as dramatically different. Bill refers to his change in perception as an experience of rebirth. He says that this was from outside of himself, since he felt that he had been "forgiven from an external source" [594], and he refers to his experience of forgiveness as a "state of grace" [595-596]. With joyful enthusiasm Bill relates:

It was the first day. It was the beginning of my life and I suddenly felt so confident. All day long at work I was crying, the tears were coming down. It was wonderful. I had a new lease on life. I realized I was intelligent, that I could read these books, that I was capable of understanding things, that I wasn't a bad guy, that I was OK. [548-554]

During this episode, Bill recalls feeling valued and loved for just being himself. I find it interesting that Bill's confirmation comes from an "external source" rather than a concrete person, but I do not know what to make of this yet. It was this powerful sense of confirmation that allowed him a tremendously cathartic release of joyful tears.

Bill talks about noticing some dramatic shifts in himself following this event. He says that he became aware of possessing such valued qualities as confidence, intelligence and strength [552; 597-598]. He describes himself as more solid, centred, and valuable and says, "I have a fairly subtle base in myself now" [623]. Because he felt more positive and sure of himself, he says he was able to be more objective about
his interpersonal behaviour and not interpret criticism quite so rapidly. This more objective awareness is still important to Bill, and he says about his present, "I've got awareness now that I didn't have before. Before, I was confused . . . my confusion would lead to anger and pushing out. But now when I get confused I can see why I'm upset" [635-638].

After I talked with Bill recently, I felt clearer about his turning-point. For a brief period early in 1971, a profound sense of confirmation from a source that seemed to be outside of him, allowed Bill to somehow transcend his relational history and experience his potential. Soon after, he entered into a relationship with M. which, he says, soon brought him back down to ground. He felt like the same old unworthy Bill again. [I discuss this relationship above.] Within a relationship that Bill describes as not very confirming, the tremendous changes that he made were reduced to memory. I know that when I, or the people I work with therapeutically, have similar "breakthroughs", most often, these dramatic changes do not last. However, I see them as an inspiring glimpse of who we can become. The memory of these dramatic episodes provides useful maps, and, with will, courage, and the relationship of confirming people, I believe we can work toward permanently regaining the qualities that these maps allow us to perceive. From both talks with Bill I sense that he has been struggling to become the glimpse of himself that this period in 1971 opened to him.

A number of weeks prior to the original interview, a friend who had been particularly confirming cut Bill off. He tells me "I was getting the feedback that, that I was, and I was getting that feedback that I was wonderful. I was a nice guy. He thought I was fabulous. And then suddenly it ended just abruptly" [682-684]. Because Bill felt rejected and thought he was being criticized for his behavior, he began to erect walls and devalue himself, as was his habit. He says he agonized over trying to ascertain what he had done wrong. But instead of continuing to hide and devalue himself, he tells me with a sense of great importance in his voice, that "rather than retreating, I pursued, I pursued" [686]. Bill trusted himself and his friend enough to
take a risk that was very courageous for him. His friend could have told Bill that he did not value something about him, and Bill would have to face the disconfirmation that he usually experiences as devastating. Bill and his friend discussed what had happened and Bill discovered that his friend was facing difficulties of his own. Bill realized the incorrectness of his belief that to be "cut off" meant he was unworthy [686]. He saw that his friend was a vulnerable, wonderful person who also fears losing himself in relationships. The friend said some very nice things to Bill. Consequently, instead of alienating himself and reinforcing his cycle of devaluation, he reached out and experienced confirmation. Someone liked him for being him. Bill believes that in changing how he perceived himself, he was able to change his habitual reaction to potential disconfirmation. This different behaviour resulted in a testing of his interpersonal reality and in his recognition that he is a worthwhile human being.

Bill's most significant present friendship is with D. The relationship is becoming more involved. At our original meeting Bill exhibited a lot of conflict in his reaction to this person. I sensed that he hoped to be accepted by D., but still feared that he would lose himself instead.

He seems encouraged to risk himself more because of the trust, or perhaps the hope, that D. will value him. This means he thinks that perhaps D. will confirm him and not insist he be other than himself. In particular, Bill says he needs to feel that when he allows his weaker self to show, D. will not reject him. He refers to D. as "someone who wasn't going to run away when I showed weaker sides" [273-274]. Bill believes that he is beginning to trust that someone can value him because he has come to increasingly value himself [895-897]. His summary of his opinion is that "I'm generally safer to trust somebody because I've a strong sense of myself" [918-919]. I felt glad for Bill that his more solid and positive sense of self was forming a base from which he felt able to risk authentic relationship. At the same time, before our second talk, I was aware of my concern that if Bill perceived D.'s love as anything less than ideal, he might still retreat from the friendship.
In the first interview, the fragility of Bill's developing trust is apparent. He clings to his dreaded expectation that D. will criticize some aspect of him that he values, and that he will react with his familiar sense of betrayal, abuse, and devaluation. The authenticity that Bill says he is risking with D. must be very frightening, since he feels he gives D. power, and consequently, is too vulnerable to D.'s evaluation of him. Bill says that "now I'm giving it [power] to D. and he's not abusing it, yet. But I'm afraid that if I see something that is just normal behaviour I may wrongly interpret that as abusing the power" [475-476]. His sense of personal worth, at the time of the first interview, is so dependent on D.'s evaluation that D. likely had to be very careful to appear confirming to Bill.

At this phase in the interpretation, certain aspects of Bill's talk seemed contradictory. It was this sense of contradiction that motivated me to speak with him again before completing the essay. For example, he states that he appreciates the importance of interpersonal honesty, and claims he has learned to confront people. In one incident he says "I came flat out, which is the only method I can use now. If I have to say something to somebody, I just have to come flat out and state it very boldly" [529-531]. But this authenticity appears to exclude any expression of anger. Bill is aware of angry feelings. He talks about hustling someone out of his house after subtle criticisms were expressed, and when I asked him how he experienced this he said he felt angry [293]. He has lost several jobs because of his temper [825-826]. In addition, he realizes he tends to withdraw in anger [732-733]. I challenged him rather gently and Bill told me that it would be unfair to express anger directly since someone might feel hurt and rejected [763-764]. He reminds me that as a child he felt he had been rejected rather than his behavior. I believe he controls his anger and attempts to intellectualize it away. He resists relating to others in a confrontational manner.

I wondered, before our second talk, about the extent to which Bill enters into conspiratorial relationships that allow him to avoid challenging his historical patterns of relating. For example, he hesitated about the exact hours of our second meeting,
and eventually told me that he was thinking about D.'s space since he "liked to avoid confrontation at any cost." I felt a need to share with him my opinion that, when I want to relate genuinely, I know I sometimes have to stay in touch with and relate my anger as well as my more gentle feelings. I am beginning to believe that when he talks about people "matching" he is referring, at least in part, to an agreement to conspire not to relate. Bill states, "Maybe it's just that alienation is a, something we do until we find someone who is a good match for our state of development" [278-281]. D. could be a good "match" in that Bill sees him sharing similar anti-relational strategies. Bill says "D. said that people shouldn't fight in relationships" [753-754]. He also says, for example, that he manages very well with his friend G. because Bill knows he cannot get very close with G. [240-241]. As I approached the evening of our second meeting, it became important to me that I relate to him more as a human being and not reduce him to a research object, as I felt I had sometimes tended to do during our first meeting. In addition, because of what I was reading as Bill's struggle for confirmation, I wanted to share how I view certain issues differently from him while still communicating that I was accepting him. I met him with the following questions in mind.

1. Your memories of relationship bear great similarity to one another. (share brief summary). I'm curious as to whether you have any fond memories of relating to your mother while you were growing up. How do you perceive her today? Do you blame her for who you have become?

2. I get the impression that you wanted your mother's love to be almost perfect. (share summary) This image interests me since, as much as I would enjoy this kind of love, I don't expect it from anyone.

3. To what extent are you still maintaining alienating walls? How do you do this? In your imagination, what does this wall look like?

4. Does D. have power over you now? How are you reacting to this? Is he abusing this power? What is your reaction? How would you describe the quality of your present relationship?

5. Are you working to improve the quality of your relationship with D. How? You talked about your desire or need to be authentic with others, does this apply to your present relationship? How? Examples? With others?
6. You told me that during and since 1971 you have been developing "a subtle base" in yourself. Does this still have meaning for you? How? Tell me what that base is like for you now.

7. Both in our original interview and during our recent phone conversation I had the impression that you avoid confrontation and especially the direct expression of anger. I would like to understand you in this respect since my experience is that to authentically relate I must share my anger sometimes.

8. If you reject people who criticize you, then you are not loving others the way you say you want to be loved, that is, unconditionally. In fact, you seem very critical of people who criticize you. I would really like to understand how you see this.

9. If both you and D. agree that a direct expression of anger is wrong, does this not amount to an agreement not to risk authentic relationship? I don't understand how two people can relate closely without being quite critical of each other on occasion.

10. How do you see yourself relating to people in ten years?

Bill stands his ground in his memory of his mother. He told me he has no fond memories of her but only recalls her criticisms and dirty looks. His mother does not bother to criticize him anymore, because he is a free agent and not under her power. Bill says that she still criticizes his father, since he still is under her control. I believe that Bill has grown since we last met. He says he has forgiven his parents for their treatment of him, since he realizes that in many ways their lives were much more demanding than his. I enjoyed listening to him. I noticed that his talk about his parents was delivered in a much softer, more compassionate tone of voice than when we had met previously. When I confronted him about wanting perfect love from his mother he said, "I have learned to see myself more clearly and therefore am able to overlook other people's shortcomings more." I felt more confident in my opinion that Bill's developing sense of self, and the more objective awareness that seems to accompany it, is allowing him to change his interpersonal stance toward a more compassionate and confirming understanding of other people.

He claims he does not put up walls in the same way he did two years ago. In fact, Bill says, he has become more discriminating and sometimes what he thought were
walls actually represented his decision that he really did not feel like relating. It seems to me that, because he is growing in a sense of both centre and self-value, he is learning that being by himself is sometimes just fine.

Bill credits a lot of his "growing up" over the last few years to his continuing relationship with D. With a great deal of tenderness in both his voice and facial expression, Bill tells me how D. allows him to be "weak" and to act like a "silly child." Bill describes in three different ways that he needed to feel accepted for being silly in order to grow up, since he was not allowed to be childlike in any of his previous relationships. My recent time with Bill leads me to believe that, within the confirmation of his present relationship, he has "grown up" a great deal. He seems more solid to me. I felt that someone was there listening much more than in our last meeting. I also sensed that the person with me felt much better about himself. He sat in a more relaxed yet erect manner and I sensed a more confident human being. I felt more free to confront him this time, while two years ago I was far more hesitant. But has something to do with me too. I also feel more centred, and my self-esteem has improved. I know we both have changed, and that confirmation shown by important in our lives has acted as a significant catalyst. Bill repeats the theme of the part, "D. is there when I need him." Confirmation has a sense of constancy to it; that is, while D. might reject his Bill is growing in the trust that D. will not reject him.

I am free to confront Bill with my opinion that he rarely expresses his anger and D. might be involved in a non-relational conspiracy. Rather than taking critical and retreating into himself, Bill seemed genuinely calm and said he has to think about it. He told me that he has come to realize that when he is expressing his thoughts and feelings with D. and receives critical feedback, he is attacking. Bill says he has become aware that he has pushed people to anger, although he did not realize this until recently. Later in the
interview he argued that he does not perceive his friendship with D. as particularly
conspiratorial, since, although neither of them confronts others very often, both are
learning to confront each other more all the time. Bill says that they both feel safer
that the other will not reject. He tells me quite matter-of-factly, that,

neither of us confront other people with anger in the outside world. Being so
similar, I think we have a pattern that we both feel relatively safe in
expressing ourselves with each other and that paves the way for being that
way in the outside world.

Bill indicates that the acceptance and safety he feels within his relationship with D. is
singlarly important in learning how to express himself more openly and honestly.

He does not envision any future fantasy of relationship, but concludes that he
wants to continue "growing up" and to learn to understand more and more clearly,
since he now sees cutting people off as "childish".

Now it is apparent that Bill is leading a homosexual life-style. It makes sense to
infer that he would encounter additional relational difficulties, because his sexual
preference places him in a minority group. Prior to our interview I asked him about
this issue. He firmly stated that his attraction to men did not affect his problems with
relationship per se. This became a concern for me since other people's reactions to his
homosexuality does enter the interview, albeit in a minimal way. I have decided not to
interpret this horizon of Bill's experience. I made this decision because of Bill's
personal viewpoint, and because I have taken a more psychological than sociological
perspective in this paper. My intention here is to at least acknowledge this omission. I
also realize that I cannot include every horizon.

5.3. C: An Interpretation of Tim's Experience

When I first met Tim, about two years ago, he was twenty-three and studying to
be a concert musician. We talked again recently, because I wanted to become clearer
about a few aspects of his story.

Tim's memory of painful past relationships still inhibits him from risking
intimacy. Because he does not risk closeness with people, I believe his view of his past has remained relatively fixed. His conversion to Christianity, and the tremendous meaning that he finds in his relationship with Christ, is helping him to reinterpret some of his relational difficulties.

Tim remembers no meaningful contact with either of his parents. He tells me, "no communication (with them) was sufficiently deep enough to leave any spot." Tim says he rarely saw his father because he left the family just after Tim was born. He believes he did not have much opportunity to relate to his mother, either, since she needed to go to work after his father left.

He emphasizes that, although he respects his parents for what they have accomplished in their careers, he does not love them. With a firm voice Tim states he feels no "reverence and love and I mean none." He then says that his lack of love for his family leads him to believe that he lacks a normal moral conscience. At first, I did not understand how his negative self-evaluation related to what he was saying. Now that I have a stronger grasp of the tremendous meaning that Christianity has for Tim, I realize that his impression that he is "morally deficient" may be another value that he derives from his conversion. Christianity, as Tim interprets it, lays down a very definite set of rules concerning how people ought to behave with one another. In my attempt to hear Tim accurately I say, "So you respect your parents for what they accomplished . . . but you don't identify any real feelings for them?". Tim responds with "That's true, yah. I have to be very deliberate about the moral duties . . ." He then initiates a brief discussion about what Christians are supposed to do. The moral tenets of Christianity guide Tim to know how to act with his parents in spite of his lack of feeling for them.

After I understood Tim's emotional distance from his parents a little more clearly, I still felt some unhappiness for him. My struggle to make peace with my past, and to learn to understand and love my parents, forms a large part of how I define myself. As I relate to them more intimately, I believe, I learn to relate more closely
with others and vice-versa. But, again, perhaps Tim would feel sad for me because I do not have the relationship he has with Christ. In any case, considering the sense of distance he experienced with his parents, I imagine a fragile and vulnerable five-year-old Timothy, coming from a broken home and entering public school.

Tim discusses details of incidents he remembers from his early school years. All these memories concern how his classmates would tease him, and how as a result, he felt rejected, hurt, and humiliated. As I will discuss below, his memory of these painful years still influences Tim very much.

Tim distinguishes between "latent factors" that set the stage for his relational difficulties prior to his entering school, and the "cause" of his problems that he believes developed during his difficult early years. He reasons that he was both socially and physically handicapped at the time he entered public school. He believes, he was socially awkward because he did not have the opportunity to play with children his own age, since he was an only child from a "broken home". He was physically awkward, he explains, because he wore thick lenses to correct a serious eye problem, and, he walked with a "very obvious" limp. Tim sounds convinced that his very visible social and physical handicaps made it inevitable when he entered school, that he would eventually become the class scapegoat. I understand that he believes he had absolutely no control or power to change these physical and social "factors" that eventuated in the "cause". I believe his sense of powerlessness is significant, since, as I will discuss, his conversion includes an image of God as Ultimate Agent.

When Tim was already in public school, he believes, his obvious physical and social handicaps made it natural that he would be chosen as scapegoat for the other children's teasing. He says, as if his statement were a truism, "of course the kids started to make me the class butt." He thinks he could have either fought openly against the children or managed his predicament by withdrawing into himself. Tim dismisses fighting as a possible alternative, because he viewed himself as a coward. I interpret him saying that, although he could not fight with the children who were
teasing him, he did have the power to attempt to control both their actions and his response by withdrawing from them into himself. He also realizes that his effort failed.

In retrospect, Tim knows that his withdrawal from his schoolmates was a strategy he felt he needed to protect himself from the terrible hurt stemming from the children's teasing. He is also aware that this strategy was ineffective because he believes that it led to his classmates teasing him even more. He speculates that he was already socially awkward when he entered school, and that, because he withdrew and did not practise relating to his peers, his interpersonal skills atrophied. He remembers that he felt even more socially awkward and behaved even more inappropriately. He would make "social . . . gaffes" on occasions when the situation demanded that he interact with his peers. Tim believes that his socially awkward behaviour gave his classmates even more opportunity to tease him. Even turning inward gave Tim no sense of power or control over his painful experiences.

Although Tim never appeared very emotional, I thought I heard anger in his voice as he began to describe particular memories of the children teasing him with familiar cliches such as 'Timothy Turtle lost his girdle!' "You know," Tim tells me, "it hurt." When we met recently I asked Tim if he had any fond memories of his grade school classmates. He answered quickly: "My memory of these relationships as hurtful has not dimmed."

He recalls an incident in grade six as particularly significant. I will quote it at length, since I believe it captures Tim's perception of how his classmates would tease him, and how he invariably would feel rejected. As he spoke I understood better how Tim remembers himself as helpless and hurting at ten or eleven years of age. Tim communicated a sense of special importance as he said,

you know how kids are at that age. Boys particularly start to notice girls. Smart jokes, etc., and somebody got the bright idea that since Timothy was the class clown maybe we could persuade him to kiss the girls. 'Georgie Porgie puddin' and pie . . . .' And they did it by saying, 'okay, you do this and you're part of us.
(If you kiss the girls you'll belong.)
Right! I think somebody promised me a dollar to do it the first time. He gave that dollar. It was monopoly money! ... I have very great trouble thinking of that person today, and I haven't thought of him for six or seven years now. If I ever met him I'd have great trouble choking down my gorge. (Gorge?)

Anger I mean he was just having fun, but you know, you can imagine. That didn't work and I soon found out it didn't work. I wasn't part of their set. I was still the butt.

(As I will discuss, in his relationship with Christ he has no need to reject him."

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Right! I was still the butt of their jokes, and I found it out more.

Tim emphasizes how important this incident is to his life since he believed it brought the whole thing nicely into the open as far as I was concerned. I mean, after that you can't avoid realizing that you are the class butt, no matter how you try and disguise it.

Tim probably shrunk in humiliation. It must have taken tremendous courage for him to risk kissing this girl publicly. I suppose he was willing to try almost anything to gain some sense of belonging among his peers. He remembers this important risk as being futile. Not only was he forced to realize that he would never belong to this group, but also, he saw himself demonstrating in front of everybody just what a fool he was. According to Tim, this public event put the final stamp on his identity relative to his classmates. With this incident, Tim believes, his status as clown and outsider was confirmed.

Tim is saying that he did everything he could to gain acceptance from his peers. He remembers that he had no control over the social and physical handicaps with which he entered school. Tim might say: "What could I do about a broken home or physical handicap?" He tried to gain a measure of control by withdrawing when the children teased him, but that did not work either. In this important incident he took an extreme risk in front of his peers and believes he became a laughing stock. Tim presents a past in which he had little control over painful rejection. This memory is still very much alive in Tim as the fearful anticipation that people will continue to reject him. As I will discuss, in his relationship with Christ he has no need to fear rejection.
I am also beginning to understand that, within his present relationship with Christ, Tim may be working to make some kind of positive sense of his history. It is possible that Tim perceives much of his past rejection and pain as the way in which God, the Agent, has been involved with Tim intimately to bring him to his relationship with Christ. This would certainly be a way for him to make more sense of a very painful history.

Before his conversion to Christianity in grade eleven, Tim remembers only three positive relationships. One was with a music teacher in grade six, and two were with Christian musicians in grade eleven. These encounters are very different from most of Tim's memories, and I believe they have had a crucial impact on Tim's life. In fact, I am beginning to wonder if Tim's description of these relationships is his story of the steps to his Christian conversion.

In our recent meeting, Tim said it was very rare to meet someone who was willing to reach out to another person. He compared his few positive memories of relating to people to eating sugar for the first time in months, explaining that the sudden rush of energy sugar creates stands out because the result is so different. I get the impression that Tim is saying that the few positive encounters that he remembers, have given him the energy to initiate some very meaningful life changes.

Tim reminds me that by the time he entered grade seven his fear of being rejected was already severe. That year, he found himself in the class of a music teacher who played trombone. Tim describes this man as genuinely interested in the children, saying that his enthusiasm was contagious. He recalls the awful noise made by these students. Nevertheless, the teacher would "really glow with enjoyment, and it caught, and I got interested in music." This teacher is the first person that Tim remembers who showed any real warmth or interest towards him. He sounds amazed that this man did not reject either Tim, or the other students, because of the clamour that Tim believes they were substituting for music.

It is no coincidence, I believe, that Tim, moved by his teacher's ability to relate,
is about to become a concert musician. Interestingly enough, the other two people that Tim describes in positive terms are also musicians. I suppose that by the time he was twelve, Tim was so accustomed to expecting rejection, that a warm approving human being must have had a tremendous impact on him. In fact, it is possible that his sense of identity changed at that time. Tim, the outsider, could have become a little more Tim the musician. To become a musician was important for him because it provided a means of relating to others. Tim stresses that music gave him the opportunity to excel at something, and that his instrument gave him a "safety valve" to release some of his internalized hurt and anger. Music might provide Tim a structure through which he can interact with people in a safe and controlled manner and thus allow him to release some of his emotions. As I will discuss, in his career that followed, playing for his audience is a form of "reaching out". His other two significant experiences of relating to people occurred years later in grade eleven.

Tim says the school orchestra conductor asked him to talk with her, after she witnessed Tim questioning an evangelist who was speaking in the school auditorium. Tim remembers that he was not particularly intrigued by what the minister was saying. He seems surprised that this teacher spent several hours talking with him, since "she was a strange teacher in the school . . . (and) she was using her spares to talk to me!" He emphasizes that this conversation was the longest he remembers ever having with anyone. She invited Tim to a service at her church. He accepted, he says, because he did not want to offend her and jeopardize his position in the school orchestra. I sense that the meeting is important to him primarily because it led to his attending a service at her church.

Tim remembers approaching a Christian trombonist who was playing at the church service. He believes he "put (his) foot in (his) mouth" by suggesting to the musician that his faith was an illusion. The musician did not reject Tim but simply replied that he did not want to base his life on illusion and that was his reason for being a Christian. Tim reflects that "at that moment I think I was subconsciously
forced into thinking about the question . . . if God is real . . . it’s an idea that hits you . . . it has consequences." In fact, the idea had dramatic and inclusive consequences for Tim. He converted to Christianity and entered into a relationship with Christ. I am seeing more clearly that Tim does not ascribe much importance to his meeting with this trombonist per se. What seems tremendously significant to Tim is that this meeting was another stepping stone to his eventual encounter with Jesus Christ. Before talking about the significance of Tim’s conversion and his relationship with Christ, I will discuss his present relationships.

