LESSONS FOR TEACHER

BY

IAN BROWN

学习

INDEX:

CHAPTER 1:

ROOT LEARNING:
Where is the path?

Is LIFE a game to be played, a contest to be won (fairly or by whatever means), or a project in which one must strive to facilitate equality and equity, a stage upon which to play one's part? Or perhaps it is just a tragicomedy with histrionic undertones.

At the age of 70, my life feels like it has mostly been a path of learning. However, sometimes as I struggle to stay mindful in the present, it feels like I spent too much time unlearning with my mind what I had already learned in my body. These days, there is much intellectual talk of 'embodiment' as if the mind has finally acknowledged the wisdom of the body and innate instincts. When I was young, I lived in a world that was all about the body. The path I was on was wherever I happened to be – and that usually meant playing somewhere with someone, 'play' being physical more than mental.

These days I am getting clumsy and on occasion knock a utensil off the table or counter top. However, more often than not, I catch the object just after it drops over the edge. How come even at an advanced age, my reflexes are still this sharp? The answer is that I spent hours and days, and months and many years playing and practicing physical activities of one kind or another. I knew my body very well. I knew just when to push, where to push, what to push, how much to push and when to ease off on the pushing. At the same time, I was becoming more and more deeply ingrained with the belief that perfection was an important goal to strive for. The positive side of the coin was having high standards and an appreciation for Quality in all things. The other side of the coin was that nothing was ever good enough.

Up to the age of 8 or so, play was spontaneous and informal. Then it became channelled into games, like cricket, rugby, soccer and golf, as well as playing the cello and the piano. Then, around the age of 14 or 15, academic study and mental work began to exert a stranglehold on my time and energy. By the age of 24, as a graduate student in London, the path of physical play and activity had become overgrown and almost unrecognizable. I was on the Highway of the Mind. I was learning *about* things, and in the process losing touch with experiential knowledge.

When I was young, I would wonder why 'brainy' people often looked so ungainly and uncoordinated. The precision and power that they enjoyed was not in their bodies but in their minds and was expressed in words and logic from a place of erudition. Because I bought into the belief that I needed to apply the principle of perfection to the mind as well as the body, I spent decades trying to develop my mental capacities. By nature I was very right-brain dominant, imaginative and capable of intuitive learning. However by my mid-twenties it was as if linear conceptual thought had taken over. I became trapped in my left brain as life became nothing but an endless stream of problems to be solved, requiring observation, analysis, assessment, choices and action. Intuitive leaps were being constricted by analytical dissection.

When I was young, I wanted paths that involved challenging climbs. Then, as I became more concerned with levelling the playing field than actually playing in it, I started visiting lowland terrain where I learned that the challenges were of a different kind, namely climbing out of the slippery slopes onto firmer ground. I began to learn that those who lived at a higher altitude had no idea what it was like below – they couldn't see that far down, and they had certainly never been there. However, because I knew what it was like to live like them 'up there', I knew that even though they didn't understand just how hard it was to survive let alone succeed down in the depths, they *did* know perfectly well, under all the layers of denial, that (1) gross inequality was unfair, (2) that the material conditions of social reality could change - given people's will.

I did my degree in Sociology. It was not a glamorous choice like Philosophy or Political Science. However what immediately attracted me was the way in which Sociology professed to be able to

demystify the relationship between the individual and society as well as stating that the individual cannot be understood through psychology alone because the individual is a product of society's institutions. Sociology gave me the tools to become aware of the various structures and functions of family, community, social and economic class, corporate and cultural institutions, as well as the prevailing ideological systems of values and beliefs. It enabled me to understand the roots of inequality and inequity as well as methods for implementing social change. George Orwell's 'Down & Out in Paris and London gave me the impetus to have direct experience of being in the 'underclass', and theorists like Max Weber, Karl Marx and C. Wright Mills provided the conceptual framework.

Eventually I learned that I could best contribute towards social change as a teacher. My heroes were Jonathon Kozol and his mentor Paulo Freire. I learned how the education system could and did mystify the nature of inequality. Speaking about elite institutions and children from wealthy families, Kozol says: "little by little, year by year, a wall of separation is constructed in the child's mind to offer self-protection in the face of realistic guilt at unearned privilege and inherited excess. Poor people exist – so also do the rich – but there are no identifiable connections." (The Night Is Dark & I Am Far From Home: A Political Indictment of the U.S. Public Schools, p. 34).

I also came to agree with Marx's dictum that 'religion was the opiate of the masses' and that modern variants such as 'New Age spirituality' continued the tradition of saying 'all you need is love', and how this was a convenient truth to the empowered and a sugar-coated lie to the powerless.
I learned that I was driven by conscience and while this bolstered integrity, it also bred a stoical suspicion of the pursuit of pleasure. It took me a long time to learn that conscience and integrity should not stand in the way of self-care, just as awareness or power and powerlessness should not diminish the capacity and willingness to love oneself and others.

I learned that I was a dualist in that, while I could believe we were all one on a spiritual level, we were certainly *not* all one on a material level, and as long as there was significant inequality of wealth and status, there would never be equal representation or equal opportunity, and there would always be an adversarial climate between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'.

But I am getting ahead of myself. Let's go back to the roots.

FAMILY OF ORIGIN:

In the 60's and 70's, the word 'dysfunctional' began to be overused, especially when applied to 'families'. It became *de rigeur* to say that you came from a dysfunctional family. Given the definitions and clarifications offered by the following quotations, I think I can say with confidence (and regret) that my family of origin was genuinely and deeply dysfunctional.

The following quotes are from 'Healing Shame: Understanding How Shame Binds Us and How to Begin to Free Ourselves' by Robert D. Caldwell; http://www.psychsight.com/ar-shame.html)
I insert my own comments about how I see the quotes relating to my family.

The Neglecting Family

Children learn to move on tiptoe, avoiding or mollifying father's anger and mother's anxiety and depression.

I was terrified of my father's anger and when I was older, disgusted by how his anger manifested as verbal rather than physical abuse.

They learn they must strive to prove themselves in order to get their parents' acceptance and love. They make endless attempts to communicate and be understood and in return, get endless experiences of little or no response. In the neglecting household, our need for contact, respect and acceptance is lost, and we experience neglect as something wrong with us - after all, if 'they' don't care to involve themselves with us, it 'must be' our fault.

I tried to please my father by being good at sports. I tried to please my mother by being good at music. I tried to please them both by selecting appropriate classical music on the radio and by baking a cake on Sundays. They sent me away from my home, my school and my friends at the age of 13 – to residential school (aka boarding school). I felt it was my fault if I wasn't proving myself to them, if I wasn't excelling, if I wasn't doing my very best to succeed at what would qualify me as 'a good boy' in their eyes.

The Controlling Family

This is the family that is portrayed with clarity and passion in ***Dead Poet's Society****: the blindly ambitious father 'knew' what was best for his son, imposed his paternalistic vision, never seeing his son's true interests, resulting in catastrophic consequences for his son's sense of self-worth and for his will to live. This is an example of how the shame engendered by the parent's domineering control can cause the child to believe he has no 'self' worth preserving. As it becomes impossible to live according to his own desires, and as he cannot give his parent what he wants, he gets driven to the point of feeling that he has no choice but to kill himself.*
The controlling family carries deep shame. Its 'solution' is to make the exterior 'perfect'.

My father coerced me to do academic subjects not of my choosing in attempt to pressure me to enter the army. He believed he knew what was best for me rather than listen to me, and in so doing, become aware of my true interests.

The Enmeshed Family

The child who is happy when his mother is happy and sad when mother is depressed is enmeshed. The child who is made privy to all the struggles of the parents and invited into them and often made responsible for them and asked to comfort or give advice to his parents, is in the enmeshed family. The child who is relied upon as being 'father's little helper' or 'mama's strong little man' to the point where he begins to define himself as essential to his parents for their happiness is in the enmeshed family.

My mother would share her anxieties, depressions and deepest feelings with me. There were times when she would describe my father as 'that awful man'. It seemed that I was being asked to be her therapist and protector.

Enmeshment greatly handicaps one's sense of individual identity. Also, enmeshment is very hard to see if one is in it, for the net becomes a part of the self. One shares in the family shame, the family's inability to be strong in the world, the family's inferiority feelings, simply because one belongs to the family, not specifically because of anything one has done.

The Abusive Family

This is the aggressive, the attacking family. This is the family which may abuse the child when she is very small, thus establishing a sense of worthlessness. The emotionally abusive family

uses ridicule, punishment, putdowns. This is the family where the old and strong intimidate the young and weak.

My father referred to my brother as 'Long John' or 'Dirty Dan'. Using ridicule and putdowns with my mother and brother was his stock in trade (I got off more lightly – at least until my late teens. My mother often shared stories in which she had felt inadequate or unworthy. She said her mother referred to her as her 'ugly duckling'.

The physically abusive family spanks and uses emotional intimidation in threatening further spanking and hitting. It may also withhold meals or send the child to do physically punishing tasks. Children do not separate their "self" from their body, and the physically abusive family is experienced as attacking and devaluing the core of one's being.

My brother was spanked repeatedly by my father at a young age. I was also spanked but not as often as Robin.

In short, and without exaggeration, my family fell into all of the above categories. It was a neglecting, controlling, enmeshed and abusive family.

* * *

It wasn't until my late twenties and thirties that the three of us children began to gain some consensus and mutual perspective on our family.

14/3/82: Letter from my sister Joy:

"Adolescence was a fight to emancipate myself from the pain and sadness and failure of family life that I remember all too clearly. I knew instinctively that to survive at all, I had to kill off emotionally the demands that both mother and father made. From the ages of 5-13, I experienced depression, nightmares, parental breakup, and a terrible insecurity that this break away demanded.

I never worked so hard academically nor put so much energy into music and other activities. Every minute had to be filled so I would not sink back into depression. I was a survivor for them (parents) of terrible hardship – death of 2 children, India, the War, separation, birth of Robin with a disability, Daddy nearly dying in '42, sent home to England 'a failure'. I had to deal with loss of past hopes and failure. Robin had to bear the burden of being the failure, and of being horrible scapegoated – how he survived that is a miracle. You were invested with a terrible burden – a rebirth of their hopes and dreams. We all carry different scars."

<u>Some oft repeated 'lessons' from my parents</u>

- 'want doesn't get' (mother, from her mother)
- 'Ian, you're not very bright in the brainbox - it's not your fault.' (mother & father)
- 'the devil makes work for idle hands' (mother)
- 'in Life, you have to prove yourself over and over … and over again.' (father)
- 'don't ask questions, just do as you're told' (father)
- 'waste not want not' (mother)
- 'don't answer back – do as you're told (mother and father)

In order to answer the question asked throughout my adolescence, 'what do you want to do (or be) in Life?', I first had to be aware of what I wanted. Given that both my parents believed that 'want doesn't get' and 'do as you're told', I was seldom asked what I wanted. My upbringing was one in which choice was limited and overseen, so that when I started trying to figure out what I wanted to do/be in Life, I realized that the most accessible point of entry was to consider what I did NOT want.

Like most adolescents, I discovered that I did not want ongoing parental pressure. I did not want to accept that my options were limited to the Army (father) or Business (mother). Even though neither of them thought I was 'very bright in the brainbox', at least neither of them were against University – if, that is by some unlikely chance, the aforementioned brainbox brightened up enough to get the attached body through the front door.

MY FATHER (Douglas):

I have written about my relationship with my father and mother in the two memoirs Chameleon and Phoenix. Given that the theme of this book is lessons learned, relearned and still being learned, I refer the reader to the following passages with headings that seem appropriate to me.

1. Learning to resist my father's will (Sedbergh: September 1962):
   This passage describes how my father overrode my wishes with respect to subject choice at school in his drive to persuade me to go into the Army, and how eventually I stood up to him. *(see Chameleon, pp. 42-43)*

2. Learning to resist my father's abuse (Edinburgh 1964):
   This passage describes a key incident in which my father was abusive towards my mother and I felt I had no option but to confront him in support of her.
   (see Chameleon pp. 97-100)

3. Learning that sometimes separation – however painful – may be necessary:
   The day I turned my back on my father.
   (see Chameleon, p. 324)
   The day I cut all ties with my father.
   (see Chameleon pp 345-347)

4. Learning that full expression of anger and pain may be a necessary precursor to forgiveness:
   A description of a therapy session and being present at the death of my father
   (see Phoenix, pp. 157-158)

MY MOTHER (Katherine):

1. Learning to cope with my mother's mental & emotional states:

   Two of my mother's poems: To Joy, Robin and Ian (31-5-67):

   In my right leg, I feel a pain
   Should I die and we not meet again
   Remember this –
   I love you, is there more to say!

The world is torn
And I, for one, have lost my way
You've been born
So try to make the best of life
Be grateful
There's much good. Admit that strife
Is hateful
Work and love – try to do some constructive good
There must be some way through the darkest wood

What's the score? Twenty-Four! (26-6-67)
I sobbed as I lay on Blackford Hill
Though larks soared high as the sun went down
In a cloudless sky: the air was still
A beacon light from the distant town
Shone out. Grief at a doctor's farce:
Miserable – alone – and free!
Near golden gorse on emerald grass
And Craighouse waiting to welcome me!

A complex world, so I went to find
If they could help resolve my woe
A two-day cure! I knew my mind
As sane as theirs: the certain foe
Un-natural sleep. "Pills. Take these!"
Then I a.m. – with no concern
The door's unlocked with noisy keys
Nurses whisper – patients turn
A bright light shines upon my bed
No peaceful quiet. I stay awake
"Settle with us,' the Psychiatrist said
"Let us help – for your own sake."

Indeed they've helped, for now I know
My place is HOME: my husband's ill

Letter from Mum (11-5-75):
"Sorry I sounded so depressed when I was at Aunty Mollie's … please don't worry about me, I usually manage to get on top of the depression in the end. ***Finding out that Daddy has an identical twin was a severe shock and has made me distrust the whole family****. I feel that I have been surrounded by a conspiracy of silence." (my emphasis)*

Letter from Mum: (24-3-77):
"Dearest Ian,
I need your help and advice. The other day I thought I saw you or your double. This upsets me – because this very fact brings so much I don't understand and is hurtful and overwhelms me."

2. Learning to individuate from my mother: (Sept. 1979)
'Autobiography of Feeling':
I think my relationship with my mother has become more realistic. In the past, I had to blame someone for the terrible atmosphere at home. My father seemed the obvious one to blame, as he was so evidently the aggressor and clearly had the intention of hurting a lot of the time. Now, through age and experience (especially as a father myself), I can see how my mother's personality frustrated my father and in many ways helped make a tyrant out of a fairly decent person.
For instance, my mother often exhibited extreme symptoms of paranoia. She would, for example, believe that she was a victim of deception and involved in plots set up by others without her knowledge. She thought my father had a twin; she questioned whether what seemed to be her children really were her children (i.e. the wrong baby could have been given to her in the maternity hospital). When she told me that she had 'seen' me on the streets in Edinburgh, I tried to explain that it couldn't have been 'me' because I was busy being a teacher and parent in B.C. This logic would fall on deaf ears and she would say that she 'understood' it was my duty to deceive her on account of the fact that I was an R.C.M.P. undercover agent and therefore owed first allegiance to my country (just like my father during the war.
I think, in a very Laingian way, my mother and father literally drove each other crazy. The more angry my father became, the more despairing, depressed, and withdrawn my mother would become. This only served to make my father more angry. This anger would then get deflected onto the children.
Since my father died, I have felt a great degree of responsibility for my mother. On the one hand, I don't want her guilt trips and/or dependency on me. On the other hand, I want to avoid using the old 'guilt trip' defence as an evasion of a son's responsibility.

3. My mother tells me about the family history of mental illness while on a walk to Threetmuir reservoir and Robert Louis Stevenson's house)
Notes from my diary written during a family visit to Edinburgh, May 1981
    - Mom had 3 visits to Craighouse (Edinburgh's main psychiatric institution)
    - Dad was sent to Woodlawn Hospital in Surrey following return from South Africa. Psychological breakdown. Diagnosis of 'anxiety neurosis'.
    - Mom says, "Adelaide was no more crazy than me or anyone else." (Adelaide was mom's older sister. She had spent her life, from the age of 24 on, in a mental institution – diagnosed with schizophrenia)
    - Reason for mom not being able to "parry" dad's angry "thrusts" ("a soldier like to fight")
    - Family background of William's (her brother) epilepsy; they were told never to excite him by expressing emotions. Mom explains that Adelaide's problems were a product of her being given the responsibility of taking care of William while her parents would be out socializing.
    - March-April 1981: Mom had a relapse. Doctor suggested stellazine.
    - During my visit, Dr. Deuchars says to me that Mom is "certifiable" and a "chronic paranoid".
    - Mom talks about justifiable life-causes for depression and how pills don't address the cause. She says she only pretended to take pills while at Craighouse.

- She explains that the reason that I was sent away to boarding school at Sedbergh was due to the unhappy state of relationship between Mom and Dad and her disturbing mental states.
- Incident at Aunty Doris's house:
  Mom does her weekly shopping trip for Doris (who like my father is completely blind from glaucoma). Mom feels bad vibes from 'The Boffin'. She gets angry, having said or suggested that Doris is behind this "attack". Doris gets angry. Mom leaves.
  Next day: Mom goes to Doris's house to explain (apologize?). Doris gets the architect down from upstairs to listen (a witness). He says nothing. Doris finishes up by telling mom 'not to darken her doorstep again'.
  A few days later: Mom calls Elizabeth (my cousin and daughter of my father's and Doris's sister, Margaret) concerned about Doris getting her groceries. Elizabeth says that they take Doris out every week to get her groceries. Mom says she doesn't know who to believe; she can't believe 'hearsay' because Doris always says that she hardly ever sees Margaret and Elizabeth.
- Mum has a bad fall, breaks her wrist, bruises her ribs and gets a black eye. Robin and I have to ferry her to the Royal Infirmary and back a couple of times with inevitable 'scenes' with doctors, nurses, ambulance drivers, etc. I arrange for the Meals on Wheels' person to come. Another problem because she is black.
  Robin says "you are attached to Mom in a way that I am not."
- INSIGHT: while watching Mom with Annie: her overprotectiveness towards me when I was a kid; invasion of space / personality; no room to speak / feel / be heard; memories of her draping her large body over me as we pretended to be elephants climbing the stairs – feeling claustrophobic and that I had outgrown this toddler care

4. <u>Ways that Mum drives me crazy</u>:
   - not listening to me
   - not questioning me
   - talking incessantly
   - criticizing / doubting / not trusting me
   - pulling me into her 'crazy' world of associations and fears
   - not giving me any space
   - blunting / denying my problem-solving initiatives
   - In the evening I reiterate to Mum that we must have 'balance' in our conversations … that I will not be held as a 'captive audience'. I tell her about my breakdown and we talk a little about 'God'. Mum articulates her agnostic position and says that "death is peace, release from responsibilities."

