

#### 4.5.5.1. Key Words & Key Images

a disconcerting process  
unknown territory, the world within

#### 4.5.5.2. Intersubjective Response

What has emerged for you within the drawings has been a surprising glimpse of the world within. In this statement you have distanced yourself from the emotional experience of the journey and seem to have reached a point of containment.

#### 4.5.6. Picture 4 (Session 2)

##### 4.5.6.1. Image

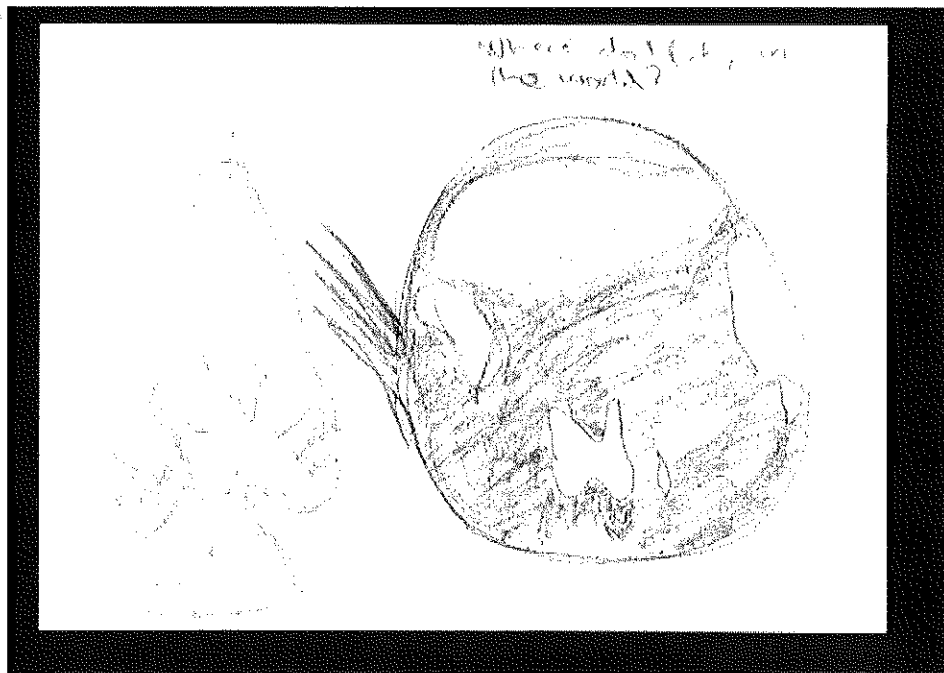


Figure 71 — Co-researcher 5, *Picture 4 (Session 2)*

##### 4.5.6.2. Description

There are two major objects and a question has been written on the top of the right side of the page.

The left hand object is in the lower half of the left third of the page. It a shape outlined in purple and not coloured in. The shape has five finger-like shapes pointing roughly upward, with a oval shape between the third and fourth of these (numbered from the left). This oval has marks that would indicate, hair, mouth, eyes and nose. The finger like shapes would appear to be arms and all have some degree of over-scoring or zigzag lines over them. Below these fingers there is a bulbous base that has two sets of 1 cm parallel lines extending to the bottom of the page. Small purple dots and marks can be seen between the face and the yellow and orange objects as well as over some lower parts of the purple outline.

From the end of the fourth 'arm' an orange line extends to 10 cm from the top of the page and directly above the head of the purple figure, and ends in an orange squiggle 3cm in length. This orange shape is paralleled by a yellow line on either side of the orange and a 4 cm yellow squiggle at the top.

The right hand object occupies the right hand side two thirds of the page.

It is a circle that extends to 3 cm of the bottom, top and right side of the page. The circle has a blue perimeter and an overlapping red perimeter, which ends in a tight zigzag of lines that protrude from the edge of the circle. These lines begin at the 9 o'clock position of the circle, are 4-5cms in length and are directed towards the top left hand corner of the page. This places them in close proximity to the yellow and orange lines and the lowest point of the zigzag is touching the yellow line furthest to the right.

The blue and red circle is mainly coloured in, in blue but some outlined shapes have been left uncoloured. The uncoloured shape in the lower half of the circle would appear to be a representation of Australia, with Tasmania and New Zealand in close proximity. Thus the circle would appear to be a representation of the globe.

The words 'Where do I fit, in the world?' are written in blue above the blue and red circles.

#### **4.5.6.3. Key Words & Key Images**

the globe  
the angel holds the flower  
'where do I fit?'  
the fairy holds the wand  
the red zigzag

#### **4.5.6.4. Intersubjective Response**

There is a sense of the tight boundaries between the figure and the globe and the much more fluid boundary between the figure and its 'wand.' It looks like a wish or a spell is necessary to make connection with the world. There seems to be an ambiguity about the red zigzags marking an explosion coming out of the world or being a force penetrating the boundaries of the world. Whichever way this is perceived it is evident that the red boundary of the world is broken at this point.

There is a powerful and primitive gripping of the wand or flower by the figure which has a naive, hopeful expression.

#### **4.5.6.5. Written Text (Reflection on Picture 4)**

##### *4.5.6.5.1. Description*

There are 15 statements; the first briefly describes the beginning focus of the drawing. This is followed by four statements discussing the implications of the image of a flower, which had emerged in the previous drawing.

The next statement describes the colour of the flower in this picture and its connection to the figure in the drawing (described as a 'dot-to-dot angel').

A statement of the hopefulness of this image is then made, followed by two statements expressing doubts and concerns and the possibility of false hope being created.

Two statements describing the internal experience follow, leading to a statement of the desire for a real 'angel.' The statement then describes a worldview ending with a question 'How do I find peace in an alienating world?'

#### *4.5.6.5.2. Key Words & Key Images*

pursuing the flower  
finding my place in the world  
connected as well as separate  
maintaining a sense of self within the enormity of others' expectations  
fear of being absorbed, overrun, encapsulated, entrapped  
others' reality has no meaning for me  
the flower of the self  
seeds of self creating a dot to dot angel  
a sense of hope  
I fear the angel is not real.. to give false hope  
the fragility of being alone and unique  
my inner life rejects the outer world  
I can't love the dot to dot angel, I want a real one!  
a universal sense of spirituality is not for sale  
How do I find peace in an alienating world?

#### *4.5.6.5.3. Intersubjective Response*

An emphatic and dense statement about boundaries.

There is a dilemma between maintaining your sense of self in a world that is to be feared and making connections.

What is the purpose of the 'Angel of False Hope?'

#### 4.5.7. Written Text(s)

There are three written texts (no order has been indicated, thus the order presented here is purely convenient and should not be taken as any indication of original chronology).

##### 4.5.7.1. Text 1

###### 4.5.7.1.1. *Description*

Text is headed 'Reflection on Drawing and Dialogue of 11/6.'

This is a series of six statements reflecting essences of the experience up to then. The first asserts that a focus has been created on a lack of hope of finding a 'place for myself.' Three statements follow which express a fear about an uncertain sense of self in a dangerous and threatening world. In the next statement the 'angel' (of *Picture 4*) is recognised as a hopeful fantasy. In the final statement early trauma is identified as a cause of a fearful and distorted relationship with the world.

###### 4.5.7.1.2. *Key Words & Key Images*

lack of hope in finding my place in a dangerous world  
losing my sense of self  
the world is hostile  
who am I and how do I fit?  
lost and attacked  
the angel is a fantasy of goodness  
fearing the world yet not understanding it

###### 4.5.7.1.3. *Intersubjective Response*

You courageously open up to the issues raised in this process. You make feeling statements about fear and hopelessness, and raise questions without answers. A platform has been built for further exploration. We feel a strong sense of your self in the writing.

#### 4.5.7.2. Text 2

##### 4.5.7.2.1. Description

Begins with 'A decision to move forward and draw something.'

There are five statements in this text. The first is underlined, and reflects a decision to move forward and to draw. The second ponders on the process of emergence that creates a drawing; this process is described as 'almost magical.' In the next statement uncertainty and confusion are described as the current feeling state. The last two statements assert a need to move, that stillness will lead to depression, but that the desire for movement is combined with an uncertainty about the destination.

##### 4.5.7.2.2. Key Words & Key Images

moving forward to draw  
moving from 'no picture in my mind' to a picture that's intuitive and magical  
confusion and not knowing  
needing to move  
stillness can become depression  
where am I going?

##### 4.5.7.2.3. Intersubjective Response

A metaphor which comes to mind is: 'Walking onto the high diving platform.'

Moving on is strongly asserted as a way to finding answers, and you know that drawings move you on. The 'intuitive and magical' are powerful aspects of your self.

#### 4.5.7.3. Text 3

##### 4.5.7.3.1. Description

Headed 'Write and draw at the same time ->'

This text would appear to be a companion text to *Picture 5*. It is a four page document, consisting of 28 statements each marked by a '-'. Statements 22

and 28 are further marked by the word 'Shift' in the margin. The first statement refers to the heading, stating it was an intuitive decision to ensure an inclusive response. The word 'empty' is repeated three times, and a black jagged line is said to appear (refer *Picture 5*). 'Red' is then said to arrive marking 'energy, growing out of the black.' A line across the page, both before and after it separates the next statement. It expresses a fear of, but a need to explore 'depression' in an attempt to overcome it.

A metaphoric description of this powerful emotional state follows ending in a statement that, whilst not being experienced, it is being feared. Next, this fear is viewed as being 'worse than the thing,' and that the fear itself might become overwhelming. Six short statements follow that explain an unsuccessful search for an illusive and dangerous target that must be faced if it is to be overcome. Explanation of the feelings of the figures in the drawing follow in the next three statements, alluding to a complex pattern of connected depression and blame. Childhood lessons in meaninglessness and alienation have lead to a state of 'No boundaries' (underlined) for them all.

The next statement (22) begins with 'shift' in the margin. A difficult and hostile texture to childhood is described and linked with growing feelings of alienation. Strong negative feelings are expressed about this process and those seen as responsible for it. Current independence is gratefully acknowledged, and a strong desire to move away from the past is asserted. (This statement is preceded by a 'shift' in the margin).

#### *4.5.7.3.2. Key Words & Key Images*

empty  
red for energy  
exploration to be rid of the fear  
depression: the enemy of the self  
I don't feel it but I fear depression  
depression consumes my body  
wanting to locate the depression, to know it and let it go  
should I be on my guard  
the anger and blaming of lost lives  
the family is shaken and distorted by depression  
alienation  
no boundaries  
no wonder I fear the world  
I'm glad I've grown up  
sick of thinking about childhood and wanting to move on

#### *4.5.7.3.3. Intersubjective Response*

The clarity and power of the issues is startlingly clear. It has all been said and is difficult to respond to, beyond re statement.

We sense the movement you have made through this journey of drawing and writing. There is a great deal of 'black' but there is also a great deal of 'red' energy growing out of the black.

#### 4.5.8. Picture 5 (Session 3)

##### 4.5.8.1. Image

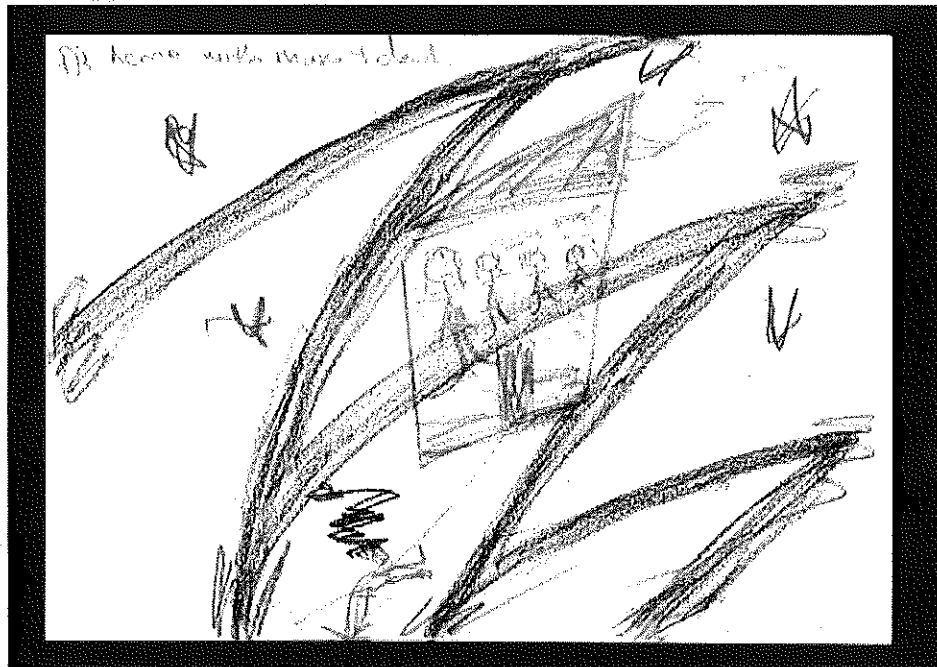


Figure 72 — Co-researcher 5, *Picture 5 (Session 3)*

##### 4.5.8.2. Description

There is a black zigzag band (2-3cm wide) that has six 'zigs.' The first extends from the middle of the left hand edge to the top of the page, 10cm from the right hand corner. This then extends in a slight curve to the bottom of the page, 10cm from the bottom left corner. Then it extends to 2cm from the right hand side of the page and 10cm from the top. From there it goes to the centre of the bottom of the page, then up to within 1cm of the right hand side and 10cm from the bottom right corner. It then finally ends at the bottom of the page, 10cm from the bottom right corner. All except the first (as described above) of the meeting points of the zigzags have some red scribbling over them. The left hand edge of the zigzag has six tight, red zigzag lines oriented to match the direction of the first black zig. The second zig has a red line on its lower side that extends into the meeting of the first

and second zigs and then is sharply angled back into the first zig. The meeting of the second and third zigs has six, vertical, tight, red zigzags. The meeting of the third and fourth zigzags has six, red more open but still zigzagged lines in the same orientation as the third black zig. The meeting of the fourth and fifth zigzag has four open zigzags oriented to the direction of the fifth black zig. The red zig, furthest to the right extends about 10 cm parallel to, but below the fifth zig. The meeting of the fifth and sixth zigzags has four open zigzags that match the direction of the fifth zig and then leads to a curving red line that runs down the right half of the final black zig, ending at the bottom of the page.