The more I work to understand Tim, the more clearly I see how unsatisfying his past relationships with people actually were. As I have mentioned, he describes these recollections primarily as either not meaningful in themselves, or as painfully rejecting. The one exception seems to be his teacher in grade seven. I am not surprised that Tim’s memories still have a powerful negative influence on how he relates to people today, and I am realizing that Tim’s present relationship with Jesus likely helps him make sense of a great deal of his past pain.

Concerning his present struggle to relate, Tim says he experiences “a dull resentment and a lot of cynicism about people because I still have to deal with those things (memories of rejection) today.” He believes that he still anticipates reaching out to people with a fear that he calls “almost paranoid.”

Tim makes clear that it is the pain of rejection that he anticipates so fearfully. He is hesitant to become very involved with people since “you don’t want to be hurt, but, if everytime it happens (involvement) somebody hurts you, you soon learn not to do it.” He tells me about how “extreme” his fear of rejection is and then asserts: “I mean, who willingly puts his neck under the guillotine?!” This statement in particular helped me to realize just how intense Tim’s fear is, and how physically he anticipates the catastrophic pain of rejection. In various ways, his fear of becoming too close to anyone but Christ is reflected in all his relatively recent encounters.

Tim tells me about an encounter he recently experienced at school. He was
talking about Christianity to a girl, who, Tim thought, appeared to be rejecting
neither him nor his message. He says he felt comfortable with her since his fear of
rejection was not on his mind. As he reflected on this meeting he sounded very
surprised at himself. He says, "you know, here I am, here's the guy who is so worried
about being rejected. I don't think that was in my thoughts at all . . . " Tim then
explains that his encounter with this girl is representative of the deepest kind of
relationship for him because he says, he was relating as a Christian. It was important
to Tim that "the deepest form of relating from my perspective is something where I am
talking about the fact that I am a Christian because that is me." He says that this most
intimate kind of relating is rare for him, since it happened only once in the three years
he had been at school.

From my perspective, it seems that Tim chose, for this deep relationship, an
interpersonal situation in which he could feel very safe and in control. He chooses both
the person and the topic of conversation very carefully. Tim senses that she will not
reject him while he talks about a matter that is central to his existence. He must have
felt some confidence that this girl would accept his presentation of himself as a
Christian. I am becoming aware that, as he would when playing in an orchestra, Tim
organizes safe and controlled forms of reaching out to others.

Tim and I related similarly during both our meetings. He talked a great deal
about Christianity, and I was careful to judge neither him nor his message. I know
that I was allowing him to control how we were relating. My hunch is that if I had
rejected what he was saying, he would have felt threatened and withdrawn from me.
Tim says about our relationship:

Certainly there was no clash with wills. You kept your will right out of the
picture entirely. I think there would be a clash of wills with somebody
coming out of introversion. That will just force them back into their shells.

I imagine that because Tim felt he could maintain a certain amount of control with his
classmate and myself, he allowed himself to relate in the deepest manner he believes
possible for him. He related to us both as a Christian, that is, he risked talking about his belief to two people who he trusted would not reject him or his message.

Tim says that he still has no close friendships with his fellow Christians, although they "did take an interest (in him) . . . because (they) shared the same belief . . ." I thought that Tim might make closer friends within this group. Certainly he could talk about Christianity with some of them without fearing rejection. Tim still finds it very difficult to make friends within any group of people.

In our recent meeting Tim spoke about his present relationships with musicians. As with his Christian acquaintances, he says, he shares an interest with these people, but does not have any intimate friendships.

Tim believes that when he plays his music he is reaching out to his audience. He says, "I was afraid of being rejected personally so I went into music so I could give something with the horn . . ." He then tells me that in relating to his audience he feels afraid of being rejected. However, once he gets up on the stage and starts playing he often enjoys it. As I have mentioned, his playing is very important since it provides a "safety valve" for him to express emotions in a relatively safe way, and it gives him a chance to build more self-esteem.

Finally, Tim explains that, about two years before our first meeting, he fell in love. He hinted that this part of his life feels very private and I have decided to only allude to our discussion, and to omit pages thirty-six through forty-four from the transcript. I feel that it is enough for me to say that Tim terminated this relationship because he believed that his relationship with Christ had to come first, and that his association with this woman might interfere.

It is my impression that Tim still does not relate to people very intimately other than in his identity as a Christian. These encounters must be crucially meaningful to him. His memories are still associated with so much fear of painful rejection that he avoids risking much closeness out of this one context. Tim seems to partially satisfy his need to relate in Christ. He describes his relationship with Jesus as both personal and intimate, and feels secure that Christ would never reject him.
Tim realizes that his faith helps him to resolve many of his interpersonal problems. It is very important to him that he prove, both to himself and others, that Christianity is a truth that can be logically deduced from fact, and is not just a way to satisfy his needs. Tim says very firmly that "there is sufficient evidence to believe in Christianity" in spite of the solutions it offers him. The truth of his faith is essential to him since he repeats several times that it is based on factual information. He says, for example, "I'll put it in a nutshell. The fact that Christianity brought me out of alienation is irrelevant to whether Christianity is true or not." Regardless of the truth of his faith, Tim seems to require this conclusion to make sense of his interpersonal world. If Christianity were not there for him, he would not have his relationship with Jesus. He might be left with only the pain of his memories, his music, and very few people to provide him confirmation and intimacy in his present.

I realized how urgent it was for Tim that his Christian identity be based on reason and not just emotional satisfaction. I asked him about this at our recent meeting and he said that although he knew there were a few holes in the logic of the Christian argument, the evidence made its truth so probable that he would be committing "intellectual suicide" if he did not conclude, after careful consideration, that his belief was a reality.

Tim explains that his belief is a "reality . . . (that) has consequences." I do not feel a need to question the truth of Christianity. From my perspective, Tim's conversion to Christianity helps him cope with many of his life difficulties, and thus it has several important consequences.

Tim's memory of his past, and his description of his present, indicate that he has known very little intimacy in his life. He assures me that he now enjoys a relationship with Christ which is both personal and intimate. He says, "Christ is as real to me as you are . . . I am convinced that if Christ walked into this room now, I would know him." He believes that Christ knows him perfectly and loves him unconditionally. He says, very matter-of-factly, "Christ is in us. He knows us better than we know
ourselves... we seldom know ourselves... it is like peeling an onion... "According to Tim, what Christ knows in us, He loves, since, "He loves His people. He's a Good Shepherd to His people." His relationship with Christ helps him reinterpret what I perceive as his most pressing interpersonal difficulty. Tim believes that only Christ loves him unconditionally, and that Christ would never reject him as he fears others would.

I have discussed how Tim represents himself as powerless in his childhood. For example, he believes it was inevitable that he became the scapegoat for his classmates, and because he was a coward, it was inevitable that he would withdraw rather than fight. His representation of himself as a person in control is the exception rather than the rule. I think that Tim reinterprets some of his sense of powerlessness through his faith. He believes that God actively helps him solve his problems. Tim says:

I'm quite content to wait until He resolves them (his problems). He has resolved so many others. You see it's this consciousness that God is an Agent in the case who is active, not just sitting passively above the world and watching things go by.

In our final meeting, as he described his relational history, I told him that I sensed he felt he was not in control of his life. He said: "I wouldn't say I was not in control. I made decisions but my life is not determined by them." I asked him what he meant and Tim responded, "A true Christian sees God as the Ultimate Agent."

Perhaps I am stretching this interpretation beyond the data, but I imagine that Tim is reinterpreting another important issue for himself. If God is the Agent then why would he allow Tim to experience the kind of painfully rejecting history that he described? I wonder if Tim sees his past as a blessing? As I listened to Tim talk about his history of relating, I imagined him telling me: "This is how I arrived at the reality of Christ." I think that almost everything he says culminates in his conversion. I wonder if he perceives God, the Agent, as bringing him to Christ. This perception would help Tim to make more meaningful sense of the powerlessness that he has known.
My sense of identity sometimes feels uncertain. At other times, I experience my "self" quite solidly. Tim solves a great deal of identity uncertainty with his conversion to Christianity. He is a Christian. He asserts:

The one thing that is, I think, fundamental to me now as to what I am. If you asked me: 'What are you? Describe yourself in one word.' I would say "Christian." And it's fundamental to me. So it's me that's reaching out by talking about that.

Certainly he must experience a great deal of security in this kind of unambiguous identity. Because he sees his fundamental self as a Christian, he says that the deepest relationship he can experience occurs when he talks about Christianity to a person that does not reject him or his message. His acquired identity and the situations in which he will talk about it, must provide Tim a great deal of security.

An aspect of my identity is based on my definition of myself in relation to significant people in my life. I am a husband, lover, friend, son, brother, counsellor, researcher, etc. Since Tim's only long-standing intimate relationships seem to be with Christ and, secondarily, with music, I can understand how he identifies so strongly as a Christian, especially since Christ only confirms, where others might potentially reject him.

Christianity also helps Tim to feel more positive about himself. He still has strong feelings of anger and inferiority that he associates with his past. Tim says he still has, "A burning sense of resentment . . . (and a) sense of inferiority." He also maintains that everyone devalues themselves since "it's a part of the human condition to feel worse than you are." But since Christ knows and loves him, he believes that he can no longer justify this negative self-evaluation. Tim argues that since God "accepts you as a son . . . a co-son with Jesus . . . you can't feel bad about yourself." He believes that as long as he is a Christian he has to feel good about himself.

I am confident that Christianity helps Tim with many more of his difficulties. For example, I have discussed how his conversion almost immediately presented him with a group of people who were friendly because they shared an interest in
Christianity. I also talked about how Christianity provided Tim with a set of rules for ethical behaviour. It provides a structure through which he can relate to others. Regardless, from my perspective, his conversion may have caused some problematic consequences. His memory of painful past relationships prevents Tim from seeking close friendships with people today. Because he fails to take more interpersonal risks, he has insufficient opportunity to redefine his history.

I view my past relationships, to some extent, from the standpoint of my present reality. As my understanding of present relationships shifts, I perceive my past differently. When I felt habitually angry at people, I remembered them behaving selfishly and foolishly toward me. After I reduced a lot of my anger through psychotherapy, I was surprised to realize how much love and wisdom those same people had actually shown me. I used to feel that I had been cheated in my relationships, but I began to understand how lucky I had been. My changing perception is helping me to gain compassion for people, and I am continually learning to behave with greater love and respect toward others. Although I believe that Christianity helps Tim tremendously, I think he is maintaining a rather inflexible view of both his past and present relationships. In relating so exclusively with Christ, he might not feel very motivated to reach out to others. But then again, perhaps his relationship with Jesus has allowed him to take the impersonal risks he has allowed himself until now. I would like to see him maintain his intimacy with Christ and reach out more to other people. That is my bias.

I find this kind of interpretative work fascinating and frustrating. Each time I re-write an interpretation of a participant's experience, my understanding shifts and deepens even before I have finished it. Sometimes I feel as though I am trying to build a house on quicksand! I do not want to continue this process too much further but I will include a few last-minute thoughts.

Tim realizes that a Christian has a mandate to reach out to others with Christ's message. He says this is the deepest kind of relating. I believe there is another way
that a person can reach out to others. When I have the courage to suspend my habitual roles, I experience myself as a person who occasionally relates much more meaningfully than is my norm. Tim seems to relate only as a Christian or a musician. I wonder if he is too afraid to allow himself the awareness that reaching out without roles, on occasion, is a deeper experience of relating. I believe that one of Christ's most important contributions is His message that a human being with courage and love in his or her heart does not need a role or a legal code in order to respond to others. But, then again, I am sure that Tim would question my sense of relational reality!

Similarly, Tim says he works to hold down strong emotions he still feels when he thinks about his past. I think that one of the ways he blocks his emotions is by reducing almost all his experience to logic. He struggles to prove that Christianity is based on logically deduced fact. Perhaps Tim protects himself from the pain of rejection he anticipates from people by blocking his emotions. To me, an intimate relationship needs at least a measure of balance between mind and emotion.

He remembers not relating significantly with either parent. I wonder if this memory is more important than I originally imagined. Certainly my counselling experience has shown me that often when a person does not have much physical contact early in his or her life, he or she often has difficulties relating to others when they become adults. Perhaps Tim was more handicapped at the time he entered public school than I thought. (I also wonder if he is rationalizing his anger towards his parents in his testimony about respecting them.)

His experience of powerlessness includes a sense of defenselessness. For example, he says that if he had known how to protect himself physically, a lot of his history might have been different. He tells me that Christ is a Shepherd who protects his people. I wonder if his conversion also alleviates his fear of being physically hurt in his relationship with people.
By the time I began interpreting the records of Lise’s experience, the phenomenon was already much clearer to me. I also realized that the essays about Bill and Tim had become quite lengthy. I decided to write a shorter and less detailed account of Lise’s experience. I highlighted the aspects of her journey to learn to relate that seemed most relevant to the developing summary that eventually became the next chapter.

Lise, my fourth participant, was approaching forty when I interviewed her two years ago. She has endured many difficulties with relationships, but recently has altered the way she feels about being with others and herself so drastically that she calls her change a "transformation".

Lise is convinced that her difficulties stem from problems that began while she was a very young girl. Her voice is sad as she describes her parents’ separation when she was three, and her subsequent placement in a Catholic boarding school at six years old. With a tone that emphasizes how important it is to her, Lise offers her interpretation that "at the time my mother was abandoned, I was also abandoned." Her fear of rejection and abandonment is a consistent theme throughout our interview.

She remembers seeing her father only rarely after she was placed in the boarding school. When she did meet with him, he was always with his new girlfriend. She experienced herself as an abandoned third party relative to her father. Furthermore, her mother became involved with another man shortly after the marriage separation. Lise talks as though she were the rejected third party again. She believes that there was always someone separating her from the people that she loved most. I am not surprised that Lise has struggled, and still has to face strong feelings of jealousy, possessiveness, and rejection.

She developed roles early in her life to manipulate people for the love she felt she
needed, and consequently to avoid rejection and abandonment. For example, she thinks that her "abandoned child" role became a frequent method of manipulating, since, she says, "One could confide to a friend and expect something in return for that trip." She was able to get sympathy and attention from this behaviour. Lise's perception is particularly significant since she believes that prior to her recent "transformation" her relationships primarily were attempts to manipulate others to approve of and not reject her.

Sometimes she had to shift roles very quickly to maintain the approval of her mother and the boyfriend. He was married and had a family. Lise recalls, with some sadness and bitterness, that when she was with him and her mother she was allowed to call him "daddy", but when he was with his family, she was required to call him "sir". She says with a sad voice, "His kids to me were like stepbrothers and stepsisters ... [but] they didn't feel like that for me in return ..." As a young girl, Lise learned that to be approved of and not be rejected, she needed to be vigilant in choosing the appropriate role for specific people and situations.

She seems certain that her pattern of role playing, in a form she significantly calls "hiding," continued into adolescence. Lise remembers learning strict Catholic dogma at school, and then visiting her mother, who by then was living with her boyfriend. According to what she was being taught, her mother was living a "life of sin". She felt she had to hide the shame of her home life at school, and not show her disapproval of her mother at home. I say to Lise, "So you must have felt that you needed to be somebody else everywhere." With a loud burst of energy, she answers, "Yah, yah, yah." I felt sad to realize the extent to which Lise remembers not feeling free to be herself and not being able to maintain love and approval in her life.

Lise carried her pattern of excessive manipulative role playing into her adult life. Most frequently she discusses her problems with the "sexually attractive woman" role. Because she needed the love of a man so badly, and, she says, on account of her social conditioning, she believed that men would only love her if she was sexually
attractive. If someone did not find her attractive she would feel unworthy and unlovable. Other roles she saw herself playing frequently were "artist" and "holy person". Regardless, she views much of her adult interpersonal life as attempts primarily to manipulate for approval and avoid rejection and abandonment.

She describes her relationship with her ex-husband as a typical and final example of behaviour that was keeping her from a positive feeling about herself and from relating more effectively with other people. She says, "I wanted so much to be loved that I was over-extending all the time." Lise explains what she means by overextending.

I looked at the model (he) was telling me he liked and seeing what he liked by looking at what he liked in other people. And I tried to be that instead of being myself. And ah, and while doing that I destroyed the whole thing, that was feeding me in living life.

She clarifies that she gave up a good job and comfortable apartment because she thought they did not match her husband's life style. She was so busy trying to be valuable to him that, she believes, she was losing her feelings of worth and self-respect.

Lise describes concepts she learned about others that were as destructive to her later relationships as were her roles. She remembers, for example, living in a "world of women" at her convent school. Because she knew hardly any men, Lise believes she developed idealized models of heterosexual relationship by watching Hollywood movies. She came to expect, that as in these movies, she would meet a man, get married, and live "forever after" in a state of "bliss." Lise laughs as she reminds me, that "when I got there, it was far from bliss!" Idealized expectations like this one, made it difficult for her to relate without feeling disappointed and angry with the men in her life.

She believes that the few relationships she had with men when she was a child made matters even worse. The "man who was in my mother's life", as Lise names her mother's boyfriend, she recalls as difficult and domineering. She says that because he
was one of the few males she knew, she began to believe that all men would be just as difficult. She speculates that, because of her limited relationship with him, she learned to view all men as "the enemy." She would likely agree that her memory of her father supports this perception. Although her sense of worth was dependent on the approval of a man, she states that she developed the habit of fighting with men even before she got to know them. She was in a trap, since she wanted to be confirmed by men, but her history had taught her to have antagonistic and guarded relationships with them.

Lise maintains that, as a consequence of behaviours such as manipulative roles and idealized conceptions, she was "not getting that fulfilled" and "started feeling that I [had] no value." She states that she was not very aware of what she was doing, but from her present perspective, realizes that "In my attempt to please him [her husband] I turned myself into someone who I didn't like." Lise views her separation from her husband as the turning-point that she claims was the beginning of her transformation.

Lise appears and sounds sure of herself as she summarizes the heart of her transformation:

Actually, I remember the weekend he left. I was in a lot of psychological pain and I, I just, it was so much, there were waves and waves of sadness. And it was like, I couldn't cope with the rest of my life. You know, high state of depression and I had the feeling of being totally empty and the only way I could get myself together was to visualize myself as some little point in the centre and that was me. And now I was going to re-create myself again and I was only going to have the parts that I like. And it's like I gave up everything that existed around me. Ah, relationships, everything mentally, and just started to, you know, build Lise. Because I had become this wife and now I just wanted to be me. I created the person.

When Lise's husband left her, as an aspect of her separation, she was forced to face the abandonment that she dreaded. She describes tremendous sadness, emptiness, and the fear that she could not cope with the intensity of her life. She remembers that not only did she cope with her predicament, but instead took the initiative to turn her life around. Lise tells me confidently that she decided to rebuild herself. She wanted to become somebody she could love and respect. The "wife" was yet another role that she was acting out.
She refers to her change often, and calls it a "transformation". From her present perspective, she views her past relationships as unsatisfying, empty and manipulative. With her past in mind, she describes her present encounters as more responsible, caring, and much more meaningful.

Within the first few minutes of the interview, Lise stresses the importance of her shifting understanding of responsibility. She credits someone who confronted her with her habit of blaming others for her negative lot in life. My hunch is that, after so much upheaval and decision-making following the marriage separation, she was ready to listen to this confrontation. Nevertheless, Lise relates a theme that become salient consistently during much of our discussion. She says:

I saw the transformation occur basically when I let go of a couple of things. The most important one being that I decided to love rather than look for love ... I started taking responsibility for what was happening in my life.

Lise explains that she realizes how she was responsible for creating many of her adult relational difficulties. She believes, for example, that because she now loves herself more, she is not so quick to interpret other people's behaviour as uncaring. She knows that in the past, instead of taking the responsibility to check her interpersonal perceptions, she would automatically conclude someone did not care about her. Accordingly, she would wait passively in resentment until the other person did something to redeem the situation. Now she sees things differently. Lise says she is taking the initiative to satisfy more of her needs, since she realizes that she cannot expect any single person to be able to satisfy all of them.

As she accepts herself more, Lise says, she is responding to others more as individuals with needs and responsibilities of their own. This more tolerant attitude stands in marked contrast to her view of herself before her turning-point. Lise explains:

Yah, it's like, um, I don't think I was looking for the individual person. I was looking for, that role in the person that would allow me to play my role. If you were being "Father Knows Best," then I could be father knows best's partner. And if you were doing a motorcycle bit then I didn't want to be part
of your life and I couldn't see then, that the motorcycle days were a part of your individuality. Couldn't see the beauty of it.

If someone would not react according to the role Lise was playing, she would jump to the automatic conclusion that the person did not care about her, and would believe consequently, that she lacked personal worth. She realizes now that people are responsible for the pace and direction of their own development. Lise reasons that, in learning that she has the right to be herself, she knows others have the same right. Rather than looking for love from others so often, she is saying, she is able to be much more confirming of people in their individuality. Her reinterpretation of her responsibility in interpersonal relations has allowed her to reduce many of her expectations dramatically, and to let go of a great deal of hostility toward herself and others.

Before she took charge of her life, Lise says, consistent with the idealized concepts she learned as a youth, she used to wait for the one man who would come along to satisfy her every need. She would, of course, take a position of manipulation relative to this "enemy", whom she had reason not to trust. Lise laughs as she describes her altered view that "It is not so much in the future that some day my prince will come. There are a lot of princesses and princes in the palace, you know, and everyday I relate to someone." She is saying that she takes greater initiative to respond to people she encounters every day.

I began to understand that her different attitude was resulting in extensive behavioural changes relative to her past. Lise says, at different times during the interview, she is able to relate now in a much greater variety of places, with a wider age range, with plants and animals, and in her work. Each of these changes satisfies more needs in herself, and others, relative to her former behaviour. It is much more important to Lise, that she also take responsibility for her personal health. The terminal illness of a friend, she says, has helped her realize how self-destructive she used to be. She tells me forcefully that "I'm taking much better care of myself and it's changed my energy. I'm healthier ..."
Lise emphasizes how taking responsibility has made her life more meaningful. She states, "I paint my own picture. When I'm unhappy, well, I change something about my picture. I'm responsible for who I am." She recalls, for example, how unsettled she often felt because she did not have a meaningful job. After her change she realized that "It would be meaningful to have a job." Lise is saying she has learned that she finds meaning in taking active responsibility for her life, since even a routine job is "addressing something in my life by doing it." Just paying her rent and other bills has become much more meaningful to her.

From the perspective of the whole interview, I understand how Lise perceives her life as "transformed". I will summarize some of her changes. She used to feel fragmented and did not value herself. Now she is much more self-accepting and secure. Before she viewed her interpersonal world narrowly. But now, she says, she is willing to relate to a wide variety of people in all kinds of situations. She describes her earlier life as despairing and painful, and, words such as unhappy, insecure, and needy appear often in her talk. Her more recent experiences seem more meaningful to her and words such as happy, secure, and free appear more frequently when she describes more recent times. Lise believes her former relationships were marred by a great deal of inauthenticity and manipulation. She says she knows herself more clearly now, is more secure, and is willing to risk more genuine encounters. She describes herself as more egocentric prior to her critical turning-point, and, she employs adjectives such as jealous, possessive, dependent, and needy in the interview. Now, although these descriptions still apply to a degree, she perceives herself as more altruistic. Words like caring, compassionate, and valuing appear more in her discussions about her recent encounters with people. Prior to her "transformation" she thinks she was too passive; for example, she says she did not attend to her own needs but waited for her prince to come and solve her problems. She now views herself as much more responsible for her life. In several ways she states how she creates her own meaning these days. She claims that, from the viewpoint of her present, she realizes that she was to blame for
many of her past difficulties. Whereas in the past, passion was an overly significant item for her, she says that compassion has become at least as important in her relationships. Lise thinks that she used to interpret her interpersonal world very narrowly. Ambiguous behaviour often became: "You don't care about me." She says she has developed the ability to interpret people's behaviour more objectively now. Lise realizes she can still improve the quality of her relationships, but when all these changes are lumped together, I could see how the expression "transformation" made sense for her.