5. <u>May 1993: EDINBURGH</u>
   Walking with Mum to Astley Ainslie. I can't take Mum's loud strident voice and barrage of associations any more. I tell Mum that I am going to have to go back to Canada unless we can work out a way for her to hear me. She gets angry and says, "of course I want to hear you … but I don't want to pry … in the morning you complained that family had not supported you in your difficult situation with Joan … you're being like your father … you're 'shutting me up' … I won't say another word."

6. In retrospect: appreciation for my wonderful mother:
My mother was a 'character' and loved by all who met her (at least at first). She could have been a stand-in for Miss Marple, a character played by a grand dame of English theatre, Margaret Rutherford, who she resembled in more ways than one. She was fiercely independent and lived on her own until the age of 88. She was extremely perceptive and discerning in her tastes. After my father died, her latent creativity burst forth in her art work, culminating in an exhibition of her work at Edinburgh Central Library in 1991. She was an environmentalist way before it became fashionable. If she saw a candy wrapper on the street, she would complain about careless people and pick it up to be deposited in the first waste bin she saw. She loved nature walks, and in later life the Astley Ainsley Gardens became her favourite destination and retreat. When not distracted by her own problems, she was a loving mother always ready to provide a home for her family at any age. "You will always have a roof over your head, a bed to sleep in and food on the table," she would say. She was caring and compassionate. In her 70's. she worked as a volunteer driver for 'Meals On Wheels'. She would also remember family birthdays by sending a card or present – even to distant relatives. She was a strong, resourceful woman struggling in a truly patriarchal strata of British society and in the days before women's emancipation. She deserved so much more love and credit than she received.

CHAPTER 2

FORMAL LEARNING:
The path of sociology, politicization & education

I learned athletic skills experientially and without formal training; the same applies to gaining the ability of how to play the piano by ear. Both those skill-sets were gradually built up in a cumulative, unfolding fashion. I was my own teacher and 'lesson plans' materialized from whatever obstacle had to be removed from the path of progress at any particular time.

By contrast, my academic studies from elementary school through to the end of secondary school were more about crushing the spirit of inquiry than nurturing it. From the beginning, I was being taught to believe that I was not very intelligent. I had to repeat Grade 1 for reasons unknown. I have a distant memory of that being a humiliating experience. Later, I failed, or at least did badly on my 11 plus examination. That put me into the 'B' and sometimes the 'C' stream. There was no 'special ed' designation, but it was understood by all that being in the second or third stream meant belonging to the intellectual underclass – the dim-witted 'thickies'.

I didn't understand why we had to learn certain subjects. For example, it was never explained to us why we had study Latin ("yes, admittedly a dead language, but one that would be useful if you become a lawyer or doctor"), or Geometry ('why', I would ask myself, 'is knowing that the area of a circle is πr^2 useful or interesting to me, now or later?!' French? I get it. France is just across the channel and knowing how to ask directions in Paris would certainly be useful. But even with French, was it really necessary to learn all those verb tenses so that I can use them 'correctly'?

And then there were History and English. I figured History could have been interesting. I mean why were the Scots and English always at war with each other, and why did the Scots always seem to be the losers? Maybe knowing that would help me understand why my Scottish father lorded it over my English mother. Historical reparation; restorative justice; revenge? But we didn't learn about historical causes and contexts. Instead, it was all about memorizing dates of battles and the names of endless monarchs from hundreds of years ago. And English literature? Why did we have to study the barely comprehensible language of Shakespeare? Why couldn't I be encouraged to do my own writing? Shakespeare, I was told for the umpteenth time, was the genius who wrote 38 plays and 154 sonnets while I was not fit to write even a sentence – unless it was an 'essay' analyzing one or another aspect of 'the genius'.

But at Secondary School, things got worse – much worse. Now I was told I had to study Physics and Chemistry. I had to memorize the Periodic Table and any number of laws and equations. And again, I was plunged into the tangled foliage that overgrew these new fields of learning without first seeing some aerial photos of the topography or least be furnished with a map. We weren't shown the larger picture. We weren't told what Physics or Chemistry *were*. What were their definitions? What were they trying to do? Why were they useful to me, or of any interest to me … *now*?!

At the age of 16, I finally had the opportunity to choose my major subjects. When my father heard that I had chosen English and History, he was most upset and came down to Sedbergh in person (his one and only visit during my five years there). He was coming to see my Housemaster to make sure that my decision was overturned, saying that if I was to enter the Army (his wish), I would need to have Physics and Chemistry A levels under my belt in order to be accepted by his old alma mater, Sandhurst. Given that my teachers deferred to my father's will, I had no option but to comply. Two more years of excruciatingly hard study – 90% memorization, 10% understanding of two subjects that were almost impenetrable for me.

At least, in a fringe course called 'Civics', I occasionally got to visit oases of material that was comprehensible and of interest. The hours spent reading 'Animal Farm' and 'Lord of the Flies' and the 'Biography of Gandhi' allowed my mind to breathe, encouraged me to want to understand more, to explore and to gain the self-belief that I was anything but 'dim' or 'thick'.

And then there were certain extra-curricula activities which confirmed where my talents really lay, activities which weren't just interesting but which aroused my passions and proved to be deeply fulfilling. I am referring principally to Drama and Music.

I couldn't get out of the straightjacket of badly taught Physics and Chemistry, but within a couple of years, I defied my father's wish for me to go into the Army. Instead I set my sights on University and committed myself to cramming and memorizing whatever material might scrape me through the A level examinations. Somehow I passed Chemistry ('D' grade'). I failed Physics but retook it four months later and passed with an 'E' grade. In the end, mainly due to some excellent character references which helped me get awarded a Draper's Company Commonwealth Scholarship, Queen's University was gracious enough to accept me.

It was there, as a student immigrant in Kingston, Ontario, that I had the freedom to explore and discover what really interested me, on an intellectual level that is.

* * *

At the age of 12, a teacher at The Edinburgh Academy wrote the following about me in the year-end school report:

> *'I feel that he suffers from over-conscientiousness, and I find it hard to believe that lack of effort is at the root of lack of success in any subject. For me, at any rate, he had worked with an admirable spirit and has made good progress. As a class ephor he has taken his duties most seriously and performed them very well. A good all-rounder and a most rewarding boy to teach.'*

That teacher turned out to be acutely perceptive. I think the over-conscientiousness stemmed from two fundamental principles drilled in by both parents and my boarding school Sedbergh:
(1) Try hard, try harder, and if you fail – try still harder. Prove yourself again and again and at a progressively higher level. My school held fast to the same principal as illustrated in the Chorus of the school song entitled 'The Long Run'.

> *Strain and struggle might and main*
> *Scorn defeat and laugh at pain*
> *Never shall you strive in vain*
> *In the Long Run.*

(2) Be morally aware and vigilant in the constant assessment of the line between 'good' and 'bad'.
In other words:

- always tell the truth.
- never be dishonest or deceitful
- always be loyal and faithful
- never treat anyone unjustly (i.e. always be fair)

These were injunctions which were seared into my brain at a much more significant level than anything from religious teaching. Perhaps religion had some influence on my moral compass but not as much as the humanist works of writers such as William Golding (Lord of the Flies) and George Orwell, or the historical examples of people such as Gandhi, Luther King and Helen Keller.

By the time I left for Canada in 1966, I had a very firm belief system. I felt I was clear about my values.

* * *

At Queens, I discovered Sociology which had much more effect both cognitively and morally than religion ever did. Suddenly, here was a whole field of knowledge that was providing insight and answers to questions I'd been asking for years. I could immediately grasp the lay of the land. It was familiar territory – societies, elites, cultures, groups, classes, sects, clans, institutions, socio-economic status, colonialism, imperialism, racism, etc. etc. The clincher was when, in the first week, my Prof. said "the purpose of Sociology is to demystify". To 'de-mystify' … oh how I loved those words. I felt the world from which I had come had been extremely mystified with many secrets, half-truths and prejudices.

Growing up in Edinburgh and at boarding school in Sedbergh, there were many social observations that I had puzzled about. For example, I was aware of class differences from an early age. When I was around five or six years old, my mother would send me on occasion to the nearest store to buy something she needed. We lived in Murrayfield, a middle-class area of professional people who, like my parents, mostly spoke with a BBC English accent or a mild and refined 'educated' Edinburgh accent (like Maggie Smith in the movie 'The Prime Of Miss Jean Brodie'). The nearest shopping centre, Roseburn, was down the hill in a crowded area of shops and tenement housing on the main road. When I visited the grocery shop, I noticed how I was treated either with a touch of deference, or at other times with what seemed to be like a thinly veiled scorn. Why was that, I wondered? My clothes? *My* BBC accent? Was I regarded as the offspring of one of those posh folks up the hill? It seemed like I was picking up on resentment of one kind or another.

Then there were my two Aunts. Aunt Mollie, on my mother's side, was extremely wealthy. She lived in a large house on a considerable acreage of farmland outside Derby where everything seemed bigger and grander. There were horses and stables and she even had servants – a maid, a butler and a chauffeur to drive her Rolls Royce. She was a fast-talking, chain-smoking, dominant lady from whom my embattled and depressed mother would seek advice and support in troubled times. Aunt Mollie's was the one place that she could escape to, with or without children, and find refuge.

Aunt Margaret, my father's sister, on the other hand, lived in a small council flat in a run-down, low-income area of Edinburgh. Her husband had died tragically (struck by lightening) and she had been left as a single mother with three children to raise. Several things struck me when my father took us to visit her. Why was it, for example, that unlike my father, Aunt Margaret had a strong Scottish accent? Why did she and her children smoke so much? Why did they all seem to have a predisposition towards a curious blend of cheeriness and caustic humour? In later years, I understood completely how economic hardship can produce exactly this kind of behaviour. You have to put on a happy face, but underneath …

And it wasn't that I was blind to simple facts like Aunt Mollie being rich and Aunt Margaret being poor. It was more that I was questioning the unfairness of such inequality. In addition to the disparities of Murrayfield/Roseburn and Aunt Mollie/Aunt Margaret, at Sedbergh there was the anomaly of an elite boarding school where virtually everyone had BBC accents, embedded in a Yorkshire village of working class folk who inhabited a completely different culture. Whereas Roseburn had not been seen as a desirable place to frequent except for quick shopping excursions, the village of Sedbergh was strictly off-limits to the schoolboys. In both cases there was an unspoken, un-named class apartheid. People were expected to 'know their place' and if there were exceptions, they stuck out a mile. There was one boy at Sedbergh who was the son of the local butcher. He was the beneficiary of one of only a handful of bursaries allotted to local folk – what you might call token justice, a nod to democratic ideals of 'equality of opportunity' and an investment in guilt absolution. Did he see this gracious gesture as a benefit? Not at all. He knew he was a misfit. He experienced constant condescension. He knew he was seen as the local yokel – slightly better than the village idiot. As for the kitchen staff, they were virtually ignored or treated with disdain. When I played on the Rugby team

again noted grammar schools like Lancaster Royal Grammar School, there were sarcastic remarks amongst members of our team about their brylcreemed hair and pointy shoes.

Although I was sensitive about economic disparity, I was completely naïve about personal finances. Until my mid-twenties, money simply hadn't been a part of my life. I had a full music scholarship to Sedbergh. I had not been conditioned to conceive of 'making money' as a number one priority. Quite the opposite; my father had railed against 'wartime profiteers' and had a barely concealed resentment that it was my mother's side of the family who 'had money', and that this wealth had come from the family business of owning iron foundries during the industrial revolution. Also, my father had been retired at the age of 63 – against his wishes. From that point on, we lived off his army pension and the combined old age pensions of both parents.

My mother had always been a fulltime caregiver and hadn't had a paying job since her twenties. I didn't see either parent making money or even spending money much beyond food items. The Sedbergh values were about depth and strength of character, all with the full knowledge that more often than not, there was a pretty secure route ahead to well-paid positions of power and privilege. For five years I had no need of any kind of money from day to day at school. In the holidays I would be given small allowances as needed. Admittedly, I had a few temporary jobs before going to Canada in 1966 but the resulting income wasn't needed for anything vital like food, shelter or transportation. Then for the next three years, I was supported by a scholarship while taking my B.A. at Queens University, Kingston, Ontario.

In the summer of 1967 I had my first experience of a paying job that gave me disposable income. I worked as a guide at the British Pavilion at Expo '67 in Montreal. The pay was good, the rent was cheap and in September I had the comfort of knowing that the scholarship money would be in the bank before the College year started. So I could think of things like buying nice clothes at Le Chateau or taking a date to a nice restaurant and a disco.

Conversely, the first time I became aware that I *had to* do a paying job was in the summer of 1968, when I signed up to go to Kenya with Operation Crossroads, Africa. After finishing final exams at Queens, I had only six weeks to raise enough money for the air fare. I went to Toronto to find work, lived in a cheap room with paper curtains at the top of a derelict tenants building, and managed to land a couple of menial jobs. In the struggle to save every penny, I walked everywhere and lived off brown rice. I remember vividly the acute guilt I felt at stealing something for the first time in my life – i.e. taking a newspaper from the kind of boxes they used to have which operated on an honour system. I also remember getting a practical lesson on how Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' worked. If your basic needs of food, shelter, health and transportation were taken care of, then of course you could think of indulging in entertainment or travel. But if you were struggling to pay next month's rent, the '*had to*' of paying to go on a trip to Kenya (even if it was volunteer work) began to sound like middle-class 'poverty'. I could always choose to back out of the trip, whereas with having to pay the rent, the only other option was to beg the charity of someone's couch, or sleep on the street. The concept of living in a society which valued equality was a myth; there *was* one rule for the rich and another for the poor; there *was* a direct correlation between economic wealth and quantity and quality of available options. With disposable income, the act of choosing became easier and more enjoyable.

I also learned that maybe, just maybe the Sedbergh rules of scrupulous honesty did need to be bent a little under certain circumstances e.g. taking newspapers. Within a few years, I was applying the same kind of logic to accepting that there might be legitimate reasons to get involved in civil disobedience as a way to counter oppression of one kind or another.

Gradually, through experience backed up by formal studies in Sociology, I began to understand the disconnect between the myth that financial wealth is simply a product of hard work, and the reality that in many cases the significant factors were not hard work or even 'labour', but instead inheritance, property ownership, investment and the profit motive, the cornerstones of the capitalist system.

Before University, outside the exhaustive demands of physics and chemistry, I had not read a lot but there were two books that had a great influence. One was a biography of Gandhi and the other was Orwell's book Down & Out in Paris and London. Both books made the central point that authentic understanding of society had to come from lived experience, not just intellectual input. And even then, a token liberal gesture like going on a fast, or spending a week (or even a month) living off a welfare allowance, was tantamount to no more than dipping one's toe in the stagnant waters of the underclass – nowhere near full immersion. I wanted to understand society's myths by both formal study and lived experience.

The central idea of sociology was that society had a structure and each element within that structure had a function. Major areas within the field of sociology included 'social stratification', 'social control' and 'social change'. There were certain recurrent themes like 'is social change deterministic or voluntaristic?' and 'what are the relative influences of superstructure and infrastructure?' At the end of my second year at Queens, one of my sociology professors introduced me to a colleague of his at the University of Toronto. His name was Ian Weinberg and he was in the process of writing a book entitled The English Public Schools: The Sociology of Elite Education. Professor Weinberg wanted to hire a researcher and I fit the bill perfectly, just as his area of interest couldn't have been more appropriate for me. His main thesis was that English public schools fitted the definition of a 'total institution' as put forth by the Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman, namely 'a place of work and residence where a great number of similarly situated people, cut off from the wider community for a considerable time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.' According to Weinberg, a public school, had many things in common with other total institutions such as monasteries, jails and nursing homes.

Three years of formal study at Queens also gave me the opportunity to explore the process of learning itself. My interest stemmed from my own experience as a student/learner at school. In only a few years, I had gone from being regarded as 'not very bright' to 'exceptionally intelligent'. I had to be able to explain to myself and to others how such a drastic transformation could have taken place. I learned about study skills. I became informed about different learning styles and patterns of thinking. Specifically, I read about the 'convergent' and 'divergent' thinking (J. P. Guilford), the nature of creative intelligence (Paul Torrance), 'linear' and 'lateral' thinking (Edward de Bono) and Arthur Koestler in The Act of Creation. I learned that I was 'right brain' dominant, a lateral thinker, and more proficient at divergent production than convergent. I also started beginning to understand the huge bias in educational institutions towards equating 'intelligence' with linear/convergent thinking and facility in memorizing. Whole curricula, at all levels from elementary school through College, were designed around 'finding *the right* answer' rather than the ability to see several possible answers to any given question or problem.

I started looking for pioneers who were trying to set up educational institutions that would allow and nurture creative thinking. At first I found inspiration from people like A. S. Neil and his school 'Summerhill', with its principles of democracy, equality and freedom. I visited the Canadian 'Summerhill', a place called 'Everdale Place'. What I encountered there was about as far away from Sedbergh as you could possible get. Instead of a strictly hierarchical structure (which had both positive and negative features) I found what appeared to be a chaotic community in which there was more talk than action, more license than freedom, and apparently little valuable learning of either a structured or unstructured kind.