There are five blue star shaped scribbles in between the zigzags. From the left the first is 10cm from the left hand side of the page, and 3cm above the first zig. The second is between the first and second zigs, half way down the page and 12 cm from the left hand side of the page. The third is directly under the meeting of the first and second zigs, the fourth is 2cm above the meeting of the third and fourth zigs and the fifth is 3cm under the same meeting point.

Slightly to the right of centre of the page is a simplified representation of a house outlined in green. The left wall of the house is 14cm long and not quite vertical on the page (leaning slightly towards the left at the top.)

The right hand wall is 20cm long, the top 6cms forming the right hand edge of the triangular roof. This wall leans slightly to the right at the top. The roof has been made by joining the top of the left and right walls diagonally and by a line from the top of the left wall going directly across to the right wall joining it 6cm from the top. This line is not quite horizontal, but slopes up to the right. The roof is coloured in green. Protruding half way along the top 6cm of the right wall in the same green is the outline of a triangular shape, its base being 2cm long and its apex pointing towards the right hand side of the page. There is a curling line extending from the point of the triangle toward

the top right hand corner, ending 2cm, from the top and 3cm from the right hand edge.

The inside of the house has been shaded in brown, with the strongest shading being at the base of the house. There are four green stick figures standing in the house. From the left, the first is the largest (10cm tall) with discernible hair, eyes, nose and mouth. An open triangle indicates arms. There is a coloured in triangle for the lower torso. The legs are two curved lines. The next two figures are similar to the first, though smaller (5cm and 4cm), with single lines to represent arms and with less discernible facial features. The fourth figure is the smallest (2cm tall) and the 'dress' is outlined only.

The black band of the third zig covers the legs of all these figures, though they are all still visible.

The leg on the right side of the tallest figure is connected to a heavily coloured, brown door, with a green stroke in its centre. The door is in the centre of the base of the house that slopes up towards the right.

From the door two green lines extend to the bottom of the page. They are 1cm apart at the door and 3cm apart when they reach the bottom of the page.

This would appear to represent a path. Another figure is standing on the right hand edge of the path at the very bottom of the page. This figure is outlined with a head with unclear features, torso leaning to the right and two arms protruding to the right. The upper arm ends in an 'L' shaped hand. There are two legs with L shaped feet. Extending from the top of the head is a short zigzagged line in green, and a longer over scored black zigzagged line, which extends 6cm from the top of the head to very near the third zig 10cm from its beginning. The end of the black zigzag is marked with a small intense red squiggle.

In the top left corner of the page is written in blue 'At home with mum + dad.'

#### **4.5.8.3. Key Words & Key Images**

the black and red zigzag through the centre.

four figures in the house and one outside

the closed door

the distorted house

'At home with mum and dad'

5 blue stars

the big black zigzag and the smaller and darker black zigzag.

#### **4.5.8.4. Intersubjective Response**

Home is being distorted by violently coloured pressures. The outside figure stands next to, but not on, the path. They look vulnerable and subject to powerful external forces. Are they reaching, being pushed or falling?

The house is occupied by separate, but confined, grim faced figures. They appear to be standing on a black forceful line.

The path leads to a firmly shut door. Can anyone go in or out of the door?

Does smoke come out of the chimney or is the roof beginning to unravel?

This image though naively drawn is powerfully evocative.

#### 4.5.9. Picture 6 (Session 3)

##### 4.5.9.1. Image

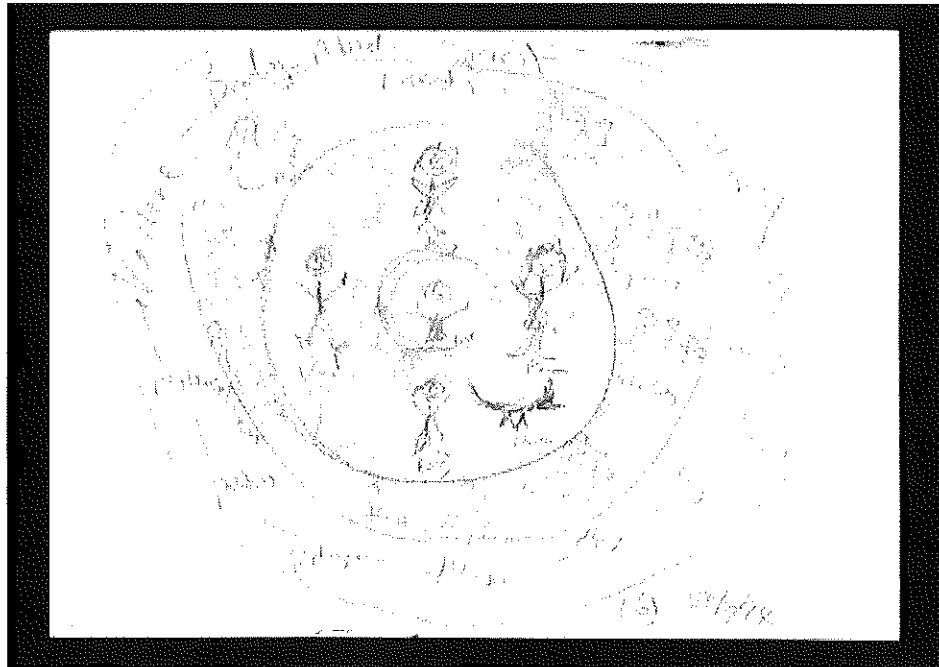


Figure 73 — Co-researcher 5, *Picture 6 (Session 3)*

##### 4.5.9.2. Description

There are four concentric circles of different colours and contents. The central circle is purple, 8cm in diameter and over scored five or six times. It contains a purple, smiling stick figure with single lines for arms and a coloured in 'dress.' The word 'Me' has been written in dark blue. A dark blue circle with a diameter of 25cms surrounds the purple circle. The dark blue circle is filled with a large number of stick figures of different sizes and colours. The five largest figures are in dark blue, four human stick figures at 12, 3, 6 and 9 o'clock and a blue animal (dog) at 3.30, named respectively 'Joy,' 'Mum,' 'Roz(?),' 'Dad' and 'Daisy.' There are another 18 figures in pale blue each named and apparently indicating family members.

The next circle, also in purple is 35cm in diameter and contains 25 stick figures of differing sizes and grouped together in groups of 1 to 5. Most are named and at 12 o'clock in the circle the word 'Friends' has been written.

The largest circle is green, 50cm in diameter and extends from the top to the bottom of the page, and within 3-4 cm of the right and left edges.

Around the circle the following words have been written, in green, with a dash between each (starting at 1 o'clock and proceeding clockwise) 'World of Work-School-Play-Art-Music-Religion-Politics-Materialism-Nature-Body-Mind- Spirit.'

#### **4.5.9.3. Key Words & Key Images**

'Me' in the centre

lots of people

the boundaries between the rings

the central circle has a boundary of a different quality

being contained within the boundaries

a precision about the figures and who they are

the patterning of the use of colour

#### **4.5.9.4. Intersubjective Response**

An explicit laying out of rings of support and connection. It looks like a map, with clearly and deliberately located landmarks. You have surrounded yourself with a great number of images, but there is a strong boundary between you and them. In this picture there is no clear way out of the centre. You are at the centre of the mandala.

The central figure looks comfortably alone. So is the strong boundary because of desire or necessity?

#### 4.5.10. Written Text

##### 4.5.10.1. Description

Headed "A completion exercise on 'Who am I?'"

'Who am I?' is boxed.

This text begins with 11 points, each beginning with a '-' followed by three boxed headings, a double underlined heading, a statement beginning with an \*, and finally a list of words commencing and joined by a '-' leading to an arrow pointing to a doubly underlined word.

It appears to be a companion text to *Picture 6*.

The first five statements describe the aim of the drawing; explain selected structural elements, and the significance of two colours and the patterns of their use.

Statements six to nine, describe a realisation about the importance of relationships and friendship to happiness. This is seen as being much more meaningful than the 'more external world.'

Statements ten and eleven both begin with 'Who I am?' underlined and clarify the link between family and friends in 'Who I am?'

Next a boxed heading 'family' is followed by a 'definition' or statement of its meaning in feeling terms connected by a '+' and an -> leading to and underlined 'Destruction of Self.'

A structurally similar definition for a boxed 'Friends' follows, with an additional double pointed arrow leading from 'Friends' to 'Affirmation of myself.'

The word 'World' is then a boxed heading, and defined with qualities such as 'big,' 'scary,' 'stimulating' and 'exciting.' Three sub headings are listed (School, Art and Nature) and Nature has been boxed and an arrow leads from it to a double underlined 'Self' that is defined as 'a sense of connectedness...'

A final statement begins with an asterisk, and summarises that the last drawing seems/feels like a completion of this series of drawings. This statement ends in the following chain of words:

'— Me — family — friends — Nature → Humanness'

(Humanness has been double underlined)

#### **4.5.10.2. Key Words & Key Images**

who am I?  
perception of self in relation to others  
I am in the centre  
a wall around me  
blue-depression represents the family  
purple is me  
friends like and love me  
external world of little value  
relationships have great meaning  
who I am is in my blood lines and in my choice of friends  
family leads to destruction of self  
friends lead to an affirmation of self  
the world: big, scary, stimulating and exciting  
self: a sense of connectedness to life  
this drawing is some kind of completion  
— Me — family — friends — Nature → Humanness

#### **4.5.10.3. Intersubjective Response**

This text seems to be coming to grips with two aspects of yourself. One is liked and loved and the other connects you with shame, sadness and alienation. You feel that connection with nature will bring a reconciliation of these forces or at least a way to move forward from the impasse.

There is a structural shift in this text, which leads to a strong sense of definition and spatial connectedness between elements. This picture of connectedness is like a map of what can and cannot nourish you and what does and what might help you to move.

#### 4.5.11. Final Depiction (Out Last Conversation)

The text brings you back  
To the unhealed rupture of  
Your spiritual and bodily self.  
Jagged still, keeping out  
The harmonising angel.  
Keeping in a pig-dog father  
Keeping up the story —  
He to be blamed  
You to be the victim.

But you create your own emerging  
Self as a boundary  
A line of understood hurt  
But also of discrimination.

A felt bodily self  
Takes a new perspective  
From the centre  
Of a real green grass-blue sky world  
And connection strengthens  
Dissipating fragmentation —  
No longer needed.

To *be* there  
You are safe at last.  
Feeling the oneness  
Of yourself.  
Your own humanness.  
At last.

You reached a stillness.  
Folding up and putting away  
The incredible hurts  
Brought a frightening doubt —  
Is this the real or the hoped for?

But, calmer, you know  
It is the new way to go,  
To *be*.  
And you have the Feeling of it.  
Transacting from a place  
Within you.  
Towards truer connectedness.

#### 4.5.12. Discussion

This process consists of a series of seven drawings drawn over a period of three months. Each drawing is accompanied by a short commentary. There is a texture of explicitness that emerges through this process. Colours are explicitly given meaning, and these colours are consistently and symbolically used in each drawing.

The range of colours in this nominated emotional palette increases through the sequence of drawings. Meanings are stated specifically in each commentary, and increasingly, circumstances of life history are disclosed.

The sequence of seven drawings begins with three — all drawn on the same day — in which symbols of experiencing are used. The subject comments on this structural element in her first text 'abstract not representational.'

The commentaries on these drawings often contain questions or statements of uncertainty 'who am I? I don't know what this means, I am unsure, I don't know, what is it?' The explicitness of this sequence lies in the explanation given in the commentaries: it is an explicitness of issue. The drawings act as symbols or metaphors of the doubt and questioning.

This questioning phase is both a genuine statement of the subject's feeling state and a representation of her attitude towards the process of drawing. In a short summary statement made after *Picture 3*, she describes it as a 'disconcerting process' leading to 'unknown territory, the inner world.'

In *Picture 4*, two representational elements dominate the image.

She describes it as an attempt at 'finding myself in the world,' about being 'connected as well as separate.' In this drawing a figure is drawn for the first time, a 'dot-to-dot angel' holds a flower. The symbol of the flower can be traced back through the first three drawings. Representations of 'organic seeds' in *Picture 1*, 'dropping and sewing seeds' in *Picture 2* and 'the red flower'

in *Picture 3*, might be perceived as an emergent and growing theme leading to this drawing drawn two weeks after the first three. The commentary at this stage expresses both 'a sense of hope' and 'the fragility of being alone and unique.'