Lise credits the man she was living with at the time of the interview for helping her to change. She says that he was patient and did not run from confrontations with her. When she would slip back into old behaviours, such as interpreting ambiguous interpersonal situations as uncaring, he would "just open my eyes" and show her alternative, more positive interpretations. Within the context of the whole interview, I understand Lise to be saying that this man, more than anyone before, was willing to be with her in a way that she felt trusting enough to risk being Lise.

She presents her changes in relating to others and to herself as dramatic but not total. Lise is aware that she still harbours a fear of abandonment that stems from the past. She says this fear is a "physical shyness [that] is still armoured in my body." Her fear enters her relationships, she explains, since she has been so needy for love and afraid of rejection, that she projects her neediness onto others. For example, although she finds it important to respond to others with greater compassion, she experiences conflict. She fears people might become too dependent on her and she might have to reject them. She expresses this fear in her fantasy: "it's like when you see people take care of disabled children and you have this one person and all the kids are hanging on to her leg. In a way there is fear like that. That people will be dependent." Lise feels much more able to respond to others with compassion, but still inhibits herself because she remembers her own great neediness and fear of rejection. She adds that although she fears abandonment, she does not blame others for her lot in life any longer and can work through this on her own.
Chapter VI

A Summary Interpretation of the Meaning of Alienation and Relationship

6.1. A: A Synopsis of The Process

This chapter is a summary interpretation of the most significant threads of meaning that run through and form the fabric of alienation and relationship in the lives of the four participants and me.

As I make greater sense of what the participants are saying, the meaning of my own problems with relationship (including those that are occurring within this research process) are becoming clearer. The more insightful I become about my own personal difficulties, the more sensitive I become to theirs. As a result of this dialectical process, I am understanding aspects of the phenomenon more clearly.

The meaning of alienation and relationship is shifting for me. Like the participants, I am contacting others and becoming aware of myself in an exciting yet threatening new way. I am working to verbalize what I feel challenged to live. This chapter is a representation of my unfolding understanding of the phenomenon, and for that reason I call it an interpretation. Since the interpretation stems from a dialectical process between the participants and myself, I write from the perspective of "we".
6.2. B: Some Consequences of Negative Relational Memories

Our memories of being with other people, from early childhood to the present, are similar. To relate meant not only to be frustrated in our need for love and confirmation, but also to feel the pain and humiliation of being rejected and criticized too often. Each of us came to associate intimacy with disconfirmation. I fantasize hearing us recollecting in common: “I learned that I was not good enough to be accepted and loved for being me”. There are several similarities in our perceptions of the consequences of remembering relationships as primarily disconfirming.

6.3. C: Diminishment of Trust and Self-Worth

The most significant people in our lives came to be perceived as threatening and untrustworthy. As a result we began inhibiting the expression of our most personal emotions and thoughts. Our encountering these people became associated with pain, and an increasing estimation that we were not good enough to be accepted by them. Bill stresses how he eventually avoided closeness, since he believed he became a prisoner who lost his soul to others. He learned to expect that most people would criticize what he most valued about himself, and came to withhold from them much of the person he valued. Tim recalls so much humiliating rejection that he learned to encounter others, he says, as hesitantly as one would the guillotine. All of us remember that we did not learn to trust very much of ourselves to other people.

We all came to doubt our own self-worth. Since we perceived that others did not value us, we began to believe that we were essentially not good. Bill has had a lifelong struggle with his "bad little boy" self-image. Lise put so much energy into working to satisfy others, and hoping to win their approval that, before her "transformation", it was difficult for her to like herself. Only since I am learning to be more myself with people, thereby risking their rejection, do I feel better about being me. Until recently, I almost never felt worthy enough to respond even relatively honestly with the people I most liked being with.
6.4. Dr. The Perception of Feeling Powerless

Consistent is our report that we felt little power to change our situations. Lack of control is a repeated theme in Tim’s talk. As I discuss in detail in the individual interpretation, Tim represents his history as if almost everything that happened to him was inevitable. Bill’s prisoner metaphor reflects his opinion that he had no control to change his relationships. He became a “pinned-down butterfly” who lacked the power to escape devaluation relative to other people. Lise has seen only recently how she was in part responsible for her lot. Previously, she gave up power particularly to men, whom she manipulated to confirm her. When they did not she would blame them for not caring about her. My own tremendous fear of rejection gave me the impression that I was powerless to control my interpersonal life. Like the others, I learned to control and, I hoped, to gain some power over my life by withdrawing.

6.5. E.: Alienation: A Strategy to Reduce the Pain of Disconfirmation

We recall, with varying degrees of awareness, that, since we felt powerless to control our pain, we developed strategies to reduce hurt, maximize confirmation, and attempt to make sense of bleak and despairing lives. Alienation, a word we used to signify a common strategy to control the consequences of disconfirming relationships, is represented as a withdrawal or separation from others, and consequently from a valued and concrete sense of personal identity. It is viewed as a strategy designed to control the pain that resulted from the diminishment that we learned to expect when we risked relating. Because we felt reduced as human beings too often, we remember learning methods to minimize interpersonal contact. We withdrew from others by substantially reducing the expression of our most significant thoughts and emotions. This reduction eventuated in our feeling less “ourselves”. In time, it felt as though there were walls or boundaries between ourselves and others. Being alienated is consistently described as not touching or having meaningful contact with people. It is remembered as empty, despairing and lonely in the extreme. The specific forms in which we alienated ourselves are described similarly.
6.6. F: The Withdrawal of Emotion

Anger and hurt became frequent but unwelcome emotional reactions to disconfirmation. They were unwelcome because it felt too risky to face the rejection that we learned to expect when we responded too openly. Tim talks about his need to control the "gorge" (anger) he feels when he thinks about specific memories of rejection. Lise, prior to her "transformation", recalls the resentment and hurt engendered by those who she perceived did not fulfill her needs. Bill is only recently risking his anger and sadness within the safety of his friendship with D. My own fear of expressing hurt and anger, particularly with those closest to me, has been destructive to the intimacy of these relationships. Unexpressed emotion does not vanish; it is often expressed in subtle, hostile, or morbid ways.

6.7. G: Fantasy and Idealized Concepts Replace Intimacy

Our deliberately limiting contact with people and substituting fantasy relationships became a frequent method of alienating ourselves and not facing the pain that had become associated with intimacy. By early high school, Tim says, instead of involving himself with his classmates he sat alone reading a great deal of his time. Tim fantasized about being a powerful super-hero who could defend himself and others, because he felt he had so little power over his interpersonal lot. Bill talks about eliminating people from his phone book, literally, or throwing them out of his house, if he even suspected they might be critical of him. At the time of our original interview he was accepting only part-time assignments as a conscious strategy to avoid being criticized by supervisors. Lise believes that, because of her circumstances, she had very little contact with men while she was growing up. She talks about forming idealized fantasies about men and marriage that were impossible to actualize with real people. Lise set herself up for disappointment often, and blamed others for her lot. During my first unhappy years at university, outside of classes, I spent almost all my time alone. I thought about being with and responding to other people, but
usually left these thoughts at the stage of reflection. I did not have the courage or trust to reach out to other people. My fear was that the past would repeat itself and the rejection would be just too much to bear. When a person feels unworthy, relative to others, the last thing he or she wants is additional proof. This stance as outsider was generally associated, for all of us, with subjective reflection that for the most part lacked responsible behavioural expression. That is, we thought about reaching out to others more often, but our memories warned us this was too risky a business to mess with.

Several times during this research I blocked relational understanding because my fantasies and preconceptions came between myself and the participants. For example, as I discussed in Chapter IV, I was working so hard to relate in the way I thought Buber might have that I had trapped myself into an idealized concept of relationship. This behaviour is a good way to create distance, as I have learned.

6.8. H: Habitual Manipulative Roles as Attempts to Satisfy Needs

Since we did not trust people enough to act more spontaneously and openly in our relationships with them, we developed habitual roles with which we could attempt to interact with some measure of security. With the help of these roles, to a greater or lesser degree of awareness, we were working to manipulate others to approve of us so that we could attempt to affirm our own self-worth. Lise is aware how she would "hide" conflicting thoughts and emotions and reduce herself to a number of manipulative roles. She speaks most frequently about the role of "sexually attractive woman". When a man affirmed her as attractive she felt lovable and worthwhile, but when he did not, she negated her self-worth and blamed the man for not caring about her. This is very problematic since when a person reacts through an habitual role he or she perceives both interpersonal and personal reality through the eyes and ears of that role. Lise would confirm her negative perceptions constantly by reading, in even ambiguous situations, that if a man did not find her attractive, he therefore did not
care about her; and consequently she believed that she was not a worthwhile lovable human being. After her "transformation", and a great deal of confirmation from the man with whom she was living, she realized that there was much more that was lovable about her than just a handful of her most frequent roles. Similarly, Bill remembers, first with family members and later with friends, he felt free to actualize only the aspects of his behaviour that he believed would gain him acceptance instead of rejection. He felt like their prisoner since he perceived he had permission to be strong but not weak, serious but not childlike, etc. Because he already felt negative about himself he was not willing to face even more rejection. He learned to behave in ways that conformed with others' expectations. Bill repeats his belief frequently that, through this kind of behaviour, he lost personal qualities that he values and respects highly. Tim identifies with his role as Christian primarily, and with his role as a musician only secondarily. He calls Christianity his essence. Since he will talk about this identity only with a person that will not reject him or his ideology, he has developed a strategy to be with others in a secure, controlled manner. As I said within the interpretation of Tim's experience, this opinion does not question the truth of Tim's belief. I have discussed my difficulty in transforming my "approval seeking" role in order to learn to respond more freely as one human being to another. It was my tendency during several stages of this work, to allow my exaggerated role as "researcher" to act as a wall that prevented me from a deeper understanding of the participants. I often blocked myself in the writing of this work by getting trapped into the role of "good student" in relation to a "critical reader".

6.9.1: The Potential for Confirmation is Reduced

Although these alienating strategies provide a measure of security, they reduce the possibility of being confirmed. By protecting ourselves from the disconfirmation we fear, we have been depriving ourselves from what we long for. We want to believe, if only for a moment, that someone means at the very least: "I know you well, I accept
you, like you, and I chose to risk to continue relating to you." Behind the wall that we build between ourselves and others, is pervasive loneliness, personal worthlessness, and often unbearable despair. The dream that: "I am worthwhile, and I experience my relationships and life in general as meaningful" remains despairingly diminished.

6.10. J: The Significance of a "Critical Turning-Point"

The fact that we are establishing more satisfying relationships to others and within ourselves seems remarkable when I consider our memories. Certainly our determination to change is an important factor. But we all believe that a significant critical turning-point, and the confirmation (sometimes in the form of confrontation) of other people, have been crucial.

All of us, individually, have stressed some single turning-point in our lives that guided us toward significant insights and behavioural changes. This "critical turning-point", as I have labelled it, began with extreme alienation, but was followed by a glimpse of the potential for a significantly greater relational and meaningful life. This time is often remembered with excitement, and is expressed in terms of death and rebirth.

(i): Extreme agitation and separation

The turning-point begins with an agitated, anxiety-ridden, heightened sense of separation from both others and one's familiar identity. Lise, for example, was so consumed with pleasing her husband to win his approval that after he left she felt terribly alone and emptied of her former idea of self. Stripped of her habitual manipulative roles, she felt empty, tremendously anxious, and thought, she says, that she might not be able to cope with "the rest of her life". Bill remembers anxiety that he calls "almost paranoid" on an evening he realized how "cut off" from intimate relationships he was feeling. I felt frighteningly separate from other people, and from my usual sense of self, during one stage of this research. As I described, my familiar identity seemed shattered and my anxiety soared. Tim presents his experience more
cognitively. Although his identity and definition of intimacy were both shaken radically by his conversion, he does not report the same intensity of emotion or anxiety as the rest of us. But I did not press him about this during our interview. Regardless, Tim seems to handle his reality primarily through logic, and he works to push down strong emotions.

(ii): Emotional and Cognitive Death

With the anxiety and agitation came a depressiveness associated with some very bleak thinking. This negative ideation took the form: "I am alone. There is nothing meaningful. It will always be like this. What is the use of continuing?" Some of us report physical illness and body pain during this time. Heightened emptiness and personal worthlessness is a frequent complaint.

(iii): Emotional Catharsis and Cognitive Re-Interpretation

This suffering gives way to an emotional catharsis which sets the stage for a fresh and far more meaningful way to be with oneself and other people. It is as if our old mode of relating temporarily died so that we might glimpse, or even begin to actualize, our potential for change. Bill's voice sounds very happy as he describes the morning of his "breakthrough". He says he felt so positive about himself, others, and life in general, that he cried with joy much of the day. Lise recalls "waves and waves" of sadness moving through her. After releasing a great deal of hurt, she decided that she was going to re-create herself as a woman that she could like. I cried so much that I felt embarrassed to leave the house over a two day period. Tim does not talk about an emotional catharsis specifically, and I did not have the clarity to question him in this regard during our interviews. My hunch is that after years of rejection, disconfirmation, and living isolated from people, his turning-point was a dramatic, inclusive, cognitive re-interpretation of both his identity and his relationship to others.
(iv): The "Re-Birth" Metaphor

The positive phase of the turning-point is remembered as a highly significant milestone, and is described in the metaphor of re-birth. We talk as if we were born into a fresh, far more satisfying reality, if only for a time. It is a reality that made much more meaningful sense, compared to our former one. Tim felt "born again" as a Christian. His identity changed and his definition of intimate relationship was radically altered. Bill felt so positive about himself and others that he describes the morning of his "breakthrough" as "the first day of my life". Lise emphasizes her decision to "re-create" herself as a person that she liked. After a few terribly painful, frightening days, I entered into a relationship with myself, the people in my life, and the world, that was startlingly different and unquestionably full of meaning. I felt "born again" too.

(v): Confirmation

The insights that occurred during the critical turning-point motivated us to alter our intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships significantly. I find it difficult to understand the dynamics of this motivation now, but some form of confirmation was crucial in each case. Bill calls his feeling of forgiveness from an "external source" a "state of grace". He experienced confirmation, an affirmation of his essential worth, from a source other than himself or other people. The confirmation, regardless of the source, initiated some tremendously meaningful changes in Bill's life. Tim's turning point also involved a source outside either himself or another living human being. This confirmation, which occurred in relation to Christ, radically altered both his sense of self and others. Lise seems to have confirmed herself through an act of will. She says "I was going to re-create myself" and "I created the person." Lise represents her self-confirmation as a starting point for a new and much more meaningful relationship to others and to herself. My own critical turning-point felt like a combination of grace and will. I remember looking upward in the midst of my most
intense feeling of alienation and saying: "I give up; I surrender". Shortly afterwards, I knew myself, others, and the world in a profoundly more close and meaningful way. I felt confirmed in my own value, and in the essential meaningfulness of life.

6.11. K: Models for Relationship

The perception of a promising new potential for interpersonal and intrapersonal relationship is consistent. Although the intensity of the original critical turning point was short-lived, each of us was left with a view of a more satisfying way to live. For now, we are all working toward this view. We represent relationship as essentially different from alienation. By relationship we mean a complex shift in how we are learning to perceive and respond to ourselves, others, and the world. I will summarize a few of the most significant changes that constitute this transition.

6.12. L: More Positive Personal Identities

We talk about the importance of a radically changing personal identity. Our experience of ourselves is shifting. We feel more secure and positive about who we are. This more solid identity acts as a "home base" from which to risk reaching out to others more frequently. Tim presents himself consistently as a rather tragic outsider prior to his conversion. But since that time, he says, he experiences a much more satisfying "core" self, that is, his identity as a Christian. As he explains, "this (identity) is me". Tim clarifies for me that only when he relates to someone as this most nuclear self, is he involved in the most intimate encounter that is possible for him. He carefully reserves this "deep" level of relationship for people who, he perceives, will not reject either him or his message. When he relates intimately as a Christian, primarily to Christ and to a few selected others, although only occasionally, Tim has far more reason to live than when he was an outsider and a target for peoples' jokes. He avoids facing the "guillotine" that rejection signifies for him with his strategy. Similarly, his secondary identity as a musician provides Tim an additional
secure, predictable structure through which to relate to other people. Lise decided, after her painful marriage separation, that she would become a person whom she liked and respected. Lise realized that she was much more than just the most frequent roles that she played. She learned that as long as her self-worth depended on others exclusively, she would not value herself enough. Her more positive identity is associated with several other changes, including her altered view of responsibility and her more active caring for both herself and other people in her life. Bill's experience of confirmation from an "external source" during his critical turning point had a very significant impact on his identity. He gained a joyful awareness that he was "O.K.", a worthwhile human being with many beautiful qualities. For example, Bill talks about claiming the confidence and intelligence that he knew were within him all along. During my own critical turning-point, and to a considerable degree since, I am questioning less "Who I am" or even "Why I am" More often, I am solidly and quietly more aware that "I am". This perception is reassuring and intrinsically satisfying. Each of us talks about being a more solid and valuable person who feels more secure to risk reaching out to others.

6.13. M: More Realistic and Satisfying Interpersonal Relationships

A change in how we are learning to relate to others parallels our shifting personal identities. As we become more positive about ourselves, we read less criticism and rejection into people's behaviour. We are risking contacting others more frequently because of these less negative perceptions. This interpersonal contact allows greater communication and re-interpretation of how people respond to us. Bill sounds happy that, since he feels better about himself, he interprets criticism from the behaviour of others less often. He is a little more free to "pursue" his friends and inquire about his assumptions concerning their relationship to him. He reports that he has been pleasantly surprised, often. Lise realizes that she used to feel angry, hurt, and unworthy when someone did not react with the role that corresponded to the one
she was acting out. She would imagine that the person evaluated her negatively, and believed that he or she would certainly abandon her. Now that she feels much more positive about herself, she realizes that people's needs do not necessarily match at the same time. She is happy that she is able to accept the beauty of another person's individuality even when her needs are not being satisfied. With her changing attitude, Lise has revolutionized her perceptions concerning to whom, when, and where she can relate meaningfully. Tim is still terribly frightened that people will reject him, but as a Christian he says that the moral tenets of Christianity demand he feel positive towards others as well as himself. He is working to assimilate the attitude that everyone is a "co-son with Jesus" in spite of his memory of painful disconfirmation. I used to shrink inside when I thought I was being criticized. Now that I feel more accepting and secure in myself, I realize that interpersonal reality consists of sometimes being rejected and sometimes being accepted. I still prefer acceptance, but rejection does not destroy my self-worth as it once did. And more significantly, I have become aware finally that criticism and rejection are not necessarily the same. It is liberating for me to understand that criticism may even be offered as an act of love.


We talk about a difference in our perception of responsibility as we learn to relate. Lise stresses how important her changing perception of agency has been to her "transformation". She emphasizes how she feels much more compassion for people, including herself, since she decided that it was her responsibility to love, rather than blaming others for not caring about her. Tim remembers that he had little control over the pain that was inflicted so consistently when he risked relating. Since his conversion, his conception of agency has altered radically. Tim expresses his belief that God is the "Ultimate Agent". As I have discussed, his re-interpretation of agency allows him to make more positive, meaningful sense of his history as well as his
present. Additionally, although he is still frightened, his view of Christianity demands that he reach out to others with the message of Christ. Since my crisis, I feel greater freedom to respond to my own needs and those of other people in a more realistic, less manipulative way. The importance of risking responding to others more readily cannot be overestimated. We all learned to control the painful disconfirmation we expected from our interpersonal relationships by withdrawing. It is essential to take the responsibility for reaching out to people more often to discover that rejection is not the only consequence of relationship.

6.15. O: Changes in Interpretation Occur Dialectically Through Time

As we learn to relate in the present, we are interpreting our pasts and futures more positively. Furthermore, since we perceive our histories and potentials differently than before, we are viewing the present in a brighter light. For example, Bill is realizing that his parents lived in more difficult circumstances than he, and that they did the best they could for him. I imagine that, since he feels more confirmed within his present relationship, he is able to hold a more objective, compassionate view of the interpersonal circumstances of his past. Similarly, it is likely that his more positive memory allows him to experience greater trust within his present relationship. Lise sounds clear about her past tendency to blame people, and she is determined to be more responsible in her present relationships. Her present behaviour, and the satisfaction that results, helps her to realize the alienating consequences of her former attitude. Her view of the future is very optimistic, since it offers her the potential for greater and greater intimacy. Tim’s perception of past relationships seems fixed, and he speaks minimally about his future. His exclusive identity as a Christian and his very controlled relationships with anyone other than Christ, seem to reduce the opportunity to reinterpret either past relationships or the potential for future ones. This lack of altered perception through time tends to keep his present contacts rather static. But, from Tim’s perspective, Christianity likely gives
him so much present meaning relative to his past that he would not want to tamper with his truth. The manner in which changes in perception are represented dialectically in time is an interesting and useful way to interpret peoples’ experiences.

6.16. P: The Significance of Feeling Confirmed by Others

As much as a critical turning-point initiated and is providing us a model for relationship, the confirmation of others is encouraging us to actualize the potential that we perceived at that time. After his "break-through", Bill realized that he was a worthwhile human being with many admirable qualities. But, as was his habit, he involved himself in a disconfirming friendship that was destined to undermine his self-worth and trust in other people. Within his recent relationship, Bill has developed enough trust to risk expressing more of the potential he perceived in 1971. Bill has sufficient evidence that his friend will not criticize him when he risks exposing behaviours that are aspects of his suppressed, valued, and still vulnerable identity. In fact, he is discovering that this person accepts him when he risks expressing himself more honestly. Bill is excited that he is contacting the confident, intelligent, child-like man that he glimpsed over ten years ago. The confirmation of another person is also crucially significant for Lise. She tends to fall back on her habit of blaming others for not caring and then devaluing herself. Lise credits the man she was living with at the time of the interview for confronting her with his opinion that she was lovable for much more than just her sexuality. She needed confirmation to assimilate and continue to manifest the changes that she had made. Tim’s history sounds the most disconfirming of all. But his relationship with Christ, who, he says, is like a real person to him, guarantees that he will be confirmed. Since he relates from his "deepest" level only to someone who will not reject him, he assures himself that in his identity as a Christian, he will be confirmed. This confirmation is tremendously significant to Tim’s life meaning. I was blessed with a profoundly meaningful view of the worthwhileness of my own existence, and my potential for relating to others. As I
described, I fell from this way of being to my more accustomed alienated stance, but I had changed. I had a vision, a model for living relationally, more meaningfully. I began to reach out to people more honestly and frequently. The accepting responses I received, from a few people in particular, assured me of the worth of expressing myself. One of the most significant remarks made by the participants was the importance of my confirming attitude towards them. They stressed how my spirit of acceptance was necessary for them to talk about such personal issues. A vision of how to be human relative to others provides a wonderfully insightful guide. The confirmation, the love of other people, as well as the courage to risk reaching out, appears to be necessary to actualize these models.