Writing about Everdale Place in 1992, Harley Rothstein wrote: "leaving students to their own interests and motivations was not a sufficient foundation upon which to build a functional learning program and too many of the adults were afraid or unwilling to demonstrate leadership." (p. 536, 'Alternative Schools: 1969-1975'; doctoral dissertation, UBC, Vancouver)

By my last year at Queens, I was an 'A' student. Partly due to my grades and partly due to strong supportive references from my professors, in 1969 I was accepted into a Masters in Sociology program at The London School of Economics (L.S.E.). Despite having my intelligence recognized by this prestigious institution, it was a poor choice on my part. It was not a program that encouraged creative thinking. On the contrary, unlike more progressive graduate programs like the ones at Sussex and Essex Universities, the L.S.E. program was traditionally 'convergent', analytical, and believed in disciplinary boundaries. I felt like a fish out of water and when I couldn't find a thesis supervisor who could relate to my interests, I decided to drop out.

The most important lessons for me as a young teacher came four years later after I had returned to Canada as a landed immigrant. While I was working at Dawson College in Montreal as a social animator, I attended a talk by Jonathon Kozol, radical educator and author of Death At An Early Age: The Destruction of the Hearts and Minds of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools (1967), and Free Schools (1972). Kozol had taken alternative schools in a more realistic direction that Summerhill or Everdale Place but in the process had become progressively radicalized. He was angry and incisive and spoke to my heart and mind. Like many others, he had given up on working 'outside the system' as unworkable – for financial reasons, if no other. The following quotation outlines some of the 'other' reasons:

> *"The free schools were so intimately related to the sixties … to the sex, drugs and rock and roll culture … and without that culture they never would have survived. But the sixties dissolved, and when it dissolved, the free schools felt the change. Hippies got tired of living in teepees and not getting paid to teach … parents weren't looking for the same kind of radical lifestyle. On the whole, people got more conservative. They wanted some stability maybe. We still believed in peace and love and happiness, but didn't have the same self-sacrificing commitment." (Allan Graubard – radical educator, quoted in A History Of The Free School Movement by Tate Hausman, Brown University, 1998, p. 43)*

Kozol was a friend and colleague of the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, who had written the book Pedagogy Of The Oppressed. What both of them understood, unlike many hippies and liberals, was that one could not significantly improve the learning and well-being of students in the classroom without confronting the socio-economic inequalities outside. These views mirrored my own evolution. I knew I had found my mentors and guides.

Here is a sample of Kozol writing about a parent of one of his students - a single mother of four on welfare living in an apartment covered in lead paint covered plaster:

> *The landlords of Roxbury live in the beautiful country west of Boston. They send their children to the Montessori schools and little schools modeled upon Summerhill. They have their yachts in Falmouth Harbor. Buildings at universities are erected with the money donated by the landlords of Roxbury, and the names of the landlords of Roxbury are carved in handsome letters of New Hampshire granite upon the lintels of the doorways of the libraries and the dormitories that they pay for. The law does not compel a landlord to replace, repaint, or cover over the sweet, sticky plaster that paralyzes children. The law does allow a landlord to take action to evict a woman who misses one rent payment by as much as fifteen days. (pp. 26-27)*

* * *

Despite my bad experience at L.S.E., in later years I returned to two graduate programs. The first was a Masters Program in Education at Concordia University. In 1975, after completing a Diploma in Education at McGill University and teaching for a while at The Alternative High School (an experiment *within* the system), I wrote a paper entitled 'The Limits To Educational Reform A Comparison of the Liberal and Radical Paradigms'. In 1981 at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, B.C., I repeated the pattern of entry into a Masters program followed by a quick disillusioned exit. At least by this point in my life, I knew that quitting had nothing to do with intellectually inadequacy. I was also secure in my occupational identity of teacher. Shortly after starting the program, my supervisor, Maurice Gibbons wrote me the following letter:

> *Dear Ian,*
> *I am looking forward to working with you on your Master's work. Your intelligence and manner are certainly beneficially influential in the class. I couldn't help but notice that although you could have dominated your working team, you did many things to invite their involvement and build their commitment as well as excitement. The sharing of ideas and negotiation was very effective. The whole team was skilful, but you seemed to play a special coordinating role very effectively, while I was eavesdropping. I look forward to a productive and pleasant relationship in class and on our other mutual graduate tasks."*

CHAPTER 3

INFORMAL LEARNING
(Self-Education)

The speciality of Professor Maurice Gibbons of S.F.U. was what he called 'Challenge Education'. In the first class he showed us some beautiful wood sculptures that he had produced. He then explained that he had never taken a formal lesson in wood carving but rather had learned gradually on his own. He then used this example to explain his model of Challenge Education, which could be represented as follows:

First you identify a strong interest. Then you allow yourself to dream about where this interest might eventually lead. The challenge is then how to get to this envisioned destination. The next step is to formulate a goal for the first step without having to know what the second and third will be – an 'emergent curriculum' if you like. From this first goal, specific objectives and tasks can be defined.

The first thing I realized was that my education at Sedbergh had been all about challenges, meaning not only institutional challenges but also training in setting and meeting your own challenges. Then I realized that the most striking example of self-education in my own experience had been teaching myself to play piano by ear. I had received formal instruction on the cello but from the age of around ten, I had become increasingly interested in learning how to play the piano. My mother had a baby grand piano and I was irresistibly drawn to it, at first picking out tunes and then wondering how to add chords. That led to exploration and discovery of the vital 1-4-5 harmonic structure that underlies so much music. This in turn led to learning the dominant 7^{th} chord and the 'pentatonic scale' (although at the time I didn't know that was what it was called). Within that framework, I spent years progressing with rhythms, left/right hand syncopation, bass lines and melodic improvisation. Around the age of 15, I heard 'Basin Street Blues' and found that I could not deconstruct it with my 1-4-5- chords. That was a major road block and I had intense motivation to overcome the challenge. So eventually, with much trial and error, I discovered the 1-3-6-2-5 chord progression and added E7, A7 and D7 to my tried and true C, F and G7 chords. Further discoveries led to realizing that this sequence was a template for many other songs.

Being able to learn in my own way, and at my own pace, kept me interested. I wasn't just sight-reading from a score like when I played the cello. Here I was able to create my own music because I was developing an understanding of the inner workings of composition. A parallel example might be chefs who through their knowledge of ingredients and combining flavours, don't have to rely on a recipe book. They have the freedom to improvise with basic ingredients like eggs, flour, oil, salt, sugar, onions, garlic, ginger, etc.

So learning to play by ear was also learning how to improvise – learning how to do variations on a theme. And as I learned by playing and exploring, I was able to share these simplified formulas with others. In later life, there were periods in which I survived on an income from teaching students to 'Play It By Ear'. These were usually adult students who typically had been forced to take piano lessons

as a kid, had come to the point of feeling it was unrewarding drudgery. As one woman put it, "I just want to be able to play 'Happy Birthday To You' at my son's birthday party."

When I joined the Stephen Barry Band, the lead singer asked me several times how I had learned to play the blues so well. Who had been my teacher? Had I, like him, listened to records of the blues masters and copied note for note what I heard? And I would tell him that learning the cello had helped and that I had a good ear and had obviously learned from everything I listened to, but no, I had never copied anything consciously and was unschooled in the history of the blues.

It seemed that the most meaningful 'jumps' in my informal learning came from intuitive flashes in which a piece of information connected two or more neural pathways. It was like a vital piece of the overall cognitive jigsaw suddenly appeared and filled in the gap. One of these moments came in Spain shortly after I had quit L.S.E. As mentioned before, in Sociological theory, one of the big debates was on voluntarism versus determinism. In other words, how much of our lives are due to free will and choice and how much to fate? I had just chosen to 'drop out' and to radically change the direction of my life. Was that really free will or was there an element of fate? While reading Henry Miller's book The Big Sur And The Oranges Of Hieronymous Bosch, I came across the following section in which Miller is debating an astrologer friend of his on the subject of fate versus free will:

> *What you believe I might have learned through a deeper knowledge of astrology, I learned through experience of life. I made all the mistakes that it is possible for a man to make - and paid the penalty. I am that much richer, that much wiser, that much happier, if I may say so, than if I had found through study or through discipline how to avoid the snares and pitfalls in my path ... ... every so often I revolt, even against what I believe in with all my heart. I have to attack everything, myself included. Why? To simplify things. We know too much - and too little. It's the intellect which gets us into trouble, not our intelligence. That we can never have enough of. But I get weary of listening to specialists, weary of listening to the man with one string to his fiddle. I don't deny the validity of astrology. What I object to is becoming enslaved to any one point of view ... I abhor people who have to filter everything through the one language they know, whether it be astrology, religion, yoga, politics, economics, or whatever … two lines of poetry often tell us more than the weightiest tome by an erudite. Knowledge weighs us down; wisdom saddens one. The love of truth has nothing to do with knowledge or wisdom ... and that brings me back to the question of choice. A man can only prove that he is free by electing to be so. And he can only do it when he realizes that he himself made himself unfree. And that to me means that he must unvest from God the powers he has given God. The more of God he recognizes in himself, the freer he becomes. And the freer he becomes, the fewer decisions he has to make, the less choice is presented to him. Freedom is a misnomer. Certitude is more like it. Unerringness. Because truthfully there is always only one way to act in any situation, not two, not three. Freedom implies choice, and choice exists only to the extent that we are aware of our ineptitude. The adept takes no thought, one might say. He is one with thought, one with the path ...*

This passage had a powerful effect on me. On the one hand, it validated my decision to leave the oppressive world of the intellect, one that had transformed me from a 'being' and 'doing' person into a largely 'thinking' person. It validated my belief in holistic learning. At the same time, it shed light on a choice that I could have made but didn't.

At Sedbergh, at the time of wrestling with the decision of whether or not to go into the Army, I had a voice of 'certitude' (as Miller describes it) telling me that I should become an actor. It was as if in the confusion of searching for what I really wanted, a prerequisite to finding my path, I was being

shown what I wanted and liked, but was not heeding the call. The following section from Chameleon describes my experience:

> *The last month of the winter term seemed to be a period of cultural activities and escape from the usual routine of Sedbergh life. First, there were the 'Pirates of Penzance' performances at the end of November … Chris Wells and I milked the most out of our roles with some Laurel and Hardy type antics, so much so that after the first performance, the Headmaster congratulated me on my performance and said that he hoped I would do more acting …*
> *But the most enjoyable experience of all, during this cultural binge, was appearing in the Powell House Christmas concert. Traditionally, the Prefects always did a series of sketches at the conclusion of the concert. In the 1964 House Concert, our sketches were subsumed under the title 'Belli 'Celli'. The opener was a sketch in which I appeared alone as a Squadron Leader giving a tipsy briefing on bombing raids over Hamburg. For me, being able to play this role, was pure psychodrama, given my recent situation. I found it wonderfully therapeutic and freeing to be able to step outside the inner battleground of warring identities and, in an instant, become a much simpler kind of person, a caricature of the real thing. For years, I had forced myself to think and say nice things about the Armed Forces. Now, in a role such as this, I could act out and play out all that I found ridiculous associated with this world. I could act out the 'military type' without worrying about being him. It is ironical that a month after deciding not to be an Armed Forces Officer, I could portray one so successfully. I found it even more ironical when Mr. Begley, obviously impressed, told me after the show that what I had done was "as good as anything you see in the West End."*
>
> *I knew I had an ability to act. I could feel it. People told me so. I had always known it. Acting felt as natural to me as scientific investigation felt foreign. The power that I felt in this area was a sense of being able to move people, whether it was moving them to laughter or to tears. Unfortunately, there had been little scope for legitimate dramatic expression at Sedbergh. Drama had not, as yet, been given the institutional support and recognition of say, music. Perhaps, if the situation had been different and I had developed both experience and confidence as an actor, it would have affected my career choices. But I doubt it. First, there was my mother's reaction, one that I heard often in connection with a friend of Joy, Bridget Connell, who had gone to R.A.D.A. (The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art). 'An acting career is too risky,' my mother would say, 'too insecure' … 'besides, it leads into a kind of bohemian world where, more often than not, there's drink and drugs.' But it was not just my mother. Acting was not a suitable career choice by Sedbergh standards either. I had never heard of anyone from Sedbergh going to R.A.D.A. or a similar institution. And then there were my own inner feelings. Despite the fact that I felt such a strong ability to act, I also felt an equally strong 'conscience' that forbade me to indulge for very long in anything so frivolous. (Chameleon, p. 111)*

There were other forays into the world of Drama. At Expo '67, I had produced, directed and acted in a Revue at the British Pavilion. I found it easy to write and act in skits that made people laugh. And I could also arrange and perform the music to accompany the skits. My mentor at that time was Dudley Moore who I had seen several times with the Cambridge Footlights Revue at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. There was a lineage of slightly deranged British comedians starting with Spike Milligan and the Goon Show, Peter Sellers, Peter Cook and Dudley Moore and then later Monty Python, Blackadder and Fawlty Towers. In each case, there was an attempt to escape through humour the oppressiveness and divisiveness of the English class system.

My flirtation with the world of acting continued at Queens when an aspiring drama student called Gord Vogt asked me to perform 'Zoo Story' by Edward Albee with him. Although almost buried in the world of academia (my sociology courses) I agreed. Then when I was in London, just before starting the Masters at L.S.E., I had an experience in which it seemed that despite my inability to 'choose' the path of Drama College, the powers of 'fate' had decided to intervene. My friend Jerry was Theatre Manager at The Open Space, an experimental theatre that staged mostly off-off Broadway plays. He had got me a temporary job stage-managing a one act play with only two characters. I met and got to know an American B-list actress called Marie Gorman. One day, Marie and I were waiting for the start of a rehearsal when the director entered and announced that the male lead had dropped out due to a better offer back in the States. He was furious. "Who are we going to get in time for the opening?" he shouted as he left the room. After a few minutes, Marie looked at me and said "you know, *you* could do it. I know you've got it in you. I'd love to see you do the play."

In an instant, it seemed as if my whole world was about to change. L.S.E. and the world of books and ideas and intellectual analysis began receding from my mind in a puff of smoke. It was as if the door to what I really wanted had suddenly been thrust open. How could I *not* want to enter? At that moment, two people entered the theatre by different doors. One was the director, the other an actor from one of the other one act plays. "Ah … problem solved," announced the director, "Lawrence can do it."

Deep within me, something recognized that this was an existential crossroads, so to speak. What *could* have happened didn't – a case of 'determinism'?! But then again, I didn't have the confidence or the clarity to try to make it happen. I could not legitimize 'becoming' an actor. My conscience dictated that I should be doing something more political, something more related to social change or education, something more worthwhile. I just couldn't rationalize the life of an 'artist'.

In the end, my interest in drama got channelled into education and writing.

Diary entry: July 11th. 1972: Montreal

I want to create. I want to relate to people again. I want to live Life again, to feel – not think, to experience not study.

A search for guidance leads me back to Miller. I read. I am inspired. I try to apply. I seek to rejoin the flow of life. Failure. Loss of confidence as teacher. Failure as artist. Experiments in the medium of writing show me that I have an ear for, and an affinity with, the spoken word. This leads me towards dialogue and inevitably drama. But I am resistant to both the role of actor and the role of writer. The former re-enacts life but does not act upon it. The latter records life in words, dramatizes it, but like the actor does not directly impact it.

The relationship between Art and Life becomes clearer. Art is indirect communication. There is an intervening medium – the bridge between creator and perceiver. I begin to see that, for me, the most worthwhile activity would involve direct communication with people. I begin to see that rather than order matter into creative form, I want to help order Life. I want to facilitate the creative process. I want to facilitate the realization of creative potential that exists in everyone, not just a chosen few. I want to put my energies towards finding or creating a social form or framework for this purpose.

Today I went to McGill library and for the first time came across the term 'developmental drama'. I was immediately excited and looked up reference books on the subject. Developmental drama seems to be an overlapping area that interconnects my interests in drama, play, education, therapy and self-realization. It seems to be an area in which action, thought, feeling, instinct, intuition, spontaneity, imagination and authentic communication can and do co-exist and feed off each other. It seems holistic in scope and focused on process

rather than product. I want to further investigate both playwriting and developmental drama possibilities in Montreal.

To date (i.e. my present age of 70), I have written 4 plays, two of which achieved distinction in the Canadian Playwriting Competition, and one of which was produced in both Vancouver and White Rock. I discovered that competitions were both a means of having to stick to a deadline and creating a finished product. As somebody who was drawn irresistibly to developmental process (e.g. piano improvisations), I was aware that sometimes I wanted to have something tangible to emerge out of the process.

As a final comment on my affinity with Drama, there is a scene from the 1989 movie, 'Dead Poets' Society', already referred to, which did more than resonate with me when I watched it. It was like déjà vu. The movie was set in an elite American boarding school, in which Neil – one of the lead characters – is cast in a local production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Neil has discovered his love of acting but has to deal with an authoritarian father who wants him to go to Medical School. Neil's father discovers his involvement in the play and forces him to quit on the eve of the opening performance. Neil is devastated and goes to his teacher (played by Robin Williams), who advises him to stand his ground and prove to his father that his love of acting is something he takes seriously. The father unexpectedly shows up at the performance. He takes Neil home and says he has been withdrawn from the school, only to be enrolled in a military academy to prepare him for Harvard. Unable to find the courage to stand up to his father, a distraught Neil commits suicide.

Fortunately, I did stand up to my father. I didn't go into the Army. I did quit academia when it no longer served my interests and aspirations. And I did find in teaching a career in which I believed and an occupation which I loved and was good at.