In *Pictures 5-7*, the subject represents herself directly. In this series, the explicitness of issue and circumstance can be seen. 'Red for energy,' 'purple for me' and 'blue-depression' are shown and articulated. She states the 'family are shaken and distorted by depression' and that she is 'sick of thinking about childhood and wanting to move on.'

In *Picture 6* she states 'I am in the centre' and that 'this drawing is some kind of completion.'

Following *Picture 6*, her drawings and commentaries were described, key words and images listed; and intersubjective responses written by the research group. All this material was returned to the subject, who completed a further drawing and was then interviewed.

In the interview the particularity of issue and circumstance is further increased. There, she makes explicit the meanings of her colour choices, refers to aspects of her family dynamics and connects these to elements of the drawings. She refers to the impact of the intersubjective responses.

She identifies two major *themes*, from her drawings, in the interview. The first is, 'trying to marry the spiritual with the physical self in the world,' 'that I will get into contact with who I am as a spiritual being.'

This struggle she says was not quite achieved, though sought after in *Pictures 2 & 3*. The theme of familial victimisation still stood in the way of 'the need to individuate,' and led on to her second theme, that of self-other boundaries.

She finds themes of boundaries and fragmentation and describes the essence of her experiencing as 'trying to draw the three parts of myself together...something about a...disassociated, disconnected sense of body, mind and spirit, and it is like there was this drive...trying to get a connection.'

She sees in the drawings her ability to 'draw the spirit like in [picture] 4, I could draw the body in [pictures] 5 and 6, I could draw the spirit inside a body...but I could not get a sense of connectedness, a sense of wholeness.'

She concludes the interview by acknowledging that the final drawing is 'more like what I would like to be, and I think that it is probably showing me the solution to this disjointed stuff that has gone on in the...previous six [pictures].'

Her current work is 'just accepting who I am really,' and bringing her 'fragmentation' back into wholeness, 'to bring my body back to my spiritual self.' She also describes her work as 'not needing the thick barrier between me and other people.' Thus, understanding is deeply present, though bringing this into life experience is still incomplete.

She is aware of this, and states her final issues as dealing with fragmentation of the self and connectedness to others. 'I was striving to do it, and I could not reach it.'

Regarding the review of her materials prior to the interview, the drawings and researchers' texts, she commented very powerfully. 'Three months had elapsed when she came to her review. The distancing effect was significant. 'It was a much stronger emotional experience than when I actually drew it — I could see, three months later, what these things actually meant — I could see that the thing had to be resolved — I could really see how important it was to me.'

The last drawing, the night before the interview, showed 'maybe where I would like to be, but I have not achieved this yet.' Her comments on the researchers' responses to her are seen in her words. As to her process — 'When I got through your text, and looked at the drawings, what I came up with was this drawing here [Picture 7], where I was attempting to marry the spiritual nature of myself with the physical-ness and having relationships with other people. I felt that I could not do it — I cried a lot.' And as to her understanding, she said: 'When I read the transcript I realised there were two very important things: a) to marry the physical and spiritual self in the world and; b) boundaries to protect myself.' The transcripts and drawings when reviewed together allowed both reexperiencing of events and associated affect, and produced a consolidation of understandings, in such a clear manner, that they were highlighted as themes structuring her experience, like a form of reduction to essence.

Following the interview the research group considered all the materials and made the final poetic depiction, as their final intersubjective response, entitled 'Our Last Conversation.'

The data reveal a co-researcher who has developed her own personal symbolic language in drawing, and engaged in a consistent interchange between drawing and reflection. This journey produced increasing levels of disclosure of both issue and circumstance and a clear understanding of the dynamics of her experience of the process. The intersubjective responses of the group seemed to contribute to reflective understanding, but again, the co-researcher seemed to be guided by her own process in her construction of self-understanding.

The dialogue of researcher and co-researchers in this case is the most minimal of the five, as displayed in the intersubjective responses. This represents the attempt to stay at the outer level of empathic summary description: it is reduced and provides key focusing questions, but little of the resonance in

some other of the ISR's. This is also partly because the coresearcher provides a text that usually states the issues she is exploring, leaving less of the unknown to search for, except for the questions towards buried meanings. It also suggests that there is a range of responses potentially in the intersubjective, and choices are also being made about the level of 'giving back resonances' to the coresearcher.

## **5. CONSIDERATIONS & REFLECTIONS**

Some general characteristics of this form of inquiry can be clarified, from the interactive dialogues of the five co-researchers and the four researchers, and from reflections upon these texts.

### **5.1. The Ways of Knowing: A Multimodal Epistemology**

In each researcher/co-researcher dialogue, the nature of the processes of new personal knowing can be explicated.

Co-researcher 1 chose to use musical improvisation and poetic writing as the modes of inquiry. She describes a process of discovery with a strong sense of the body as embodiment of her knowing, her voice as the vehicle of her experiencing, a dialogue between the body and the mind, between images and thought. The discovery involves transformation — the forming into verbal mode of the sensing, images, and thoughts which came in her activity of searching to know more, in an interplay of feelings, sensing/content and forming.

This coming to know experiencing is across modes, although the final forming is verbal. By accessing the prereflective stored memories which contain significant content, through reflective reexperiencing and connecting, representations are produced in which meanings are constructed and discovered, in this process and the responsive recognition that follows her forming. So, a multimodal exploration moves into transformation, produces expressive representation containing understanding and integration.

In a dialogue with very little literal or verbal content, the personal inquiry into meaning is more abstract, more at the level of symbolisation. Co-researcher 2 made her inquiry using non-verbal forming via abstract art. She gave occasional, minimal clues through words and phrases, which confirmed our sense of access to life forces present in her work. The attempt to understand what and how she came to acquire new personal knowing then required the development of visual reading of the structures of feeling dynamic sensed in the flow of energy as it was disposed through texture, colour, shape, line, and flow.

The qualities of the images formed statements of experiencing through which there was continuity and development over time. Changes in the use of colour and texture, the flow of images in space, their balancing or imbalance, the intensity of flow, the sensing of emotion in the patterns formed, textural rhythms and contrasts, all these created the felt sense of abstract forces in living activity, which could be described and seen as meaningful at the abstract, core level. That we did not know who or what the substance of the experiencing was, did not lessen the strong sense of personal struggle and significant life experience being explored and documented. The personal knowing was not ever stated in an explicit content; it remained in dynamic terms, like a dance of life forces, with powerfully connected emotion and themes.

Co-researcher 3 however, was entirely multimodal in her search for personal knowing. She provided an exploration that combined visual patterns with word signifiers, gave extended poetic or narrative remembrances or movement statements. She strove to access her experiencing in whichever mode the content was stored or was currently demanding representation. In her drawings, an interplay of imaginative correlative occurred between the feeling of the patterned shapes and the strong 'being' state words; the task was again to sense the energy flow, its balancing and direction. But in her

poetic writing, the details of life content are more sharply drawn, the emotions made more concrete, her statements making clear the core structure of her existential dilemmas. Understanding was at the abstract level in terms of themes, balanced by the sensed emotional energy and its dynamic movement: these were the contents of her knowing, extracted and discovered as she brought life experience into multimodal patterns of representation, then distilled the meanings current. The same energy, the strong emotions, was brought together whatever the modes of inquiry.

Co-researcher 4 used the primary mode of visual statements, revealing an interior story over time, but verbal signifiers were also interspersed with the visual. Again, the qualities of the representations — through the use of artistic elements — were used to convey content and a search for personal discovery. Images of inner/outer landscapes hinted at themes in her life, suggesting an emergent knowing from a consciousness within: her art was extremely self exploratory, and it was as if the words came into awareness as she stayed within the forming of her consciousness, surprising herself with things implicit and not quite known, becoming explicit and owned as her understandings. It is a strong example of an artistic aesthetic and a personal aesthetic converging into personal meaning. These are not just 'interpretations' of art after the event, they are 'knowings,' integrally present in the forming of the representations of an awakening awareness found in the connecting of emotion, sensing, shaping and forming of a content, emergent into a rightness of personal construction. It is in this sense that the meaningfulness is the discovery of something now known, drawn up out of the interplay of pre-reflection and reflective reexperiencing.

Co-researcher 5 also uses the verbal and visual modes in combination. In her work, both modes seem equally present and interactive in the activity of forming meaning. However, there is a strong indication that the searching for new understanding of existential dilemmas was directed towards pictorial

exploration. She seemed to rely on drawing to help her see what it was she was trying to explore. Often she would give words to what was in the consciousness of both her thinking and her visual shaping. The spatial, textural elements of her coloured drawings seemed to have acted as symbols of her sought-after meanings. She automatically trusted this dialogue of modes as her way of making meaning. In this way she progressed over time towards changing perspectives on the content of her materials, holding existential themes in different visual/verbal patterns, allowing her to see the movement of her own self-referent discoveries through these.

As with all the work, the strong presence of emotional sensing acted as a kind of intuitive leader to the dynamic movement of understanding across all the modes and contents. Emotional sensing seems to be the connecting fluid across modes of understanding: this is the force that collapses boundaries and allows fluency of mental activity to bring new arrangements into awareness that we call 'the discovery of new understandings.' It is not a predominantly cognitive activity, but an integrative one, lead by an intuitive emotional sensing. This is, of course, particular to this field of the derivation of multimodal, personal knowing. The release of connecting emotion into patterns of related experiences seems to act as a force towards coherence: the intelligence of emotional intuition draws modal forms into meaningful association. This intuitive knowing transforms its contents across modal experiencing into a pattern of coherence, in which understanding is present.

## **5.2. The Construction of Personal Meanings**

The making of personal meanings requires intensive engagement and the maintenance of intentionality towards 'being comprehension.' Co-researcher 1 was very clear in her statements of process towards meaning making. She reported processes of reexperiencing existing, partly known aspects of her childlessness and its manifestations in her daily life. By working across

modes, she gained access to new images of herself in her lived experience. She saw an interplay between the content, her emotions, the thinking and variemodal images she engendered, with finding an expressive-representative form. The forming was itself a process of transformation, through which she continued her reexperiencing, through time and intersubjective dialogues, enabling her to specify her personal meanings. The continuing engagement with experiential knowing is itself the ground in which both concrete and abstract meanings are constructed. They are not post facto cognitions; they emerge in the process of transformative construction, being retained as the inner structure of experienced meaning.

In a primarily non-verbal mode of inquiry, the pursuit of personal meanings was still deeply personal, but more private in the disclosure of its content. The search for form displayed the content in the terms of its representation. In the artwork of co-researcher 2 the inquiry was conducted in symbolic terms, and the language of experiencing was abstract and minimalist. Yet the knowing was a current experiencing of critical events of current living, displayed through the configurations of art elements and an embodiment of strong emotional dynamics. This style of forming was a characteristic way of making meaning for this person. She contained her explorations in the dynamic movements of the pictures over time, but again, gradually understood them over time, with indwelling, and through the intersubjective dialogue of our inquiry.

The transformation from inner to outer representation invites a sharing through expressive-dynamic forms in a particular language of communication. The meanings themselves are expressed in dynamic terms-the balancing or changing of emotional forces, the sensing of textural-imagistic statements; these are lived experiences, told, not in the details, but in the abstracted dynamic of their experiencing. Content, form and meaning are inextricably

interwoven. Responsiveness also requires resonance from an informed intuition, for meanings to be transacted.

The multimodality of co-researcher 3 makes the process of meaning construction evident in a more generally recognisable way. In each exploration over time, understanding can be seen to emerge as reflective forming is continued across modes of representation. A considerable amplification is observable across life events, yet at the same time, a dynamic movement towards reduction to essence is always present. These come through the visual images, through contacting the emotion attached to aspects of her story, through the use of existentially significant key words, by connecting these into their underlying structures of meaning. Although it may seem that these statements are verbal ones, there is a stronger sense in which the meanings occur in the connections across all the materials, though they are more objectified in the verbal statements dedicated to meaning presentation. These meanings identify her life events as a source of content about which perspectival understanding is being apprehended. Again, although there is quite a lot of content detail, the understandings are refined into a qualitative knowing from which a more confident view of being in the lived experience is seen to be growing. How this is translated into life is part of the recurrent cycle of the knowing-in being of living. To sit with the understanding of life meanings is the foreground of possible enactments.

The dialogue of not quite known pushing into awareness and recognition is at the heart of the meaning making of co-researcher 4. The interchange between key word, image, emotion and knowing was played out in the representational forays, and the same interaction was replayed in the intersubjective dialogue with the researchers. The movement of dynamic sensed meanings into appropriated meanings was accompanied by surprise and deep appreciation at her understanding affirmed by ours. It seems a clear example of strongly joining intuitions sharing a knowing which was latent but

in a movement from implicit to explicit. The overlapping frames in the modes of her inquiry seemed to construct the meanings in an irrefutable declaration of themselves. They were epistemologically self-validating. The nature of her lived experiences, her contrasts, challenges, dilemmas, declared themselves in these dialogues, assisted by the strength of her wish to know and her receptiveness to shared sensing from others. The process of coming to know results in a description of what is then known — the knowing in experiencing, stated as the current approximation of meaning.