6.17. Q: Social Support

The support of other people is also important. Bill mentions some friends, other than D., who encourage him when he risks honest communication with them. Two friends in particular seem very supportive of him. Lise says that people have been very responsive to her since she has taken a more relational stance with them. She also stresses her recent awareness that there is a community out there for her when she chooses to reach out to it. Tim, on the other hand, says he has not made any friends, although he meets a lot of people through his faith and music. I feel concerned that if he does not risk a little more intimacy he may choose to withdraw again. People are there for him, I think, but he is still too frightened to establish close relationships. I hope a few will choose to initiate closer friendships with him. I also wonder if he will maintain his born again identity. He says that the truth of Christianity is logical for him, and I realize that his faith helps him make more sense of his life. But if he is not developing more personal support within his Christian community I wonder about his continued involvement in this group. I am happy that I now have a small group of people with whom I often feel free to be myself. I can laugh with them and cry with them. I no longer experience the isolation and loneliness that I once knew. I know
that the support of these people has been crucial to how I feel about myself, and to my
growing tendency to risk establishing other relationships.

6.18. R: The Present: A Time for Choice

Now we are being challenged to choose. We can risk responding as authentically
as courage, compassion, and good sense allow, or we can withdraw from people in our
historical way. This choice seems to depend on whether we are willing to trust greater
intimacy, even though we remember so vividly how relating has frequently
eventuated in rejection and the despair of disconfirmation. Since being confirmed on
occasion adds potentially to our self-worth and trust in others, how people respond to
the risks we take contributes to our choice to continue relating. Lise stresses the
importance of responding honestly and compassionately in relation to all kinds of
people. She represents this change in attitude as essential to her "transformation".
She is aware that she is sometimes still terrified of abandonment even when she lacks
substantial evidence that someone is about to leave her. She must choose, within each
interpersonal situation, whether to withdraw physically and alienate herself through
excessive role-playing and fantasy, or, alternatively, to risk more intimacy in the hope
of resolving her fears through communication. How her behaviour is responded to will
influence her decision to contact or withdraw in that and future encounters. Although
Bill is risking progressively more honest communication, he is still aware that if his
friend criticized him too harshly, he might return to his former withdrawal behaviour.
As I have discussed, his fear of criticism inhibits him from expressing anger. Tim, still
terrribly frightened of rejection, keeps his relationships under tight control. But I
admire him for risking this degree of intimacy, considering his memory of
disconfirmation. In retrospect, the fact that he agreed to an interview in the first place
was a big risk for him. I am acutely conscious of my own choosing. On each occasion, I
respond even a little more authentically to someone, and feel I have been confirmed.
I become more positive about myself, the other person, and life in general. When I
discover myself manipulating people for approval, I experience myself as becoming separated from them and the sense of self that I am learning to like and respect. I am aware that, when my interpersonal risks are met with confirmation, I gain courage to risk responding more authentically in future encounters. In a way I become more human when I feel confirmed.
Chapter VII
Further Reflections on the Phenomenon:
Martin Buber and Roberto Assagioli

Martin Buber (1961; 1966; 1970) and Roberto Assagioli (1974; 1976), from an interpersonal and intrapersonal emphasis respectively, are assisting me to understand more clearly and precisely the meaning of the struggle to learn to relate. I will discuss some ideas that seem most relevant to my general grasp of the phenomenon.

7.1. A: Martin Buber

As I read Buber, I am reminded that we must learn to alienate ourselves from others. This task of separation is a crucial developmental accomplishment, and is an essential step towards the realization of our unique identities. Each of us must recognize, that like other people, we must work to acquire a sense of differentiated selfhood. Buber calls this distinctly human ability the "setting (of others) at a distance" (1966, p. 60). He cautions; however, to actualize the human qualities with which we are blessed, and to be able to participate more fully in other people's lives, we must risk relating sometimes and thereby overcome our separation. In Buber's words, "Distance provides the human situation; relation provides man's becoming in that situation" (1966, p. 64). His poetic descriptions of distance and relation, which include detailed implications for many aspects of life, are illuminating my attempt to penetrate the meaning of human relationship.

Buber adopts the expressions "I-It" and "I-Thou" to signify alienation and relationship (1970, p. 63). (In Kaufman's 1970 translation of I and Thou, "Thou" is interpreted and printed as "You". I will write (Thou) to avoid unnecessary
complications when I quote from *I* and *Thou*). Although distance is an unavoidable necessity of the human condition, an excessive *I--It* experience, Buber argues, eventuates in alienation, meaninglessness, and despair. Our ability to overcome separation by encountering another as *I--Thou* is an exceptionally rich metaphor to portray the potential for relationship, and for the possibility of a rich, meaningful life.

We (the participants and I) complain that feeling unconnected to people has seemed like an impenetrable wall stuck between us and them. It is as if an invisible barrier has inhibited us from touching others at any significant or satisfying depth. We remember withdrawing and running away from intimacy, and moving too far into our own private subjectivity. We wanted to fend off the pain we had learned to anticipate when we were criticized too harshly or too often. During these times, we recall feeling that we were unacceptable and not worthy enough to be loved. Eventually, the threat of expressing ourselves spontaneously became too great, and, consciously or not, we substituted more cautious manipulative ways of relating with others.

In my understanding of Buber, I am seeing more clearly into the predicament of excessive separation. He reasons that the seemingly unbridgeable schisms that develop between us, the *I--It* experience, occur when people objectify others by labelling them with historically pre-existing classifications. We fail to enter into relationship, to personally and meaningfully encounter another person, since our awareness is attached primarily to the conceptualizations. Lise, for example, says she expanded her ability to relate to men radically when she realized the fairy-tale connotations that they had acquired for her. She was relating to idealized fantasies and not staying open enough to respond to her male friends with freshness and vitality. In other words, in the *I--It* modality, we react to our subjective reflections primarily, rather than to the reality of the person standing before us. Buber explains that an *I--It* experience results in a piling up of subjective information about someone, but it excludes knowing anyone at any meaningful depth. He says, "The experience is 'in them' (the individuals) and not between them..." (1970, p. 56).
As I compare Buber's description of the I--It modality to my interpretation of alienation, I am struck once more by the nightmare that results from too much separation among people. He warns us that if we experience people as objects we will use and exploit them. I am frightened that an object can be disposed of when it no longer serves a purpose. We have already disposed of too many people in our history. Furthermore, we pay additional heavy penalties for this thing-like perception and treatment of people. Despair eventually permeates a person who has become so alienated from the rest of humanity. Buber teaches: "The purpose of setting oneself apart is to experience and use, and the purpose of that is 'living'—which means dying one human life long" (1970, p. 112). I remember my own crushing loneliness, and have felt overwhelmed at times by the despair described by the participants, who, I am sure, would agree with Buber when he imagines an excessive I--It existence becoming "a gigantic swamp phantom (that) overcomes man" (1970, p. 102).

The participants hypothesize that they began to withdraw from relationship early as a strategy to deal with the consequences of their threatening interpersonal situations. Buber argues that a human being's evolution depends significantly on the confirming quality of his or her initial primary relationships. He says, "The development of a child's soul is connected indissolubly with his craving for the 'Thou'..." (1970, p. 79). In the light of this study and my general understanding of Buber, I take him to mean that we develop a solid and positive sense of self, and simultaneously the ability to relate as that person to others, primarily within the acceptance and love given to us as children. If we feel, during this vulnerable period, that our basic and most essential identity, our "soul" as Buber calls it, is in jeopardy because we are being treated as "Its" and not "Thou", we are likely to separate ourselves from others. We retreat into the relative security offered by experiences of alienation. I recognize the initial comfort I felt when I withdrew from the prospect of any relationship that threatened depth. The participants and I became frightened of the repetition of our past experiences, and came to believe that we were better off to avoid closeness.
Buber contends that as people become more separated from others, relating becomes more difficult. We experience so much fear and insecurity that we are tempted to continue seeking solace in the ordered and predictable pseudo-security of the I–It world. It feels safer to focus on inner reflections and classifiable outer objectifications than to risk expressing our thoughts and feelings more openly. We learn to imprison our dreams, aspirations and emotions within us, and do not dare respond to the life presented to us by other people. As a remedy for distance, Buber is saying, we regress into the safety of even greater separation. The more alienated a person becomes, the more difficult it is for him or her to surrender the I–It habit. I can attest to the difficult struggle it has been for the participants and me to learn to risk responding more honestly to people. But one reason I am drawn to Buber is his relentless optimism that people can learn to relate. Before I discuss Buber’s views concerning the potential for our return to relationship, I find it necessary to expand on some of his ideas concerning authenticity.

The participants and I express the belief that we narrowed our behaviour into patterns that we hoped would gain us at least a measure of acceptance, because we learned that being ourselves was too often not sufficient reason to be confirmed. Over time, we remember that it became more and more threatening to behave even relatively spontaneously. Buber calls this habit of inauthenticity "seeming" and insists that this learned manipulative reaction acts as a thick barrier that prevents people from knowing each other at any meaningful depth. His thesis is, "The essential problem of the sphere of the inter-human is the duality of being and seeming" (1966, p. 75). Seeming is a primary source of alienation, since one’s concern becomes too attached to the impression that is being made. As I explained, this is an I–It stance, since the intention is to exploit, and this is an objectification, the relation to an object. I understand Buber’s conception of seeming more clearly as I compare it to "being", the behaviour associated with relatively authentic interpersonal activity. When relationship is based essentially on being, according to Buber, a person responds as he
or she is called to respond within a given interpersonal situation. This means that one does or says what needs to be done or said, without too much concern for the impression that is being made. Buber says the individual is "uninfluenced by any thought of the idea of himself which he can or should awaken in the person whom he is looking at" (1966, p. 76). His distinction between these two kinds of behaviour becomes more realistic when he clarifies that being and seeming are rarely found as pure forms in people, but that we can distinguish the "essential attitude" (1966, p. 76) that prevails.

It has been important for each participant and me to find some recognizable, relatively solid sense of self from which we can work to begin to express who we are and what we want. The struggle has been to feel positive about ourselves, so that we would not be so threatened by the negative consequences we learned to expect from relatively honest interpersonal transactions. This change has been a difficult undertaking. It takes a great deal of trust to reveal oneself to others when something deep in our memories screams: "No, too risky, stop, don't forget how much you have hurt and lost in the past!" Buber acknowledges the tremendous challenge for an alienated individual to move beyond seeming toward being. During my own willful struggle to relate, I have felt heartened by Buber's maxim that, "To yield to seeming is man's essential cowardice, to resist it his essential courage" (1966, p. 78).

Buber reassures us that we can learn to relate in spite of our alienated histories. He argues that people of this age have an unprecedented "faith in doom..." (1970, p. 105). This negativity is couched in many kinds of laws, (psychological, social, cultural etc.) but, Buber believes, we have little confidence in our ability to liberate ourselves from the oppressive trap of the I--lt world. He sounds relentlessly optimistic in his assertion that this negative attitude disregards the innate potential in each of us to find meaning through the return to relationship. He is confident that those who see the lt-world as the unavoidable lot of humanity do not know that:

The human being who overcomes the universal struggle by returning; who
tacks the web of drives, by returning; who rises above the spell of his class by
returning; who by returning stirs up rejuvenates, and changes the secure
historical forms. (1970, p. 106)

Every person in the study is breaking the chains of his or her unrelational and
despairing past to some degree. Each is finding a more meaningful way to exist. Now
I am aware that the "return", as Buber calls it, does not last. Regardless, he has taught
me an even greater respect and admiration for those who are taking whatever form of
risk is required to open themselves to another and more relational way to live. They
are struggling to move from their habituated separateness. They risk changing their
lives by relating, or as in Buber's poetic statement, "he that returns knocks over the
men on the board" (1970, p. 106). But the change is risky.

I have argued, as does Buber, that the l-It world offers a measure of security.
The participants and I retreated into ourselves and away from others, because this
movement felt predictable and safe. Not relating offers comfort and a measure of
excitement. The use of people as objects can be stimulating at many levels (sexual,
political, etc.). Buber reasons, that in this pseudo-secure world, we "can live
comfortably—that even offers us all sorts of stimulations and excitements, activities
and knowledge" (1970, p. 84). He says, as do those of us in the study, the return to
relationship is threatening in the extreme, since, when we feel drawn into
relationship, the learned threat re-emerges. We fear that we may be pulled
"dangerously to extremes, loosening the well-tried structure, leaving behind more
doubt than satisfaction, shaking up our security—altogether uncanny, altogether
indispensable" (1970, p. 84-85). Buber is well aware of the risk but leaves us with his
thesis, that, regardless of the threat, the return from distance to relationship is
indispensable to a meaningful human existence. To Buber in fact, human existence of
any worth depends on the quality of relationship, since, he believes, "All actual life is

The wish to be confirmed emerges as a central theme throughout this study. We
have been saying, each in our own way, that we wanted, perhaps needed to feel acceptable to someone just because of who we were. Confirmation, an event that occurs when someone knows and communicates his or her acceptance of a person’s uniqueness, takes place within relationship, Buber stresses. But before I discuss his conception of confirmation, it is necessary to describe very briefly Buber’s metaphor for genuine relationship, the I--Thou encounter.

Buber calls the "basic word" of relationship "I--Thou" (1970, pp. 57-68). Relationship, he says, must be to the whole being that "confronts (us) bodily" (p. 58), and not to just an aspect of the person that we abstract, judge, or categorize. As soon as one begins to pull apart, to conceptualize someone, I--Thou becomes I--It. He states:

I can abstract from him the color of his hair or the color of his speech, or the color of his graciousness; I have to do this again and again; but immediately he is no longer Thou (1970, p. 59).

"Nothing conceptual" (p. 60), Buber emphasizes, can come between I and Thou. He argues that relating as I--Thou requires a standing in relation to and not a theoretical experiencing of someone. The great risk in this ineffable encounter is that one cannot hold anything back since "the basic word can only be spoken with one’s whole being; whoever commits himself may not hold back part of himself . . ." (p. 60). The participants and I all know this risk. For example, I recall Tim, asking rhetorically, "Who willingly puts his head in the guillotine?" as he expresses metaphorically his tremendous fear of being rejected. We all learned to hold back so much of ourselves. Relationship, to Buber, involves the will to risk reaching out with unreserved nakedness, to know another person, who by grace (p. 62) just might reach back to us as himself or herself.

An I--Thou meeting must occur in the present; an I--It labelling of someone can only be historical. Buber says, "the actual and fulfilled present—exists only in so far as presentness, encounter, and relation exist. Only as the (Thou) becomes present does presence come into being" (p. 31). Here Buber seems to imply a double yet single
meaning for presence. Relationship, which must involve being present to another human being, occurs only in present time. One must be right there as a whole being to another person, to borrow Buber's phrase, who "confronts us, waiting and enduring" (p. 64). This relational presence forms the ground of meaningfulness according to Buber. I understand the connection he makes between presence and meaning more clearly now and feel inspired by his challenging question: "What do we expect when we are in despair and yet go to a man? Surely a presence by means of which we are told that nevertheless there is meaning" (1961, p. 31). Relationship and meaningfulness are synonymous to Buber. I think the most general statement I can make about this research is that the struggle to learn to relate is a quest for meaning.

We have described our relational successes with great enthusiasm and hopefulness, compared to our much more subdued discussions about the despair we have associated with too much separation.

Buber describes present relation to a whole being as responsible movement (1970, p. 65). He argues that this quality of being with someone includes action, not only a personal subjective feeling such as love. It is based more on a love that is a responsible confrontation of another person. He says it is an event occurring between people, and a feeling such as love is an accompaniment. The specific interpersonal activity may take the form of helping, feeling, educating, raising, redeeming, etc, but regardless, "Love is a responsibility of an I for a (Thou)..." (p. 66). Each of us in the study, as I have discussed, has been facing a changing vision of interpersonal responsibility.

The reciprocal nature of an I-Thou meeting is stressed by Buber. As we encounter one another "between I and (Thou)" (p. 66), we form each other. We become more human by meeting, further distinguishing, and expanding the truth that exists between us. He states:

Human life and humanity come into being in genuine meetings. There man learns not merely that he is limited by man, cast upon his own finitude,
partialness, need of completion, but his own relation to truth is heightened
by the other's different relation to the same truth--different in accordance
with his individuation, and destined to take seed and grow differently. (1966,
p. 69)

In this passage, as in much of Buber's work, the significance of interhuman
confirmation is expressed directly and also fills the spaces between the lines.
Confirmation facilitates this "coming into being", perhaps more than any other event
occurring between people.

As I have discussed, longing to be confirmed is voiced as a central theme by the
participants and me. We are all working to risk more authentic interactions with
people. I believe we are dreaming that, once in a while, someone will make the effort
to know us and accept us at a level that is so essential that we define this essence as
"self". Tim is still hesitant to risk himself with people, but says he feels this quality of
confirmation from an unconditionally loving Christ. He allows his essence, his
Christian identity as he puts it, to emerge only within carefully circumscribed,
potentially confirming interpersonal conditions. Bill, after carefully withholding so
much of his behaviour until recent years, is beginning to trust that someone knows
and accepts him. Within this context, he is even beginning to risk being angry with
his friend. Lise, in her relationship with a man, who, she says, basically accepts her as
she is, seems to be risking relating more, instead of "hiding" behind the roles to which
she had become accustomed. Buber reminds me that confirmation does not require
that a person agree with me. A confirming confrontation might even be in anger. I am
learning to stay more open to people who are critical or angry with me, if, on the
whole, I feel their presence is confirming and is not basically just destructive.

Buber maintains that confirmation can occur only within human relationship
and that our ability to confirm and be confirmed is the primary basis of worthwhile
interhuman life. He argues that confirming relationship is the hallmark of humanity,
and if this ability lies fallow, we had better take a serious look at ourselves. In Buber's
words:
The basis of man's life with man is two-fold, and it is one—the wish of every man to be confirmed as what he is, even as what he can become, by men; and the innate capacity in man to confirm his fellow man in this way. That this capacity lies so immeasurably fallow constitutes the real weakness and questionableness of the human race; actual humanity exists only where this capacity unfolds. (1966, pp. 67-68)

Within the context of this study, I interpret Buber to mean that confirming relationships are imperative for a person to realize his or her unique identity, and a deep sense of his or her own humanity. It is this inner security that gives a person the courage to relate; it is confirming relationship that is required to develop this assurance.

One has to know someone to confirm him or her in the manner Buber suggests. My own wish to confirm and be confirmed soars as I read Buber's description of the depth of perception that this knowing implies.

To be aware of a person, therefore, means in particular to perceive his wholeness as a person determined by the spirit; it means to perceive the dynamic center which stamps his every utterance, action, and attitude with the recognizable sign of uniqueness. (1966, p. 80)

For confirmation to become personally completed, Buber adds, one must realize that he or she has been recognized and confirmed. Our difficulties with intimacy were precipitated when we withdrew from relationship that we experienced as too analytic and critical. We needed to retreat from our sense, articulated or not, that this "dynamic center" in us was not being confirmed. Instead, we felt manipulated into manifesting only certain pre-defined acceptable behaviours. Buber might say that we retreated from others to avoid the pain of having to be only partial selves.

Relationship is essential to meaningful human existence. But, as I said at the beginning of this section, distance is also necessary. Buber states, "Genuine contemplation never lasts long; the natural being that only now revealed itself in the mystery of reciprocity has again become describable, analyzable, and classifiable. . ." (1970, p. 68). Although I--It distancing is a necessary fact of human existence, the more a person learns to relate, the less oppressive and despairing is the separation that
inevitably follows. So, the goal, according to Buber, is a balanced flow between an alternating dialectic of distance and relationship. He expresses the need for this balance when he describes a person who has achieved it. Buber says that this individual:

knows that his mortal life is by its very nature an oscillation between (Thou) and It, and he senses the meaning of this. It suffices him that again and again he may set foot on the threshold of the sanctuary in which he could never tarry. Indeed, having to leave it again and again is for him an intimate part of the meaning and destiny of this life. (1970, pp. 101-102)

Buber argues then that an understanding of the alternating dialectic between I--Thou and I--It provides a comprehension of life itself.

I am realizing that this "oscillation between (Thou) and It" (1970, p. 101), the alternating dialectic between relation and distance, has been an ideal model guiding this research. I have been working to relate to the participants in person, and through the records of our interviews. I have been struggling to clarify and focus my understanding by trying to touch the meaning of the phenomenon as it exists in that ineffable encounter "between" us. Further, it has been necessary to verify through interpretation that my perceptions have been grounded empirically in experience as represented by our taped conversations and the verbatim transcripts of our talks. My greatest frustration, in part because of my haunting perfectionism, I think, has been in trying to express these insights personally and honestly to you. Another problem is that I have not been educated in relational language but in the language of objective reporting. My education has often proved inadequate to my relational task. I will expand on some of the implications of these ideas in the final chapter.
7.2. B: Roberto Assagioli

Psychosynthesis (Assagioli; 1974, 1976), a comprehensive, practical philosophy of human evolution, has influenced my view of relationship significantly. It has proven fruitful for me to compare my interpretation to some aspects of Assagioli’s writing.

I have discussed the importance of developing a positive identity; discovering a sense of self that the participants and I could claim as relatively solid and "OK", as Bill put it. The security we are gaining, as we develop some sense of a personal centre, has been essential to our having the courage to relate more. Assagioli’s understanding of a personal centre is pivotal to his theory. He describes a personal "self" or "I"-consciousness that is pure awareness. Body, mind, and emotion are contents of this awareness. The "self" is the hub of the personality through which a person can potentially observe and direct his or her life. In Assagioli’s words:

The "self", that is to say, the point of pure self-awareness, is often confused with the conscious personality just described, but in reality it is quite different from it. This can be ascertained by the use of careful introspection. The changing contents of our consciousness (the sensations, thoughts, feelings, etc.) are one thing, while the "I", the self, the center of our consciousness is another. From a certain point of view this difference can be compared to that existing between the white lighted area on a screen and the various pictures which are projected upon it. But the "man in the street" and even many well-educated people do not take the trouble to observe themselves and to discriminate; they drift on the surface of the "mind-stream" and identify themselves with its successive waves, with the changing contents of their consciousness. (1976, p. 18)

As psychologizing is viewed as approaching criminality in certain circles these days, I wish to make my intentions clear. My concern is not primarily whether this "self" exists ontologically. Rather, Assagioli’s ideas have provided a useful metaphor to make further sense of my interpretation of alienation and relationship. Further, his insights have proven most beneficial in working with people having painful relational difficulties.

Now, to continue with Assagioli’s model, when a person loses awareness of this
personal centre and overidentifies with other aspects of existence, intrapersonal alienation results. Assagioli argues as a "fundamental psychological principle . . . (that)" We are dominated by everything with which our self becomes identified. We can dominate and control everything from which we disidentify ourselves" (1976, p. 22). His "principle" can be applied to this study in several ways, and I will outline a few of the most significant.

I have discussed how we formed habitual ways to deal with people, and how these manipulative roles were strategies to reduce the disconfirmation we learned to expect. Assagioli teaches that people become overidentified with constellations of strategic roles or "subpersonalities" (1976, p. 75). It is necessary, he argues, to play different roles in various situations. Problems occur when we become so identified with these roles that we do not recognize that they are not our "self". According to the theory of psychosynthesis, it is important to consciously choose the roles we play, and simultaneously recognize a central identity that is pure awareness. Assagioli says, "The goal is the freed self, the I-consciousness, who can play consciously various roles" (1976; p. 75).