* * *

Another leap in the process of self education came one day as I was reading a book called The Necessity of Art by Ernst Fischer. Like any intelligent person, I needed to come to my own understanding of the meaning of 'reality'. Here is the section that had such an impact on me:

> ***On the two mutually contradictory tendencies of nature and reality****: (Chameleon, p. 351)*
> *'What Goethe calls the 'vis centrifuga' and Hegel calls 'repulsion' is the tendency of particles of matter to fly out into the infinite at constant velocity – the tendency towards evaporation and dissolution. This tendency is counteracted by the 'vis centripeta', the Hegelian 'attraction', the tendency towards association, unification, the forming of groups, the agglomeration of energy.*
> *Both tendencies operate in all organized ordered matter: the conservative tendency, the 'tough persistence; the clinging to a form of organization once it has been achieved, inertia: and the revolutionary tendency, perpetual movement, the inability to remain at rest, the continuous change of state.*
> *Without the infinite contradictions of these two tendencies and without the constant removal of contradiction by the states of relative equilibrium attained by matter and energy, there would be no reality, since reality is just that: a state of suspended tension between being and non-being, in which both being and non-being are unreal and only their incessant interaction, their becoming is real.' (my emphasis)*

On the dialectical relationship between form and content – in the inorganic world
'This can be observed very precisely in crystals, i.e. in the structure of solid, ordered matter. What we call 'form' is only a specific grouping, a specific arrangement, a relative state of equilibrium of matter; it is the expression of the fundamental conserving and conservative tendency, the temporary stabilization of material conditions. But 'content' changes incessantly, at times imperceptibly, at other times in violent action; it enters into conflict with the form, and creates new forms in which the changed content becomes, for a while, stabilized once more. We might define form as conservative and content as revolutionary.' (my emphasis)

On the dialectical relationship between form and content – in the organic world
'In the organic world, heredity is the conservative tendency, and variation the revolutionary one. In human society, which has risen above nature and evolved its own laws, we may generally recognize the conservative tendency in the relations of production, that is to say in the forms taken by production, and the revolutionary tendency in the productive forces, i.e. in the developing, forward-thrusting economic content of all social formations. Always and everywhere the form, structure, or organization that has already been attained offers resistance to the new – and everywhere, the new content bursts the confines of old forms and creates new ones.' (Necessity of Art, E. Fischer, Pelican, pp. 124-125)

My comment in Chameleon following this quote is as follows:

At last I felt I had a cognitive road-map to see where I was going, I had the conceptual tools with which to analyze and understand almost anything. For example, take the cultural schizophrenia I had experienced between the British roots part of myself and the Canadian emergent part. Could this not be seen as a battle between form and content? On the one hand, there was my very formal upbringing with its strict moral code, rigid class structure and ancient traditions. On the other, there was three years of living in the New World with its informality, greater opportunities for the disadvantaged, and the wealth of information and challenging ideas I had gleaned there at University, all intermingling and interacting to produce explosive content. My mind and my soul felt like they had been, and still were, the battleground in which this content had burst its confines in an unstoppable chain-reaction.

I needed to understand the process of change, whether psychological, sociological, political or spiritual. I knew that the relationship between form and content was essential for understanding many things. This quotation gave me an explanation that seemed to have universal application – a template that could be used to understand many different phenomena.

I wanted to map the cartography of the mind-brain as it pertained to the learning process in general and my own awareness in particular. Just as I wanted to understand the structure and functions of societal elements, I also wanted to know the key features of the mind-brain in order to make clear choices as to where I did and did not want to focus my awareness. Wasn't that what the Buddhists were doing – methodically visiting all the nooks and crannies of the mind? Wasn't that what drugs are doing (for better or worse) – either facilitating or blocking neural pathways? Maybe I could even consciously learn how to block the portals to those pathways that repeatedly seemed to lead to negative emotions.

For example, I needed:

- to learn how and when and why to say 'no'
- to learn how to assert what I didn't want
- to understand that I had power over my choices
- to be vigilant about how my thoughts had highjacked sensory awareness of the present moment and how those thoughts pertained to future or past time
- to learn how to be and stay in the present

If we conceive of the mind/brain as a galaxy, it seemed to me at times that there was a black hole at the centre - a place where powerful forces akin to intense gravitation could suck me into a place of darkness in which I became lost. In contrast, the galaxy was full of shining stars sparkling with intense light. I learned that the black hole seemed to be located in the amygdala (an almond shaped structure in the frontal portion of the temporal lobe), whereas the galaxies of stars were to be found in the pre-frontal cortex.

Before Queens and the start of an intellectual awakening, I would often 'know' something but not be able to explain why. It was a kind of pre-cognition, a sensitivity to emotional dynamics in the now and the near future. At the same time, I seemed to have an overactive amygdala - especially when it came to pain, of the emotional or psychological kind. I wanted to understand why reason seemed so inadequate when trying to deal with intense emotion. Sociology was my formal focus but psychology was at least as important to me.

The Scottish psychiatrist R.D. Laing had a huge impact. The whole subject of 'who was crazy?', 'what was craziness?', etc. was central to my experience. My family had a history of mental illness, especially on my mother's side. Because I had seen clearly how anxiety and depression were linked to stress and distress, and how in turn these states were intimately connected to socio-economic conditions, I was very drawn to Laing's 'anti-psychiatry' (e.g. Sanity and Madness In The Family), and the way in which he, and others like Thomas Szasz (The Myth of Mental Illness) questioned the nature and causation of mental 'illness'.

Here is a quote from Laing that illustrates what I mean:

"Objective deprivation and economic insecurity create intense anxiety and lower self-esteem, making their victims unwilling or unable to take psychic risks, or tolerate their own or other persons' impulses towards growth, dissent or rebellion. Each individual's mounting sense of existential guilt and self-betrayal, makes him increasingly hostile towards signs of growth, honest feeling and self-realization in others. This viciously circular relationship between economic and psychic insecurity is a central social fact."
(R. D. Laing, 'The Politics of Madness', Ramparts, April1974, vol. 12, no. 9, p. 21)

As has already been mentioned, I also felt a kinship with George Orwell. His depictions of the British class system, colonialism and his ambivalent feelings about socialism, all resonated strongly. The following is a quote by George Woodcock from his biography of Orwell.

"In Orwell's view, individual integrity and even, on occasion, individual caprice, stand above political loyalty, and this fact alone makes one hesitate about regarding him as a politician at all. It is in the nature of the political animal to hunt in packs. The lone hunter belongs to another race – the race of moralists. The differences between politician and moralist are clear. The first is concerned with acquiring power in order to implement a certain program (which may be merely the consolidation of power), and for him the means are always subordinate to

the end. For the moralist, the means are all important; the quality of the act rather than its results is what he has first in mind."
(The Crystal Spirit – A Critical Study of George Orwell by George Woodcock p. 111)

Was Orwell a socialist, an anarchist, a humanist? Some of these? All of these? And what about me? What was I? As always, I took refuge from such labels in the simple but profound belief that what was needed was a society in which there was equality and equity in the sense of fairness and social justice. The means to that end involved both individual and collective action. And the problem, as always? People don't want to give up power voluntarily. Quite the opposite – everyone, whether individual, group or nation, wants to increase their power. The most striking example of this throughout history, and the cause of most wars, has been the acquisition of land and property. When it came to giving up what you have, the sociological and historical trends buttressed the deterministic argument.

CHAPTER 4

LEARNING ABOUT LEARNING

At University, I became fascinated in the process of learning. As mentioned earlier, I read the early 'creativity' theorists like Koestler (The Act of Creation), Guildford ('structure of the intellect'), Sidney Parnes ('suspended judgment'), Torrance (convergent and divergent thinking), De Bono (linear and lateral thinking). The first thing I needed to do in mapping the cartography of the mind-brain was to understand why I found some kinds of learning easy and others hard. It didn't take long to realize that I was a 'right-brainer'. In the learning process, I had to proceed from the WHOLE to its parts. I had to be able to see the big picture, the gestalt. The way I had been taught in school was to enter the forest and start studying one tree after another such that I 'couldn't see the forest for the trees'. In my experience as a teacher, I often presented my students with the picture below and was always intrigued by the fact that the majority could see the young woman in silhouette but not the old crone with her huge beaked nose.

LEFT BRAIN FUNCTIONS	**RIGHT BRAIN FUNCTIONS**
uses logic	uses feeling
detail oriented	"big picture" oriented
facts rule	imagination rules
	symbols and images
present and past	present and future
knows object name	philosophy & religion
words and language	can "get it" (i.e. meaning)
math and science	
order/pattern perception	spatial perception
reality based	fantasy based
forms strategies	presents possibilities
practical safe	risk taking

I began to become fascinated with the role perception played in our conscious awareness and in the learning process. At Queens, I began to morph from a very right-brained, embodied teenager into someone who needed to develop the left-brain capacity of sequential, analytical thought in order to function well in the world of academia. By my mid-twenties. I became aware that I had undergone a significant shift from a predominantly *per*ceptual universe to a *con*ceptual one. In other words, more of my time was spent thinking and less on seeing and doing.

In my late twenties, I was influenced by the writings of Carlos Castaneda and in particular what he said about becoming a 'man of knowledge'. Key to this was 'seeing', as opposed to thinking about seeing. In A Separate Reality, Don Juan (Castaneda's teacher) explains that what he calls 'seeing' is a process of apprehending the world without interpretation. "A man of knowledge lives by acting, not by thinking about acting, nor by thinking about what he will think when he has finished acting."

In reading Castaneda, I realized how I had not only shifted from a right-brain to a left-brain mode, but how in addition, reason and thinking had supplanted sensory awareness and the exercise of my will as the C.E.O. of my consciousness. When I read that Don Juan believed that the body had a will of its own, I was reminded from a passage in The Inheritors by William Golding that had made an impression on me when I was at Sedbergh. The book is about contact between a Neanderthal tribe and a group of Cro Magnon early humans about 30,000 years ago. The passage in question describes the main character, Lok, running with great agility through a forest and how it was as if he had eyes in his feet. These days, as my vision deteriorates due to glaucoma, and I have the occasional stumble, I recall

my own youthful agility and eye-body coordination. It certainly seemed that my body had an inherent wisdom and a will of its own.

For a long time I resisted trying marijuana. From years of constant physical exercise in various sports, I knew what a natural endorphin 'high' was. Why would I want to replace that wonderful, overall sense of well-being with a chemical boost to my senses? That said, when I did finally start sporadically smoking weed, I learned how marijuana facilitated a quick shift from conception to perception. Sight, sound, taste, smell and touch were all apprehended with less interpretation and more appreciation of detail and overall quality.

These days neuroscience is increasingly able to explain the various structures and functions of the brain. In the October 2014 study, "Reversal of Cortical Information Flow During Visual Imagery as Compared to Visual Perception," (published in the journal *NeuroImage*), researchers compared visual perception to imagination. They discovered that during imagination, there was an increase in the flow of information from the parietal lobe of the brain down to the occipital lobe. This is a type of "top-down" processing from a higher-order region to what most consider a lower-order region. With visual perception, however, information taken in by the eyes flowed directly to the occipital lobe and was then sent "up" to the parietal lobe. These results were the first direct demonstration of a reversal of the predominant direction of cortical signal flow during mental imagery as compared to perception.

There were other 'separate realities' of which I became aware. The radical changes in cultural and social environment that I experienced in uprooting from Edinburgh to Sedbergh and from the U.K. to Canada (and back again), produced inner changes of perception and interpretation. To take a mundane example, when I arrived in Canada, I saw everything as big – the cars, the roads, the landscape, etc, just as when I returned to Britain everything seemed small. When I started meditation and yoga, I became aware of still other states on consciousness.

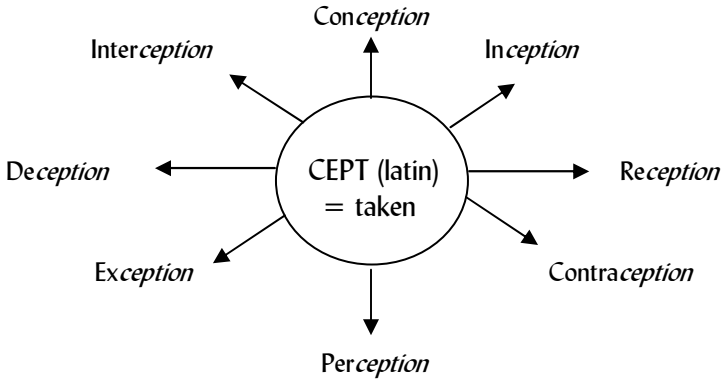
I started to become aware of the difference between 'looking' and 'seeing', and between 'listening' and 'hearing' – the way in which we often (usually?) have to look twice in order to see what someone is feeling, or what someone means when they say "you're not hearing me". Then, of course, there are the times that we are neither hearing nor listening because we are tuned in to our internal chatter.

There were, of course, good things that came out of increased left brain capacity. I found that in my inward search for meaning and answers to problems that were blocking my path of learning, I became involved in various kinds of conceptual analysis. I found often that an opposing set of concepts was an incisive tool for deeper understanding. I became fascinated with the prefixes 'ex' and 'in' (or 'im'): for example, exclude/include, expression/impression, exhale/inhale, explode/implode, etc. Then there were opposing concepts such as 'production' and 'consumption' that I would find useful in identifying broad categories; for example, I always found more affinity with fellow 'producers' than with those oriented around consumption.

When I started teaching E.S.L., I became interested in the semantics of the English language itself. For example, what could be learned from prefixes and suffixes in general? I had become increasingly interested in the relationship between the processes of 'conception' on the one hand, and 'perception' on the other. When I checked the dictionary for the derivation of the two words, I found that the suffix 'ception' had a common Latin root 'cept' from 'cipio' meaning 'to take'. The prefix 'per' meant 'through' and 'con' meant 'with'. Therefore, 'perception' = taken through, and 'conception' = taken with. Interesting. Food for thought.

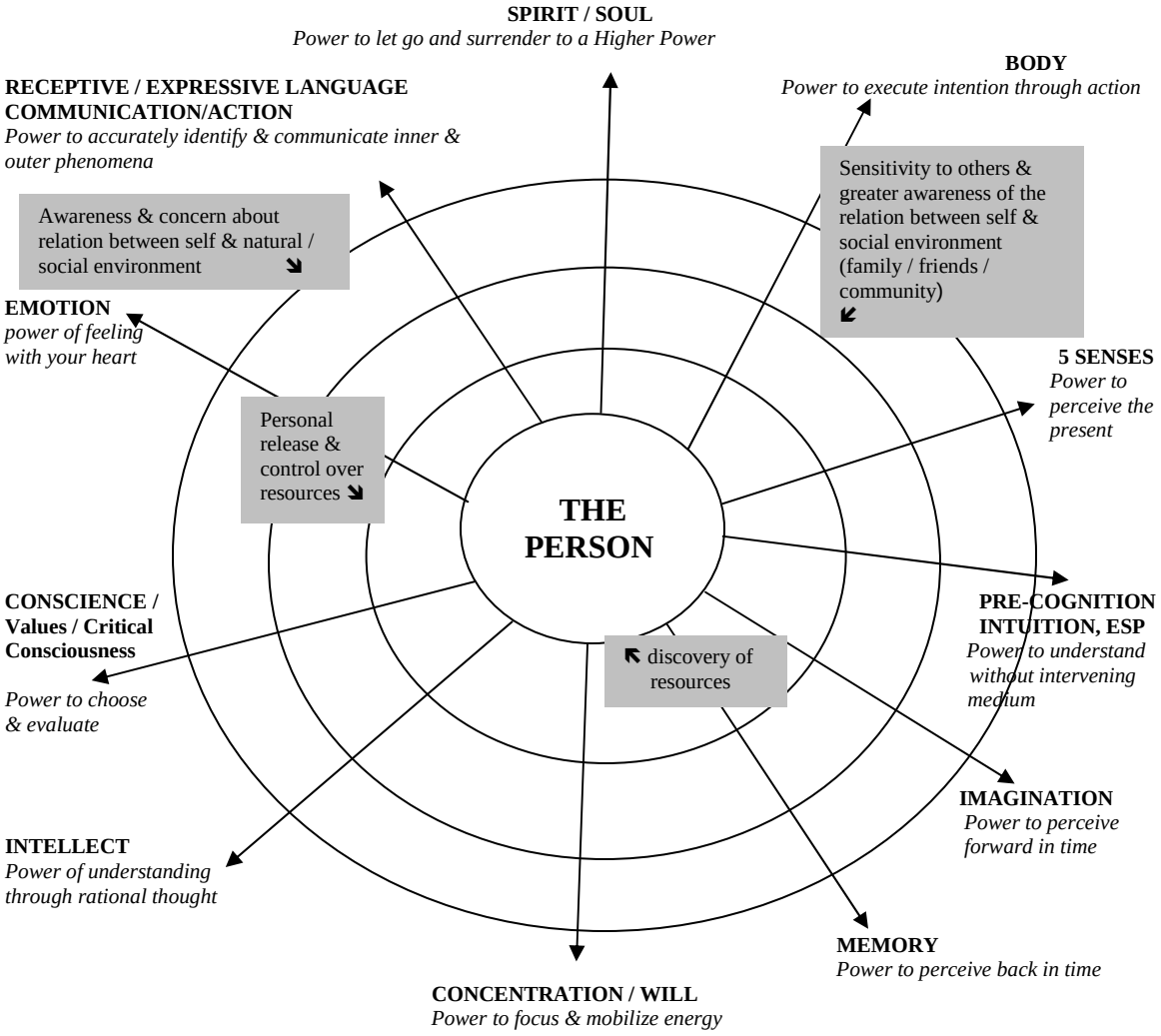
It seemed much could be investigated and possibly learned through conceptual analysis, especially when rendered in diagrammatic form.