Co-researcher 5 also has her own dialogue across modes, in which her themes already recognised, are pursued through to greater levels of knowing. She engages herself in reflective dialogue, from drawing to writing to reexperiencing, through indwelling and successive approximations to meaning. She goes back into art representation, and dialogues to and in it, to reconstruct her knowings, often through questioning and reflecting up possibilities. She in particular, pursued existential themes, both in her consciousness, but also from her prereflective awareness, allowing this interaction to recreate her experiencing, and then be formed in her reconstructed representations. This pushing of the boundaries of understanding shows how understanding is invested in new patterns of reexperiencing—is both part of the process and the product of connecting up new patterns. The meaning is the core of the pattern of experiencing, that which irradiates it with understanding, and displays the pattern as a connected, meaningful whole. The specifiable meanings are again the outcome of the multimodal processes of coming to know. What is known is not a single phenomenon, as in psychological phenomenological research, but a statement of the content of knowing meaningfully from within the living experience of being.

A more conceptual discussion of this follows later.

There is apparently a set of common processes that can be identified, variably present in each of the co-researchers in their pursuit of personal meanings. These have been melded into a general statement of the characteristics of experiential knowing.

### **5.3. The Form of the Inquiry**

After two substantial programmes of research into the experience of inquiry into personal knowing, a conceptualisation of the procedures and phases of this method of inquiry have been formulated. This experiential work presents a number of methodological procedures within the conception of experiential knowing. It draws upon procedures that are variously naturalistic, phenomenological, and heuristic, but always brings into confluence the epistemological and ontological elements of living experience. This work pursues the explication of meanings from what are essentially interactive and intersubjective experiences of living, shared between co-researchers, starting always with the intrapersonal-aspects of living experience in the life of the participant, nominated by her, in her own search for life understanding. But it is a procedure of inquiry dedicated to understanding human meanings.

The experiential method then is distinguished by an absence of prior designated constructs or phenomena, and by emergent foci of experience and forms of inquiry. It is also characterised by being multimodal in format, thus creating verbal and non-verbal texts and interchanges. It is also fundamentally relational: the dialogues of the intrasubjective and the intersubjective responses of the participants are seen to be the cornerstone of the discovery and construction of personal meanings. How these function together also becomes part of the inquiry.

## 5.4. Experiential Inquiry

The form of inquiry into experiential knowing can be said to have the following characteristics.

1. It enquires into the living experience of a person or persons: experiences of being about which understanding is sought. The nature of such experiencing is dynamically presenting itself in experiential predominance, or is sought by an intentional pursuit of discovery. It is both intrapersonal and interpersonal.
2. The content of experiencing is not predetermined by a researcher-that which emerges or comes into focus, becomes the content. Triggers within process and content do emerge and can be more categorically identified within the interactive texts.
3. The inquiry will develop procedures of access to emergent experiencing as it flows into awareness, as the reflexive/reflective interaction continues to advance both the experiencing and the understanding of it. This is a cyclic process.
4. Modes of representation of experiencing will give form to the bodily and beyond body objectification of the inner dialogue and the interpersonal communications. The display or embodiment achieves a construction of shaped awareness, which are considered to be multi modal texts of the living experience of being: an ontological as well as a phenomenological text.
5. Cumulative cycles of experiencing and reexperiencing are likely to be required. This involves staying with emergent material, both focus on amplifying the experiencing, reflecting, indwelling, thinking, feeling, engaging in intrasubjective depiction and intersubjective exchanges, and reconstructing the forms of objectification, and the understandings.

6. Successive approximations of meanings occur, over time, as perspective changes, repatterning and integration of newly connecting experiences proceeds. Time is dynamically associated with change of awareness. Terminal points are mutually agreed when there is an agreed plateau of understanding or the energy of inquiry exhausts itself. Meanings are proximate, being the current representation of personal awareness. Meanings embody the present understanding of connected experiencing over lifetime, and do not pretend to be a past meaning of a past event—they must be current.
7. The form of analysis of these data will be determined according to the appropriateness of the inquiry technique to the type of material. It is usual for participants to make their own representations, and for the researchers to respond by description, some form of reduction into key words or images, and an intersubjective response. This depends on the style of objectification, or representational forming—such as movement or painting or poetry—the way in which the intersubjective dialogue is conducted—in same or different forms—and the point at which either themes or depictions or essential or synthesised descriptions of understandings is achieved. These procedures may be repeated a number of times, varying the forms of exchange.
8. The intersubjective response is characterised by a deeply empathic/intuitive sharing of the feeling of personal response to the person and material, by movement within and about the objectified inner landscape, but never by what is known as explication or interpretation. We tell what we experience by indwelling the material, but we do not try to guess and tell what we think it means, in the sense of knowing more than the creator. We say what we see and feel, in their material, and what we experience in our interaction with them and their material. It is like the work of deeply sensitised artists attuned to a shared intersubjective world, the form and feelings of which are indwelled, though one has experiential primacy, and the other responsive primacy. The

intersubjective response gives back a significant other's felt experiencing of, and resonance to the participant's experience of being that is currently in focus. This space is like a framed window, or a slice of the life sphere of shared experience, jointly indwelt, in which there is a mutual sense of understanding that can be trusted.

9. This intersection of time, space and mutual experiencing carries meaning. There may be further focusing or amplification. The exploration of meanings continues, whether it be in movement, or discussion, or art or body sculpture. The meanings may vary slightly according to what each participant or respondent brings to it, but the core will be evident in the constructed approximations. The pattern of coherent meanings is already apprehended, but to state it succinctly may require further construction, especially if this is to be understood by others. This is both an epistemological process of coming to know, and an ontological process of finding knowing in the experience of being, which can be stated as a meaning regarding an aspect of being. This is not a reduction in the empirical-phenomenological sense, but a construction and display of significant meanings. For research purposes we usually seek to give some linguistic form to make meanings more explicit, and because this is the research convention. From the therapeutic perspective, the multimodal representation that is right, including verbalisation, will likely be sufficient as a statement of experiential knowing.
10. The inquiry requires both immersion and distancing over time, so that all participants can step back through time intervals, to continue the reflective process of knowing, and to allow definitive procedures of review. This allows time to move backwards and forwards, to create the pattern of meaningful experience as it coheres, now. It is a reflective/reflexive process, in which new awareness develops, in collapsed time. When significant living experience is in a process of exploration, understanding supersedes the organisation of experience over time, and brings into form a pattern in which there is discernible

connectedness. This may be expressed in a variety of configurations. This conception of experiencing is not static, nor finite in time, nor in definition.

11. Understandings may be expressed as themes, or as images in various forms. Usually, an attempt is made to bring understandings into a synthesis of meaning, both by the participant and the researchers. The participant will be allowed the authority of her own final depictions of experiential meanings. The process of making personal meanings clear is a continuous, holistic one shared collaboratively in a trusting, respectful exchange. Forms of transformation to deeper lines of meaning occur by indwelling and reduction, by textual analysis, by collaborative indwelling and restatement, by identification of key components, and by the reflexive/reflective process of imaginative amplification, reduction, focus, review and synthesis.
12. The meaning is in the experience-as the experiencing goes on (it can not be a fixed experience) so understanding of meaning reaches deeper levels of experiencing. Meanings are not necessarily something extracted from reduction of a verbal text. Personal meanings often arise in the process of reexperiencing the living text of being. The primary level of meaning is in the experiencing. Experience is not something you have, then stop to analyse it; it is a continuous process of inner dialogue, which is not discrete. Reflection about and experiencing by being in, are interactive and continuous, all part of the holistic nature of experiencing. They are not separate events. It is an abstraction of experiencing to identify a phenomenon-the structure of the experience of personal knowing is defined not by designating a construct as a separate phenomenon, but by the coherence of meaning inspired patterns of being. Thus the analysis of understanding is cyclic over time, and multi-modal in its presentation. The making of meanings through synthesised understandings, is a secondary level of experiencing, is a deliberate choice, not always taken, but one which can be evidenced as possible, as seen in this kind of

inquiry. These procedures are not the same as phenomenological reduction and hermeneutic interpretation. Multimodal intra-and inter-subjective dialogues are sources of co-constructed personal meanings, an exchange directed towards personal knowing about the experience of being in the world.

13. Experiential knowing need not be hermeneutic. The shared knowing of personal meanings is confirmed in the moments of joint awareness of the aesthetic rightness of form to meaning: it is a collaborative affirmation of what is known from within the experience. It does not require an externally based interpretation to affirm what is known, though it does require mutual representation and communication of what is known, and that this is known. This is an important distinction both for therapy and research. The meanings are personally referential, and do not draw on other sources of theory or information in order to bring authority to ontological knowing. The role of the collaborative researcher(s) is also not necessarily an interpretive one, rather it is an empathic-intuitive, exploratory, subjective one, a process that defines centrally the experiential form of inquiry, whether therapy or research.
14. Formal reduction procedures, and statements of themes and essences, may be used, or adapted to person study, but are not required in this form of inquiry. It is not a procedure to find an ultimate structure of the essence of an abstract construct as seen by a researcher interpreting others' experiences. It is a joint inquiry into patterns of being, about which greater understanding is sought. It is more apt to think of a continuous cycle of experiential exploration reaching successive levels of approximation to meaning. The patterns may have names, may have components or themes, and may vary according to contexts. These forms of experiential knowledge move towards coherence rather than specificity, towards display through multi modal forms rather than through verbal definition or abstraction, and depict statements of personal meanings, rather than structures of the essence of an identified construct. They are

meanings derived from living experience of people as they live through the actions of being in the world. There are many ways to focus personal experience in order to reveal the core meanings within it. As experience is reexperienced, given forms of representation, new perceptions are formed, discovered, understood and constructed into meanings. Yet the basic experience lies as a form of intuitive knowing in the experiencing. Understanding is built on this through amplified reexperiencing and procedures of reduction to essence.

## **6. THE EXPERIENTIAL METHODOLOGY**

A statement of the general phases of this form of inquiry as at present conceptualised, reads as follows.

### **6.1. Generation and Description of Emergent Experiencing**

After agreement is reached between researcher and participant, to engage in an inquiry directed towards personal knowing, forms of inquiry to access life reflection are developed. This may be through talking, questioning and focusing into emergent material directly, by both. Or it may be by a timed agreement in which the participants spend certain dedicated time in personal indwelling, and adopt certain methods of representing their emerging data of being. The products (formed representations) may be in art, movement, taped talking or vocalisation or performance, or forms of writing, or combinations of these.

Whatever the procedure adopted, access to the inner flow of self-experiencing occurs, with focusing on some and amplification of other inner stored images (not just visual). As the flow of energised experience-reexperience continues, apprehended aspects of experience are brought into new connection. It is this flow which is given into representational forms, and which become the embedded base of reconstituting understandings.

### **6.2. Creation of Texts**

Over time, an array of multi modal texts is created.

These filtered representations of inner searching and dialogue are brought into intentional display and communication. They may be brought into existence by personal, solitary inner dialogue to outer form, or they may be created in the exchange with a researcher, and given form in the process of that mutual exchange. The text is the initial statement of intentional experiencing by a participant committed to the search for personal meanings. It continues to be developed over time, through further indwellings, reexperiencing and interactions, with the researcher or therapist.

### **6.3. Textual Indwelling over Time**

At agreed intervals, the co-inquirers/researcher(s) immerse themselves in the texts, to relook, indwell and reexperience them. Our current procedure is to create a Description of the materials, in considerable detail, to show what is seen or what is on display. It is a factual description, striving to be without conjecture. Empathic resonance has its real origins here.

The next step is to indwell the materials until what becomes clear is where there are key words, or key images or gestures or tones, which are identified and noted down. Clearly, this is a step of responsive immersion and selection, but is derived intuitively as responses to texts and their descriptions. Such cues have richness, a sense of dynamic energy, either a directness or ambiguity, and draw attention because of their sensed potential import. They allude to structural elements yet to be discovered or recognised to which one resonates.

At the same time, a further step occurs for the co-researcher, who engages herself in an indwelling which allows her to contact the inner structures of her own experience, beneath representation and description, so that she can formulate her own Intrasubjective response-the full sense, at that time of the

inner experiencing she has represented. This may produce an inner Depiction of her experiencing.

The third step is to create an intersubjective response to the materials. This consists of the deeply empathic/intuitive sense of what is at the heart of the materials — seen through the materials, the description and key words and images — and voices what is felt to be core, or essential, which draws attention, and is responded to by the researchers. This moves the work into the arena of intersubjectivity, sensing the import of what is there. It might involve speaking to the participant in the second person: 'you report'; or 'I feel' and conveying back what is felt by the researcher, in the material (Moustakas, 1990). The voice of intersubjective response can also be multi modal—the use of any art form, or combination of modes can be used to reply. This depends very much of the way in which the intersubjective response is apprehended and the images which contain it. Art statements may receive poetic responses, and movement statements may call out movement responses or art statements, and so on. The therapist response, or the collaborative response of the researchers, will be given back to the participant.