If you will allow me to return to Buber for a moment, perhaps relating from a subpersonality too much, is a mode of reacting from an I to an It; (Assagioli calls a non-centred, subpersonality "i" as opposed to "I"). The "I" of the centred person might be the I that relates potentially as I-Thou. Assagioli's conception of an "I" as applied to Buber's ideas concerning genuine relationship has proven very fruitful in actual counselling situations.

We all became preoccupied with thoughts that inhibited us from risking relationship. We learned to reflect too much about questions such as: "What are they thinking about me? Am I going to feel humiliated or reduced in some way? Is he or she going to criticize or reject me?" Additionally, we became unduly involved with unrealistic fantasies about relationship-idealized dreams of power, romance, and unconditional love. If a person only thinks about responding to others but does not act,
he or she can avoid relationship effectively. Assagioli would argue that we lost awareness of our personal centre, in this case, by becoming too identified with our thinking. As with the differentiation between self and subpersonality, Assagioli insists that we must learn the "distinction between the self and the mind..." (1976, p. 115). Overidentification can also occur with the emotions or body, but the participants and I tended to suppress our anger and hurt with our mind-identification.

We all speak enthusiastically about the changes we are making. A number of themes emerge as similar and frequent, as I have discussed in the last chapter. For example, we value learning to read people's behaviour more objectively. Bill and Lise both stress that they are not perceiving as much rejection in ambiguous interpersonal situations. We all emphasize the significance of our growing compassion toward ourselves and others. The participants and I are realizing that how we reach out to people is our responsibility. Tim appears unique in that he says that it is his faith that necessitates changes such as compassion and responsibility. Nevertheless, he represents these emerging qualities as highly significant. In psychosynthetic theory, qualities such as objectivity, compassion, and responsibility become manifest when a person centres more in the self, and reduces his or her identification with subpersonalities and the personality vehicles (i.e. body, mind, and emotions). We all stress that we value our newly developing identities highly; certainly more than our historical, more alienated ones. I am realizing from the participants, my clients in counselling, and from my own journey that the recognition of some sort of central identity is important to a person's sense of security, personal freedom, and satisfaction.

Crampton (1977), from a psychosynthetic perspective, stresses the importance of actualizing this personal centre:

Once a person has established the ability to identify with the "I", a sense of strength and clarity emerges. It is through this centre that true identity and will are experienced, that the person discovers the capacity to create his or her own life. The experience of the "I" often brings a great sense of exhilaration and freedom. One woman who had this experience exclaimed, "It's so incredible to know that I am myself. I'm different from every other person and I'm the only one who can decide what is right for me!" (p. 15)
I hear the voices of Bill, Lise, and myself echoed in this woman's exclamation. Tim, I imagine, would make a similar pronouncement about his life as a Christian.

I am realizing more clearly that the more centred a person feels, the greater the relational risks he or she is willing to take. The confirmation or disconfirmation that eventuates during these relational moments is often a critical factor in the development of a positive personal identity. When a person feels confirmed, it becomes potentially easier for him or her to realize and hold onto an "I"-consciousness, to continue with the psychosynthetic metaphor.

It has been a difficult and challenging task to make sense of the critical turning-point that the four participants and I describe. Buber might say that we were redeemed through our return to relationship. But, although others were involved very significantly before and after the most intense peaks of the turning point, Buber's theory of dialogue (at least as I understand it) does not adequately account for all the aspects of the experience. The psychosynthetic model provides an alternative way to interpret that transformational event.

Assagioli, drawing from psychology, philosophy, and religion, as well as from his personal and clinical experiences, states that the centre of personal awareness (self or "I") is only a projection, a reflected image of our most essential being; the Self. He says that this "very core of the human psyche . . ." (1976, p. 35) is "a permanent centre, of a true Self situated beyond or 'above' it (the personal self)" (p. 18). He acknowledges that we do not know much about this higher integrating centre but suggests that it certainly "warrants further research" (p. 19). I will describe briefly how Assagioli's map of the psyche might account for aspects of the critical turning point.

He argues that after a period of intense disappointment or emotional upheaval (but at times also without any apparent cause) a sudden or slow disturbing change sometimes occurs. Assagioli goes on to say that "a sense of unreality and emptiness . . ." (1976; p. 41) might result, and that a "state of uneasiness and agitation becomes more and more painful and the sense of inward emptiness more intolerable" (p. 42).
Sometimes, he adds, "a new sense of responsibility appears" (p. 42). For some there follows a catharsis that is experienced as a "flood of light, joy and energy which follows, (and) often produce(s) a wonderful release" (p. 43). Assagioli stresses that this profound occurrence is "bound to cease" (p. 46) and that this termination has a variety of effects that depend on a person's state of integration. This is, of course, a very brief overview of Assagioli's depiction of "spiritual awakening" (p. 40); but, his description certainly sounds like a representation of the critical turning-point. As a reminder, we talk about our sense of extreme separation from both other people and our familiar and secure sense of identity. We report extreme agitation, anxiety, depression, emptiness, and loss of meaning. The rebirth, as the participants and I call it, involves an emotional catharsis, cognitive re-interpretation, and a fresh view of both ourselves and our potential for relationship. The power of the experience ends only too quickly but a vision remains; we are left with a model for a new and promising way to be and to relate.

Assagioli theorizes that this temporary spiritual awakening occurs when, for a variety of reasons, there is a brief opening or contact between the personal centre (self or "I") and the higher Self (p. 43). During this time the individual transcends his or her day to day identifications and opens to a part of the unconscious that stores our most evolved human qualities. In Assagioli's words:

From this region we receive our higher intuitions and inspirations--artistic, philosophical or scientific, ethical "imperatives" and urges to humanitarian and heroic action. It is the source of the higher feelings, such as altruistic love; of genius and of the states of contemplation, illumination, and ecstasy. In this realm are latent the higher psychic functions and spiritual energies. (1976; pp. 17-18)

He cautions us that, when these openings occur, careful guidance is required from anyone who intervenes in this complex process (pp. 35-59). I am looking forward to learning more about the concepts and connections between self and Self. I think that psychosynthesis has much to teach about intrapersonal alienation and relationship.
Chapter VIII
An Ending

The literature concerning alienation is conceptually confusing. It is difficult to conceptualize in a focused and meaningful manner when abstractions pile up that are not grounded in existential reality. This study is a contribution in two distinct ways. First, it is an empirical interpretation of the actual experience of an aspect of alienation. Second, perhaps even more importantly, it relates an honest grappling with an intersubjective process whereby such existential realities may be better understood.

8.1. A: Alienation and Relationship as an Experience

We have been struggling with alienation. We have felt too separated from people too often. It has been as if our reality was split. Our subjective sense of inner self has felt too removed from our experience of the outside, objective world. Until recently, we rarely met anyone in a close meaningful manner. We have suffered from isolation, emptiness, and pervasive despair. But we are encouraged and excited about our journey toward personal integration and satisfying interpersonal relationships.

Childhood memories have exacerbated our problem. Closeness became associated with the pain of too much rejection and criticism. We craved to believe that we were lovable just because we were ourselves. (This yearning has not changed). But as as children, we felt powerless to control this feeling of disconfirmation. It is difficult to relate honesty and spontaneously when one expects this kind of past to keep repeating. People become threatening others who are not to be trusted.

But we did have at least one form of control. We could withdraw physically and
psychologically from others, into the relative security of our own private subjectivity. Unfortunately, as this retreat was occurring, we were already fragmenting within ourselves. One of the reasons we withdrew was to avoid further fragmentation. For example, we learned to repress emotions that seemed unacceptable to others. And we learned to withhold and mistrust ideas that were judged as unintelligent or unimportant. People did not seem to think very highly of us, so we came to assume we could not have been worth much. Withdrawal seemed like an excellent alternative to disconfirming relationships, although this choice was not always made consciously.

In the routines of daily life, interpersonal interaction is necessary. But honest encounter had been too painful. With varying degrees of awareness, we developed roles with which to react to people. Sometimes we managed to get approval, if our behavior satisfied someone enough. Approval felt rewarding. But approval is not confirmation. Something was missing.

We longed to feel that someone could accept us as ourselves. The fulfillment of this need is particularly problematic for alienated people. It becomes difficult to be confirmed when one has withdrawn. It is hard to be known when one is hiding behind a wall of pretense. How does one communicate that it is permissible to feel, when one does not even know what is being felt any more? The more people know themselves, and risk being themselves, the more probable it becomes that someone will confirm them as themselves.

As we got older, we continued to perceive people through the eyes of our past. Most encounters became similar to the ones we knew with our parents. We contributed to keeping them that way. We found evidence of criticism and rejection in people's behavior because we were looking for it. This was not always conscious. We justified our continuing withdrawal. We even romanticized and fantasized about it. We became powerful super-heroes and romantic lovers. But often we kept to ourselves. Our relationships were superficial when they did occur. We knew about people, for we had been studying them diligently. We even claimed some expertise
about human nature. But meaningful and satisfying intimacy eluded us. People rarely got to know us. We remained repressed and fragmented. Our self-esteem was poor. Our sense of self stayed elusive. We were often lonely, depressed, and resentful.

But we are learning to relate. The two most significant and dialectically related factors leading to this change are our shifting experience of self and the confirmation of people who form our social network.

A critical turning-point experience was important to our changing sense of self. It was as if our separateness became so intense during this time that something in us seemed to snap. In a way we became temporarily liberated from our histories. We became more secure and confident. This more solid sense of self became a home base from which to risk reaching out to others more often. The change allowed us to lower some of our walls. Now the journey depended on other people once again.

We were fortunate, each in our own way. We risked being a little more honest and spontaneous with at least one person. And each of us enjoyed relatively confirming responses. This result was crucial. Although we felt better about ourselves, our identities were still fragile. If we had been too harshly rejected or criticized, as in the past, we would likely have quickly withdrawn. Tim's experience was slightly different since he says he felt confirmed by Christ. But he told me that Jesus was a real person to him and that his new identity as a Christian is the most solid and deepest sense of self he has ever known.

Now I want to discuss the experience of relationship, and I am becoming frustrated. It is not difficult to describe alienation. The English language handles separateness very well. When I attempt to talk about the meaning of relationship, I run into problems. The words have become hackneyed and ambiguous. I will bring this up again shortly in a slightly different context.

To relate does not mean to do so all the time. Distance and relation are both necessary as Buber says. This fact may be obvious to you. It is an insight for me. But to relate sometimes is to know meaning. As this study draws to an end I realize that the most general meaning of relationship is meaning itself.
It is interesting to know about people, and fascinating to measure their reactions. But to know and understand another in mutual dialogue is to glimpse a mystery of life. To relate is to realize that we do not stand alone in the human predicament. It is to understand that others know similar hurt, anger, and fear. It is to risk love and the possibility of rejection. It is to recognize the beauty and value of the humanity we share between us. It is to laugh and cry together. It is to confront each other so that we may come closer to truth.

Genuine meeting requires self-awareness and authenticity. And encounter teaches people about themselves. Confirmation can result from relationship, but so can rejection. To learn to relate is to learn to become authentic, even though one is aware of the mixed consequences.

Our understanding of responsibility is shifting as we learn to relate. Responsibility becomes more a desire to respond to someone than an obligation. As less relational individuals, we were more likely to manipulate others for approval while we resentfully did what we thought they wanted. Because we value ourselves, we are likely also to attend to our own needs. We are learning that, we too, are deserving individuals.

We are maintaining communication with others, rather than retreating at the least hint of rejection. We are learning to interpret other people more accurately. And because we do not fear criticism as much, we are able somehow to tell others what we think, feel, dream, and want. Consequently, we feel more satisfied.

We are learning to be present to people and not view them through our pasts so much. Put another way, we have more trust in our present encounters. Our interpretation of the past is shifting as our faith in the present deepens. We are less resentful of our families, and are more forgiving, understanding, and compassionate. As we look into the future we realize that we can know others and ourselves even more. We all seem excited and encouraged at the potential for even more meaningful life.
And each of us says that, as we learn to relate, even at some still vague preconceptual level, there is some order in the universe, and it is not hostile but perhaps even benevolent.

We recognize there is a choice to be made. There is a risk. It is safer to repress ourselves and manipulate others. But it is far more meaningful, even if only occasionally, to risk reaching out to others as ourselves.

8.2. B: My Process of Understanding

I have been learning about alienation and relationship, through my process of understanding, during every stage of this work. It was easy for me initially to study the participants at a distance as research objects. I have been trained to work this way, and often live this way as well. This objectification has taken many forms. I will review only a few, since I have already discussed this issue.

Sometimes I maintained the role of researcher after it was no longer necessary or fruitful. I, too, know the despair of excessive separation, but I kept myself distant. I was afraid of the feelings that might reawaken in me. Particularly, early in the work, again because of my fear, I seemed more interested in the thesis than in the people I was with. My questions were sometimes semi-aware manipulations to force their experiences into my preconceived categories. But over the interviews and interpretations as a whole, I was able to become more relational and more able to ground my insights empirically with the data of our talk. Relational and empirical knowing are not mutually exclusive, I have learned. An alternating dialectic between these two modes allows a dialogue through which understanding can take place.

Eventually, another change occurred. I felt a weight fall from my shoulders when I almost imperceptibly shifted to the viewpoint of "we". I began to contact, to understand our experiences with much greater compassion and clarity.

Writing this paper was an integral part of my learning process. The same lessons kept repeating as before. I found at times I could be honest with you and write
simply and personally. These moments were the most meaningful. At other times I was more manipulative since I wanted you to see me in preconceived ways. During these times, I felt alienated. And you were as unconnected to me as is an object. At some point, and I cannot even say exactly where, I found a balance. I learned I could communicate to you relationally and empirically. I think this blend is the appropriate goal for intersubjective research of this sort.

8.3. C: A Brief Return to the Original Literature Review

My goal has been to clarify the experience of interpersonal and intrapersonal alienation from the perspective of people who were aware of, and willing to discuss, their journeys. The original literature I reviewed attempts to define alienation primarily as a sociological conceptualization. This difference in viewpoints makes comparison difficult. I felt a need to reflect on the ideas of Buber and Assagioli because more natural parallels existed in their work. At the same time, a few comparisons are possible.

Schacht (1970) argues that although alienation is an ill-defined concept, it usually connotes some form of separation. This general conceptualization holds true in this study. Each of us felt separated both from others and from a secure and valued sense of self.

Rousseau (1960) and Hegel (1967) suggest that we alleviate the problem of alienation by cooperating with the community. Individuality seems to be thought of as a part of the cause. But this study indicates that a solid sense of self helps an alienated person to risk relationship. Buber (1966, p. 80), for example, says that dialogue allows us to realize our dynamic centre. I would like to dig a little deeper into the ideas of Rousseau and Hegel. I would be interested in reviewing their ideas concerning individuality, in particular.

Marx (1964) states that alienation occurs simultaneously within and between people. This study supports the notion that intrapersonal and interpersonal
separateness maintain each other dialectically. Marx argues that the nature of work in a capitalistic system causes alienation. He stresses, for example, how people become commodities, replaceable cogs in the economic machinery. I do not feel qualified to criticize his analysis. But it is clear that others did take the form of objects for the participants and me. They were threatening others, to be manipulated because they were experienced as disconfirming. We were socialized at home and in school to view people this way. It is important to me, since I have viewed the problem from a psychological perspective, to remain aware that all alienation occurs within a social context. The problem must be tackled at every possible level of inquiry. If our socialization agents responded to us as objects, then a great deal is happening to them to make them feel dehumanized themselves.

Seeman, I realize more than ever, has posed a gigantic task for himself. Alienation is a complex phenomenon. There are so many aspects of this dilemma that it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to reduce the experience to a single concept such as locus-of-control. For example, Seeman (1975) operationally defines meaninglessness as "a low expectancy that satisfactory predictions about future outcomes of behavior can be made" (p. 786). He is hypothesizing that people become alienated because they cannot predict with confidence. But in this study the difference between too much alienation and relating more often is the difference between pervasive despair and a life that is worth living. Alienation must be studied at its existential roots if we are to someday have clear and useful conceptualizations.

8.4. D: Some Implications

(a) Psychotherapy

In my work as a psychotherapist, I find that most of my clients complain of relational difficulties. Some therapeutic models stress that the best way to work with these people is to attend to the quality of relationship between client and therapist. Friedman (1975), for example, relying on Buber's ideas, argues that relationship of
high quality is healing in itself. Other models, such as Assagioli's, focus on one's developing sense of self. In a therapeutic encounter there are two developing selves within one potential dialogue. It is important that therapists attend to all these dynamic perspectives if they are to be most useful to their clients.

I would like to write a paper that delineates how the findings of this study relate to the psychotherapeutic encounter. It would be based on a lecture and workshop I gave recently entitled: Becoming the "I" in the "I-Thou". I talked about the meaning of alienation and relationship first. Then I worked with some exercises designed to help people become more aware of themselves. Finally, I invited them to respond to other people as Thous, with the help of exercises based on Buber's work. The results were stimulating and rewarding. People responded with enthusiasm. Many said they related to what I was presenting.

(a) Psychological Research

It would be useful if psychologists and students became more involved with intersubjective research into the problem of alienation. The subject matter could be extremely varied. But studies into the existential reality of separation for the elderly, women, workers, minority groups, etc. are needed. These inquiries would give flesh, bones, and spirit to the numerous abstract conceptualizations about these problems.

And, with my struggle with this process of understanding under my belt, I would like to interview people who are even more isolated than the participants and I. How would individuals who have been given various traditional psychiatric disease labels, for example, describe their experiences of alienation and relationship? In contrast, I wonder how people who appear to enjoy exceptionally close and meaningful relationships describe their encounters. Studies of these extremes would expand the scope of this study considerably. And they might also eventually form the groundwork for a conceptualization based on a wider range of human experience.
(c) Education

Every level in our educational system could fruitfully attack the problem of relationship with greater vigor. As I have discussed, alienation has been associated with many psychological and sociological problems. Buber argues that the I-It world has continued to increase since the dawn of our civilization (1970, pp. 87-89). I am convinced, as is Buber, that we can reduce the barriers that people have built between each other and within themselves. Our children will likely face a technology that will make today’s mass of steel, glass, and raw power look primitive. It is essential for their own meaningful survival that they become relation individuals who can blend more compassionate wisdom into increasing technological advances. As budgets tighten, we tend to reduce curriculum to core subjects. But I would like to see "relationship" become a part of that core. I taught school for seven years and ended that career about eight years ago. That period of absence has left me unfamiliar with much of the available instructional material. But it would be possible, for example, to develop this research into a kit, or into workshops, to help teachers, perhaps counsellors, work with units on alienation.

There is at least one other implication for education. I have felt sorely handicapped in expressing myself in a relational manner during the course of this work. Like most students of social science, I am well versed in the language of objective reporting. But if we are to embark on alternative forms of study and intersubjective research, it would be extremely useful to encourage students to speak and write personally as well as objectively. May (1979) says of our times, "Along with the loss of the sense of self has gone a loss of our language for communicating deeply personal meaning to each other" (p. 64). He adds that almost every non-technical word has become ambiguous. We could work together to develop a more relational language in our schools.
8.5. E: An Ending

At times, I have felt related to this work. I enjoyed it then. But as I have been fighting an increasingly uphill battle to complete it, it has been separate from me. It lost its meaning. I have been feeling empty, tired, and depressed.

A few days ago all this changed. I was pulled back to my forgotten motivation of years ago. I visited the Royal Ontario Museum to see an exhibit called The Precious Legacy. It was a collection of Jewish cultural artifacts from Czechoslovakia. Some items predated the Renaissance. But I felt indifferent to the event, and disliked myself for feeling that way.

At the end of the exhibit was a wall-sized photograph. It represented a section from a wall of the Pincus Synagogue. On this wall are the names of 77,297 people, every Jew sent to concentration camps from Moravia and Bavaria. The holocaust victims were no longer an abstract six million. These were individual names.

An emotional turmoil brewed in me. I was angry, disgusted, and sad. And I was relieved that I was given this reminder. I will never understand how people became so alienated that they systematically eliminated others. It is difficult to comprehend how someone becomes so dehumanized that others become disposable. But I do know that I will never relent in my struggle to understand how people learn to relate.

As I left the museum, a large but relatively quiet peace march was winding down University Avenue. What a contrast to the end of the exhibit. I felt happy as I walked home. I am gaining faith that if we take the responsibility to learn to relate to one another with patience, understanding compassion, and tolerance we can all live together in greater harmony, love, and peace.
References


Seeman, M. Alienation studies. Annual Review of Sociology, 1975, 1, 91-123.


Appendix A

Sample Interview Schedule

1. Fit as a Participant:

This study is an attempt to understand what interpersonal alienation and relationship mean to people who have experienced several years of interpersonal alienation and, are presently involved in at least one relationship that they experience as close. I would appreciate a brief overview of how you think your experience fits this description.

2: The Present:

What do you notice about how you are presently relating? Are your relationships influencing you? How? Do you see your relating having effects on others? What is it like for you to be able to more intimately relate to another person?

3: The Past:

Which experiences of interpersonal alienation stand out for you? What was the experience like (for each)? Have these experiences affected you? What does it mean to you to be a person who has had a great deal of trouble relating closely to others? Then as necessary: recent, early adult, adolescent, childhood and earliest memories of having difficulty relating.

4: The Future:

How would you like to see yourself relating in the future? Why? What might make this more likely? What might prevent this from happening? Do you have any fantasies about your ultimate potential for relating?
5: Open Talk:

Is there anything else concerning interpersonal alienation and relationship that you would like to talk about?

6: The Process of the Interview:

How have you been experiencing yourself during this interview? How have you been experiencing me? Did you feel listened to? Pressured to say anything? Cared about? What do you think has been the purpose of the interview? Do you have any fantasies about my theory of alienation and relationship? Did the tape recorder affect you? Do you have any suggestions for my next interview?