For example:



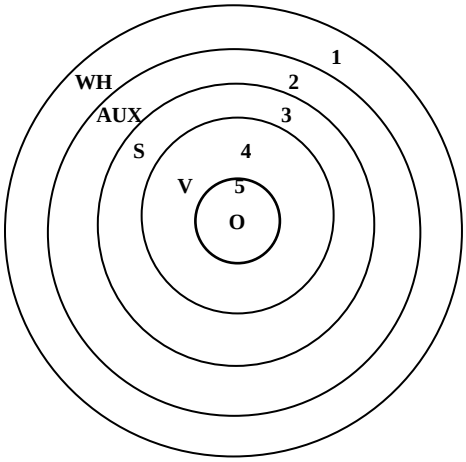
Prefix:
Con = with
In = in
Re = again
Contra = against
Per = through
Ex = out of
De = away, off
Inter = between

In my ongoing quest to answer the questions 'who are we?' and 'what are the aspects of ourselves that can be developed through learning, I developed a holistic curriculum, a theoretical model that *ideally* I would like to see implemented in my own life and inc the lives of those I taught:



Years later, after I had been teaching E.S.L. for many years, I adapted this mandala type model to what I termed 'The Grammar Wheel'. This was an educational resource consisting of 5 'wheels' which could be rotated around a central axis and manipulated to both construct and explain essential question and statement structures. Below is a diagram:

Rough sketch of the conceptual structure of The Grammar Wheel:



Wheel 1 = 'WH' question words
Wheel 2 = auxiliary words
Wheel 3 = subject words
Wheel 4 = verb words
Wheel 5 = object word

(to see a representation of the complete color-coded wheel + more explanation see theotherianbrown.com\Education\Teaching\ESL\ESL Educational Resources\The Grammar Wheel)

* * *

By the age of forty, this process of learning how best to learn and, as a corollary, how best to teach specific materials, crystallized into two main areas: (1) how best to learn the English language at a beginner level, (2) how best to learn (and teach) to play piano by ear.

What fascinates me is which comes first, conception or perception? The answer is 'it seems to depend'. Like the particle and the wave in quantum physics, there seems to be a symbiotic relationship between the two. In language learning, you have to first have a vocabulary foundation of single words. A beginner can communicate with what he/she wants with the words 'give' and 'apple' without having yet learned the syntax that will render more polished English of 'could you please give me the apple?'

What is certain is that if the teacher presents an object or a picture of an object (e.g. 'apple') that can be perceived or *taken (in) through* the visual sense, the student will comprehend/retain/learn the word 'apple' more effectively than if the concept is presented only in verbal form, whether in the form of print or speech. 'The Grammar Wheel' presents students simultaneously with conceptual and perceptual stimuli. The former are the words in print, whereas the latter combines both color coding and tactile manipulation. 'The Grammar Wheel' helps the student construct questions and statements by moving outward from the object (e.g. 'apple') to the verb (e.g. 'give') to the subject noun / pronoun (e.g. 'you') to the helper verb (e.g. 'can') such that, in this case, the student can see (perception) and understand (conception) 'can you give apple?' and the further short step 'can you give *me* (an) apple?'

There is a wonderful book Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language by Eva Hoffman (Penguin, 1990) in which she described how, as an immigrant to North America, there were so many instances of words that could not be translated literally from Polish to English. She gives as an example

the word 'river' which, as 'rzeka' in Polish, evokes a much richer conceptual meaning. The Inuit have a much broader range of perceptions for the various states of snow than we have. Consequently, there are more vocabulary words to identify external conditions, the knowledge of which is vital in everyday life.

The second topic of 'how best to learn to play piano by ear' may well have a broader appeal to readers than these reflections on language teaching/learning!

If one looks at the piano keyboard without any conceptual understanding, all you see is a bunch of black and white *notes* (I reserve the word 'key' to denote the seven notes of a major or minor scale). If you press down randomly on three or four of those notes, chances are that you will produce a disharmonious sound. One the other hand, starting from some basic knowledge of harmony, and/or by a process of trial and error, you would get a chord that sounded 'good' if you press the piano notes C, E and G. If you proceeded from there in search of a four note chord, sooner or later you would discover the rich sound of an added Bb and would be pleased with the sweet sound of a C7 chord.

That would be acting for the main part in the perceptual mode. However, if a teacher or a friend, told you about a dominant 7^{th} chord and then showed you the notes, your learning period would be quicker and more efficient. The combined power of both perceptual and conceptual modes is usually the most skilful and effective pedagogy, no matter what the material. Where the pedagogical fine skills come into the picture is knowing when and how to present each mode, how much of each and in what ratio to the other?

Ever wondered how blind people can play the piano? How come Ray Charles and Stevie Wonder can do what they do? As Stevie sits at the piano, the keyboard is 'seen' by his *mind's eye*. He has a vast conceptual vocabulary and syntax of harmony as well as the 'feel' of the piano keys, from which to direct his fingers. He has developed over many years the fine cognitive and motor skills to know which notes to play and which to avoid.

In my case, my conceptual vocabulary is less (far, far less) than Thelonius Monk or Oscar Peterson but comparable in some ways to that of Ray Charles or Stevie Wonder (although the syntax may be more limited). For decades, I was really only fluent in the keys of C, G, D, Am and Dm (in that order) – in other words, I spoke only 5 out of a total of 24 languages. I was audibly mute and conceptually blind (and, to a lesser extent, perceptually as well) in 19 of the 24 'languages'. And *that*, as any worthwhile musician knows, is where the yawning gap between blues/rock/pop/country and jazz lies. I knew that to cross that bridge, I would have to knuckle down and start some serious 'wood-shedding' (as my son would say). I had to start creating neural pathways for a great number of other outer perceptions and inner conceptions, as well as developing more motor skills (similar but not the same as in the key of C), an endless cycle of perception, conception, practice (action) and skill (fruition).

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING FROM RELATIONSHIPS
(with women)

Up until the age of 20, my friends were almost exclusively male. I had spent 20 years on the planet Mars and had yet to visit Venus. What I learned from five years of total immersion in a boarding school was what it was like to live in an authentic community, one that spoke the same language, had the same myths and traditions, the same system of justice with its rewards and punishments, as well as common values and beliefs as to that particular social class and community. At the same time, it was five years of intense psychological conditioning into accepting the structure and function of a strictly hierarchical system (that had changed little since Victorian times), as opposed to a more democratic structure in which, hopefully, one would be trained to question authority and to criticize it when necessary. And it was five years of *no* contact with the other sex. That translates into the non-boarding school boy having 8760 hours x 5 = 43,000 *more* hours of working with, living with, playing with, flirting with, hooking up with, breaking up with, etc. etc. females than a boarding school boy. At the age of 20, I really didn't have a clue.

My first whiff of a sexual experience was at the age of 17 with a young lady from Newcastle who a schoolmate had brought up to Edinburgh with his girlfriend. The occasion was the annual rugby match between England and Scotland. The plan was for the four of us to watch the game and then go to a movie afterwards. My friend, knowing of my virginal innocence, was determined to hook me up with an experienced, 'worldly' Tynesider.

The game was exciting. The after-game movie was only briefly watched as the other two took off to make out in my friend's car. My blind date had wasted no time in preliminaries and was busy squeezing my thighs and what lay between them. I felt combustible. We needed to get out of the theatre too. The problem was that there was nowhere to go. I didn't have a car and my parents' place was out of the question. We walked and walked through the drizzle, and eventually found a park bench on Calton Hill at the east end of Princess Street. It was windswept and freezing but we were both still ready to rumble. Looming above us were the Grecian columns of the National monument – erected in 1826 to commemorate Scottish soldiers and sailors who had died in the Napoleonic Wars

My lady friend urged me on. "Don't be shy lad, go on … get your hand in there," she panted. And that was when my innocence and ignorance were exposed in all their miserable shame. As I fumbled around in her jeans, suddenly my hand encountered what felt like a forest of hair, somewhere south of her navel. What the hell? I thought. The Playboy pics never showed any hair down there. In a state of mild shock, increasing bewilderment, embarrassment and frustration, I prodded and poked vainly trying to find 'the' entrance – any entrance in fact, especially given that I wasn't sure if there were two or three. Eventually in exasperation, the Newcastle lass told me to forget it and we trudged disconsolately down the hill leaving behind the unfinished monument, incomplete because the City fathers ran out of money. Somehow fitting that it has always been referred to as 'Edinburgh's disgrace'!

It wasn't until the age of 22, five long years later, that I finally lost my virginity – with a fellow virgin (female) in Montreal. Sigh …

* * *

Expo '67 is where I truly lost my innocence. At the British Pavilion (where I was working as a guide), there were scores of beautiful young women. Montreal was overflowing with hot chicks all looking for a good time – or so I had been told. The catch was that I didn't have a clue as to how to approach them. At the beginning of the summer, I was – at one and the same time – a competent guide interacting easily with the public, while also being an extremely horny young man with no idea whatsoever about opening gambits in games of flirtation.

I knew nothing about the dating game and it wasn't even a game I wanted to play. However – at least in the previous five years, I had gleaned a bit more knowledge about female anatomy. I knew

what I *would* do if I ever got a chance, if I ever got beyond the flirtation game. I had absolutely no doubt that I would be a passionate lover, but the art of seduction …? It seemed to me that the safest thing to do was to do nothing – just wait and watch, let *them* take the initiative. I had to do things my way. All I knew was 'my way' up until now was clearly 'no way'. Experience had shown me that if a situation looked promising, I tended to blunder in with earnest words and no finesse.

In spite of everything, the summer of 1967 was memorable. I did lose my virginity and I did face up to some of my fears with surprising results. I had a wild affair with an 'older woman' - a model from Toronto. Her name was Muriel. We met several times culminating with a trip to the Stratford Festival. What Muriel hadn't told me, however, was that she was living with a sculptor in Toronto and had lied to him about how she was going to spend the weekend. The first I knew of anything being wrong was after a night of non-stop sex, she announced she had to catch the next bus back to Toronto. When I asked her 'why' she said only that I had made her feel guilty.

(My relationship with Muriel is described in Chameleon, pp. 123-126, 187-189, 193-197)

* * *

And then early that Fall, back at Queens, an enchantress stepped into my life. She was lively and a bit wild and almost straight away said she adored me. How could I resist? I was entranced, captivated and infatuated. She led, I followed. Was this love? I hadn't a clue. For that year we hung out together, ate together, studied together, went skiing together, and slept together. When the summer vacation came round, I went to Kenya and she went to Montreal. But while she was there, she had an affair with a good friend of mine from Expo that I had put her in touch with. All this time I was writing letters to her and getting more and more confused and worried as the weeks went by and I heard nothing from her.

A month after I started my last year at Queens, she finally announced that she had "moved on". Then she told me about the affair and who it had been with. I had been confused and in emotional pain anyway, but that news shocked and eviscerated me. She was my girlfriend. We were great together. Everyone said so. She had always told me she was crazy about me. How could she? How could she do that? And not tell me? And with HIM!? In my hometown of Sedbergh, on the planet Mars, such an action would be punishable by death. Nobody would even dream of fucking a friend's girlfriend. But she told me "it wasn't a big deal, it's over and I didn't really like him anyway", and he said "it was summer, I had dope, it just kinda happened." No real explanation. No apology. No remorse. Just "no big deal".

I realized that the truth was that I had no idea what planet I was on any longer; part of me yearned to be back to where I knew the terrain, back to where I knew what to say and what to do and what to expect. I had always felt that I was lucky and privileged in so many ways, but now I was beginning to feel that I had been badly wounded in a surprise attack from a dear and trusted friend.

And the mental obsessing wouldn't stop. I couldn't accept it. I couldn't let it go. It wasn't fair. I could have fooled around in Kenya but no, I had stayed true to her. I hadn't sat under any apple trees with anyone else. I had been a good boy. IT WASN'T FAIR. The sacrosanct code of loyalty had been broken wilfully.

(My relationship with Lesley is described in Chameleon, pp. 202-203; 210-211 and 235-237)

A year later I got involved with another woman. In 1969 I returned to the U.K. to take a Masters in Sociology at the London School of Economics (L.S.E.). Like me, Ellie was a graduate of Queens University and was studying Film at the Slade School of Art. After we had been dating for six months, she invited me to move in with her. Our room was in a two bedroom flat rented by a white South African (Roy). At the time, I was struggling at L.S.E. and in great need of her support. But before long, it seemed to me that something was going on between her and Roy. When I told her of my suspicions, she denied them and assured me that I was "her man". It was crazy-making. The flirtation from both sides was unmistakable and evolved to the point that they didn't even try to conceal it. One evening I couldn't take it any more. I tried to talk with Ellie but became overwrought with anger and distress. I stormed out and spent the night at the house of an old friend from Sedbergh, one I hadn't seen for five years. I had gone through so many changes that he almost didn't recognize me. He was embarrassed and so was I. When I returned, I found a note from Ellie on the table:

> *'Ian, I feel flattened by the thought of how thoughtless I've been. How stupid. How tactless. It seems incredible that I didn't realize what pressure you were under, that I didn't smother you in care and cherishing. You are my man; we wanted to live together. I got distracted by my own immediate problems, my own moods. I held myself back from you.'*

There was a temporary lull. Then on Ellie's birthday, Roy gave her some mimosa and the flirting became overt again. What followed was anger, tears and the realization I needed to have it out with both of them. It was one of the most painful confrontations I have ever experienced. I almost begged them to tell me the truth. In response, they continued to flirt while all the time denying my perceptions. Once again I fled. I spent the night at the house of a fellow student from L.S.E.

Next morning, on returning, I found the house empty. Shortly after, I found out that they had taken off on his motor bike and gone to visit a friend of Ellie's in Oxford. It was the final straw. In a broken and desperate state I went to L.S.E. and told the registrar that I was quitting the program. All I knew was that I had to get out of the city, get away, go somewhere. The only thing I could think of doing was to meet up with a friend who was going to Morocco. I was shattered. What had happened? What was wrong with me? Ellie had called me 'neurotic' and a 'crybaby'. The trip to Morocco wasd a nightmare. I was broken. I had had a breakdown.

Nine months later, Ellie had a child by the South African guy. A year after that she contacted me and told me that he was abusive and violent.

(My relationship with Ellie is described in Chameleon, pp. 284-304)

These two betrayals could not have been more devastating. They were violations of my deepest values. I didn't belong to the hippy scene. I was at odds with the free love/drug taking/anything goes aspects of the alternative culture. I had been in complete confusion about who women were and what they wanted. Now I felt my trust had been reduced to an aching wound. My experiences with Muriel, Lesley and Ellie had introduced me to the dark side of women, or so I saw it at the time. I didn't understand. I hadn't cheated on them. They seemed to like me and said they loved me. I had done my best to please them. What was wrong with me?

* * *

Around that time I discovered Anais Nin's Journals and it was she who started giving me some insights into some of the differences between men and women. When I look at my own journals from the early seventies, I came across quotes such as the following:

'Women are much more dangerous as thwarted wills, unfulfilled artists, frustrated mothers, perverted power-seekers, who seek to dominate indirectly, via man. Women of yesterday and their negative wills! Their bending children, husbands, servants, gardeners, etc. Trying to fulfill themselves through others.' (Journals, vol. 2, p. 291)

'Anxiety is a woman screaming without a voice out of a nightmare.' (Journals, vol. 2, p. 275)

***'Depression is characteristically associated with over-conscientiousness and so it is particularly liable to befall virtuous people** (my emphasis). This is because they feel it is their moral duty to hang on to all good things, fixing them forever against the moving law of time.' (Journals, vol. 2, p.316)*

This last quotation resonated strongly. I had grown up with a mother who had serious problems with anxiety and depression. She was both a thwarted will and an unfulfilled artist. I had been brought up to be a good boy. I wanted to be a good man. I wanted to treat women with kindness and respect and be the opposite of my father. But I had been told before that I was 'overconscientious' and I also knew I had a fear of rejection or abandonment that made me confuse loyalty with possessiveness, and attachment with clinging. As a result of my relationships with Muriel, Lesley and Ellie, I had built up a well of pain, fear, distrust and anger. Why did women say they wanted a good man and then get swept away by men who revelled in a 'bad boy' image? Why did some of the same women who were becoming feminists not reject jerks like Mick Jagger and *his* patriarchal, sexist antics? At the same time, why did they not see that sexism wasn't exclusive to white men, especially when there was the double standard of it being politically correct, or at least acceptable, to have affairs with brown men and black men. I had known more than a few women who, while condemning patriarchal behaviour from non-whites, would find ways to overlook, explain and rationalize the patriarchal behaviour of non-whites.

As for my flaws, why did it take me so long to learn from my mistakes with women? Why did I see myself acting like my father at times, despite all efforts to the contrary? Why couldn't I understand and accept women for who they were, rather than setting out to change them? As for understanding the attraction of 'bad boys', it was none other than Ellie who enlightened me (forty years later). Reading her online lifetime Journals recently, I came across the following passage:

From Ellie Epp - Collected Journals: vol 4: April-May 2013:

"The really beloved bad boys of women's literature don't bully or abuse the heroine, but they continually provoke and tease her – they are teasing her to release her own latent wildness. And one thing the romantic heroes of women's fiction, even the bad boys, who can be brusque or verge on rudeness, never ever do is actually snap at, that is negatively startle, the heroine.

The heroine who begins demure and unripe, but who becomes herself, grows into herself, under the provocation of this bad boy who is secretly good. This seeming paradox and politically incorrect fantasy is, I would argue, an essential archetype of the female heterosexual journey. A skilled, or even at times slightly dangerous, male provocateur, can help the female sexual journey to begin. The motorcycle boots, the Harley – they are about her adventure, her penchant for the open road, erotically and in terms of her own creativity and subversiveness that society has generally repressed in her and forbidden her to claim as a longing. ***His male***

***badness is simply the projected dark animal of her own unacknowledged wild self**. (my emphasis)*

The difficult secret is that there is something about power – or skill or mastery of the situation – in men that is erotic to many heterosexual women. She is looking for a helpmate, she is looking for high quality sperm – a dual mission that can lead to pair bonding with simultaneous female adultery.

I was always being dominated (in my fantasies previously). There had always been a warped vision of a father figure.

It also took me far too long to realize that the women I had relationships with seemed to have had fathers who were negligent or abusive or absent in one way or another. This was true of Muriel and Ellie, and also of Francoise and Jennifer – the next two women in my life. It also took me a long time to realize that maybe I was attracted to 'bad girls' because of my own 'unacknowledged wild self'.

Francoise and Jennifer weren't 'bad girls' but they were rebels and they both had fathers who they had disowned. And they were both needy and vulnerable, a fact which my over-conscientious self welcomed as a chance to be 'the good man' and 'the rescuer' if necessary.