In an agreed time, there will be a further step by the participant, which may incorporate her own response to the ISR, and new material. This process may continue as long as is agreed. In some situations, a group of participants may meet, create an intersubjective response to each other as a group, and keep meeting. In therapy, the dialogue continues.

When the process seems to be nearing finality or the energy is exhausted, or the search completed, a final exchange occurs. This is initiated by a review of all the materials or texts, a kind of further look into the representations. Then final statements are made and final ISR's returned. The co-researcher may choose to make a final statement back to the researchers.

## **6.4. Depictions of Meanings**

In experiential research for personal meanings, the responsibility for the clarification of meanings is a shared one. There are various ways to achieve this. It is possible to do this by asking for identification of themes and essences, by both participant and researchers or, in more experiential form, to simply continue to focus the responses of participants and researchers. The meanings then are a combination of implicit and explicit understandings, contained and held in the constructions of shared understandings over time. But choices are available as to how proximal meanings are to be arrived at—whether in metaphoric form, in written text, as felt meanings in images, or as depictions in various modes, or combinations of these. There is no fixed number of exchanges to achieve this outcome.

Both participants and researchers arrive at a strong sense of patterned understanding. Articulation of these for the self, for the other and, as research for public viewing is important. The degree of specificity or abstraction of understandings is a matter for negotiation.

## **6.5. Creative Synthesis**

Depending on the choices of format for experiential knowing to be described, some form of synthesis is required to move from patterned understandings into synthesised meanings. This does not necessarily imply generalisation or theory building. It is a search for the most elegant, most aesthetically right and most authentic way of representing the coherent meanings revealed in this reconstruction of aspects of a life as lived. It does not mean a survey of all the knowings. It is in some sense a statement of what is important and how it is experienced in the living of the life. The meaning is not just derived at the end of an analysis; it is discovered in the experiencing and is present continuously in the representations and the intersubjective responses. But the

artistry of constituting significance is the last integrative task of the research collaboration.

## 6.6. Processes

A hierarchical list of these processes might read as follows:

- 1) Dissonances
- 2) Access
  - a) Attending
  - b) Focussing
  - c) Indwelling
  - d) Staying With
  - e) Entry to
  - f) Pre-intentional Associations
- 3) Experiential
  - a) Stored Images
- 4) Amplification
  - a) Reflections
  - b) Connections
  - c) Representations
- 5) Multimodal Systems of Experience / Re-experience
  - a) Keywords & Images
  - b) Emotion
  - c) Dynamic Flow
  - d) Representational Forming
  - e) Intrapersonal Searching
  - f) Imaginative variations

6) Understanding Reductions

- a) Intentional Looking
- b) Seeing
- c) Hearing
- d) Sounding
- e) Thinking
- f) Feeling
- g) Speaking
- h) Reexperiencing
- i) Reconstruction
- j) Representation
- k) Connecting
- l) Patterning

7) Meanings

- a) Surprised
- b) Recognition
- c) Discovery
- d) Personal Knowing
- e) Forms of Approximation to Meanings
- f) Variemodal Depiction

8) Collaborative Authentication

- a) Interactive
- b) Externalisation
- c) Communication
- d) Construction
- e) Consensual Verification

Since these processes are not linear, they can be seen as cyclically recurrent — a flowing dynamic — the order itself variable.

However, the important idea is that experience is never finished, but interacts multimodally with current awareness, in order to construct a current meaning system about one's experience of being in the world. This is to reconstruct the past and the present awareness into a new updated version of understanding — sharpening what is known, now.

## 6.7. Cycles of Experiencing / Re-Experiencing

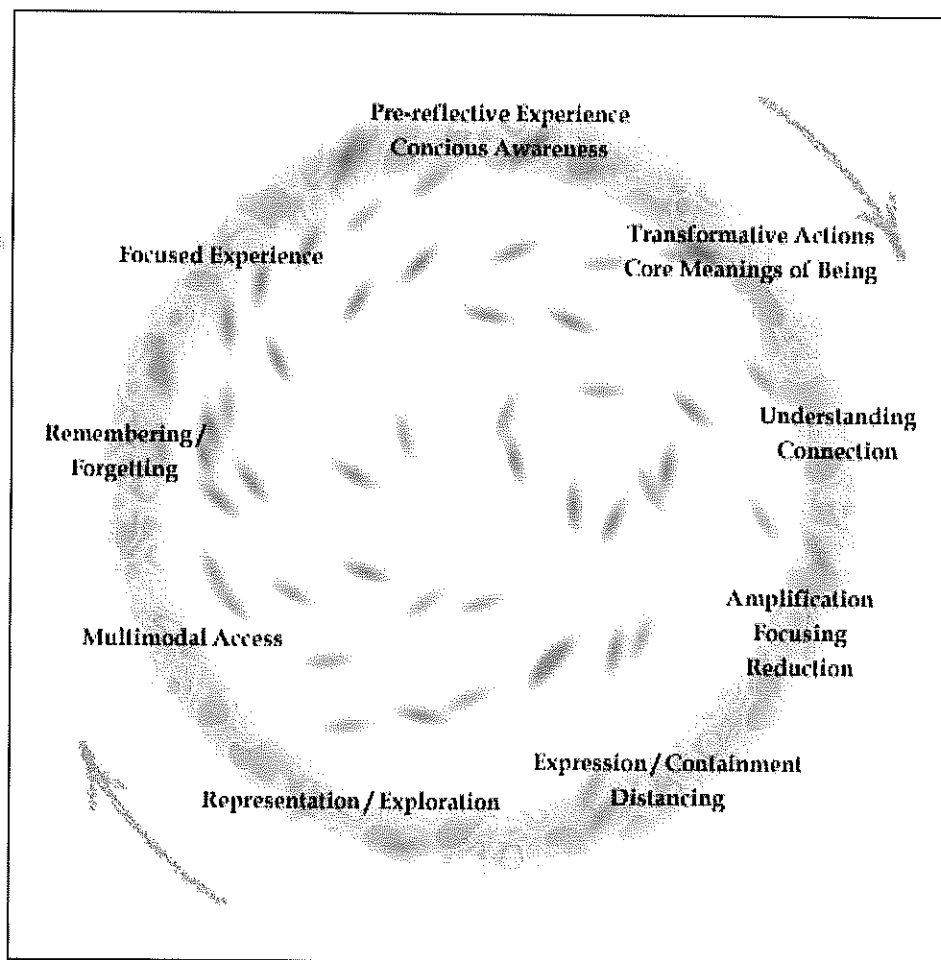


Figure 74 — Cycles of Experiencing / Re-experiencing

A typical cycle of inquiry into personal meaning would have these elements. There may be many cycles in coming to understanding of complex structures of meaning, especially in therapeutic work.

## **7. MOVING CURRENTS: INTERSUBJECTIVITY & MEANING**

### **7.1. The Concept of Intersubjectivity**

The dialogue of understanding personal meanings is, for each, first an intrasubjective one. It is between the activated memory, the activated awareness and current awareness, guided by the intentionality to understand experiencing. As these interact, and as activation of feeling, sensing, emoting, imaging, and thinking, are allowed to range in a movement towards inner understanding, a construction or shape of potential representation occurs. When the representations begin, the forming of a new awareness continues, since constructing an outward form is the step to either recognition of something partly known or the discovery of something not yet known, or both. The process of knowing then is given a holding form. How, turns into what: reexperiencing declares itself, into a form of knowing about being. This form is the first approximation of understanding arising from the intrasubjective dynamic flow towards a definition of the knowing for which an intense inner searching has taken place.

This declaration of a knowing gives visible shape to the inner experiencing, and makes an essential step to the inner-outer dialogue, by enabling reflective activity.

### **7.2. The Intersubjective Response**

When the representations from this process are offered to an other (therapist or researcher), either by reportage in various forms, or by direct enactment in the presence of both, the respondent creates his own engagement. This is

firstly a subjective empathic recreation of that which is received, which is interactive in the sense that it seeks to recreate that which is received, but also allows reverberation and amplification of the experiences received by connecting with his own subjective vestibule of related memories, feelings and so on. There is another intrasubjective activity released through this accommodation to the received. It is both empathic and coexperiential. The respondent tries to choose what to shape into representation of that which he has coexperienced.

He constructs a representation of this immersion, trying to give back the flow of his interactive 'respondingness.' It remains experiential; it enters, engages, explores, extends, shapes, plays with, questions, as well as feels, tastes, senses and connects with the emotion of the materials and his response. This is the resonance experience, which we bring into the interaction, instead of bracketing it out, as in empirical phenomenology. Being in, being with, co-constructing and giving back, this is the sense of it. But, what is given back is filtered, arranged and shaped differently, through a process of intuitive selection. The two forms are clearly genetically related, products of two perceptual efforts to construct different forms for the same story, experienced through different residuals.

The resonance comes from a different place. For the initiator, the material may be primitive, personal, owned, directly reexperienced, often surprising, even disturbing. For the respondent, the material is new, perhaps unexpected, approached with an awesome openness to possibility, with a naivety so as to enter, inhabit and be taken into and surprised into responding without judgment, or conceptualisation, but with a strong sense of responsibility to reach for 'rightness.' It is a powerfully subjective, intuitive gesture—a companioning of emerging awareness. It is empathic, it tries to be accurate, but it also brings qualities of responsive resonance and the selective felt sensing to and with the initiator, by the respondent. It is likely to be more

far ranging in its intuitiveness in the therapeutic activity, which initially lacks a construct as container of the inquiry, than in the research activity, which is more particular.

But curiously, it is also selective. In his externalisation, he makes two distinct kinds of responses: one is the operational that maintains the functional interaction of the verbal performance. The other is the intersubjective-the responses carefully shaped and given back from the selected parts of resonance to the client, with a sense of supportive appropriateness, clarification, challenge, inquiry and openness to possibility. This shaped excerpt derives from his much larger pool of inner experiencing (IE), much of which is surmise, imaginative flow, triggered self-connections, which are subjected to choices as to appropriateness, riskiness, and ownership. The qualities of resonance as discovered in this research mark it out as a concept categorically different from theoretical interpretations.

### **7.3. Inner Experiencing (IE)**

The ISR is a resonance that also requires intuitive selectivity in responding.

He becomes intuitively aware that some of his responding is about his own story, his own reactivated emotions, his own sensitivities, incompletenesses and residues. He listens within, and chooses between what is his and is not for viewing at this moment, and what resonates within him from the client in a way that amplifies his being in her material. He gives back the gift of his amplified resonance, as a deeply felt response, as a tentative question, as inquiry into possibility, but never as interpretation. He endeavours to separate out that which feels his, from what is sensed to be hers, or what can be said as constructive experiencing, from what would be going beyond her experience or beyond searching for meanings into stating interpretations.

The intersubjective response (ISR) moves them both into things recognised and partly known, and beyond into things hinted at, hardly known or not known, but becoming emergent. The material that is unstated remains the basis of his further indwelling of his inner experiencing the private journey of the therapist, more so than the researcher, where selection is less crucial.

#### **7.4. Intersubjective Dialogues**

All experiential research and therapy is part of this process of successive approximations to meaning or personal knowing. As therapist, his larger pool of inner experiencing (IE), is the material to stay with and in which to take his own parallel journey, through indwelling and reexperiencing through to understanding, as his form of personal inquiry, when he becomes aware of the energy of inquiry activating a re-search for understanding. In a research team, the consensual validation arising from shared inner experiencing(s) over the texts, takes a different form of exchange, as has been shown. Lincoln (1995), refers to this form of research as requiring reflexivity, or the 'high quality awareness (Rowan & Reason, 1981), required in 'transformative subjectivity' (Frieden, 1989) and endorses the concept of reciprocity, used by Rowan (1981) and others, maintaining that researchers must be able to reflect upon their own reciprocal participation in the study of the persons in relating. The criteria of validity are also relational, as stated by Rowan & Reason (1981) 'valid knowledge is a matter of relationship' (p241).

How does an experiential therapist or researcher select out the ISR from the IE? The researcher-practitioner becomes increasingly able to manage different levels of awareness. He knows intuitively, sometimes consciously, sometimes only intuitively, that the client's material is touching his own. The representation of his experiencing self is the therapist's component of being in an intersubjective dialogue. But in order to do the work of understanding this intersubjective experiencing, the levels of his experiencing within or

beneath the representation, are also subject to inquiry. The unstated, the tacit, the known but not said, the not known but suspected, these comprise the matrix of the therapist's presence. These cues or possibilities do include his holistic bodily experiencing, all forms of sensing, emotion, feeling, thinking, imaging, sounding, and his recourse to modes of representing.

This responsive interchange lies in the zone where the prereflective and the reflective meet; the zone of intersubjective experiencing, where two people are in the experience of each other, finding the meaning in the lived experiencing, being inside experience, not somehow treating the experience as the object of cognition from outside. This is much like the description of Merleau-Ponty given by Moss (1989), in distinguishing the lived experience of the body as that which is known fundamentally differently from considerations of the body as object or the image of the self in body. The knowing of being in the body is intuitive and prereflective: the intersubjective dialogue arises from this source in both participants, from their inner experiencing into their interactive responding, they try to represent that knowing which is in process of experience and which, when transacted into representation, give form to potential meanings. These are both recognised and discovered as they are formed. This interchange is qualitatively different from the texts that arise from these interchanges, becoming a source of reflection and conceptualisation, in which patterns are recognised, themes identified, and meanings more clearly stated, but we should not move too quickly to assume that this second phase of reflection is simply interpretation.