How did I experience myself in the interview? How did I experience the participant?
## Appendix B

Example of Systematic Note-taking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>Location on Transcript and Tape</th>
<th>Initial Interpretation</th>
<th>Reflections on the Initial Interpretation</th>
<th>Reflections on the Interview Itself</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
<td>I paraphrase accurately</td>
<td>almost sounds like this person <em>did it</em> to him</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106-108</td>
<td>get us close, person drowns—sad</td>
<td>this theme is <em>central</em>. One cannot trust closeness since you will eventually feel bad. <em>(Loss of control?)</em></td>
<td>I would rather have said <em>&quot;You sound very sad about that incident&quot;</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>voice he repeats &quot;He went away and drowned. Confirmation of central hypothesis: closeness eventuates in bad feelings. I try to clarify the relationship he had with this person. Why?</td>
<td>Later says mother’s love was not constant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td></td>
<td>Repeat how this friend did not return</td>
<td>Sound to me, as above, that he <em>did</em> feel betrayed—sense that nobody can be trusted—they may even die!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Says he felt &quot;betrayed&quot;, then says this is not logical, felt &quot;awful&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--present impact, still feels compelled to pay his share of bill</td>
<td>seems to still be reacting to this memory—does reaction influence the memory?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td>I focus on friend’s activity</td>
<td>Better to focus on the more significant issue—<em>trust</em> and expectation!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
<td>Supersensitive behaviour? I must act in X way or someone else will <em>y</em>.</td>
<td>Historical proof: Closeness leads to pain. <em>(Anger?)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123-128</td>
<td>I summarize last few pages: fear of closeness because of expected loss of relationship (mother, moving, death)</td>
<td><em>(Thought: Rather idealized conception of love. Who has constant love! Everybody does!)</em></td>
<td>Accurate paraphrase reflects my listening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I believe he feels listened to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Location on Transcript and Tape</td>
<td>(b) Initial Interpretation</td>
<td>(c) Reflections on the Initial Interpretation</td>
<td>(d) Reflections on the Interview Itself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178-179</td>
<td>He agrees. Definite sounding &quot;That's right.&quot;</td>
<td>(Expectations and interpersonally alienated</td>
<td>I believe he feels listened to.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>179</td>
<td>I look for directness vs indirectness. Why?</td>
<td>people?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>Says it is direct: Would not visit him in prison. Relative to whole, Bill's sense of his parents' love as very conditional. (For that matter, within the whole, he talks about all love as very conditional)</td>
<td>(Control issue?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape from 078</td>
<td>I paraphrase</td>
<td>This relationship leads to being imprisoned idea is repeated several times later in the interview.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Repeated idea: relationship as a prison--must be good to be free. Cannot be whole person--child, silly, etc. (Relationship and loss) of SELF?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I might have said, &quot;Your parent's love seems very conditional to you. You needed to be &quot;good&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Verbatim Transcript of the Interview with Bill, the Second Participant (my words are in parentheses)

1. (I'm trying to understand the experience of people
2. who have been aware of being very alienated and then have found
3. ways out of their alienation; so the first thing I want to
4. talk about is whether you perceive yourself as a person who has had that
   kind of experience?)

I'm still alienated but I'm far less alienated now, able to
5. accept good things that happen to me as being my due. I was
6. thinking about that the other day. I think that has to do
7. with alienation, divorcing oneself from good things and
8. good company as well. Having certain standards for people
9. to meet before they are accepted and trusted,

(OK, so what I'm hearing you say is that your still alienated
10. but less so because you have less demands for people?)

Yes, learning to trust people a bit more. I still have
11. a basic suspicion or distrust of people, but ah, I trust
12. people more now.

(Aright, I think we'll get back to that. In terms of me
13. having a little bit of direction let's talk about the alienation
14. itself. OK, when you say that you are still alienated
15. to a degree, or that you were very alienated at one time,
16. what does alienation mean to you? What, is it?)

Ah, a good example is when I go to the Y. at night I give a
17. friendly hello to a lot of people and I felt one night
18. it seems very strange that I'm such a shy person and here I
19. am talking to all these people saying "hello hello", that's as
20. far as it goes and that's as close as these people ever
21. get to me ah, people try to get a bit closer but I, maybe I'm
22. dealing with alienated people as well, but I like to keep it
23. on a sort of surface level, I don't like to get too deep
24. with anybody. I, I guess I fear losing my soul if any
25. body gets too close. Part of the reason for my alienation
26. is ah, that if anyone gets too close they, they take
27. possession. I allow them to take possession of me somehow
28. and I lose myself in the process. D.'s is a good example I,
29. the eagerness to please makes me lose myself, my confident
30. self, so I have to watch who I let into my world sort of.
31. So that I don't lose my independence, I don't become some
32. one else, that person I don't like, that insecure person.

(So it's, it's it's like you don't feel secure enough to
33. relate closely because if you do you feel you'll lose who
34. you are or...?)

It gives somebody, it gives people a handle on you somehow.

(Power?)
35. Power! But I'm more capable now of taking putdowns. Before
36. when I had a putdown, somebody would say something I would
37. ah, I would feel that they were right and I was wrong
38. and that they, everything out there was correct and I didn't
39. really know and now I simply learned how to deal with put
40. downs or subtle manipulation people who, one guy said I
41. have such a colossal ego, I always want my own way and he
42. was in effect asking me to give up my own way so that he
43. could have his. Um I guess I just learned a few tricks about
44. avoiding getting upset when people try to change my behaviour to suit
45. them. And maybe a lot of the times it's justified to be careful of other
   people because they—ah—just a natural caution
46. with other people so they don't get a handle on me. I guess
47. that's the explanation.

(Um, get a handle on you?)

Well D.'s an example. I've known him for three weeks and
48. If, I want to please ah, and yet I feel that I can't somehow assert myself
   because I might scare him away. He might
49. suddenly see the real me and not like it. That's probably
50. what it is. He might see the real me that I know um and not
51. like who I am, even though I like who I am, I think. He may
52. not like all the silliness. The other day we were out for
53. a walk and I was prattling on and on and I said this this
54. must sound dumb with me going on and he said that's what
55. sounds dumb, not, when you say things like that. He didn't like
56. to hear me....

(He didn't like you being apologetic...?)

Yah, and ah so this relationship is hard for me to take in
57. some ways that he's always there when I want him. He never
58. says no I'm busy or no don't bother me or your talking nonsense.
59. He never says any of those things. My mother
60. used to say, "ah, can it Georgie". when I went on when I was
61. a kid and she just shut me up, and ah, I remember once threw-
62. a tantrum she would shake me and say, "stop it up! stop it
(It's like, being yourself with you mother, was not allowed?)

That's right.

(And now I guess alienation the way you are describing it is a fear of relationship because, I know who I am but if you know who I am than you are not going to accept it.)

All the little, the little negatives, that I might regard as negatives, so I keep them to myself. I enjoy my, my child on my own and I have a good time on my own but when other people get involved there's, I'm spoiled as well I guess there's a combination in there of being spoiled and wanting my own way all the time. And so I'm, I guess it's just the fear of mother being the prime person in life and mother, sometimes she's there and sometimes she's not. Sometimes she wants to play and be nice and other times she doesn't, and it's unpredictable. And maybe that's what I find with other people that they're unpredictable.

(When you were yourself you never knew how your mother was going to act?)

That's right. The same behaviour on different days would get different responses. I think. I'm not sure I may be...

(From what you remember do you remember any specific instances?)

Out of the blue I could get a dirty look from my mother and a dirty look meant "don't ask questions" don't do anything. She claims that she doesn't realize she does it and I do the same thing without realizing it. It's more power in the look than from the inside.

(How do you read the look?)

You don't question it. You you, I feared, I guess I feared her enough that I didn't question that look which said, "shut up! Don't, don't go on!"

(What was that like?)

Gee, I don't know it was, I hadn't really thought about it. Hum, the only thing I could do, in relation to this is, to sort of sulk, not sulk but withdraw into myself. The only behaviour I could be sure of getting away with was the poor me behaviour, the lonely child thing. Ah, and another reason too for my alienation, I think, is we moved fifteen or twenty times before I was nine. We were constantly moving.
88. My grandfather was always finding a new place or dad
89. was in the airforce and we were in all sorts of small
90. towns and it was moving at night, living out of suitcases
91. for long periods of time. Never really settling into a
92. home 'til I was nine and by than a lot of damage was done.
93. So I have never had a chance to develop close friendships
94. with people. Never learned how. I think it's just the
95. proximity of having a buddy around and learning to trust.
96. It could be that I've never learned how to trust somebody,
97. never learned that somebody is constantly there. That's why
98. I say with D. that I'm beginning to believe it a bit
99. more because you always there. Your always available. But
100. I--I tend also to seek alienation because it's a part of
101. my pattern that I'm comfortable with.

(The pattern is . . .?)

To keep people at a distance probably. Maybe not to get
102. close to people because getting close to people means they
103. move away or you have to move away and your not sort of
104. feeling that ache or that sad feeling that someone you like has gone away.
105. (And it's the fear that if you trusted somebody enough to relate closely
that would happen again?)

Probably, yah. And ah, now I can see logically that the ultimate
separation would be that the person would die.
106. And, that has happened to me once. I got close to somebody
107. once and was quite excited about it and he drowned on the
108. weekend. He went away on the weekend and drowned. And ah . . .

(Was that a friend, or . . .?)

Yah. It was somebody I had just gotten close to when I was
109. younger. It was quite wonderful. We . . . it was nice. He had
110. bought me a coffee at Fran's restaurant. I remember he
111. spent twenty cents for two coffees and ah, said we would
112. see each other when he got back from his weekend. He didn't
113. get back from his weekend. And ah, I guess I felt, not
114. betrayed, you can't feel betrayed by that but it was a very
115. awful feeling that I opened up to somebody, trusted somebody,
116. and they went away and disappeared. Um, For a while I find
117. I can't . . . I get very upset when somebody tries to pay the
118. bill in a restaurant I, I have to pay my share of the bill,
119. I think it stems from that, I'm not sure.

(That he paid the bill and then . . .?)

Well he, he bought me a coffee and I said well I'll get
120. the next one and ah, and I get upset when somebody tries . . .
121. I must pay my share of the bill unless it's set out in
122. advance.
(What... I guess how I'm reacting to the last few minutes of 123. what you are saying is... I hear you saying, "I am afraid 124. to get too close because the person will not accept me for who 125. I am and if I get too close the relationship will be taken 126. away from me. I guess I hear that... I guess I hear that in 127. relationship to your mother, in relationship to moving around 128. every time you got close, to a close friend dying).  

That's right, yah. Um, my mother used to say that we won't 129. love you if your bad. If you do certain things we won't love 130. you. The love was always conditional. That, I was, I never 131. felt that that there was a constant stream of love. It wasn't 132. your bad but we still love you but your bad.

(Was that a direct message, or...?)

I think it was a direct message. I remember them saying that 133. if I ever get into prison they wouldn't visit me.

(If you're bad enough to get into prison then I won't visit 134. you).

135. Yah, so that it's a behavioural thing that they did to keep 136. me in line. My mother, I think, more than my father. He was 137. pretty absent. He wasn't around. He came home from weekends 138. in the airforce and slept. He was taboo. He couldn't be 139. touched. We had to wake him very gently by our voices. We 140. couldn't touch him to wake him.

(If that's another factor then? Your father was never around?)

No. I remember coming to see him when I was about fourteen. 141. But that's a very WASP attitude. The mother can bring the 142. kid up until he is a man and then I'll take over. By then 143. of course it is too late and everyone finds out the hard 144. way. So the mother's have control over the male children. 145. At least in our family it seems the mother's had control. 146. The fathers are sort of in the background 'cause there 147. was this whole stream of dominant women. My father said 148. he would never marry a dominant woman but he did, and ah, 149. I would probably go for the same thing. I would, my, and I 150. would become like a child. I would, the other day I wanted 151. a cigarette and I said to D., "I'm going to go out and 152. buy a package of cigarettes" but I think there is a question 153. sort of almost, can I? I realized, I told him, I was in 154. effect asking you if I could have permission...

(May I have permission to go?)

Yah. And ah...
(I don't want to be bad and do the wrong thing.)

Yah. And I'm really aware of the, my alcohol intake around 155. D. Um I feel very much like ah my grandmother grandfather 156. situation and yet he's not doing anything. I'm just 157. projecting a lot.

(He becomes the parent whose approval, whose love you need?)

Yah. It's like a parent, it's sort of if I don't get approval 158. then, then, I, I felt an implied, I felt criticism maybe that 159. I was smoking, criticism that I was drinking. But I was doing 160. this to myself. Now I had an object to project it onto that 161. he could do this and I could maybe rebel against it somehow.

(Be the bad little boy?)

Yah. A lot of things are coming out in this relationship 162. that finally I'm deciding I'm going to trust somebody, I'm 163. going to open up, that it's safe now to reveal some sides 164. of myself. 165. (OK, this is the other part, like, what is it now that 166. after this, I hear four things that you mention: what is 167. it now that's allowing you to say, "hey, I'm going to take 168. a chance and trust this relationship. I guess, in spite 169. of the past or because of the past".

Probably because I've lived forty-three years and why not, 170. why not? Why not just simply trust. Override all the things 171. that I used to use as "that's it" mechanisms saying "well 172. that's enough". The broken glass, for instance, I, I, dissolved 173. on my own rather than sulked or hassled. Um, and yet 174. tonight on the way home I had a, I fantacised or fabricated 175. S breaking one of my prize possessions and got quite, 176. almost angry at myself. That this projection, this creating 177. an alienation with someone and they haven't even done 178. anything.

(You mean projection into the future?)

Yah. Just almost a desire to divorce myself from from maybe 179. would have been pain from getting involved.

(I wonder like breaking the glass. when your friend broke 180. the glass you got very annoyed. What did the broken glass 181. mean to you?)

Well this simply meant that they were beautiful, beautiful 182. glasses. They cost an awful lot of money to replace. They
183. can't be replaced. It meant that someone was less careful
184. with my possessions than L Certainly there are things I
185. don't value at all but there is a precedent for this. M.
186. who gave me these glasses was drying one the other week and
187. just pulled it apart. They are very fragile. So I've
188. broken one, M.'s broken one, and D.'s broken one. So
189. the score is even. I sort of had to do a mental gymnastics
190. to to clear it so that I wouldn't hold resentment towards him.
191. And ah, we were having supper and I sort of felt the need to
192. withdraw as, I didn't want to go for a walk and leave him as
193. I was . . . We spent from Friday night together till this morning
194. with very little withdrawal. Just a little bit and I
195. said let's go for a walk so we went for a walk and everything
196. was OK again.

(So now your able to have the trust).

The person has a lot to do with it I think, too. Ah, being
197. young and relatively inexperienced with people he hasn't been
198. banged around too much. His last relationship, he didn't
199. quite know what was expected in a relationship. And so he
200. got hit by the guy.

(Physically?)

Physically hit and ah, sexually he was treated in a way that
201. was degrading, I think, but he didn't quite know. He liked men and he
202. didn't quite know what was expected. Um, and
203. I started the relationship off by very gentle methods
204. by dating a couple of times and sleeping together in a non-
205. sexual way, and just gradually building up so that he wasn't
206. threatened. And ah, my intuition also tells me that it's safe to to trust this
person.

(Because of what you perceive as that innocence?)

Yah, that he's, I guess when I asked about the cigarettes
207. control. Maybe I was testing to see how much control he
208. wants? That I'm really alert for any negatives that put
209. me down because I watch for that with people. If there's
210. the slightest criticism my hackles go up. The slightest
211. criticism on my person; I use that as an excuse to cut off.
212. A friend of mine, a friend I've had for fourteen years chose
213. to, chose a critical time in my life to cut off the friendship.
214. He was pissed off at me because I criticized a restaurant
215. we were in. I criticized the fact that he was fighting with
216. his lover. They were cool to each other anyway over dinner,
217. and sort of put a damper on the evening. They couldn't forget
218. their differences and enjoy themselves. So he decided that
219. was it. I, I phoned him once and he said, "I just put
begles on the table" and the next time I phoned him he just
put something else on the table. I said, "fuck it! Who needs
him. Who needs this crap". And I was quite willing to
throw the whole thing away. But then after friends said,
"don't do that" I phoned and, and he said he was trying to
figure out how he was going to get in contact with me again.
We're both similar in that. We both decided to throw the
thing, the friendship away, for nothing and then we said,
"well, another change". But the trust is slightly diminished
because of that. That, at a point in my life, I had just
been fired from a job and that was pretty traumatic for me.
It shook my confidence. The firing wasn't to do with the
quality of my work. It was, um, an attitude they wanted
that was not what I was prepared to give. It still shook
me. It shook my confidence and I needed somebody to, A
shoulder to cry on or some... What it did it...

(I'm sorry, go ahead.)

just forced me to see other people that I considered peripheral
because I had these two main people in my life. I
suddenly realized that there are other people who are, who
are there. G. was one; G. was wonderful! And, on the subject of G. by the
way. He is someone who has very
strong barriers. So I manage nicely with him because I know
I can't get too close. I don't want to get too close to
somebody like that. A jewel of a person that if he gave in
too much I would be frightened and want to run away I guess.

(So it seems that the key things to you then are, kind of,
fear and trust?)
I'm drawing blanks on those. Trust, yah,
and a fear of somebody getting too close... A lot of times
too it's just that my fear of that is justified that that I
had allowed myself to be captured by people. That,

(Lost your sense of self?)

Well, I've given the impression on my own of being fairly
confident, fairly strong, and people see that and they want that, but they
also want to bring it down to earth.
They want to pin the butterfly down, sort of, so that it
doesn't have mobility and I'm, I allow myself to be pinned
down. I was...

(Is that what your afraid of then? That feeling that...
It's happened a couple of times. That...

(Is that the fear though? That, this feeling of being pinned
down?)

There's a line from a song, "promise you won't take me for
255. granted when I’m yours”. That I like myself enough that if
256. I get, if I give my heart to somebody, I’ll give something
257. to somebody, give them, in effect, control. Ah, they would
258. abuse it. It’s valueless once they’ve got it. Once M.
259. had me I became valueless and it was only until I managed
260. to assert myself again slightly that he found me worthwhile.
261. Only when I withdraw into myself did he find me interesting.
262. He wasn’t willing to take me as a whole person.

(As you were . . .)

He only wanted the strong parts. He hated it when I was weak. He just
couldn’t stand
263. it when I was weak. And,

(So he was willing to love you when you were strong and not love you or
hate you or be angry at you, or whatever it
264. is, when your weak?)

Yah. Well yah, when I was available, when I was always there
265. ah, he wasn’t interested. is the same way I think.
266. He’s not interested in me when I’m, when I’m constantly
267. there. He’s becoming that way a bit, because I’m always
268. there for him, but ah, he’s not, I don’t have any attraction
269. he doesn’t find me attractive when I’m there. He likes me
270. when I’m aloof and distant. And so, I say, right away,
271. there’s somebody who won’t take me as I am. Ah,

(How do you feel when you perceive that?)

Oh, not bad. It’s just a recognition of what I’m attracted
272. to ah, I think that’s a prelude to D., maybe, that
273. suddenly here is someone who wasn’t going to run away when
274. I showed weak sides. With D. I can, I can allow myself
275. to be held which is something I can’t, I feel uncomfortable
276. normally when I’m held. With D. I don’t mind at all.
277. We, we reverse back and forth. We, it seems more open.
278. Maybe it’s just the luck of the draw. Maybe it’s just that
279. alienation is a, is something we do until we find someone
280. who is a good enough match for our state of development.
281. So that two people can sort of grow up together.

(Alienation for you then is definitely a withdrawal from
282. relationship. I’m clear on that).

Yah, when somebody crosses my invisible boundaries um, they’re
283. likely to find themselves out in limbo, and would attempt to
284. score them out of my phone book, in effect.

(What’s this invisible boundary? I’m not sure . . .)

I don’t know. It depends. It can be any insignificant
285. thing.

(That does what, though? You must react . . .)

It could be a betrayal maybe.

(Criticizing you in some way. Is that . . .?)

More than likely, yah, ah, this is what has happened in the
286. past. People who have known, met a few times, would criticize
287. my house or me in a joking way. I remember hustling
288. one guy out of the house very quickly. He referred to my
289. house as claustrophobic. He joked with me about being an
290. old man because I was sensitive enough about that and just
291. shortly after I was fired. Sort of just, little needling
292. things almost, and I didn’t know how to deal with this and
293. I just hustled him out of the house very quickly.

(What did you experience when that was going on?)

Just anger, that, that, I let somebody get close to, that I
294. extended myself to this person and, and, I could see that
295. this would just get worse with continue, continuing things.

(Did he know that you were angry?)

I tried to express it by saying, I think I tried to express
296. it to him. That, he, he was beginning to take me for granted
297. enough that he could say these things. He thought he was
298. probably comfortable enough that he could do these things,
299. but, I don’t like things said in jest that have a bit of
300. truth to them or a lot of truth to them.

(Plus, your really sensitive to criticism.)

Yah.
301. (And criticising your house is criticising you?)

Yah. Criticising my house is criticising me, right. Um,
302. I feel bad when I criticize my friends. When I say anything
303. mildly negative about people I feel I’ve betrayed them.
304. Even talking about people I feel that. I feel guilty
305. talking about M., for instance, or talking about my
306. mother the way I do, seems to me to be that I’m criticising them.

(Your not supposed to criticise them?)

Well I’m not supposed to, if you like somebody you like them,
307. if you don’t you don’t. That there isn’t an area of middle
308. ground.

(How do you feel when somebody critizes you?)
Depends on my mood. If they do it correctly, ah, what's correctly? I don't know. If they have a valid point then I'll probably go along with it and say that's OK. I may change it or I may not. It depends how it is done.

(Before you said that when somebody criticized your house you felt angry).

That's right. Because, there are, the claustrophobic furniture, well it just happened to be what I had. I hadn't got rid of a lot of it. Um.

(So you agree with him then?)

Yah, but I didn't agree with the way he did it, ah, I hadn't given him the familiarity to criticize me. I hadn't...

(You didn't know him well enough?)

I didn't know him well enough. He didn't know me well enough to take those, those steps. Ah,

(So I'm getting the impression that, I don't know, hey, I'm a really sensitive person. Show me you like me before you criticize me?)

Yah. Show me you like me period. If you have a criticism make sure it's a criticism that can be, is, something I can do something about, immediately without, in the case of the house, well there's only so much time and so much energy and so much interest to do something. When I was going to public school I remember saying to myself, "I'm never going to give anyone the chance to hurt me, the upper hand in a relationship". I didn't, didn't know what relationship but I said, "I'm never going to let anyone get the upper hand."

(If someone got the upper hand, how would they hurt you?)

I guess it would be a throwback to childhood that my mother had control. She had the power to hurt me.

(How did she hurt you?)

A multitude of ways, I guess, Ah, I started wetting my bed when I was three and I think I did it until I was fourteen. And they tried bribes, they tried beatings. Not beatings because they never beat me, strappings in the morning, they tried humiliation. It was humiliating enough doing that. They, they just didn't, they were
332. sort of ignorant in that, well, a lot of people were
333. back then because they didn't know psychology and things
334. like that. I tried a lot of methods of changing that
335. behaviour.

(But it was all very critical?)

Yah, bribing is also critical in a way. It's sort of saying,
336. "well, your doing it just to spite us so we can bribe
337. you out of it". Ah, belittling by telling you to shut up
338. when she was tired. These are standard things that people
339. do. I'm, I'm justifying it by saying that people do these
340. things.

(Yah. In trying to understand your alienation the image
341. that comes to my mind now is kind of, a frightened little
342. boy. Saying I'm very sensitive, please don't hurt me, don't
343. criticize me because ... And when you kind of perceive that
344. that might happen you, kind of back off and withdraw and
345. become alienated? Does that fit?)

Yah, either become alienated or the temper, the bad-tempered
346. little boy comes out.

(I see ...) And lashes out when.

(And explain that, did that fit what I just said? I don't
347. want to put words in your mouth. That's just the image
348. that arrived in my mind.)

Yah, when you were saying that, that, that, the bad
349. little boy, or sad little boy also has a vicious temper.

(I didn't say sad though, I said frightened. You said sad
350. and bad.)

Yah, probably sad, sad and bad, yah, bad. I once asked my
351. mother, I said, "I was a perfect kid, wasn't I? I could do
352. nothing wrong," and she said, "yah" and I said, "I did everything
353. wrong, didn't I?" and she said, "yah, you were, you did
354. wrong things". So I had that schizophrenic split. That I
355. was always a wonderful little boy but I was never good.