I met Francoise in Victoria Station two days after I left L.S.E. and three days after Ellie had left with the South African and his bad boy boots and chopper to join friends in Oxford. I helped carry her big suitcase. We talked on the train to Paris and I gave her my number. Three months later, I got a call. It was Francoise telling me that she was back in London, that she was four months pregnant and that the father (also her boyfriend and boss) had fired her and told her he didn't want to see her again. She had no money, hadn't eaten for two days and had nowhere to stay. I couldn't ignore her cries for help. She had been there for me when I needed it. I offered my room. She moved in. She was absolutely distraught. On the one hand she wanted to have the baby. On the other hand, she didn't because her parents would be terribly upset and she didn't have the financial means. In the end, after much talk during which I felt I was her counsellor, she decided to have an abortion. I supported her decision and took her to the clinic. Afterwards, we continued to share a room. Given that there was an attraction between us, it was only a matter of time before we became sexually intimate. Not a pretty story but one in which I would ask the reader what he/she would have done under the circumstances. When Francoise talked to me on the train, I had already crossed the threshold into a nervous breakdown. I was very grateful to her.

After a year together, I moved back to Canada. Francoise and I had been very close and she had allowed me to resurrect some trust in the opposite sex. There were no betrayals but in the end I left her because I didn't want to marry and it made no sense for her to uproot to Canada.

(for more on my relationship with Francoise see Chameleon, pp.362-363; 380-381 & 386)
(for an account of my struggles with depression, anxiety and breakdown, see 3 Strikes, Not Out)

The last woman that I lived with before my fourteen year partnership with Joan (the mother of two of my children) was Jennifer.

Jennifer was a single mother with a two year-old infant. At the time I met her, she was struggling to make ends meet by working part time as a waitress. I had been hired at the same vegetarian restaurant as 'business manager'. The hippy owner asked if I had any experience. I said no. He then asked me what my sun sign was. When I told him 'Scorpio', he smiled and offered me the job.

As with Francoise, part of the decision to cohabit was not romantic but economic. We could both survive more easily by splitting the rent. I liked Jennifer. She wanted to go to College to train to

be a social worker. She was a rebel, on the left and active politically. I liked her and I liked her daughter. I also was very open to the opportunity to do some fathering. Being 'a good man' meant being a good partner (or at least trying to be) and a good father. I wasn't ready to have my own children but I was ready to do some preparation.

I met Jennifer in 1974. That was the year where, amongst other things, contraception became free for women in the U.K., the U.S. first lady, Betty Ford, declared she was pro-choice and for the first time, women were able to openly and unashamedly buy a vibrator at feminist sex shops. Forty years later, there is the beginning of an acceptance of male sex toys in the heterosexual community. Straight men have much to learn from their gay brothers about, for example, prostate orgasm. As in many other areas, men's liberation has been woefully behind female emancipation.

1974 was also the year in which the last American troops were withdrawn from Vietnam, Patty Heart was kidnapped, Watergate happened and Nixon resigned, Japanese Red Army members seized the French Embassy in The Hague, Netherlands, and two pubs in Birmingham were bombed by the I.R.A. It was the year that I went on demonstrations with Jennifer and Krista and other women to protest government cutbacks to daycares. It was the year that I understood that a single mother like Jennifer could not get the education she needed to support her child and make more than a minimum income, without the services offered by a daycare. There was a lot of anger around in 1974. It was the year that Susan Brownmiller wrote Against Our Will in which she describes rape as "a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear." It was a book that spawned sweat shirts with the inscription 'ALL MEN ARE RAPISTS'. It was the year in which I realized some second-wave feminists were going too far and that I needed to resist sexism in any form.

Finally, 1974 also happened to be the year that I received a letter from Ellie in which she said:

> *"Hello dear man, I'm sitting in my cell/boudoir with the garden quivering outside the windows and a lame cat with a poultice on one of its hind legs sawing along the sill … you sound good and real … I liked you in your letter. You were made to be gay, and play piano, and make love, make jokes, make theories; there you are sad and lonely and yet afraid to say so."*

I was still trying to be the 'good man' with her and afraid to admit, even to myself, just how much anger I had about what had happened.

> Another quote from Anais Nin that I had found striking read as follows:
> *Nin quoting her therapist, Otto Rank, on his advice to her with respect to her father:*
> *'Hurt him. You will deliver him of his sense of guilt for leaving you as a child. He will feel delivered because he will have been punished. Abandon him as he has abandoned you. Revenge is necessary to re-establish equilibrium in the emotional life. It rules us deep down. It is the root of Greek tragedies.' (Journals: vol. 1: p.327)*

Anais Nin was a visionary and had the courage and sensibility to articulate emotional states common to most if not all women. She was way ahead of her time, as was Nancy Friday when she wrote the book Jealousy in 1985. Men of course can and do have the same feelings however much they want to deny them. Deep in the recesses of my soul, I sought revenge for the dual betrayals by Lesley and Ellie, but until reading Nin, I had never been able to admit it.

Perhaps I had been playing 'good father' in these relationships where the real father had been rejected. Perhaps it was all a deep act of contrition for the appalling sexism of my own father, along with my guilt and shame for being a direct descendent of a racist, colonial and imperialist heritage, as well as being a product of the British elitist educational system. But I had my own anger at being misunderstood simply because of assumptions being made due to the fact I was a white male. I was not

a rapist. I felt I, as a man, had been emotionally and psychologically abused by two women, Lesley and Ellie. They had inflicted deep wounds knowingly and had tried to dismiss that fact. A woman is entitled to defend her self from hurt inflicted by a man, but a man in extreme pain is not allowed to exhibit that distress without being labelled as a 'cry baby'. It took another couple of decades before this double standard started to be addressed. And meanwhile I took those unresolved feelings into relationships that followed. Not a good scenario.

With Jennifer I was supportive to both her and Krista. On the other hand, I was over-sensitive and got triggered easily. I was distrustful which led to possessiveness and jealousy. Jennifer was also distrustful, and angry towards men in general and at least as possessive and jealous as I was, especially in the first year or two. I felt I had to keep proving to her that I was 'a good man'. But then once she entered College, she became involved in the Women's movement. At the same time she became more articulate and assertive, more proactive and less reactive. She began to express gratitude towards me that I had put up with a lot of bitchy behaviour and had stuck by her. As she became more empowered as a woman and as a mother, I began to feel more vulnerable as a man and specifically in my role as 'father'.

In addition to the baggage from my relationships with Lesley and Ellie, I felt I had a duty to reverse the past, to become the opposite of everything my father represented. But with Jennifer I had not learned from past insights into the ways in which I was over-conscientious. I had allowed Jennifer to use me as a target for her anger at her absentee father, as well as the father (an American draft resistor) of her daughter and men in general. I had a lot to learn about how and where and when to set firm boundaries.

With Jennifer, I realized that I didn't feel I had the right to get angry with women, lest I invoke *their* rage and become accused of being a 'chauvenist pig', or an abusive male. The consequence was that increasingly I became a 'stuffer' such that rather than dealing with frustrations and anger as they arose, I held back and stuffed them down. Of course when the pressure became too much, there was an explosion. Whether I liked it or not, the anger did come out. In an attempt to be rational, I would try to channel my emotions through my rational intellect, the result being that I often became arrogant and overbearing and used my words and logic as cutting tools. And then I would feel guilty and ashamed and blame myself in an ever-deepening pattern. It wasn't that Jennifer and I didn't have love for each other. We did. And we also had the same political leanings, including my support of women's empowerment and Jennifer's understanding of ways in which men were becoming increasingly confused as to how to respond to the tidal wave of change that was taking place in gender relations. But life was tough for both of us; little money, bouts of unemployment, child duties at daycare and at home. There were many stresses, both external and internal, and these often translated into disagreements and fighting.

For over five years, Jennifer and I had lived in a community of mostly single mothers. I supported their quest to discover and exercise their power as women, both individually and collectively. But at the same time, I felt isolated and often resentful when someone made assumptions about who I was based on the colour of my skin or my gender. After Jennifer and I finally broke up in 1978, she got involved with another man and didn't want me to see Krista. I had no legal rights. I wasn't the biological father and we weren't married. One of the lessons I learned from my relationship with Jennifer was that progressive men also needed liberation and empowerment, and that meant supporting women in their new roles while not submitting to reverse sexism. Both women *and* men needed to be vigilant about not allowing themselves to be targets or doormats.

(for more on my relationship with Jennifer see Phoenix, pp.39-203)

By the mid seventies, ideological feminists (as opposed to equality feminists) had declared men as the enemy, with white men as the arch enemy. I had read Germaine Greer's The Female Eunuch in 1970 and had loved the honesty of comments like:

> *"Now as before, women must refuse to be meek and guileful, for truth cannot be served by dissimulation. Women who fancy that they manipulate the world by pussy power and gentle cajolery are fools. It is slavery to have to adopt such tactics."*

And:

> *"Status ought not to be measured by a woman's ability to attract and snare a man."*

Twenty years later, I liked her less.

> *"Greer portrayed men—all men—as hopeless, biologically 'doomed to competition and injustice, not merely towards females, but towards children, animals and other men.' She professed to see more hope in the rigid gender segregation of certain Middle Eastern cultures than in anything in Western society. She took the feminist critique of the medical establishment to absurd extremes, denouncing pap smears, fertility doctors, pre-natal screenings, and C-sections with equal vehemence, while perversely defending female genital mutilation as a cultural practice that Westerners had no right to speak of."*
> *('Germaine Greer Is Back', by Margaret Talbot, New Yorker, July 31, 2014 in reference to Greer's book The Whole Woman, 1999)*

In the wake of my relationship with Jennifer, I formed a Men's Group and later joined a Father's Rights Group. In September 1981, two years after our break up, I met Jennifer and wrote down some of what she had to say in my diary. This included:

> *"You were too flexible, Ian. I couldn't believe how much bullshit you put up with. You put your power on a shelf because of me and my inadequacies."*

My relationship with Jennifer was followed by a brief fling with Chloe resulting in the birth of Jasmine, and a partnership with Joan which lasted for the next 14 years and involved the raising of my two other children, Annie and Ben. I have decided not to write about my relationships with Chloe or Joan because it would take a book in itself, and also because I want Jasmine, Annie and Ben to form their own impressions, without undue influence from either parent.

* * *

Returning to the good boy/bad boy theme, my brother's name was Robin. He was three years older than me and had been born with a deformed foot as mentioned earlier. Robin became the scapegoat in our family. My father projected his own failures onto Robin and treated him terribly. Robin was always in trouble and often got punished by my father (including beatings). By the time I left Sedbergh, in my father's eyes, I was 'the success' and Robin was 'the failure'. It's true that my teen years were relatively happy and fulfilling and his weren't. It's true that my father treated me better than Robin. It's true that I hadn't experienced the physical disability that Robin had. For this, and other

reasons, I had an underlying sense of guilt. Robin had a stranglehold on victimhood status. I was supposed not only to feel sorry for him, but on a subtler level to feel guilty.

But by the time I was in my forties, and had been in all kinds of trouble myself and was even considered by some to have joined the 'bad boy's brigade', I no longer had a sense of guilt with respect to Robin, rather I often felt envy and even resentment. I had come to understand that Robin and I were from different schools. I was from the 'School of Chivalry' and he was from the 'School of Hard Knocks'. I had been inculcated with values of fair play, honesty, loyalty, obedience, courage, Robin had learned from an early age various strategies and tactics of survival. He saw the world more realistically than me. He had 'street smarts'. He saw that relations between people were based much more on power than they were on love. He knew the areas in which he felt relatively powerless so he focused on internal and external resources that could bring him power.

Robin became an accountant who, after twenty or so years of service, got charged with £60,000 fraud. He nearly got imprisoned but in the end, the matter was dropped (the condition being that Robin would repay all, or at least some of that amount at a later date). Robin had convinced the court that his disabilities were somehow synonymous with incapacitation and they had taken pity. But Robin was not incapacitated. He could walk (although professed to need a wheelchair). He had a car, complete medical coverage and various pensions which added up to more than I was making as a teacher. AND on top of that Robin was a lady's man. What, I began to ask myself, was it that he had that I didn't when it came to relationships with women?

Robin was grossly overweight and hardly good-looking. Nonetheless as he grew older he seemed to attract women of all ages. I gathered from him that he was getting a lot of action. As I surveyed my own growing list of failed relationships, I wondered what his secret was. Now it felt like *he* was the success. He was 'the man' – at least when it came to the opposite sex. On at least two visits to Britain to see my mother, Robin and I got into discussions that brought up contrasting experiences with women.

Here are some of his remarks that I jotted down in my Journal:

> *"After Avril* cheated on me and then left me for another man, I decided that would NEVER happen again. From that time on I always had at least one or two women in the wings, so to speak."*
> Robin continued:
> *"You're always going on about being open and honest, Ian. You don't get it. Women say they want the truth - they don't. Give them the truth and they'll take off immediately. What you have to do is give them what they want to hear … sweet nothings really. Meanwhile, I tell them I'm a selfish, ugly, disabled son-of-a-bitch, into control. They feel sorry for me. I manipulate their need to nurture and take care."*
> (* his first wife)

Robin was trashing my precious values. I applied my quest for a level playing field everywhere – including my relationships with women. Robin saw all relationships in terms of power – you either control or you are controlled. Carlos had once said the same thing. Simple as that, especially when you figured out how to gain it and maintain it. Our differences got summarized in a few words one day in 1999. I was complaining about going through hard times. "Life's a bitch," I said. "No", answered Robin. "Life's a beach." At first sight, it seemed as if Robin and I had switched victim identities.

The biggest difference between Robin and I was that I had built up a lot of fear about being inadequate so I had become timid. Robin telegraphed his emotions from minute to minute and had no problem being angry with women. Ironically, while I had tried to be the opposite of my blustering father, Robin in many ways had come to resemble him. The big difference was that Robin could be very

soft and sweet when he was giving women what they wanted – while working on taking what he wanted.

Ellie had pointed out that I took things too literally and that I was 'ingenuous'. Robin also thought my honesty was at best blunt and at worst cutting and hurtful. And with both of these people, I had become resentful and bitter. They hadn't played by the rules and they had got away with it. Not only that, they had learned better than I how to bend or break the rules, how to work the system to their advantage. Robin and Ellie were 'players'. Life was a game.

* * *

My best friends were, and still are, women. Lynne has brought me back from the wasteland several times when my desire or passion, emotional attachment or perceived need, has caused me to stray from platonic friendship into a physical or romantic relationship. After being there for me after yet another relationship breakup, one day Lynne spelled out her observations and her advice:

Ian:

- *You give up too much power.*
- *As soon as you stand up for yourself with women, you feel like a 'bad' person.*
- *You get hooked. Build a glass wall around you.*
- *Women are looking for soft, kind, gentle, compassionate men like you. Beware.*
- *Women let out their anger with you because you are receptive.*
- *They need target practice for their assertive/aggressive skills, and what better target than receptive, guilt-ridden men.*
- *Your constant compromise with women leads to held-in resentment.*
- *You're too empathetic. You don't keep boundaries.*
- *You drive yourself crazy in your attempts to please women.*

Pretty much right on. Why was I such a slow learner? Were the Buddhists right? Was it desire and attachment that led to suffering? And if so, why could I not awaken to that fact? It was true – I had a strong desire for sexual relations. I had a strong desire for emotional intimacy. And I had a strong desire to father my own children. Once involved, I did get attached and when that happened, the underlying fears of being betrayed or abandoned kicked in.

Ellie was right. In many ways I was ingenuous, which the dictionary defined as 'artlessly frank'. My mother was like that. She would be emotionally open and hence expose her vulnerabilities. As a man of my generation, I had been told again and again that one of men's biggest problems was that they are armoured and out of touch with their feelings, let alone be able to express them articulately. I was not 'a typical man'. I had no trouble identifying, expressing, explaining and analyzing my feelings. And in the name of honesty and integrity, or so I thought, I would willingly be vulnerable, trusting that women of my generation would welcome this as non-macho, non-patriarchal behaviour. Now, in 2017, popular culture is only beginning to understand the past 50 years from a man's perspective. And some of the most incisive insights are coming from women writers. For example:

> *"I was not prepared to hear over and over from men how the women – the mothers, sisters, girlfriends, wives – in their lives are constantly criticizing them (men) for not being open and vulnerable. Here's the painful pattern that emerged from my research with men. We ask them to be vulnerable, we beg them to let us in, and we plead with them to tell us when they're*

afraid, but the truth is that most women can't stomach it. In those moments where real vulnerability happens in men, most of us recoil in fear and that fear manifests as everything from disappointment to disgust."

(Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead: 2012, p. 95*)

In addition to my friends being mostly female, my colleagues from the age of twenty on, were also mostly women - in the fields of Sociology, Education, ESL teaching and Music Therapy. In all of these areas, as a man I was in the minority, especially the last two categories which were almost completely comprised of women. It was an ironic reversal to the first twenty years of my life.

It was the same with my living situations. The house in which I lived for two of the three years I was in London had one other male and three female occupants. In my five years with Jennifer, our most significant community was that of single mothers and a daycare that had been run almost entirely by women. There were many single mothers in Totem Housing Coop, where Joan and I raised our children. For the 15 years that I was an ESL Instructor at Kwantlen University College, I was for quite a considerable time, one of only two men in a department of at least 15 women. Presently, as music therapist at a Care Home, I am the only man in a department of 10 women. Taking the Care Home as a whole, there aren't more than 5 men out of at least 100 women on the premises (staff and residents included).

From the age of twenty on, I experienced a complete reversal of gender demography. And this affected whether I made friends with men or women. There's no question that I wanted and needed men friends, it's just that suddenly they seemed to be hard to find although not surprisingly, on the occasions that I stepped briefly into a higher class enclave, e.g. the McGill Squash Club, suddenly there they were, a predominance of males, many of them blissfully unaware of the seismic changes happening around them.

CHAPTER 6

LEARNING FROM RELATIONSHIPS
(with men)

The question now is the same one posed before with respect to my relationships with women. Which men were an influence in my life? What lessons did I receive? What did I learn?

First comes David, my best friend at Sedbergh and still my best male friend. David and I have lived very different lives despite the fact that we were both teachers. He earned a Ph.D. in Soil Science, got married and had his first child all at a young age. He and his partner had two more children. They have had grandchildren for years. Unlike me and my constant uprooting, David and Frances bought a house in a small Somerset village before the ages of thirty. Over the following decades, they upgraded it many times. Fifty years later, their marriage is as rock solid as their house – which happens to be called 'Rock Cottage'.