The therapist/researcher attends to as many of these lived events as he can in the client, when being fully present to his co-inquirer. Yet the client is on a parallel journey. Part of the therapist's work over time, is to make it possible for the client to move beyond the surface story, to avoid collusion with his own story, and to find modes of access and entry which enable penetration of the not quite known. To increase access is to overcome much of the client's

selectivity of self-representation. He too has the dilemma of how much to expose of his inner self, though it is generally assumed that he should expose everything, while the therapist's task is more one of self containment. Dialogues of significance might not always be couched in these perspectives. Negotiation of the intersubjective seems critical to the kind of presence the two participants make in their work. The co-inquirer, as researcher or therapist does not only tell his own personal story, the story about himself, but he declares his felt response and experiences his own felt response with and to the other. It is this condition of his responsiveness that causes his presence to be strongly and deeply alive, and imaginatively active in the interactions.

Of course the researcher/therapist is characterised by an informed intuition. And yes, snippets of ideas from theories, may enter his thinking and be adopted or not or used in this interactive process. This does not inevitably lead us to the conclusion that he is being hermeneutic. He is the sum of his ideas, feelings, remembered emotions, accessible memories, incompletenesses, and so on. But the experiential therapist and researcher are not attempting to reconstruct someone else's lived experience by imposing a predeveloped theory of meanings onto it: the meanings are contained in the structures of their experiencing. The intention to construct personal knowing brings the co-researcher more fully into his own awareness — both prereflective and reflective — and the intersubjective dialogue of his reexperiencing and other resonance assist in both recognition and construction of these meanings. The utilisation of informed intuition in an interchange contributes to a form of inquiry in which experiential knowing occurs through a process of recognition and construction: can meanings be acquired without interpretation? The personal and intersubjective referents are not theoretical; they describe the ontology of lived knowledge. They can of course become conceptual, by standing back and doing thematic analysis, but this too, can remain very firmly within the experiential referents of the co-researcher or client. We

would prefer to retain the conception of intuitive knowing for these experiential constructions, and leave interpretation to be used for the application of external theoretical referents to internal data as ways of inferring meanings.

As a group of co-inquirers, we reflected constantly on our process, in order to fashion intersubjective responses to the personal inquiries of our co-researchers. The purpose of these activities was to give back a deeply considered intersubjective response, to establish as far as possible a consensually agreed upon response, carefully arrived at, thereby maintaining the interactive dialogue. The use of the independent research interviews gave understanding of the value of the ISR's to the co-researchers. These gave verification of the way in which the ISR functioned, showed the various impacts on the dialogues, and revealed deeper levels of the process of coming to know personal meanings. Post data reflection then allowed the conceptualisation of the procedures of experiential inquiry as developed here.

A four-step procedure is described by Schneier (1989), called the imagery in movement method (IMM), 'that can be used to explore any topic or question of concern or simply open investigation into the structure or fabric of one's current consciousness' (p313). These are:

1. **Expression:** 'doing an abstract colour drawing — in response to a question one wants to explore;'
2. **Mapping:** 'exploring the body sensations, thoughts, images, and feelings associated with — the drawing — and getting a preliminary understanding of the meanings of these elements — about the inner psychological situation;'
3. **Fantasy/enactment:** 'taking an imaginary journey — engaging in a psychodrama — into the most compelling element of the drawing and physically enacting the flow of images that present themselves;'

4. **Verbal translation:** 'using a series of questions designed to uncover the symbolic meaning of the elements — and the events — and further questions to determine how these symbols relate to one's current life situation.'

This is perhaps the closest procedure to that developed here and has a similar purpose — the exploration for understanding, of matters of concern in current awareness. Although the procedures described emphasise a visual-kinetic combination of modes in the search for meaning in the present life circumstance, the discussion clearly allows a multimodal process, explores things not quite known, and pursues meaning closely in the elements of representations. This makes it similar in its reliance on entry to awareness through artworks, to the procedures of Betensky (1987), in which a four-sequence method is employed to create artwork, distance the self, re-enter intentionally, and provide phenomenological description, unfolding and integration. She too allows the client to establish her own meanings without hermeneutic interpretation from the therapist.

For Schneier and Betensky, seeing patterns in the art elements is seen to relate to seeing life patterns, the recognition of which eventually leads to change (Schneier, p164). Schneier, however, adopts body enactment as the means of 'unfolding,' herself included in the drama, and moving to a recognition of the theme or meaning contained in it. She too emphasises the importance of emotion in reconnected memory, and the process of reflecting upon the reexperiencing, including homework usually of reflective writing, in order to increase understanding. In this, there is a search for important elements-words, images, and feelings as a way of exploring the meanings of these 'analogies.' The similarity to our key words and key images is marked.

## 7.5. Understanding & Interpretation

Schneier also emphasises the importance of non-interpretation of the client's materials:

*Without direction or interpretation from the facilitator with regard to the content of the session, 'something' presents the key issues, works on these issues, and resolves them' (p321)*

In addition, she writes, 'the client is led directly to his or her own interpretation of drawing, in contrast to many art therapy methods that give much of the responsibility for interpretation to the therapist' (p325) And finally, 'it provides a graphic representation of the inner world, of the meanings and experiences that have structured that world, and a clear understanding of how that private reality is a filter through which we encounter our current reality' (p326) Although there is no particular emphasis on the joint construction of meanings, it is evident in the description of procedures that this is what is understood. And again, there is no intention to adopt hermeneutic stances for the discernment of meanings — here also, the co-researcher's reexperiencing and the intersubjective dialogue are the referents for meaning derivation. Though the conceptualisation contains slight differences of emphasis, the procedures and epistemology are substantially the same.

Both these writers describe the role of the therapist/researcher as an empathic, non-interpretive questioner, who adopts a research procedure which creates an inquiry, but leaves the reconnecting to inner experiencing and the construction of meaning to the co-researcher, assisted by the researcher in a cohabitation with the data. The step towards analysis of the inner experiencing and the focus on intersubjectivity itself is the development currently being reported. In contrast, the position taken by Van Manen (1990), is that the description and interpretation accompany each other: this position seems to derive from the view that representation is seen already as

interpretation, and that description is a further interpretation of an interpretation (p26), hence 'there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena,' (p181). He agrees that the Husserlian position, articulated in research by Giorgi, 1985) is that phenomenological description is a deeply 'intuitive grasping of the essential structure of phenomena as they appear in consciousness,' but is concerned about the distortions that are likely because of the incompleteness of intuiting. But Susan Sontag (1962) cited by Lomas (1987), states emphatically:

*The modern style of interpretation excavates, and as it excavates, destroys-- According to Marx and Freud — events only seem to be intelligible. Actually, they have no meaning without interpretation. To understand is to interpret.'*

The idea of understanding and stating this, without interpretation, lies at the heart of this epistemological dilemma. This dilemma is both of procedural and conceptual concern in this research, but also highlights issues still not clearly resolved in this field of writing. The adoption of modified phenomenology designated experientialism is practiced here and has been argued throughout. The contrasting positions adopted by Van Manen and Giorgi on the nature and role of interpretation are both linguistic and conceptual. Our experience of this in this series of interpersonal dialogues has led us to an amplified view of the experience of deriving intersubjective meaning. The intrasubjective search and its representational formings do not constitute interpretation, since forming a representation of experience is still part of the experience itself. More exactly, the experience and its manifestation are all part of the experience of being and becoming aware of how one is being in this experiencing. These are the referents for this experiencing: the pursuit of knowing in being is unitary in this sense.

Another window on this issue is about creation and interpretation. The process of creating, making or forming experience into an externalised form, cannot be the same experience as making an interpretive meaning of it.

Experiencing engages the person fully — all his modes of being. As he engages in a deep inner connectedness, as image, idea, sound, feeling, sensing, emotion connect, the impulse to form brings the components together in what is an integrated act of creating form. Of course there are choices as well as intuitive leaps, guided by a combination of aesthetic feeling and rightness of feeling to form. But at the time of immersed experiencing, as distinct from distanced recollection about the form, interpretive meaning making would halt the making process. The former process is of intuitive forming, where prereflective experiencing is thought to be dominant, and the latter is where reflective reexperiencing dominates: hence the dialogue of the prereflective and reflective becomes the basis of meaning making in the distanced sense, moving into conceptualisation and analysis — that is, reflective interpretation. What is meant is emergent in the experiencing, and remains to be viewed as to whether it is 'right' or can be altered. The analysis of meaning in a thematic or constructive sense requires further indwellings, reflections and reconnections. The resonant *being together* or *intersubjective experiencing* of two inquirers remains within the making until the transformation is begun, toward understanding of what they have created. Even then, the procedures might not be clear-cut, since making forms can be interspersed with making meanings in a complex way.

An example of a contemporary analytic use of interpretation is provided by Natterson & Friedman (1995). Accepting that the 'radically new changes in psychotherapy' (p.ix), 'will transform the way such (analytic) theories are regarded and employed' (p.xii), and 'emphasises the idea that in the therapeutic situation two individuals co-create the relationship they live and talk about' (p1) There seems to be here, and in other contemporary discussions, an agreement about the nature and centrality of the intersubjective in therapy. The conceptualisations however, do not necessarily reflect a unitary implementation. Again, retaining the central analytic concept of transference/counter-transference, it is assumed that the

work of the therapist — even when deeply attentive to their intersubjectivity — is to interpret the world of the patient.

An interpretation is always an intersubjective event. A good interpretation means that intense, intersubjective resonance is occurring, leading to a richer and more comprehensive consciousness. A bad interpretation fundamentally reflects the therapist's disruptive anxiety over whatever intense intersubjective processes are operating (p80). In the example, an interpretation of a patient's dream is given that is different from her own. This invokes the transference, but at the same time identifies a growth of 'confidence in herself — and freedom to express — her intense intimate feelings within our relationship' (p81). The writer goes on to say:

*This is a good interpretation because, in the best judgment of both patient and analyst, we were having an exceptional experience of analytic intimacy. We were sharing her pain with powerful relevance and resonance' (p82)*

In the experiential inquiries presented, we have attempted to enter the world of the other through empathic resonance, to sense and occupy the experience of the other as closely as possible, and to give back our response. In this way we amplify the possibility of constructed meanings, which, over time, are co-created. The experience described above is very similar, except that here the analyst states directly his view of the meaning of the experience of the other as an interpretation. This adds to the possible data for her consideration. Yet the process of empathic resonance must not necessarily lead to the result of interpretative statements by the other.

What we would argue is to keep the multimodal dialogue going as long as exploration and discovery are operating. And we would not continue to think of ourselves as being the best substitute parent possible for the client, since this recreates the transference/counter-transference relationship (p85). Perhaps, in the long run, these 'conceptions' are merely niceties created by

therapists in maintaining the distinctiveness of their own stances, and that the reduction to essential simplicity of the therapeutic activity as relationships of resonance, is or will be, surprisingly similar.

The dialogue of the intersubjective as we have described it, extends this process to two or more persons deeply committed to being present to the experiencing of one nominated person. What changes is that there are overlapping frames of personal reference, which merge, separate and re-emerge in order to encompass the emerging experiencing of the focussed aspects of being which present themselves. This resonance is both prereflective and reflective, preconscious and conscious. There is an exchange at this level. We do not use 'interpretation' to describe this process of personal intersubjectivity. It is a process of recognition, discovery and construction of meanings, which are arrived at in the multimodal manner described. An interpretation would be quite possible as an additional level of interaction. This might entail adopting a meaning stance from an existing theoretical or conceptual body of ideas, in order to supply possible meaning understandings about the experiencing recorded. This would be recognisably hermeneutic.

We would contend that in psychological research devoted the field of subjective or personal experiencing, this is an appropriate distinction between the intuitive phases of inquiry into personal experiencing, and the more formal hermeneutic activity of creating meaning through the reconsideration of the data of experiencing from an interpretive external stance. Following these ideas, it is consistent with the experiencing research carried out, to suggest that interpretation is not a unitary phenomenon, and that the epistemology of knowing-in-being is more complex than the idea that everything is interpretation. Interpretation may occur, but how and when need more discourse. But the position taken here is that every piece of self-knowledge cannot be automatically regarded as an interpretation.

## **7.6. Cycles of Meaning Making**

There are different categories of experiencing in the attempt to identify personal meanings. They are not phases, they are not procedures, but they do have a character that we will describe as cycles, not necessarily temporal.

### **7.6.1. The Intrasubjective Cycle (1A)**

The activity of self-inquiry is characterised as described above, by a personal prereflective/reflective dialogue, in which representation and reflection contain meanings at various levels of articulation and clarity, contained within the experiencing and the representations. They may be recognitions of things known, or discovery of things not yet known. An other does not subject them to any kind of intervention, nor are they submitted to analysis of any kind.

### **7.6.2. The Intrasubjective Cycle (1B)**

This inquiry for personal meaning in one's life might be facilitated by another—such as a friend or a counsellor.

In this dialogue, the role of the other would be simply that of empathic co-inquirer, in which reflection, and empathic listening would occur, without any attempt to move the dialogue in any particular direction or attain particular progress towards meaning articulation, and without any attempt at analysis or thematic understandings.