(What was being bad for you? What's ...)

Just about anything. Getting a dirty look was was, I guess
356. the, the behaviour groundwork was laid. The dirty look took
357. over and ...

(I guess what I'm picking up on though is some, I guess
358. what I'm hearing now is still, like it's the critical eye
359. which meant you have had a bad little boy and you can
360. either become sad or rebellious. Now I'm wondering if
361. that's kind of, in my fantasy, that's kind of what you
362. react to now. The critical eye.)

Yah, when I was working on the switchboard and my boss, I
363. had two female bosses, that was, that was a great help to work
364. things out but it didn't help. And when they would get together
365. and close the door, I almost automatically assumed
366. they were talking about me. And the one boss, she was very
367. much like my mother. She was the supervisor of the whole
368. department and her underling was a lovely lady I set up as
369. a mother figure and tried to, I didn't like her at first
370. because I thought she was, I felt she was like a critical
371. mother to me and criticism from her was very badly received.
372. When these two people got together I felt they were always
373. talking about me and I finally managed to, in my upsetness,
374. I confronted this one woman with it and she said, "Bill we
375. have other things to talk about besides you." And, in a
376. very nice way. She was a great help. She was a substitute
377. mother for me. That when I was excited about something or
378. wanted feedback I would call her or deal with her. That's
379. why working with her wasn't good because she had to criticize
380. me. She had to say, "look, these are the things that are
381. going wrong." Um and she treated me with such kid gloves,
382. she says, "I know your sensitive, I don't know how to say
383. this to you but here it is" and she'd put it out. And I'd
384. say, "look, I know I'm difficult to deal with that way." So
385. I would, we would cover but while we had an employee--employer
386. relationship was bad. Ah, but now it's wonderful. She's
387. like a buddy to me. She's a great friend. Um, what's the
388. point of that? Just, the criticism of, I make a few mistakes
389. in my job that I'm doing. Taking a temporary job here and
390. there means that I'm going to make mistakes a lot more than
391. the usual person that gets into a routine, and I really feel
392. badly. I want to sort of beat myself when I make stupid
393. mistakes. with hindsight I can see, um . . .

(Get angry at yourself?)
394. Get angry at myself, yah. My boss today was saying, "Don't
395. criticize yourself. Don't worry about it." But maybe if
396. I hadn't of said that he might of wanted to criticize more
397. so that I would feel this repentance, somehow. When I was
398. talking to this, B. is her name, the boss I had at
399. H. she was talking with this woman she works with who
400. is always negative. She refuses to enjoy anything about
401. life. She just refuses to enjoy a second of it. She's
402. always grumbling and complaining and I said, "The method
403. to try with her rather than trying to get her out of it
404. is to try to get her more into it. Exaggerate what she says
and agree with it and go even further with yourself. And see if she doesn't reverse herself and try and get you out of it. I lived with a guy for two years and when I came home at night in a good mood, my dinner would be late. Just bad. He would treat me badly. And so I developed a habit of coming home, slamming the door, being angry, just angry at anything. And it would be ah, poor Billy, I'll get your dinner for you. You know.

(So the angry little boy kind of got out a more . . .)

Got, got the results that, that I must have had a pattern from childhood.

(Do you remember that working with your mother?)

I remember having such a violent temper when I was a kid. I remember kicking in the bathroom door. And I didn't get a chance to ask for it. I kicked in the bathroom door because it wouldn't open when I wanted it to. I threw a shoe at my sister once when she broke an aquarium. A foul temper and I managed to control it. Um, but it's still there. I guess. But I seem to, it seemed to be allowed, somehow. Temper was allowed. Sulking and feeling sad was allowed. Being happy wasn't somehow encouraged. I can hear my mother saying, "Now your wrong." But I don't think being happy was encouraged somehow. I don't know.

(What part of all this are you calling alienation?)

Not trusting other people. Just not trusting other people enough to let my barriers down. To

(Putting up barriers through lack of trust. I understand how that happened now.)

Yah.

(What does alienation then, this, this, putting up barriers what does it feel like to you?)

It means I'm safest on my own. That, if there's no one else around then no one, I have to make sure I'm not using book stuff I read in books here, just on my own I'm safe, that I'm not going to criticize myself, although I, I used to. Getting this house I realized how much I criticized myself because I started talking to myself. When I was doing things I heard saying, "you're a stupid clutz." and that's my father, would criticize me constantly.

(So alienation your calling withdrawing from relationship
434. because you don’t have enough trust that your not going to
435. be hurt or criticised?)

Yah.

(OK, what’s that like when you withdraw like that? What is
436. that experience like for you? What feelings? You could
437. start with that.)

My mind is going blank on this.

(Stay with feeling blank then, that’s probably . . .)

What happens to me when I want to alienate myself? Probably
438. just sadness, I guess. Ah, mopping about a bit. Maybe
439. just feeling betrayed, I don’t know. Nothing really clear.

(Sad about?)

Outcast, feeling outcast.

(What’s that like?)

Just feeling isolated and alone. That none could like me
440. because of the behaviour I’ve exhibited. That no one could
441. like bad, well, no one could like a bad little boy that seems
442. to be coming out.

(Is that, so it’s their criticism your talking about. Their
criticism. I am a bad little boy, nobody will like me. And
443. here’s some sadness connected with that and the fear of
444. they betrayed you, are you saying?)
445. Just that the things that I had done have created, I’ve been
446. isolated. I’ve been thrown in the doghouse. That’s what my
447. mother does to my father still. Puts him in the doghouse.
448. He doesn’t know why he’s in the doghouse; he waits until
449. she lets him out of the doghouse.

(What is it, that being in the doghouse, what is that?)

The dirty look. that he’d said something or acted some way.
450. His behaviour is often being criticised by her. Very often.
451. They remind me of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor a lot.
452. That this man married this woman, who he gave her an awful
453. lot of power over him and he was quite unhappy, I think, because
454. of that.

(When you say he gave her power. What does that mean from
455. his shoes?)

From my father’s shoes my mother claimed she was reluctant
456. to marry him. She thought about it a lot and she did it
457. I think in her way that he always felt that she might have made
458. a mistake. I'm guessing now that she had the upper hand
459. because she, she said yes, I'll marry you but she
460. (unintelligible)...

(How did he feel, what in relation to her? Subservient?)

I don't know. I can only go by what I saw my grandparents
461. doing. His, his parents doing. that my grandmother would
462. constantly tongue-lash my grandfather for whatever he did.
463. He was constantly being a bad little boy.

(Do you remember what he did when that happened?)

I don't know. He was gruff with us. He didn't like kids at
464. all and ah, when he didn't like us, she would criticize him
465. for not liking us which would create guilt in us, me at least,
466. it created guilt in me that, here's a man that I wanted to
467. like, maybe, I'm not certain of that, but somebody, he was
468. at least a strong male figure around. So I identified with
469. him but he would be criticised constantly for his attitude
470. towards me.

(So your grandmother was constantly criticising your
471. grandfather. Your mother was constantly criticising...)

My father.

(Your father, and you see both your grandfather and father as
472. kind of giving power to them. When you say giving power...) 

Because I've done that myself. Being with four generations
473. this is what's called the family secret.

(And your afraid of giving power?)

And I've given it. I've given power to other people. I gave
474. power to M. by saying, "Here I am; I'm available to
475. you." and then that power is abused. So now I'm giving it
476. to D. and he's not abusing it, yet. But I'm afraid that
477. if I see something that is just normal behaviour I may
478. wrongly interpret that as abusing the power. The power I've
479. given him. So, so this relationship for me is a chance of
480. growing. Taking a chance because time is not forever as it
481. used to be.

(And when you give someone power, does that mean, I'm trying
482. to understand, that you become susceptible to their criticism?
483. Is it...?)

I just become open to them. Once I opened...
(And then their criticism has meaning?)

Yah.

484. (You see I'm trying to understand)

Yah.

(Yah)

M. never criticized me but he didn't like me when I
485. was weak.

(How did he, did he show that in some way?)

Yah. Once, the most recent incident when we lived, we lived
486. together for seven years, and I rarely got sick. I rarely
487. got sick more than a cold but I, but one time I got sick
488. . I had the, something that just knocked me out. It was
489. obviously a necessary thing that I was just, no energy.
490. I was just flat out. I was in good spirits but I couldn't
491. move. Well, he knew that I didn't like vacuum cleaners
492. around. He started vacuuming the place, left it in the
493. main hallway for a day and a half. All I asked him for when
494. I was sick was a glass of water and you'd think I was asking
495. for the world. He did it but very grudgingly. He
496. hated doing it. He hated me being sick. He hated me
497. being immobile like that. He couldn't deal with it.

(So you weren't allowed?)

I wasn't allowed to be sick. I had to be strong. If I
498. wanted his affection I had to be strong, And I was hooked
499. into him because he was very much like my mother. So, I
500. guess that's the thing about my father. She liked him
501. when he was strong and she could be proud of him but
502. when he's silly, makes a fool of himself, she makes him feel
503. inept because, I'm guessing again, I'm not sure,
504. I'm just going by what I've seen. She makes him feel
505. foolish but he can't help himself for doing what he does.
506. He can't help being what he is. He flirts with people
507. and makes stupid, heavy statements like today I said,
508. "Woman should be barefoot in the summer and pregnant in the
509. winter." in a semi-joke. I stopped using that but today I
510. it was sort of a half-joke to me. Um, but I used to be very much these
511. heavy statements and somebody would come
512. from Lithuania and my father would say "Ah, their Russian."
513. or something like that. Something guaranteed to alienate
514. somebody and yet it's a test to say "Well, if this person
515. can laugh and go with this than I'll open up and show them
a good side. I'll show them more. Maybe there just standard
things in a relationship. My friend B. said, "Put
them through hell. If they take that and come back then
their worthwhile to get the rest. The good stuff." But
really strong tough, testing, mechanism.

(What's your reaction to that?)

Well, birds of a feather, that B.'s a friend of mine so
I must have some of these traits in myself that, that put
people through hell to see what they take.
When I must have, I'm not exactly innocent of this. I must
done the same thing with M. that I had no subtlety.
He grew up with subtlety. And I had no subtlety, I just
had a sledge hammer. So my criticisms wouldn't, if I would,
if I beat around the bush I would alienate people because
I would do it in such a way that it would sound like a
heavy criticism veiled. And if I came flat out, which is
the only method I can use now if I have to say something to
somebody I just have to come flat out and state it very
badly.

(OK, one thing which keeps on ringing in me is, like, your
talking about having more trust, and therefore risking
relationship more now and, leaving your state of alienation
then, it sounds to me that your consciously selecting
people that you don't perceive as very strong.)

Oh no, these people have strength.

(What are you saying? That they're just not people that
are going to be that critical with you? Is that... I want to
understand that...)
Oh, well in the past, M. and I met and I recognized
that, I had seen M. around for a couple of years and I
didn't acknowledge his existence. He was just somebody
who was there and not there. I just wouldn't even have
any fantasy about him. He was just wasn't, he was a
person who probably scared me a bit. Then I had this break-
through in '71 in which I woke up one morning with a hangover
and I was so happy, I couldn't believe it. I got dressed
in front of a mirror. I played Richie Haven's record
called "This Could be the First Day" and I don't know why
that particular one but it was the first day. It was the
beginning of my life and I suddenly felt so confident. All
day long at work I was crying. The tears were coming down.
It was wonderful. I had a new lease on life. I realized that
I was intelligent, that I could read these books, that I was
capable of understanding things, that I wasn't a bad guy,
that I was OK. It was after reading a book called I'm OK,
your OK about a week before I finished that.

(That book had a major impact on you.)

Yah. I felt a feeling of forgiveness from that. And so I went out and I overstepped all the boundaries. I went out and I would get the people I wanted just my shere. force of, "I'm great and your going to love it" and so I abused people that way. I didn't have any humility with it. or care I guess. M. caught me right at the peak of this thing and because of the strength I had within myself I could deal with him. But then it was similar to this job I had at P. where I went in saying "I'm going to become manager and suddenly all the events that I just couldn't deal with came and made me feel incredibly insecure. And that happened with M. too, that, especially since I wasn't the only one, I was just one of hundreds of people in his life. And I sort of said, "Well this is a relationship."

I'm very quick to want a relationship. To want to pin it down and yet I'm afraid of the pinning down. I'm pinning down sort of, and we're, both trying to find mechanisms to avoid rushing into these things.

(What does pinning down mean to you?)

It's strange because I, I want a security of a relationship and yet I don't want to feel like I'm owned by somebody. That I'm afraid to look at other guys on the street for instance or I'm afraid to do what I want to. We have come up with the mechanism of having a night off every two nights or just occasionally. We haven't pinned it down to that but

(So neither of you want to feel that your pinned down?)

Yah. He's enjoying his freedom too that, that we both have, that were both stressing with each other that we have our own lives to live and ah, that we shouldn't get too close too fast and take it for granted too quickly. That it could go stale if we, it could go sour if we get too close too fast. If we give too much too quickly.

(Rather than?)

Rather than just taking it easy and enjoying the getting there because there isn't no there to get. That the (The process?)

The process, yah.

(Let me go back to that book for a sec. I don't completely
understand. You woke up ah, a morning in '71 and you read

About a week after I finished the book, yah.

(Now the book goes from, there's four positions. There's
I'm not Ok: Your not OK. and the different combinations
I'm OK; Your OK. I'm OK; Your not OK. I'm not OK;
(Well there's four combinations. What, for you thought?)
Well I had the standard one, I guess that I was not OK but
everyone else out there was OK.

(So you started off with I'm not OK; Your OK and then you
read the book . . .)
Which gives people power out there because I'm not OK, what
do I count for?

(Ah, I see, I see, I'm not OK; Your OK so you have power and
what you say really effects me in some way.)

Yah.

(And then what is it in the book that you read? What did
the book say that had that effect on you?)
I don't know but the general feeling I had was forgiveness.
And this is the basis of a religious conversion as well.
That of being forgiven from an external source.

(Was it like a religious . . .?)
It could have been, yah, if I had a, if I had, it was
period, it was a state of grace. But I forgot who referred to
it as a state of grace, but it was a state of grace.

(And then you got now I'm OK, but it sounds like you shifted
from I'm OK; your not OK.)
No.

(No?)
No.

(Because you said you went out with kind of a power? or)
Yah. That wouldn't mean not OK, it just meant I was suddenly
given confidence that I must have had from the beginning but somehow lost.

(So the book reminded you then that it's OK to feel OK?)

Yah. I felt good about myself. I liked myself. I, I was confident and that attracts people who want to undermine that. Don't pretend your too happy. Don't, it's OK to be happy but don't show your happy because people can't deal with that sometimes. They have trouble dealing with it.

(Like your mother for instance.)

I guess so. I found when I had something that really excited me when I was a kid that showing it to or telling my mother would diminish it incredibly. That her attitude would be do indifferent sometimes.

(And then when you went out into the world with this I'm OK position, what did you find? How did people react?)

They liked it. They seemed to like the power and the confidence and ah, or else they just saw me as a regular run of the mill person who was fairly confident.

(So how did that morning in 1971 expect, um expect, influence this experience that you call alienation?)

It dissolved it a lot.

(Yah?)

Because I felt as good as anybody else, suddenly. I felt that I was OK and they were Ok. I guess basically is that this is my attitude now generally to people. That, that I can have good will to everyone. That I try to avoid criticising anyone because it's not much, so much trying to avoid it because I don't criticize people unnecessarily if I can help it unless they get on my territory. S.'s on my territory so unfortunately he's a target and I have to really watch that. And if it wasn't S. it would be someone else. My grandmother had the same thing with roomers in this house that they were wonderful fine but when they got in here it was ah, bad.

(OK, so now your OK as long as someone doesn't encroach on your territory.)

Right.

(OK, now I understand your alienation as often beginning
with what you perceive as a criticism, OK, but I want to understand, what about when somebody criticizes you now. Do you go through the same process?)

No, Because I have a fairly subtle base in myself now.

(Talk about, let's talk about, yourself now then. What's it like, in terms of alienation, to be you now?)

Ah, I would think that I'm less alienated then the average person, now.

(What does that mean?)

That means that I can get as close to somebody as they want to so long as long as they don't try to take up too much of my time. There's only seven days a week and it doesn't take too many people to fill in those seven days. I, I have an aversion to making future plans, making long range plans.

(I'm glad I got you now then.)

Well I like, I like some spur of the moment things. Planning a night in advance is the maximum.

(So could you compare now, um, kind of a little bit. I'm trying to understand. What's it like being you now in terms of alienation. I'm, I'm Your saying that now you can relate closely as long as somebody doesn't try to grab too much of your time.)

Yah, but I've got awareness now that I didn't have before. Before I was confused. I was confused and my confusion would lead to anger and pushing out. But now when I get confused I can see why I'm upset. The broken glass, D. was washing the dishes and he did a very small number of dishes but the hot-water tank depleted because of the method; and all the soap he was using and the paper towels. Not these are the things that you didn't do in our family and I had to stop and say, "OK soap costs $1.79 a container go and buy six if you have to. Forget about the paper towels keep plenty on hand." I had to be adult about it rather than a child. I had to say, "Don't make issues out of nothing." In the hot water case, I was running a tub later on and there was no hot water. So D. had to have a cold bath. So I could say, well that, something must be broken or something. But ah, but I will be able to communicate and say. "It does bother me when you do certain things." I now (???) so I can say, "I feel slightly annoyed when certain things happen." What you were saying
(Reason it out more)

Reason it out, because I don't know that anger is necessary.

(How long ago was it that this fellow criticized you about the house?)

Oh just shortly, just after I'd been fired, a couple of days after I'd been fired.

(So how long?)

655. Um, three months ago, I guess.

(So it's still pretty recent.

Yah.

(It sounded to me that that three months ago you did a similar thing, that you did in the past though. Like you had, you felt that when he criticized the house he was essentially criticizing you. And what happened after that?)

I guess I didn't like the person I saw. I didn't like that. He referred, he said, "Anyone that's sexually permissive is a hosebag." And he referred to himself as a hosebag. And I guess he showed to me that he didn't have much of a good feeling about himself. I just generally began to dislike him.

(You didn't become alienated in relation to him?)

No. I just began to dislike him, I think.

(and be angry at him?)

Yah.

(So you didn't go into that . . .)

664. No, no I didn't alienate myself.

(I guess I'm trying to determine like, what do you do now?)

Yah. I was just angry at him.

665. (Yah, OK)

And yet when he isolated himself, I had to know what I did wrong, I, I went over and over and over in my mind what I could have done wrong to . . .

(And that was recent too?)
Ah, that was back in Nov.

(But is that . . . Your saying what did you do wrong?)

That's right I felt that because . . .

(Did you feel alienated then? This is, I'm trying, having trouble finding words but that's what I'm getting at.)

Yah. Yah, I felt that I was, that he had, that was probably a classic case, that he had cut me off because of something. I had said and I went over everything I had said. That, why did this person I cared for so much, who opened up so incredibly wonderfully, to me. Who, He phoned me one night after we were just together, he phoned me to say that I just wanted to see that you exist. And it was wonderful, and I suddenly started to recover from this. when I was nineteen. I fell in love with someone; it was a disaster and I realized that had been the basis of all my relationships. That I was no good because this person didn't want me

(So the differences now is that you feel better about yourself?)

Yah.

(And are you saying that that gives you the courage to, I don't know, what are you saying? I, I'm trying to understand like . . . I feel better about myself, therefore what comes next?)

I feel better about myself as long as I'm getting the feedback that, that I was, and I was getting that feedback that I was wonderful. I was a nice guy. He thought I was fabulous. And then suddenly it ended just abruptly.

(He cut himself off.)

Yah. It just ended and I thought, "What did I do wrong?"

(What happened to you at that time?)

Ah, rather than retreating, I pursued. I pursued . . .

(Persued him?)

Persued. Phoned him, wrote him.

(So rather than withdrawing you went after him?)

Yah.
(Said, hey, what, what, it is . . . ?)

Yah, yah, and he said well it's nothing, it's me. It was him, he said. Ah, but I saw this beautiful vulnerable person. And I guess because I saw this vulnerable person, when we were out walking, after I managed to establish contact with him, I could never give him enough compliments, I, I, had to hold myself back from praising him to the skys. ah, and one day I just very calmly told him all the things that I liked about him and he said, "Well, if you see those things in me then you must have them in you, as well."

And Ah, it was wonderful. wise man. I guess I was perceiving myself in him, what I saw of myself in him.

(The part you liked.)

Yah. But the vulnerability. The . . . he doesn't like relationships because he changed in them,. and I could see how, how this strong, strong person, this cock of the walk that we see became a vulnerable little child. I loved holding him, I loved, I loved, I wanted, I wanted to make his life easier for him. I wanted to, without control, I just wanted to make everything easy for him. I still do. I want to, he's a big enough boy. He can protect himself.

(I have a hunch now that he reminded you of yourself.)

Probably, he really brought out something in me.

(That vulnerable little boy who needs affection, hugs.)

Yah. And I wanted to be that person. And and I'm being that person but he has to reach out and take it. I've, I've made it clear to him that, I'm there. So if someone like myself came along as D seems to be, then I'm beginning to see that I can trust because that's where a lot of memory things coming up, in the last week or so that, for me to spend a whole weekend in close proximity to somebody without needing to back off. The backing off I did was just very minimal.

(It's a real accomplishment?)

Yah. It also says a lot for the person, for D.

(Does trust mean anything different to you now, or is it the same as before?)

Trust is really critical. Once a trust is betrayed, then it's betrayed and ah, the relationship would go down the
713. drain, probably. But, a mere criticism would, if D.
714. for instance, had criticised me for something then the
715. whole relationship would probably be in jeopardy.

(Still?)

Probably, yah it... (tape change)

(OK, what I was curious about is that you said that if
716. D. criticised you, his criticism would be crucial.)

Depending what he criticised, I guess. If he criticised
717. something that I value in myself some charm that I like
718. in myself, I would find that bad.

(Yah).

That ah, this fellow that I rushed out of the house criticised
719. my age. Something I had no control over but I was
720. struggling with to come to terms with. My house which I
721. was beginning to value because I've been struggling with
722. the house as well to rid myself of old ghosts, old, grandparental
723. tapes manipulations, criticisms, whatever. Um
724. so this is a crucial thing, this is my home, my environment, my
725. dwelling.

(What do you think you would do if he criticised you?)

It would have to depend on what he did but he's been
726. so mature in that respect that he hasn't done it.

(In your fantasy.)

I would hope I could access it, calmly, and say yes or
727. no. Yes I agree with you or no I don't and here are the
728. reasons why, and possibly say that I didn't like that
729. kind of criticism. It's hard to say.

(But you don't think you'd go into that withdrawal?)
730. No, no, that's a waste of time.

(OK, I hear that as a crucial difference.)

Yah, I consider that a waste of time.

(Before you perceive criticism, you felt hurt, you withdraw
731. into yourself...)

That's anger.

(Anger, sadness, betrayal, and then you kind of left it
at that . . . is that what it was like before?)

I would walk away, I would walk or run away from it I think.

(Just not relate to them.)

Yah, probably.

(And what would you do with what you were feeling? Like you
would cross the person off, but what about your reaction?)

I would feel bad about myself. I would say, "Geez I'm a
fuckup in relationships." Before I met M. I vowed . . .