I went way to the left of David with my politics and lifestyle. And I have had a much more austere life in terms of material comforts due to the fact that my lifetime income has been considerably lower than David's, let alone the combined household income of him and Frances together (like David, she was also a full-time teacher throughout her working life). There was a ten year gap from about the age of 23 to 33 where we almost lost touch. Given the severing of my roots to Sedbergh and my former life, I didn't think we would be able to relate to each other. I was wrong. Our two families have met on several occasions and David and I are lifelong friends. What have I learned from David?

That:

- Sometimes the good guys win
- We *do* all have some essence that will *always* be unaffected by whatever existential changes we go through. The essence of who David and I were to each other, and with each other, never changed.
- I learned *about* David that he was and is unfailingly generous of spirit, courageous of heart and inquiring of mind. Two years ago, David took my son Ben to visit Sedbergh (his first visit there since he left school!) – a perfect example of his goodness and kindness. The visit involved two days of travel, and accommodation at a bed and breakfast. I should add that David is Ben's 'Godfather' - a bit of a joke really considering David is an ardent Atheist.

My best friend at Queens was Frank. He was a musician who dropped out of University in order to dedicate himself to his music. Like David, Frank had a balance of yin and yang energies. They could be strong-willed and they could be yielding. They could be fierce and they could be gentle. They could talk and they could listen. They were also both creative and highly productive people and expected a lot from themselves.

What did I learn from Frank?

What comes to mind is sensual pleasure. At Sedbergh I knew about the fulfillment that came from various physical activities. Frank was a bona fide hippy and the hippy sub culture was more about 'passivities' than activities. Frank introduced me to marijuana. I was very hesitant to take it at first and drew the line at hard drugs like LSD and mescaline (something I partially regret). Weed seemed to facilitate our mutual pleasure in the following areas: listening to music, appreciating certain foods (most notable large tubs of strawberry yoghurt), and having intense, flowing, right-brain discussions, where creative imagination, philosophical questioning and humour were the drivers. I learned to let go a bit with Frank. I learned to loosen my strict asceticism.

My best friend in London was Jerry. I had met him at Expo '67 where we were both guides in the British Pavilion. Jerry had an English mother which was significant in that I was beginning to discover that often the Canadians I got on best with were the ones who had one or two British parents. Jerry got me a job as stage manager at the Open Space Theatre where he was working as theatre

manager. We shared a flat for my first six months in London, along with a former British Pavilion hostess. Jerry was undeniably an alpha male. Like Bill Clinton, he had a combination of intelligence, self-assurance, charm, good looks and sly wit. He exuded a 'naughty boy' attitude. He also gave the impression of being grounded and in control. Women LOVED Jerry. He was the one at Expo who had three girlfriends going at a time – each of them apparently unaware of the others. Despite being an alpha male, he wasn't insensitive. He could listen and he could be empathetic.

What did I learn from Jerry?

I learned (once again) that I was not an alpha male. Years later I read this description of alpha males, and was introduced to a description of 'sigma males' which resonated with me:

> *Alpha males: They are the guys who are "pack leaders" or who rule small "tribes". Today, this means guys who rule social circles or are the coolest guys in a subculture. Women in their social circles will often seek them out and make themselves available. Alphas tend to be rather inclusive towards most people.*
>
> *Sigma males:*
> *Strong, attractive men who run a nomadic strategy. Instead of trying to climb to the top of the social hierarchy, they ignore or make an effort to avoid social hierarchies in the first place. Thus, they don't really have any definite "rank". They might challenge the group dominance of alphas, but pure sigmas have no strong interest in having subordinates for extended periods. They will instead release control of the group as soon as they get their preferred outcome. Sigmas tend to spend at least some time in isolation and only go out in order to meet women or close friends. They may be rather antagonistic towards people who don't interest them, as they don't care much about social consequences.*

Unlike me, Jerry was a born leader and relished being in that position. I had been described once as 'a reluctant leader' which at the time I thought was pretty accurate. However, Jerry wasn't overly ambitious. After moving back to Canada, he spent most of his working life as head stage manager at the Avon Theatre in Stratford, Ontario. Now I think about it, that position was tantamount to being king of a large and celebrated stage.

The other male friend I had in London was Stuart. Stuart, in contrast to Jerry, was single-minded about becoming wealthy and influential. He learned first-hand about market forces of demand and supply by going around the world buying and selling as he went, according to where he could turn the best profit. He set off on a BMW motor-bike which he later sold for a profit in Nigeria. He even bought and sold drugs for a while. Somewhere on that trip he met and married an American woman from a wealthy family. Later, they moved to the States. Stuart set about capitalizing on his British accent and smooth manner while overstating the importance of his degree from L.S.E. (only a B.A.). He had considerable ability in manipulating people and situations to his advantage and worked his way up over the years from reporter on a radio station in San Francisco to Business Affairs anchor on CNN and then Fox. He benefitted from the 1987 Stock Market Crash and made a lot of money (his net worth is estimated at $10,000,000). He used to live in a mansion in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey and commuted every day to New York City. According to press reports, during much of this time, he was secretly cheating on his wife by carrying out an ongoing affair with a woman in Florida. His spouse went public and filed for divorce in 2014.

What I learned from Stuart was that I didn't like raw naked ambition, especially when it was tied to making a lot of money. I could see how Stuart was utterly focused on doing whatever was necessary to get ahead. He was an entrepreneur, a capitalist and a self-promoter like his friend Donald

Trump, now President Trump. Stuart ceased being a friend many years ago. I do not respect him. We have different values.

The next man who had influence in my life was Carlos. Although a sculptor rather than a businessman, Carlos shared with Stuart 'raw naked ambition' and being prepared to manipulate and use people to achieve his goals. I have written about my relationship with Carlos *(see Phoenix, pp. 3-17)*. Suffice it to say here, that we lived together when I first arrived in Montreal in 1972. I helped him paint a huge mural, after which we went our own ways. I instigated the split on the basis that I felt Carlos was all take and no give. At a time when I was trying to figure out whether to put my own creativity into teaching or art, Carlos came to represent the self-centredness and egotistic selfishness of 'the artist'.

At the same time, I was aware that Carlos exposed and challenged the inner conflicts between my own artistic identity and my commitment to sacrifice that in the interests of teaching. While disliking his endless self-promotion, I admired and envied his chutzpah and I resented the fact that he displayed not a trace of guilt in putting his creative process ahead of other people. In any event, my experiences with Carlos helped clarify for me that I believed in teaching and vehemently opposed George Bernard Shaw's dictum that 'those who can do, those who can't teach'. As far as I was concerned, the world was more in need of good teachers than good artists (especially those overpaid rock stars and actors who considered themselves 'artists'). In self-justification of my choice (and attitude), I needed to turn Shaw's dictum on its head and centre myself around a counter proposition - something like: *Those who can teach. Those who can't, draw or learn to play three chords, or pretend to be other people.*

Carlos, once explained to me that the name of the game was 'promotion'. In his case, this meant getting a commission to do a mural by bullshitting about his qualifications and experience. It wasn't about never-ending training until you were 'good enough'. That was playing a fool's game. Quite the reverse - you convinced others of your talents and then, and only then, did you do whatever work was necessary to prove you were who you said you were. It was the 'fake it 'til you make it' philosophy, one which used to arouse complete scorn in me, until in older age I began to see that as a strategy it was not, by definition, immoral or 'bad'. In fact, I got confused when that other Carlos, i.e. Carlos Castaneda put a positive spin on the notion that truth doesn't matter:

> *Instead of telling yourself 'the truth', that you are ugly and rotten and inadequate, tell yourself that you are the complete opposite, knowing that you are lying; this may hook you to another doing, and then you may realize that both doings are lies, and that to hinge yourself to either one is a waste of time, because the only thing that is real is the being in you that is going to die. To arrive at that being is the not-doing of the self. A warrior is not a clown, at the mercy of other people. A warrior is like a pirate that has no qualms in taking and using anything he wants, except that the warrior doesn't mind or he doesn't feel insulted when he is used and taken himself."*

That said, whatever sense this made to me, and however much I rebelled against being 'a good boy', I could never reconcile myself with having 'no qualms in taking and using anything he wants'. I realized that for those who played Life as a Game, there were no good or bad guys, only winners and losers. However even a game had its rules.

My relationships with men continued to be a disappointment. My expectations were too high (as they were with women as well). Whereas before the age of twenty, I had absolute trust in my

friendships with men, now I had grown cautious, less spontaneous and more defensive. The relationships with Lesley and Ellie had soured my trust level with both women and men.

I made one good friend in my time in Montreal. His name was Martin. Like Jerry, Martin had British parents (in his case both mother and father). On the outside, he seemed completely Canadian, but his character displayed English traits which I recognized and with which I was familiar. Like David and Frank, Martin had a balance of yin and yang. He was strong and assertive and had taken leadership training as a community organizer. He was on the liberal left and became a social activist with low income people. Martin and I could talk about anything: sports, music, movies, politics, theories of social change, and relationships. Like me, Martin despaired of macho men who weren't in touch with their feelings, let alone being able to share them. Like me, Martin was attractive to women, but once in a relationship, seemed to get into fights. Like me he was sensitive and took things to heart. Like me he was somewhat androgynous in his gender identity and emotional make-up. We both needed a meaningful relationship with another man and it didn't take long before we became close – emotionally (we both had the potential of becoming gay men but never 'crossed over'. If the present acceptance of bisexuality, trans-sexuality and polyamory had existed then, who knows what would have happened.

After Martin moved from Montreal to Vancouver, I began to think of following in his footsteps. Unfortunately, when I finally did arrive on the west coast (with Jennifer), Martin was in the process of moving to Eugene, Oregon where he had been accepted into a Masters Program. A year later, we both went through break-ups with our partners. By mail and on the phone, he vented to me and I vented to him. We both recognized the reactionary aspects of second wave ideological feminism and talked of plans to set up a Men's Group when Martin returned to Vancouver. But when he did return and found me in yet another domestic crisis, Martin announced it was too much and he wasn't sure he could 'be there' for me. I felt rejected and betrayed (something I recognized was becoming all too common) and I sank further into self analysis and trying to figure out 'what was wrong with me'.

What did I learn from Martin? That I needed to start seeking professional help for my emotional problems and could no longer trust that I could rely on friends.

Since coming to B.C., I have formed friendships with a handful of men. Two of these, I regard as quintessentially Canadian. The first is Michael, the First Nations man who was my next door neighbour at Totem Housing Coop for fourteen years. Michael had the same all-embracing love of sports and games that I did. We played soccer with our sons who were about the same age. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Michael had a computer (Commodore 64) before I did and he introduced me to a strategy game called 'Fortress of The Witch King'. From this, several years later, we graduated to a P.C. game with the title 'Heroes 3' which, twenty years later, we still play from time to time. As long as we stick to 'the game', Michael and I can have a lot of fun within the boundaries of this fantasy world. However, trouble arises when I become target practice for Michael's justifiable grievances about 'the white man'. For years I would 'play along' with projections of his anger fired into the target of my shame and guilt. But I had a growing sense that I'd paid my dues. I'd done my penance. It was like my feelings about my brother Robin. I was tired of guilt and shame about people who I had made efforts to support not victimize. Eventually I confronted the issue and told Michael that I had spent my whole life trying to atone for the sins of my ancestors and that I was tired of this 'game' of victim-persecutor.

These days it seems, thankfully, as if that particular 'game' is played out. Now we can joke about how our games of 'Heroes 3' (in which he has been the winner 98% of the time) have been great therapy for Michael, in that he has had decades of being able to overpower, outwit, beat up and kill 'the white man', as represented by my 'Hero'. At times I have questioned whether I am a masochist, but always conclude that (1) I love the game (2) if I keep learning, I will be able to compete with the master strategist and up my winning percentage.

Michael was raised as a Haida in Prince Rupert. At the other end of the country, in Newfoundland, there lived a family named 'The Keepings'. Their son, Garry, left school early and worked on fishing boats. At the same time, he was gaining experience in various other trades – construction, plumbing, being an electrician, etc.

I met Garry when I moved to the Ranch on First Nations land outside White Rock. This was after Joan and I separated. I first heard about Garry when I read his small ad in the local paper. It said simply 'Handyman for hire' and gave his phone number. Talk about modesty! The thing about Garry was that along with his knowledge of different trades, he brought a level of excellence to anything he did. For several years I observed Garry upgrading my house and building a music studio in which he had to knock down walls, construct a new ceiling, and do all manner of carpentry, drywalling, wiring and installation of skylights.

There was the kind of flow, rhythm and assuredness in his movements that is noticeable with anyone who has mastery of their skills; the graceful, elegant style of someone who always looks for the best way to do something considering all the relevant factors. As a College Instructor on the hiring committee, one of the things I looked for in candidates for teaching positions was speed, appropriateness and accuracy of assessment. After decades of teaching I could read people and situations quickly and with confidence. In the same way., I would see Garry sizing up a situation and then, in a remarkably short time, being able to tell me what materials would be needed, the quantity, the approximate project time and the labour costs. He would then add his advice on how to proceed. I learned to gain absolute trust in Garry's decisions.

Garry had so many layers to him. In addition to his trade skills, he was a hunter, a cook, a comedian, a connoisseur of fine weed, and a wonderful father and husband. He was a 5'4", wiry, tough-as-nails, generous-hearted man – one for whom I have tremendous admiration.

* * *

When I was doing the Music Therapy Diploma, I got to know and become friends with Kevin, a fellow student. Of the eighteen students in our class, I picked him out right away. First of all, he was one of only three men in the group! Secondly, he was an out-of-the-closet gay guy (soon to be in pursuit of 'the third man').

Kevin was delightful – funny with an acerbic wit, intelligent, shy at times, over the top at others. He was sensitive to people's feelings, and was kind and compassionate. At the time I started the program, I was around 40 and he was only 24. Kevin came from a very abusive family and I became something of a father figure. I found him easy to converse with and easy to be with. *And* he was the one person in our group with whom I could improvise – both musically and dramatically.

Kevin and I would dine out at a Mexican restaurant from time to time and vent our respective frustrations about some of the dinosaurs on the music therapy scene. We also talked freely about our internal problems and attempts to resolve them. Inevitably we talked about our current relationships and our families of origin. I started this book with an account of why I think mine was a truly 'dysfunctional family', but I admit that when I heard Kevin's stories, it became a contest (with lots of black humour) to figure out who had had it worst.

After graduating, Kevin went on get a Masters and a Ph.D. His thesis was on 'Mother-son incest', a subject that Kevin knew all about given his own experiences (and those of his brother) with their mother – experiences of sexual abuse that continued for years.

Kevin is now on the Faculty at Capilano University and has an international reputation as a music therapist. We see each other whenever we can and I have complete respect and trust of him as a person and as a friend.

Throughout my life, I have seen close friendships between women (gay and straight) and gay men. On a level of political expediency, it is easy to understand why politically engaged gay men and women would want to support each other, i.e. stronger voice, greater lobbying power, etc. But why were so many straight women attracted to gay men? Because gay men were first and foremost neutral and safe in the gender war. They were often as scathing in their attitude towards straight white men as were women. They were exempt from accusations of being patriarchal, along with non-white men in general. And they were *sympathique* – witty, emotionally expressive and receptive, easy to talk to – about anything, fine foods and wines, chic clothes, grooming, sex, relationship problems – all the things that straight white men seemed incapable of. And white male caricatures notwithstanding, women knew that the average gay guy wasn't a wimp. He wasn't afraid to express his opinions, including personal criticism of his female friend if he felt it was merited. He had the chutzpah to live dangerously and put words into action. He had an amorality, at least in the pre-AIDS days, that gained him entry to the secretly admired and desired 'bad boy' club. Gay men were the ground breakers for the enormous growth in the lesbian community. While it was politically expedient to say 'we were born that way', many gay men and women knew that they had not been born that way and that after experiencing relationships with the other sex, had chosen to cross over.

Gay men knew how to access pleasure, how to indulge the senses without shame. They knew things about how to give and receive sexual pleasure that straight men had no clue about. When I was younger and experimented a couple of times with gay sex, what I was curious about was contact with the penis – whether oral or manual. The thought of anal sex repulsed me. Why? Because like many straight men, I imagined that the penis would be covered with the other man's shit.

While I had learned about women's 'g' spot and became quite proficient in techniques for pleasuring it, I knew nothing about men's 'p' spot. My only association with the prostate (which I named the 'prostrate' for a long time), was that it was a prime location for male cancer and the location of a most unpleasant digital rectal exam. I think knowledge of the enormous potential of the prostate was one of the great guarded secrets of the gay community and to a great extent, still is. The majority of straight men still don't know about 'milking' the prostate or prostate orgasm, let alone how to go about producing it. Gay men have been using sexual aids for decades: butt plugs, cock rings, prostate massagers, masturbators, dildos, lubes, strap-ons, harnesses, slings, pumps, nipple clamps, leather restraints, etc. etc.

For my part, I know a lot more about my anatomy down there than I used to. I no longer have guilt or shame in experimentation and more than anything else, I no longer feel I need a woman (or man) to fulfill my sexual needs. Ironically, it was a straight white man who first encouraged me to pursue 'self-love'. He was a 6'6" older man and he was my doctor. He told me that the best insurance against prostate cancer was regular masturbation. For quite a while I took it that he was joking but eventually realized that he was earnest.

Straight white men also assumed that the gay life was all about sex. There was some truth to that in pre-AIDS days. My friend Kevin, for instance, did his fair share of cruising in his twenties. But then he found a partner. They lived together for many years, got married and bought a condominium. Their relationship is more about love, commitment and loyalty than it is about sex. The only cruising they do now is on a boat. Just like women before them, straight men have a lot to learn from gay men.