These two cycles of personal inquiry are directed by the inquirer, and cannot be said to engage in any attempt to bring interpretive stances from without, to the experiencing. The frame of reference for personal meanings lies entirely within the experiencing self-self dialogue in A, and self-facilitator-self in B. The canvas is a personal/experiential one, and meanings discovered remain within that canvas.

### 7.6.3. The Intersubjective Cycle

As revealed in our procedures, the role of the researcher as facilitator here is qualitatively different from the first cycle. The dialogue of the inquirer is shared continuously with the researcher, who gives back his own resonance to the inquiry, by means of his undertaking a similar reflective journey to her using her material as the basis of his experiencing. They will exchange forms of representation of their experiencing of the inquirer's materials as they arise.

The researcher tries to stay with the living experiencing-reexperiencing events the inquirer is having. He tries to indwell and be in them, and to allow them to resonate deeply within him, so as to give back his own experience of her experience, being careful to try not to interpose his own life materials. The frame of reference remains within the experiential content of the inquirer, but this is co-inhabited, and amplified by their shared immersion and representations. Meanings may well arise for the inquirer in this engagement over time, but the frame of reference for these meanings is still her life experience and the reflective understanding which the inquirer may attain during this interactive, multimodal dialogue. In this cycle as described, there is no further research analysis. The activity is still one of reflexive/reflective interchange and of resonant reexperiencing of essentially prereflective experiences, now occurring in the interplay of conscious awarenesses.

### 7.6.4. The Conceptual Cycle

If, after the experience described in *The Intersubjective Cycle*, there is a wish to move to more formal procedures of understanding more explicitly what the meanings are, then procedures may be employed of an experiential kind, in which, by interview or further exchanges, patterns, themes and core meanings are extracted from the experiential data over time, by the two participants, or by which ever small group has been acting as researcher. In this cycle, the frame of reference for derived or constructed meanings remains still within

contexts of this form of inquiry are particular to this form of personal knowing, extracted from actual living experience.

Description and meaning construction, as inquiry, are procedurally different from the procedures and attitudes to inquiry, of interpretive science, and are not, as Giorgi maintains, in the Husserlian tradition, 'reducible to each other' (1992, p121). Intuitive discovery leads to personal knowing, can be displayed, and the procedures of description can reveal the activity but not the mystery of personal discovery, without drawing upon the idea of interpretation.

That the results of such discoveries can be conceptualised, and can also become the materials of hermeneutic interpretive processing is legitimate, but the epistemological strategies should not be confused, but may be better seen as part of an epistemological continuum.

As stated by Giorgi:

*'description is the use of language to articulate the intentional objects of experience within the constraints of intuitive or presentational evidence.'*

Further he reports that Mohanty (1985) has suggested that:

*'phenomenology bestows meanings from within experience as experienced, whereas interpretation clarifies meanings 'in terms of plausible but contingently adopted theoretical perspective.' (p122)*

Where our procedures take a significant divergent tack is that instead of adopting the usual phenomenological practice of bracketing out prior knowledge and assumptions about the emerging phenomena, we bracket in the resonant experience of the other, thereby making a more powerful intuitive dialogue, one which amplifies and extends the range of experiencing, as well as increasing the possibility or a more accurate forming of it.

The mental activities of understanding are, as argued above, more complex than that everything is interpretation. The broadest distinction lies between

making meaning of a theoretical kind with regard to human experiencing, and the results of intra-and inter-subjective exploration. As Lomas (1987) argues, interpretation, in its definitional form, expounds meaning (p2), and cautions us that although interpretations may be consistent with a theoretical understanding of phenomena, 'arbitrary but useful functions' (p27), they may not necessarily be true about the meaning of the experiencing. The intention to make meaning of experience from a theoretical stance must confuse both the creation of reexperiencing as well as any attempt to stay within it, except from this designated perspective. This of course is the reason for bracketing out theoretical assumptions when accompanying an other in her reexperiencing, whether in therapy or research. But to bracket out theoretical perspectives should not require the loss of informed intuitions and utilisation of the developed capacity to move about in the experiential world with resonant responsiveness, reaching towards personal truthfulness. As Lomas says, 'The admission that a search for authentic meaning may go astray does not absolve us from attempting to make one' (p31). And again, 'we have to recognize that attempts to understand people are too likely to go astray unless we give due weight to the empathic, intuitive sense of the experience that comes from being with, and caring about, someone over a period of time.' (p33) In arguing for the therapist's imaginative participation in response to his client, Lomas observes that 'if the therapist works within a non-discursive frame of reference, he will let his imagination dwell on the patient's words and will convey whatever thoughts and images come to mind' (p43). The authentic exchange is again focused, in what we would describe as the multimodal responsiveness of the dual dialogue.

It is important also to notice the spatial placement of the participants in experiential intersubjective inquiry. The co-inquirers are participants in an exchange of living experience. They attempt to discover the nature of their experiencing and to become more fully aware of its meaningfulness, as

the experience of the inquirer and the intersubjective responding of the researcher(s).

This activity draws out the structural content of the experiencing and its representations, and expresses this in the manner most evidently trustworthy to the data from which it is drawn. This too, is part of the reflective reexperiencing of the participants of the experiences that came up for the inquirer. The research task is to make the analysis true to the experiencing: it is the step of conceptualising the experiencing, and again of representing it, so as to show its structure and meaning in some form more explicit than has yet been attempted. This might still be in multimodal formats or written depictions.

The movement to conceptualisation of personal meanings might be the transition to this very particular kind of personal-intersubjective interpretation. It is not the ordinary activity of sitting outside the data as object, and doing a content or thematic analysis of it. It is again a process of immersion and reflection and dialogue and further representation, until the construction of core meanings is extracted from the representations. The result to this point may still be a description, in Giorgi's terms, or a depiction, in Moustakas' terms: statements of meaning gradually extracted from constant reexperiencing and staying with the inner events in their conveyance to one or several others. At which point do we say we have an interpretation? Or is it still possible to say that the process of experiential self-discovery has just reached its most exact point, that being a continuous process of emergent construction through the forming of experience until it reaches the most satisfactory level of clarification and representation. But it has a more cognitive quality to it: it is that combination of being within and standing without the experiencing, in order to know it as experiential conceptualisation. It is likely that the language will also change, and that more formal constructs will appear in the conceptual depictions.

### **7.6.5. The Theoretical Cycle**

When the participants agree on the inquirer's meanings, a choice is available to compare her lived experience structures or core themes, to those of others in contexts that are related or are of significant interest thus, a different intention and context drives this choice of activity.

Reconsideration of one experience in the light of others' might occur. The inquirer might see her experience similarly described through more symbolic frames of reference, through Jungian symbols or theories of metaphor. Taking a focus of certain variables of experiencing, or procedural, epistemological or methodological concerns may be enacted: theoretically relevant frames of reference can indeed be brought into contrast with those displayed in this data. One likely example would be to consider the contribution of this data to grounded theory, when other similar data are assessed.

### **7.6.6. General Discussion of Cycle(s)**

The point is that the elimination of prior theoretical frames of reference is argued as a key component of experiential work, in order to try to arrive at the least contaminated construction of personal experiencing. Filters of experiencing are reduced as far as is possible in the intersubjective exchange, and one of the ways to do this is by eliminating theoretical self fulfilling prophecies. In many so called 'phenomenological research studies,' the data are said to be collected experientially, but in the second half of the research, they are then reconstructed through an existing theoretical frame: in this, the phenomenological and the hermeneutic are inseparably intertwined. We have chosen not to do this, but to run the risk of trying to make the intersubjective a valid basis for arriving at personal meaning: the meaning in the data of personal experiencing are inherently in the representational descriptions of the experiencing, and are extracted by reflective and intersubjective discovery and construction to a level of conscious understanding. The conditions and

experienced and reflected upon. It is useful to distinguish this orientation from the hermeneutic, as described by Packer (1985):

*The hermeneutic paradigm takes as its starting point the fact that, despite the ambiguities, any observer has a preliminary practical understanding of what the people studied are 'up to.'*

Experiential inquiry tries not to set up a researcher acting upon an other or others, studying their behaviour in order to make meaning of the behaviour of the other. Although there is, generally speaking, so far a co-researcher or 'subject,' who does indeed create representational texts of experiencing, the researcher does not simply use the text, as in a phenomenological study, to move into analysis and interpretation, he responds to this experiential forming or text by developing his own resonance and giving this back to the generator of the statements, usually multimodally.

The purpose is to act as co-inquirer in the search for personal meaning, not to act as researcher to determine the nature of the other's meanings for him. This is perhaps the key point of difference between phenomenological empiricism and experiential inquiry: that there is no construct to be understood, that there is not an observer of an other, that the task is not to arrive at the concealed meanings of experience and give it back to the other, that there is not even a participant observation or ethnographic activity from which interpretive conclusions are returned. The meanings belong to the inquirer ('the subject'), and are facilitated by the researcher, who shares the experiential space with the co-inquirer. In this process of exchange over time, meanings are constructed by the continuous activity of personal search, representation and dialogue between the co-inquirers. Their data are the external manifestations of their inner experiencing, data that is always being extended with experience. The dialogue of understanding is both from within and also from outside in, in a kind of cycle of prereflective with reflective. What is understood? The inquirer comes to a meaningful construction of aspects of his lived experience that were formerly not known or not clearly

able to be described meaningfully. The researcher also inhabits these meanings, but more as a source of validation and empathic co-inquirer and resonant co-experiencer, rather than as an interpreter.

It would be possible to continue the analysis forwards to thematic levels and to reduction to essences, or inner structure as of experiencing or core meanings. In this example, constructs or themes of experiencing are identified in the meanings. But a life-derived meaning is of a different quality than a psychological construct. It is a coherent statement about a way in which this part of a life is understood, or a pattern of being is described that has continuous functioning. It is essentially personal, and though it identifies constructs of experiencing, it does not contribute to the research of a construct, only to the understanding of how the person's inner self is organised or how the life is lived in practice. These understandings, stated as meanings, are constructed in the process of inquiry, through recognition, discovery, inner searching and intersubjective dialogue. The difference between this inquiry and say, Hollnagel's description of a hermeneutic inquiry, is that this is not an attempt, by a researcher, standing outside a text, trying to 'guess' at the meanings of the text (1978, p194), but rather an intersubjective experiencing of a living unfolding of events in a life, shared between two inquirers, carrying forward the experiencing as it unfolds into meanings, which are constructed in the process.

Hollnagel contrasts the hermeneutic paradigm-to get the best approximation of intended meaning by conscious validation against the text, with the cognitive paradigm of understanding-a form of analysis by synthesis, by perception-often unconscious-of arriving at the best goodness of fit of meaning in the communication. The experiential inquiry has no fixed text, and is holistic in the attempt to arrive at knowing: it is reflective and reconstructive, it reconstructs previous understandings or levels of understanding of experience into new ones, it is both conscious and

preconscious in its functioning, is closer to the cognitive than the hermeneutic, but is multimodal and multifunctional in its apprehension of meanings, being neither only cognitive nor only intuitive, but deeply holistic in its knowing of the experience of being. The intersubjectivity and continuity of reflections and resonances over time, increase the possibility of better approximations of meaning, and lessen the likelihood of self deceiving subjectivism. There is also acknowledgment that making meanings exact or correctly explicit is never absolutely achievable in the phenomena of personal meanings, so that best approximations obtain until the present approximations need updating. It is also the case that there is an experiential constraint on validation of meanings, experiential verification being more applicable, or truthfulness of experience as understood so far. Experiential verification therefore, may be the best form of consensual validation available with the data of personal meanings.

Methodologically, in this form of inquiry into personal meanings, the best we can do regarding validity is to show as clearly as possible the what of the content of experiencing, the how it functions and makes itself manifest, and the procedures of intersubjective dialogue that transpire. At the same time we cannot simply attempt to make objective that which is subjective, or pretend that the procedures will produce the same levels of exactness of understanding as would occur using empirical methods on objective data, (Packer, 1985). But we must not also devalue as unreliable the processes of experiencing and understanding which are displayed, because not everything in human functioning cannot be displayed, or because every piece of knowing cannot be readily described as rational/empirical, but may be tacit and other modal. Subjectivity must yield up as many of its secrets as we can extract, in forms that are recognizably true to the materials it organises and the manner in which it functions. To do this without prior fixed conception is one requirement, and to recognise meaningfulness of outcome, within the

paradigm of subjectivity is another. Let the procedures proceed from the paradigm, and let the paradigm reflect the phenomena.

## **7.7. Recent Conceptions of Intersubjectivity**

Recent writings about intersubjectivity are predominantly conceptual-the nature of this construct is reconsidered intrinsically-from within its functioning, and hermeneutically-from within theoretical stances. Fewer recent writings present actual researched conceptualisations. A major source of redefinition has arisen from psychoanalytic writers. This is not at all surprising, since the analytic method, if separated from its heavily developed theoretical armour plating, is quite centrally an interpersonal dialogue of reflective reexperiencing. The relational centrepiece, still frequently reconsidered as transference/counter-transference, can be seen as a dialogue of relational intersubjectivity, especially when allowed to exist as a pursuit of meaning in its own right, shared by two people deeply connected, and without the attribution of meanings derived from the highly elaborated interpretations of theory. Without this interpretive superstructure, the form of inquiry in itself prefigures all attempts in therapy and research to return to experience itself as the source of understanding the meanings in lived experience.