(So I'm not OK would become I'm really not OK?)

Yah, I, I, decided that I screwed up so many relationships
that I wasn't going to get involved with them anymore. This is
is before I met M. That was, I remember that clearly
that I said, "no more relationships for me", And just after
I said that, days after I said that I got very quickly
involved. And we made the mistake of getting too close
too fast. We spent too much time together. We spent
all our time together. And we lost ourselves in the process.
And it was only when we finally learned to get
along with each other, but we did that with caution. There
were certain in areas that were just taboo to touch, and
we still have that to some extent. He likes me now when
I'm at a distance, when I'm the strong person because
he only gets the letters, he gets . . .

(And that's what he likes. The strong person; not the whole
person.)

Yah. Yah. That's right.

(And, and your saying now that if
if D. criticized you, you'd get that initial
reaction that you used to get, then you'd say you'd come out
and not close off relationship but go after it.)

That's right, Yah. Because he said, D. said that people
shouldn't fight in relationships. That there's communication:
that people should be able to communicate.

(What do you mean by fight?)

SIGH. Discuss differences, I think. That's what I mean
by fighting. Not, not, not, out of control fighting but
controlled fighting.
(What about, um, if somebody criticized you and you got angry
758. would you say, "I'm angry at you")

That's unfair, I would say. That's not fair. That's that's
759. not fair. I might say your dealing with something that--
760. part of myself that I value or yah your probably right but
761. I don't feel like changing that aspect of myself.

(If his coming out and saying I'm angry at you really wouldn't
762. be fair?)

I wouldn't, I wouldn't want to hurt the other person by saying
763. I'm angry at you. I would just say I'm angry probably
764. at what you said. Probably because my mother was angry
765. at me for my actions but I took it as anger at me as a
766. person. That . . .

(How do you separate the actions and the person? I would
767. have trouble doing that.)

I would too, yah. I think the "critical no stage"
768. when I was two was the the beginning where I was thwarted
769. in my "noes" when I was . . . "no" was establishing an
770. independence, ah, in a child at two or three when they start
771. to say "no" to everything, and that just wasn't done in our
772. family. We just, my older sister, she was the first born
773. used to have temper tantrums. I remember my father picking
774. up a dish, planful of water from the sink and throwing
775. it at her and, to sort of calm her down and her rebelliousness.

That's how they dealt with her so they must have done the
776. same with me.

(So you were taught that you don't say "no")

That's right.

(Saying "no" ends up in punishment.)

That's right, yah.

(Can you say "no" in relationships now?)

Uh-huh.

(How did you learn to do that?)

Probably by just getting to know myself. By studying
777. psychology enough to get to know a bit, a bit about
778. myself. I was naive enough when I first started studying
779. psychology after, I'm OK, Your OK that I, I thought
780. that I was neurotic because I was locked in a room one
781. night. One incident in my life was why I was a bit
782. fucked up.

(What do you mean, "locked in a room?")

Well I just

(You locked yourself in your room?)

No I just thought that I was, I was locked in or I was somehow or other
caged in.

(Your feeling of being locked in or caged in?)

Yah, that that one incident might have done it. At one
783. point in my life I thought the worse thing that could
784. ever happen to me would be that I would be powerless and
785. my parents would have control of me again. And that
786. they would not treat me nicely; that once they had power over
787. me again I would lose myself. All the things that I sort
788. of struggled for I guess.

(And that's what you talked about up until maybe that 1971
789. change.)

Well shortly after that I got over my anger towards my
790. father. I don't know why I would be angry at him because
791. he didn't do anything.

(Maybe that's why your angry at him.)

Yah, but I was constantly, he would, he would, M pointed
792. that out once. He said, "your father was agreeing with you
793. and your arguing with him. He was agreeing with you." Then
794. I started to realize that. So I managed to hug him occasionally
795. and then I would fear seeing him again because I know
796. I wouldn't want to hug him again. But now that's over. We
797. get along OK. We talk well and, it used to be that I'd
798. always phone up and talk to my mother and not to my father
799. because I had nothing to say to him. But now I'm always
800. talking to my father. But I'm important to him now because
801. he's feeling isolated and maybe slightly useless because
802. he doesn't have a job to relate to.

(What allowed you to make that change, being able to relate
803. to your father?)

Studyin, I just, studied all the relationships in the family.
804. I went over every one except my grandfather surprisingly.
805. It wasn't until either last year or the year before. Last
806. year I think it was, I started to suck my teeth (makes the
807. sound) and I thought, "that's disgusting" and I said to my
808. father, "I started to suck my teeth and it's really bothering
809. me". And he said, "your grandfather used to do that".
810. And I said, "Oh", Then I went to the pool that day and I
811. thought, "Grandfather, I've put a lid on him and I
812. haven't looked at his effect on me at all". So I started
813. to call him names in my mind, sort of thing, you miserable
814. bastard, what did you do that for? Why did you treat me so
815. badly? I could see why because I was the only son and I
816. was the biggest sissy in the world. I have a picture of
817. myself in his back garden at age seven or eight with a Dalia
818. behind, sort of posing like a movie star and I thought,
819. "Here's this man who was a football star, a tough soldier

(Your grandfather?)

Oh yah. I've got a picture of him in uniform with two
820. almost thuggish looking guys. And they were Canadian
821. soldiers. He hung around with some pretty tough characters.
822. So there is the toughest of tough men and I was the sissiest
823. of sissy kids. But I'm very much like my grandfather in an
824. enormous number of ways. The eruptions on the job that
825. destroy everything, ah, all at once, that this temper
826. tantrum comes up and the job people are just frightened
827. of me.

(Still?)

No, well I avoid that now because I, part of my job thing is
828. not allowing anyone to have power over me. That I have
829. temporary situations that I can get out of when I need to.

(How do you get out of them now?)

Two events happened. One when I was in a temporary assignment.
830. The boss who had never criticized me before, she suddenly
831. decided, we were a bit stoned after lunch, we wanted her to
832. go to lunch early, this guy I was working with is a bit
833. of a troublemaker too, um. so she laid into him after lunch and
834. he pointed the finger at me saying that I had done something.
835. and so she laid into me. And I thought, Oh, I don't have
836. to put up with this." so I just filled out my time-sheet and
837. handed it to her like that without a word. So she went to
838. lunch early all right but I'd quite my job in effect. And
839. the other incidence was when I was, I was within
840. three weeks of finishing a year's probation in the government
841. when I would be a permanent employee. Well this big boss,
842. this woman, called me into her office and said, "I'm tired
843. of this and I'm tired of that. Here's what I want. I either
844. want your resignation now or..." and I didn't say anything
845. and then she went down this whole list of things
846. that she had. Behaviour changes she wanted in me. So after
847. she was finished this harangue, I let her build up, and build
848. up, and I said, "End of the month OK with you?" And that was,
849. my years probation was up and I quit my job and that that,
850. Oh well, but I didn't want to put up with it. I didn't
851. feel I had to cawtowe to somebody telling me what to do,
852. . . critically. So I ended up being out of a job.
853. (Sounds like you gained more self respect though.)

Yah. and that's what happened to Pronto when they wanted
854. me to work seven hours. They wanted me to work a regular
855. day on Good Friday and it should have been a paid holiday.
856. With no compensation, with time off, and no wages for it.
857. And I felt that was unfair because I could see where the
858. problem was occurring and they were ignoring that problem.
859. And when they said they would put me on a month's probation
860. I said, "Well I'm not going to change my attitude because
861. I feel I'm giving you fair enough value as it is." And
862. that's when they decided they would just let me go. They
863. were, but what they were doing there was trying to eliminate the high-
864. priced help. What they felt was the high
865. priced help.

(see.)

And get ah, less expensive people in because they had over
866. extended themselves. So I managed to get angry and quit a
867. few jobs like that. So the method I'm working at now is
868. good, so no one gets ah, a hold of me. No one gets power
869. over me.

(Yah. I guess when I started I wanted to um, there was three
870. main things like kind of: alienation itself, how did you
871. get out of it and what you are like now. And I guess, let
872. me do a nutshell here to . . . The alienation itself for you
873. was, you really didn't think much about yourself. You talked
874. about how you think you got like that. Someone would
875. criticize you and instead of going out and confronting or
876. or figuring out what was going on you would withdraw into
877. yourself.)

I didn't know how to confront them.

(Didn't know how to confront them and you felt sad, you
878. felt betrayed, and you way of dealing with it was to cut
879. off relationship.)

That's right. That's what I said when I was in public
879. school, I'm never going to let anyone get the upper hand on me.

(Power over you).

Power over me but I always managed, to choose people who did have that.

(You consciously chose people who had power over you.)

Yah, which is why this thing with D.--is working because D. has in effect chosen me ah, it isn't a choice that

880. I've made. I just, suddenly someone stepped in and said, "Here I am". and ah, it's working out OK, so far. And

881. probably will.

(Your making some conscious steps not to have power like having periods away from each other.)

Yah.

(Alright, and then the question of how you got out of this sounds like 1971 was the turning point and the way I understand it is this book was kind of a catalyst. and the 882. catalyst is, "heh, it's OK to be OK".)

Yah. That's right.

(and that gave you more confidence to to relate in spite of some of your feelings. does that, does that fit?)

That's well the people I chose to relate to had to be intelligent, they had to have a lot of power in themselves. 883. That had to be better than myself somehow. I needed to

884. be somewhat intimidated by people.

(Before '71?)

Since then. Before then I guess too. I needed to have a bit of a power struggle somehow so I could work out childhood things I guess.

(So you still need a power struggle but you see . . . ?)

885. No I don't now. No

(I'm confused.)

OK, well now I feel I don't need to struggle with someone.
I do need someone whose intelligence I respect, and, I'm finally accepting the fact that someone can like me. Some one that I value can like me. I've got a lot of people who like me...

(Oh, I see, I see...)

I don't value.

(so before it was more ah, that person likes me but I've chosen someone I don't value.)

No I don't, I've never chosen anyone I didn't value, but I always chose someone who was a powerful person. I don't know.

(You choose someone who was, you felt was more powerful than you...)

Well an equal, equal too, I guess, because I have a lot of arrogance too. I've always had a lot of arrogance about my self. So, um, I needed someone who was a worthy companion. (That's since '71?)

I guess since '71, yah.

(OK, and the, another big difference to me is, I guess after this experience of saying "I'm OK"... you had more confidence...)

I did but but I got involved in a relationship that was geared to destroy that confidence. It was eroded and I and, I was always struggling to get it back. Ah, B. my friend said, that what I had wasn't real, wasn't based on any foundation.

(OK)

And so I had to, in all that period, work with this power struggle with M.

(OK and now, where's the power struggle now? It's...) It isn't there. I've got a good sense of myself now...

(Ah, now I understand.)

I'm cautious of it to make sure I don't lose it.

(Ok, now I understand.)

So maybe there's less testing on my part.
(OK, so it's a little bit more, ahm, I don't know what
the word is.)

Give and take, maybe

(OK, more give and take. And and that explains the now.
so I understand the transition. Just looking over my . . .
Is there anything else I've missed or anything you feel
that should be added. If I don't understand something
when I listen to the tape like I feel free enough to come
back and ask you.)

Oh, yes, for sure.

(But at this initial interview. Is there anything I haven't
asked or something you feel has to be added?)

I guess if I'm generally safer to trust somebody
because I've a stronger sense of myself ah, and having that
it means I'm more likely to choose somebody whose, who can
deal with the current me and value the current me that
One of the things D. has been doing is sort of, when
he's looking at me he would shake his head like this,
sort of in disbelief. He still finds it hard to believe that
I exist. And ah, I do this to show him that yes that this
is possible that sure I exist because I have come to value
myself enough now that I'm not going to be sold cheaply.
That sort of puts down people but I don't mean that. That
I'm not going to settle for less than what I think I'm
capable of now. And I'm beginning to see that with time I
can trust that D. is sincere and so I don't have to
test so much.

(Someone can really like you for who you are?)

Yah. yah the whole spectrum. And that's what I feel with
G. to that he can do all sort of things and ah, I
accept him totally. Although there are many times when
I want to walk away and say, "What am I battin' my head
against a brick wall for. What am I trying to prove with
him." But he's obviously testing me in a lot of ways too.
with his indifference. He'll treat a casual friend, somebody
he doesn't care for cordially and very kindly and sort of
almost ignore me. And when that happens I just recognize
it and I say, uh, OK, that's enough. And I say well look
got to go, see you later. And leave so that I don't sit
around and find myself being treated differently I
just get up and go away. And whenever I spot this indifference
I just move on rather than sit and take it. But
(Because before you said, "Well I'm the kind of person who deserves this kind of treatment or something like that?)

Yah, I probably would have felt that I deserved it.

(Yah. So liking yourself better has been a big factor in . . .)

Yah, and D. was a good case because he likes me and ah, but I feel the same about you." So whether it was coincidence or whether it is just something I'm ready for, but if he'd come along a couple of years ago when I was just finishing off the relationship with M. I would have felt, "What does this person see in me that, what could he want?" and I would destroy it with my insecurity, which is what I did with that fifth night. I couldn't believe this incredibly handsome man found anything appealing about me. And that sort of must have started the destroying part. That he found me as someone aloof and valuable and slightly indifferent that he had to prove himself to. And suddenly there was no contest because I was sort of saying, "What can you find valuable about me?"

(But then you went after him and you didn't withdraw? You had some of your old feelings but you didn't treat your old feelings in the same way?)

That's right.

(Instead of just say but get rid of them you went after him and said, "What is it?")

Yah.

(OK)

And just kept at it.

(Is there anything else?)

Not that I can think of.

(Um, how did you experience the interview?)

I like talking about myself.

(Yah?)

And, and I found that a lot of times that I find things
about myself just by stopping a moment and verbalizing.


965. Stream of consciousness without censoring.

(How did you experience me in the interview?)

Oh, non-judgemental, for sure. Non-critical, as an 966. equal.

(Did I hinder you in any way?)

No, no

(Be free with that if there is anything.)

No, no I would probably have said as much.

967. (OK, um, again for the same reason um, is there anything 968. about how I operated that you found was useful?)

Just the acceptance, I think. I feel accepted, and so I 969. don't have to be defensive. I feel trusting. But I 970. still feel that when I trust sometimes it is going to 971. be betrayed so, a part of me it's like letting loose 972. and finding somebody laughing at me later on.

(973. So there's a slight chance that I might betray you?)

974. No, you wouldn't, I don't think so. I wouldn't

(Because, like I was asking you about the interview, 975. that's why . . .)

Yah, yah, I was just doing the thing that in the past 976. I might have felt that I had opened up only to have 977. that used against me.

(And, and, what about you and me sitting here now?)

No, no, no, no, I don't feel that now.

(Um, if I were to interview again is there any way I could 978. do something differently to be even more useful?)

To keep me on track probably because I tend to wander.

(I sometimes didn't know what to do with that because 979. like it's still very early in my work and I didn't want 980. to close things down. Do you think it would have been 981. useful if I would have focused you more. Did you feel 982. I was letting you drift?)

You managed to bring me back which is OK. I like that
982. because I'll ramble until I'm sort of channelled again.
983. But if there was anything I wanted to bring up I would
984. remember it and bring it up.

(Ok do you feel that at any time I attempted to force
985. anything on you or put words in your mouth?)

No, no, no.

(OK I had something else I wanted to ask... OK if you
986. could summarize what this interview was about, how would you
987. do that?)

I don't know. Off the top of my head I would say about
988. my running away from... from reality. Just running away
989. from reality. Running away from things that I don't
990. understand. So probably the more I understand the
991. less I'm likely to run away.

(OK, what do you think I'm studying. This is my way of
992. checking on myself. I'm not...)

Well I know what you said you were studying. You said
993. you were studying how people have managed to overcome
994. alienation. How they stepped out and overcome the
995. barriers and, that's what your questioning is leading
996. to, how I particularly have managed to do this.

(Anything else?)
997. Well, what, what lead up to that period in '71 was was
998. pretty critical too. That I had been smoking grass for
999. about four years before than I guess, and it had all
1000. been nice experiences.

(ahhum)
1001. Listening to music. Eating, all easy things to take. And
1002. then I had a whole series of three really bad trips, on my
1003. homegrown grass. And I felt paranoid and anxious um, and
1004. at one point I was sitting there with these older lady
1005. friend and another guy who was busy raiding my fridge,
1006. overstepping the bounds of my hospitality. I begrudged
1007. him suddenly the things that he was doing in my house.
1008. And I said now I know what it feels like to be persecuted.
1009. I had a persecution feeling then that...

(He was persecuting you?)

That, not that he was but the woman was ah, we should
1010. be referring to your kind of people. she was thinging
1011. me.

(Oh, I see.)
And ah,  
1012. (Putting you in a box?)

Yah, and I had allowed that to happen. And ah, I became  
1013. paranoid. And ah, I had another experience with a young  
1014. lady who was over at the apartment. We were playing Led  
1015. Zeppelin Two, and I liked that music up to then but  
1016. suddenly it was like a nightmare and I came out of the  
1017. bathroom and I said, "somethings wrong or is something wrong?"  
1018. And she thought I had dropped acid in her beer. She was  
1019. having a bad time.

(The ----)

Yah. That bad a time because we were just filling the  
1020. water pipe with grass and smoking like there was no tomorrow.  
1021. And I flipped out and she flipped out. She, she, five  
1022. days at a psychiatrist to come down from that.

(Just from grass?)

I was about to tell her that I was gay, and ah, I guess  
1023. she felt something in the air we’re, we just both went  
1024. paranoid. and we went back to where she lived I put my  
1025. t-shirt on and thought I’m going to have to call the police.  
1026. What am I going to do with this women? How are we going  
1027. to cope?

(You said that somehow that that led up to that night?)  
1028. Oh yah.

(The ’7l change).

Yah.

(I’m not making that connection)

So, so, so I stopped smoking grass because it brought on  
1029. these feelings. I couldn’t hear this Led Zeppelin record  
1030. without having these nightmare feelings come over me again.  
1031. Ah, to get out of my depression I used to have a bath  
1032. occasionally, a warm bath used to do that. and I remember  
1033. having a warm bath once and having to get out and get  
1034. dressed I was so anxious. I couldn’t. I couldn’t sit. and  
1035. then December I had a depression that was really bad, for me.  
1036. and ah, I had broken up with a lover at that point. And then  
1037. at a New Year’s party brought out some hash and said, "Your  
1038. being silly, come on, smoke up." So we did, and I could see  
1039. the, I could see the cut, the connection cut between my
lover and I, had sort of made a connection cut, not clear, cut the strings sort of in the relationship, and felt free of it. And ah, it was because of these depressions I think, that me emotional state had been so churned up that it led to a rebirth of sorts. That it allowed that to happen, I think.

(Depression that churned up emotion after splitting up with your lover made you ready for the rebirth? Open)

Yah.

(for it?)

Yah. I guess so many things came out. It’s like primal therapy. So many bad things came out. So many bad feelings came out at that point of these.

(Bad feelings came out of you? It’s almost like, I get the sense that they are coming out and leaving.)

Maybe that was what it was, yeh.

(You say "maybe", I . . .)

Well, yes, yes, yah, because I look at that as as as critical to what happened that I went really really low and out of that low came this rebirth. That is, that’s the point at which I started reading” I’m Ok, Your OK”.

(And you were able to take it in?)

Yah, I was able to do that. And I realized that I was intelligent. But all these stupid things that, the stupid’s that I’ve been called. That, that I just barely made it through school. Always made just enough to pass. And, yah, I wasn’t programmed for success. That success wasn’t welcomed somehow, that failure was tolerated.

(Your low self-image that you were talking about?)

Yah, Yah, that failure in our family was tolerated. But I wasn’t supposed to do better than my parents. They didn’t encourage me to, I don’t think, they didn’t encourage me to. Well, of course they didn’t encourage me to do anything that, everything I was excited about was neutralized by their attitudes.

(Being excited or happy was not accepted?)

Yah, that’s right, it was neutralized, that they talked
about getting lessons for me for my sculpture but never
did anything about it. (Pause) So anyway that's what happened
that I guess I, credit grass for disrupting my life. In
a positive way.

(Acted as a catalyst at the time.)

Yah.

(Um, I want to make sure not to betray you, so let me
ask this then. Um, I guarantee confidence on the tape
and when I transcribe it I'll take out any names that can
be recognizable. I have a chairman now and ah, it would
be very useful for me if I could open up this material to
them just in terms of my work 'cause this is early in
my work. How would you feel about that?)

Well, that's another thing now. I've decided that why
not take chances? Why not risk, and what I've found from
having this house is that I found that I must do the
things that I fear. I must conquer my fear by moving
outside of myself.

(OK, so what are the limits then, for me with this?)
The only limits are to protect, for instance.

(Ah-huh, so let's say it took 's name out.)

Well no one's going to know but just to the
reference that I made. I, he, because he doesn't like people
to know too much about him. So I wouldn't want to betray him.

(OK, Well let me, let me just in terms of understanding
what you mean. What if I wanted to play or show Barbara the transcript,
for instance? Could I do that?)

Well Barbara knows probably well enough that she would
find that OK.

(You wouldn't mind that?)

and she wouldn't betray him, no, no. Because she's open enough and, and,
she wants the best for too.

I'm sure.

(OK, so your main concern is betraying the other people
involved.)

MMM, not for myself because I don't have a reputation to
lose particularly that I wouldn't have lost on my own.
(OK, then the, OK, I'll tell you, well what if I did this
then. Like what, like the first person I interviewed,
he gave himself a pseudonym in the transcript.)
I don't mind about that.

(So really, as long as the other people's names are protected, then you really don't mind?)
No. It reminds me somehow that I've given out many keys to my house to various people.
(It's a part of your new openness?)
Yah, to say
(Here I am.)

Here I am. I came in the other day and one friend had dropped over and left a cigarette for me with a little XKE marking on the cigarette to say that he had been there. And ah, I didn't feel bad about that.

What I'm thinking is um, my friend asked Hans Selye what is the secret to who you are and how you go on living, and he said, "I think the whole secret is to find out who you are and put it out there."
She wrote the scenery, yah, that's right. The time is running out. That's one of the critical things that I think, turning forty was dangerous, but the mid, the yearly part of the forties have been critical for me. I realized that if I don't do it now I'm never going to do it. And that's why I wanted a love relationship because I'd never had a give and take open caring, trusting relationship with someone.

(Now I turned forty so let's take the risk.)
Well, I hoped that it could happen but I didn't know if it could.

(Yah).

But I also have a. I don't like the word religious, but I have a feeling about the universe that the Creator exists wants the best for me. And if that Creator wants the best for me then who am I to say "no" to it? I am able to accept the things, the good things that are happening as being a gift. So I have an attitude of thanks an awful lot for the good things that happen.
And the more I think the more I get. But I don't get my ego in the way which says, "I've created this." because I have nothing to do with it. Because I know how fast things can destruct once ego gets in the way. To, to say that I have any power at all, except the positive thoughts that I send out, and ah, I don't want to hurt anybody and I don't want to be hurt myself. I'm not tough but I'm capable now of, of taking care of myself and, and dealing, when I hustled that guy out it wasn't so much because I was offended so much but I was, I didn't want that person around any longer because I didn't like him. I suddenly didn't like him. And I felt capable of doing that.

(Why don't we stop here?)

Hmmm.