Ogden (1994), in a paper written for the seventy-fifth anniversary of the International Journal of Psychoanalysis, refers to the intersubjective dialogue as the 'analytic third.' Rejecting the earlier notion of the analyst functioning as a blank screen for client projection, he asserts the need to recognise and incorporate, 'the nature and interplay of subjectivity and intersubjectivity' (p62), and the implications of this for analytical conceptual developments. He places this dialogue as central to the therapeutic interchange, replacing the concept of two people relating as separate objects.

'The intersubjectivity of the analyst/analysed coexists in dynamic tension — as separate individuals' (p63). 'The task is not to separate out their participations, but 'to describe as fully as one can the specific nature of the experience of the interplay of individual subjectivity and intersubjectivity — the product of a unique dialectic generated in the analytic setting.'

He reports two examples of the analytic third. In one, he simply reports to the reader all that goes on in his mind while interacting with his patient, similar to our discussion of Inner Experiencing above. These inner responses are interpreted as being part of the transference/counter-transference, not as a source of selectivity for increasing the awareness of intersubjective responding. In experiential inquiry, this is identified as the site for identification of the intra-intersubjective dialogue, and of the distinctions between intersubjective responding (ISR) and inner experiencing (IE). In the second, he verbalises a shared experience of delusion reported by a patient. The processing of the analytic third remains consistent with analytic modes—it is a verbal reflection on what is remembered of the outer story provided.

It returns a verbal description, which becomes the material of interpretation from a theory, a consistently hermeneutic practice, overlooking the possibility of a sufficient meaningfulness in the content and process of the interaction itself. Yet the step of recognition of the significance of therapist inner responsiveness brings the therapy into recognition of the activity of intersubjectivities as part of the data of the interchange. The question of researching this, outside of prevailing assumptions contained in theoretical meanings, was not yet available.

Description, in experiential inquiry, is the first step in the series of steps comprising the inquiry, and is the avenue of access to the intrasubjective at deeper, and as yet unconnected levels of potential reexperiencing.

The return to the idea of 'real relationships' as the essence of therapy, as distinct from projective distortions of various kinds, allows the research focus to become centred on the experiencing of both participants. The abandonment or at least bracketing out of the major assumptions of unknowable, unconsciously determined counter-transferences by the therapist, allows the material of his inner experiencing to become available as a source of understanding about the actual relationship, rather than as something to be understood only in terms of unconscious material to be interpreted from the constructs of the theory, for example as some form of projection.. The processes of the construction of personal meanings, not theoretically constructed ones, then emerge as potential research data, since they can be respected as reliable in themselves, not merely comprehensible because of a particular theory. The latter places the burden of validation of human experiencing and construction of human meanings onto the particular view of human nature that is held in the theoretical stance being utilised. It places hermeneutic interpretation at the centre of the understanding, and provides predetermined constructs of experiencing as the vehicles for personal meanings, rather than placing the experiencing itself as the phenomenon to be understood.

This is the strongest argument for the application of the idea of bracketing to the understanding of research on personal meanings. It also creates the dilemma of how the participants, in therapy or research into personal knowing, are to eventually construct the meanings from the data of their interactions. It is this point at which the present research has been focused: how do we create a form of inquiry into intersubjectivities as experienced, and when we do abandon theoretical bracketing, how will the interpersonal frame of reference provide the bases for valid meaning constructions?

The abandonment of major interpretive constructs in psychoanalysis, and refocusing the relationship is also advocated by Stolorow et al (1994). The

new paradigm of psychoanalysis, he calls intersubjectivity theory, in which the central metaphor is the 'larger relational field in which psychological phenomena crystallise and in which experience is continually and mutually shaped'; and 'the impact of the analyst and his organising activity on the unfolding of the therapeutic relationship itself becomes a focus of analytic investigation and reflection' (p.x). And 'intrapsychic determinism thus gives way to an unremitting intersubjective contextualism.' The new theory of intersubjectivity 'does not posit particular psychological contents — presumed to be universally salient.' However, a particular assumption about developmental patterning appears as the cornerstone of the perspective on intersubjectivity: a child's experience is organised from patterns developed in relationship to its caregivers and in their systems of mutual regulation, unconsciously derived. So a new hermeneutic is presented. There is still however, the important perspective retained on the intersubjective dialogue, that 'both patient and analyst are freed to understand themselves, each other, and their ongoing relationship with increasing depth and richness.' (p.xii)

This discussion remains a theoretical one, and does not become either a research formulation or an illustration of therapeutic practice. Our data do not present illustrations of therapeutic experiential practice either, since they are directed towards the much more limited purpose of creating research procedures into how the inquiry into personal meaning making might be pursued, investigated, observed and reported. It does also make a perspectival stance — on the nature of epistemology — that there are multiple modes of accessing personal experiencing, and that these may be incorporated in any search for understanding human meanings. The perspective is secondly asserting the significance of an intrapersonal exploration for meaning being held in significant interactive dialogue with others, emphasising the social nature of personal knowing and the social-intersubjective validation of meaning making. This is but a beginning step into the observation of intersubjectivities, their nature and functioning.

The nub of understanding intersubjectivity does seem to lie in the self with self and self with other dialogues. It is here that the struggle occurs to create representations of experiencing which both maintain the self in experience, yet reconstruct the meaningfulness of experiencing in the light of re-patterned understandings that emerge, when new connectedness enlarges and clarifies the new knowing of the person. The balancing of new with old representations of the meanings of experience is the substance of the intersubjective interaction. Gradual changes of awareness about the nature of experiencing make possible eventual consolidated changes in ways of being in experience. In making this statement, I try to avoid saying 'changes to the self in experiencing,' because it seems unnecessary to place the construct of the self in the way of the more direct idea of being in experience. We do not need to place 'the self' in the dialogue, every time we want to refer to a change in the perception of our way of being in experience: that should be a sufficient description. Yet, there is a linguistic difficulty in reconstructing the first sentence of this paragraph without the use of 'self.' Perhaps one could say: 'the nub of understanding intersubjectivity does seem to lie in the dialogue of personal experiencing and reexperiencing, and in relating this intrasubjective dialogue to the experiencing of it with an other. Thus a shared intersubjectivity is created.'

Two other factors relate to the conception of the core of intersubjectivity. The one is the nature of the process of two persons engaged in the interaction of experience sharing. The other is the nature and description of the process of meaning making itself, and the role of the intersubjective exchange in this reconstructive process. Stolorow (1994) pursues the idea of 'a pure psychology,' a theory of subjectivity lodged in the subjective 'representational world' (p33) of the individual, without any other assumptions as to motivational sources. How his being in experience is formed results from his interactions with his early carers, in which patterns of being are created, 'discernible in the distinctive, recurrent themes and invariant meanings that

unconsciously organize the person's experience.' The subjective world is experientially wider than the 'territory of the self,' as is the interactive world of the intersubjective wider than a dual interplay of self-object relations. Stolorow describes the intersubjective field in two different ways. The first is in terms of transference, 'the larger system created by the reciprocal mutual interaction between the patient's transference and the analyst's transference,' thus staying with the psychoanalytic view of the interactions, as somehow fixed in a predetermined way. However, in his second description he uses a different language:

'The concept of an intersubjective field is a theoretical construct precisely matched to the methodology of empathic-introspective inquiry. What we investigate through empathy and introspection are the principles organising the patient's experience (empathy), the principles organising our own experience (introspection), and the psychological field formed by the interplay of the two.' (p38)

Perhaps what is at stake here, from the experiential perspective, is only linguistic, or maybe it is conceptual. In trying to return to pure experiencing, we of course try to describe the dialogue of interpersonal experiencing without using the fixed notions of transference/counter-transference, since this is a language already far too contaminated, and because the attempt is to enter the field of mutual experiencing always in the least contaminated way possible, hoping that the meaningfulness of the experiential dialogue might be found within the terms and contents of this reciprocity. We have argued that the intersubjective response goes beyond empathy and beyond introspection, it being most characterised by resonance, in which awareness of my response to the client and my responses which are to myself, are both present.

The separation of response to other and response to self are identifiable, as ISR and IE, and a selection is made out of this awareness, in the responsiveness to the other. These two levels of awareness are maintained

and feed into each other, over the time of the inquiry into personal meanings. The idea that empathy is the therapist's response to the client and introspection reserved for himself seems to separate something which is in a much more reciprocal dynamic flow than this distinction suggests. The idea of resonance is that it is called into activity between two people mutually engaged in reciprocal responsiveness to the life experience of one, but both are equally engaged in a deepening level of experiencing of the life events of the one, yet are also keenly aware of their own intersubjectivity, as well as responding intersubjectively to the other. This cycle suggests that an intensely intuitive co-experiencing is in operation, where the resonances between them are much more the source of understandings that occur, than the perspective in which the therapist allots empathy to the client and engages in introspection upon himself. That can hardly be a description of mutuality or reciprocity.

One question that arises is what actually controls the interaction and the selectivity of both, since both will maintain a 'self/self' and 'self/other' selectivity, from a pool of not fully disclosed emergent awareness. The first answer is that understanding grows over time, in successive approximations to meaning. Another answer to this is that there is a strong sense of not wanting to interpret to the other the right meaning of his reforming understandings. We wish to be fully present in his process and our own, to offer as much of our own pure experiencing as we can without lying on the hands of interpretation. We assist the creation of understanding, but we do not create it by interpretation: the meanings are constructed in the process of the experiential interaction, with the interaction and its contents as the frame of reference. Is resonance merely introspection? Is our experiencing of self-self and self-other merely empathy? My view is that resonance goes beyond introspection and empathy, because it takes the therapist or researcher into the dynamic of his own experiencing of self and other as data for his responsiveness, taking him beyond the data of the client, creating a dual

personal engagement of intersubjectivities in which intuitive choices are constant, in order to contribute actively to the search for meaning.

The boundaries of this for the therapist or researcher seem to lie in some sense of appropriateness as to levels of disclosure of personal content, attempting to avoid the imposition of interpretive constructions on the other, and yet to own the resonance of feeling and sensing that he experiences in meeting himself and other in the dialogues. There is a shared experiencing and a shared co-construction of meaning, in which the authority of the understood meanings lies with the client or co-researcher, not with the therapist or researcher. His authority is also to be clear about what is his and what belongs to the other, and to know his own process of selecting material in and out, and to stay with this ever-clarifying process of interactive 'respondingness.'

And what if the researcher feels strongly that the co-researcher is either wrong or falling short in his understanding? That is something he will intuit and deal with, in his sense of appropriateness of selective disclosure, and the owning of his own intuitive sensing of the rightness of the understandings. This will continue the dialogue, but may not guarantee that the other gets it right, but then, all declarations of meaning are approximations to be mined further in lived experience. We do honour the potential of the therapist or researcher to inquire into his own subjective meanings, and advocate this as part of the inquiry—he is always taking a parallel journey with each client, and his felt sense of his other-experiencing is always influenced by the relevant stored experiences of his own. His ability to manage the boundaries of his separateness yet connectedness to the client will ultimately control the quality and usefulness of his resonance to the other. The more he questions, reflects, indwells and stays with his co-experiencing, the less likely he is to confuse his experience with that of the other, and the sharper his awareness can become of the material they co-construct into meaningfulness.

The place of reconnection in repatterning lies significantly near the core of reexperiencing and the way into fuller knowing. This is also close to the nature of the 'knowing' that occurs, as the epistemological basis of experiential work. Not only do the various modes of representation contribute to the inquiry into meaning, there is another fundamental contributor, if not the key one, to finding the core of patterns of personal meaning. That is emotion. All discoveries and recognitions of meanings were accompanied by deeply reconnected emotions. It was as if emotion when encountered through reexperiencing, becomes the dynamic which collects and connects to images, thoughts, senses, feelings, words, and brings them into a new forming relationship: this seems to be the material of the articulation of a pattern of connected experience, and the fluid which acts as a kind of gel in the discovery of understanding in a pattern.

Greenberg, Rice and Elliot (1993) argue that emotion is central in understanding interaction and cognition. The function of emotion is intentional-it directs attention, and it is motivational, and regulates communication. Bodily sensations are accompanied by emotion which integrate internal information supplies automatically, and is integrated with conscious thinking, and when strongly elicited, dominates cognitive activity. Thus, emotion must be attended to, if personal meanings are to be processed to understanding: cognition and affect cannot be separated, but emotion is the dominant force in reaching personal meanings. Nor is it just a matter of bringing emotion into awareness, as both conscious reflective processes and schematic automatic processes of emotion move into a dialectical relationship in the construction of new meaning. The motivational force of emotion directs reexperiencing and reconnecting. The articulation of meaning is not merely a post experiential act of metacognition about experiencing, but 'involves a process of continuously synthesising information from a variety of different sources and consciously synthesising these to form a subjective reality' (p57) 'This' requires simultaneously attending to the embodied felt

experience and constructing a particular representation of it.' In our work, the only addition to this view is the important epistemological one, that representation is multimodal, as well as embodied.

## *Appendices*

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