* * *

There is one more question I want to pose before ending this chapter. Why is it that I wrote twice as much in the previous chapter on relationships with women than in this chapter on men? Here are some brief answers:

(1) In the memoir Chameleon, the first 155 pages (of 390) are exclusively about relationships with men.
(2) Since that time at boarding school, as has been pointed out in the previous chapter, I have lived predominantly in a world of women due to my careers in ESL teaching and Music Therapy.
(3) Repeatedly, I have met interesting, intelligent, progressive, creative, strong-willed people in a ratio of about 10:1 (that's women to men) …. which raises the question 'where were/are the kind of men that have those attributes?' I have heard so many times from women (especially those contemplating becoming a lesbian) "where can I find a good man?" Well here's my answer. I think my fellow baby boomers are a generation in which women, in general, went into a significant period of sustained and accelerated growth, while men quite literally lost their way and went into a crisis of confidence. Yes, I know these comments are very general – deliberately so. Maybe I'll try to get specific on this topic in another piece of writing.

In the past twenty years, I have formed two male friendships of significance. They are both with men who are kind, considerate, politically aware and loyal. I have known Tony for over thirty years. We have supported each other through thick and thin and I owe him gratitude and allegiance. Tony was an engineer whereas Warren was a philosophy professor. Tony and I met each other when I started doing bioenergetic therapy with his then wife Ellen, in 1980. Warren and I were both instructors at Kwantlen College. He had a keen interest in music. We began jamming and then for several years performed blues and ballads at the Wired Monk in Crescent Beach. Like David, they have become life-long friends and perhaps I will have more to say about them at a future date.

CHAPTER 7

LEARNING ABOUT MYSELF – PART 1
(Identity)

Finding the path is both an outward and an inward search. A large obstacle that kept appearing in my life's journey had to do with questions of identity. The first important question 'WHERE AM I GOING?' followed by the equally hard questions 'WHO AM I?' Someone once did my astrological chart and declared "your house of values is very clear and strong but you house of identity is confused."

'Who am I?' – it's a deceptively simple question that harbours all kinds of complexity in trying to formulate an answer (and I am going to leave the embedded question '*what* is 'I'?' until later).

The earliest memory I have of trying to answer the 'who am I?' question, had to do with cultural identity. My father was Scottish and my mother was English. If the Scots beat the English at rugby, my father would celebrate. If the English won, my mother would give a silent cheer. Fine for them, I would think, what am I supposed to do? I'm a half breed – half Scottish and half English. I went to a Scottish school until the age of 13 and then for the next 5 years I attended a boarding school in England. That's when I decided I was 'Scottish' and emphasized the fact by wearing a kilt on Sundays and getting confirmed into the Presbyterian church as opposed to the Anglican. I even wore my kilt every day on a trip around Europe with my friend David. Sometimes I would be asked "but why don't you have a Scottish accent?" and the underlying confusion would be triggered again.

Then there were the American relatives on my mother's side. Her roots lay on both sides of the Atlantic as successive generations migrated back and forth. And why was it that of all the American cultural influences, blues was the art form that resonated the most deeply? I felt the pain and the raw sexuality and I was able to play piano blues by ear proficiently and soulfully. Of course it was true that this music came from the Afro-American culture but the notion that you *had to* be black to be able to feel/understand/play/sing the blues was a myth. What about Joe Cocker and Janis Joplin? Sometimes I felt I had a white skin but an Afro-American soul. Cocker and Joplin aside, it was Ray Charles and Muddy Waters who moved me, not Elvis and certainly not Pat Boone.

But then the question of cultural identity became much more tangled after I went to Canada. At first, as a student, I resisted 'becoming' Canadian in any way, but later after three years back in the UK, when I returned to Canada as an immigrant, things became increasingly complex. I went into a process of rejecting my Scottish/English roots and at the same time accepting the process of assimilation. My vocabulary changed (e.g. 'truck' not 'lorry'), my spelling changed ('theater' not 'theatre'), and most significantly, my accent became 'mid-Atlantic'. But that wasn't all: I had chosen to settle in Montreal with the firm intention of not only learning French but also of being able to use that as my working language in order to 'become' un vrai Quebecois.

So who was I in the 70's? A British-Canadian? A British-Franco-Canadian? Did it matter? Well yes it did. The Brits treated me condescendingly if they thought I was a Canuck. The Canadian treated me deferentially if they thought I was a Brit. The Quebecois didn't care too much about that distinction – I was just 'un anglais' and sometimes 'un maudit Anglais'. Eventually, the best fit seemed to lie in British Columbia.

(for more on the theme of 'cultural identity', see Chameleon, p. 8 (half Scottish/half English), pp. 163-164, 170 & 173 (first impressions of Canadians and Canada), pp. 267-268 (half Canadian/half British). Also see Phoenix, p. 19 (starting from scratch as an immigrant) and 'The Man Who Wanted To Experience Everything' in Writing/Poems)

Cultural schizophrenia is experienced by many. Here is a recent quote from the Scottish movie star, Gerald Butler:

"I did 4 movies in a row in an American accent … and I go back to Scotland and I see them looking at me going, 'oh you bastard'. Yet in America I am still not American. They still think

you have a funny accent and in Scotland you have a funny accent. So I am kind of drowning in the middle of the Atlantic. It's terrible."

Quite a few years ago I went on an online dating site. In my profile, I mentioned my professional experience as a College teacher and music therapist. I listed my interests in music, writing and yoga and added some personal characteristics such as 'intelligent', 'intuitive', 'good listener', and so on. I got lots of responses from interested, and interesting women. However, once they learned that I was a renter rather than a home owner, the majority quickly became silent. Which brings up class identity. Am I/was I working-class, middle-class, upper-class, under-class? In my 20's, I renounced my class origins. I have been a renter all my life.

For various reasons, people don't like to discuss class much anymore, or to be tagged as belonging to this or that class. If I put on my sociologist's hat and try to identify myself, I would say that I started off as middle class and then spent much of my life being 'downwardly mobile', as the sociologists would say. My S.E.S. (or socio-economic status) declined, although it's really the economic part. I am one of those hybrids who has had low economic status while at the same time having middle-class social status, as far as education and occupation. What was clear was that I was a misfit: no clear national identity; no clear cultural identity; no clear class identity; a walking contradiction - talent rich and cash poor, high moral standards but low tolerance for conformity.

It is hard for a Canadian to understand just how class-ridden England was, and in many ways, still is. Growing up middle class and then going to an elite public school (I won a music scholarship), I learned to quite literally 'look down' on those 'below me'. There was a plethora of social class indicators, many of them embedded in vocabulary and expressions, but also clothes, attitude, and of course occupation.

At Sedbergh, there were 'maids' who served us at mealtimes. They weren't known to us as maids but 'scivs', which is short for 'scivvie' which Wikipedia defines as 'maid, servant, or person at the bottom of the social order (primarily in Britain)'. Another example would be when Sedbergh rugby teams played grammar schools. At that time there was a three-tiered educational system; public (boarding) schools at the top, grammar schools in the middle, and secondary modern schools at the bottom. According to Anthony Sampson (Anatomy of Britain -1965), secondary modern schools were dominated by the children of poor and working-class parents, while grammar schools were dominated by the children of wealthier middle class parents, this being due according to Sampson to a class/ cultural bias inherent in the 11 plus examination. As far as 'we' were concerned, the grammar schoolboys might as well have been from the bottom tier. They put brylcreem in their hair, wore skinny ties and pointy shoes and had regional dialects. I remember the attitude on the bus amongst our rugby team that *we* were somehow doing *them* a favour by consenting to playing with them in the first place.

Six or seven years later, I went to Toronto with my girlfriend Lesley to visit her sister who was living with a photographer called Dave. Dave was from a working class background in Manchester, a secondary modern type. I remember chatting with him about how we probably would never have met in Britain due to our respective class differences. We both agreed on this point.

The three biggest influences on my views about class, as far as books went, were Gandhi, Orwell and Marx – in that order. In my early twenties I became radicalized and began to view society in terms of class warfare. In order to lead the 'common man' to liberation, Gandhi needed credibility and to achieve that he renounced his middle-class heritage. Che Guevara and Fidel Castro had done the same thing.

In the years that followed my dropping out of L.S.E., these were the guys who were my heroes. Marx wasn't so much a hero but a theoretician whose ideas I embraced. Even the Maoist idea of 'revolving labour', whereby the academics and artists had to experience working in the fields and factories, made sense to me. In my twenties, and to a lesser extent ever since, I have viewed as suspect

anyone who espoused the need for social change and yet felt they could do this without agreeing to voluntary exile in the basement. The only catch with this kind of martyrdom was that even if you stayed there, it didn't mean that the residents had to welcome your presence or like you. They might think 'how could he possibly know what it is like', just as you, having survived a year or two down there yourself, would ask the same question of others? How could you possibly know what it's like? – a question that I had heard my father utter about his Army life in Nigeria and India.

It was all very well reading about oppressive conditions but experience was the only thing that counted. In the descent into the basement, Gandhi was the guide, Marx was the teacher, and Orwell was the translator as needed. The thing was that being in the basement for any length of time changed you. To put a darker frame on it, my over-conscientiousness had led me into a state of angry and zealous self-righteousness. I was resentful. I had put my middle-class past on the phoenix alter of immolation, why couldn't they? It was the experience of working in factories for an agency called Rent-A-Staff in London that had added emotion, passion and insight to my understanding of how the infrastructure of society operated.

The streets were so much meaner than we were supposed to believe. Greed and selfishness were so much more in evidence than the hippy age (followed by the New Age) would have us believe; inequity and unfairness so intractable at a systemic level – how unfair, how cloaked in myth and spurious justification. Once in a while I would read about another idealist who had rebelled against their cultural or class background. In the late 70's, I came across an article in the Montreal Gazette entitled 'Squatter Churchill yearns to be liked.'

> *Sir Winston Churchill's granddaughter, Arabella Churchill, opened a vegetarian restaurant for low income people and squatters. Although the prices were low, the customers didn't want 'rabbit food' but rather fish and chips and shepherd's pie. But Arabella's problems went deeper than that. "The people in the street are no longer trusting me," she said. The article then quotes one of the squatters as saying "she's giving squatting a bad name … it's hardly necessary for a member of a family which owns Blenheim palace, among many other properties, to be squatting." The article concluded with Arabella Churchill saying "I just wish the squatters would accept me as one of their own."*
> (*The Gazette: 25/2/77)*

That same year, I read another article that struck even closer to home. The article was a profile of a man called David Payne who had recently been appointed 'Anglophone advisor to the Parti Quebecois Government'. It turned out that Payne had a similar background to me: same age more or less; same roots (U.K., Yorkshire, Sociology); immigrated to Canada about the same time; same values … *"I was making an embarrassingly large salary by English standards, so I rented a huge house which I planned to allow immigrants and poor people to use as a drop-in centre, having just come through the experience of being an immigrant myself" (from newspaper article in the Montreal Gazette 1977)*; same career choice, i.e. teacher; same sense of priorities, i.e. "institutionalized inequality of opportunity" versus the red herring of 'biculturalism'. The main difference was that David Payne hadn't spent six years doing bottom rung jobs. Instead he had completed his Masters and from there had found it easy enough to get a job teaching at a Community College. Whatever the case, I made comparisons and felt inadequate.

Who am I? What am I? Cultural identity, class identity … but the list went on. What about occupational identity? Between the ages of 24 and 30, my occupational identity was in fragments. Was I now 'a worker', or a community organizer, or musician, or writer, or a teacher? When people ask you 'what do you do?' they want to know who you are as far as occupational identity goes. And any

answer with 'I am ….' carries a stronger identity than 'I work *at* …'. 'I am a doctor/plumber/ lumberjack/dietician' is more descriptive than 'I work in a hospital': or even 'I work *with* refugees'.

Like cultural identity, occupational identity was hard to pin down. I could truthfully say and feel comfortable saying "I am a teacher". However, within my self-image, my 'occupational identity' referred not just to a paying job but also my non-paying ongoing development as a writer and as a musician. For example, music had always played a central role. I had a music scholarship to Sedbergh. I had put together bands. I had earned money in bands like the Steven Barry Blues Band, and as a solo performer. But did I identify with being a musician as my occupation? Answer – no, or at best partially.

I was sure that Writing was not my prime occupation but I often wondered if it should be. Like music, writing had also played a central role. The writer who influenced me the most was Henry Miller. Two books of his had a huge effect. One was, The Big Sur & the Oranges of Hieronymous Bosch and the other was entitled simply On Writing. I found what Miller said and how he said it intoxicating. There was part of me that whispered, 'no, I don't want to dedicate my life to teaching others. I want to dedicate it to expressing what I think and feel. I believe I have something to say.'
Miller always had something to say and could always make you think.

> *"With every line I write I kill off the 'artist' in me. With every line it is either murder in the first degree or suicide. I do not want to give hope to others, nor to inspire others. If we knew what it meant to be inspired we would not inspire. We would simply be."*
>
> *— Henry Miller, On Writing.*

Throughout my life, when it comes to music, what I have enjoyed most is improvising on the piano and the ongoing project of learning more about harmony, specifically making a gradual transition from blues pianist to jazz pianist. This has been a life-long self-education project that has required me to learn how to play in all the major and minor keys. I have enjoyed playing with others, especially Ben in recent years. However I have never really enjoyed performing. I find it stressful. It raises adrenaline levels in my somewhat fragile nervous system rather than lowering them as in playing raga type improvisations. At the age of 70, as I write this, I am still looking for original ways to combine music and words whether or not this finds its way onto audio or video recordings or gets performed live. What I really don't want to do any more, unless it is in a music therapy context is 'cover' material, whether blues or popular.

Teaching aside, in terms of skill, I am a musician but in terms of temperament, I am a writer. What I love about the process of writing is that I can say what I want, find my own rhythm, and go at my own speed. It settles my nerves, it strengthens my mind, clarifies my perceptions, keens my vision, attunes my ears, and allows me to vibrate with my heart and resonate in my soul. The thing is that I get so involved in whatever I do, it's easy to lose perspective and focus. I can't see the wood for the trees. I can lose my way if I'm not careful. Writing allows me a bird's eye view. It allows me to elevate consciousness to *perceptions* rather than be submerged in *feelings*. Being 'the writer' provides the psychological stability that comes from the assertion 'I am a somebody', 'I am unique', 'I have had some extraordinary experiences'. I can affirm them by myself, for myself, even if no-one ever reads what I have written.

I love the low tech. aspects of being a writer, the mobility and flexibility of being able to take a pad of paper and pen anywhere. It is the opposite of performing. The writer can sit in anonymity, engaging in truth-seeking, being authentic, and yet also feeling somehow secret and subversive. You can write out in the open without having to share what you are thinking, seeing or feeling. The outer self may be on display, but the inner self is protected at the same time as being actively engaged.

Henry Miller talks about the therapeutic aspect of writing:

"When you drive a man almost crazy, you are apt to find him acting very much like a primitive being. Such a man becomes a monomaniac, bent on doing one thing only and that is to break the evil spell which has been put upon him. If, in the realization of his terrible need, he begins to act regressively, to become unsocial, to stammer and stutter, to prove so utterly unadapted as to be incapable of earning a living, know that this man has found his way back to the womb and source of life and that tomorrow, instead of the contemptible object of ridicule you have made of him, he will stand forth as a man in his own right and all the powers of the world will be of no avail against him." (Henry Miller, On Writing, p. 226-7)

I have been there. Writing has saved me on many occasions. But I never had enough belief in committing to full-time writing, or enough belief in myself as a writer, to do what Miller did. I think if I had been a pirate, like Castaneda talks about, like Carlos personified, having "no qualms in taking and using anything he wants", then things might have been different in the sense of finding a way to survive without hoping that writing alone would pay the bills. That was a difference between music and writing. With the former, I could and did have a means of making money, whether performing or teaching.

Ultimately I came to the conclusion that my vocation was in education. I was absolutely certain that any efforts to illumine, to inform, to enlighten, through spreading the light of knowledge were worthwhile. My career as a teacher anchored the other occupational identities of music and writing, while eventually giving way to the other anchor of music therapy and 'being' a music therapist.

CHAPTER 8

LEARNING ABOUT MYSELF – PART 2
(More identities)

I have mentioned the theme of 'good boy/bad boy' several times. It is worth exploring that a bit more fully here as again it pertains to matters of identity.

Before the age of 20, the closest I got to being a bad boy was a phase I went through at Sedbergh around the age of 15 to 16. In reaction to my frustration at being shackled to having to study Physics and Chemistry against my will, I became the resident clown. Fooling around à la Monty Python felt like a way of freeing myself creatively. I found it easy to put on different accents and improvise satirical skits that would make people laugh. This happened mainly in the dorm at night after lights out. Several times, the outbreaks of laughter were loud enough to bring a stern warning from whichever prefect came to investigate. But there was a thin line between high jinx and acting out so as to clearly transgress the rules.

There were two incidents in particular that got me into hot water, one fairly serious, the other very serious. The first one was when, in a friendly fight with another boy, I threw a running shoe at him and it missed and broke an upstairs window. It's hard for me to believe now, but I had the initiative and the nerve to sneak into the village (not allowed), go to a hardware store with the measurements, get a pane cut, buy some putty and a putty knife (I have no idea where the money for all this came from), borrow an extension ladder from somewhere, and set about a DIY fix-it job. Trouble is I got caught in the act by the Housemaster. That misdemeanour merited a Houseman's beating.

A few months later, the clown became a felon. While waiting for our Chemistry teacher to arrive, I got persuaded to 'experiment' with some of the acids and minerals set out in bottles. Five minutes later there was a violent reaction in the mixing flask and there – through the acrid billowing fumes, I could see the thunderous visage of my Chemistry teacher. He frogmarched me down the passageway and locked me in a room. That was more than a misdemeanour; it was a flagrant violation of school code involving 'property damage'. There were only two punishments on the books short of criminal offense, the most serious being expulsion; the other being a beating and a serious talking to from the Headmaster. I got the latter.

(for a more complete recounting of these two incidents, see Chameleon, pp. 61-67)

In Chameleon and Phoenix, I wrote about three other acts of defiance that stand out in my memory. One has to do with the first time I ever stole anything. To some it may seem silly to relate such a trivial incident. The point is that although stealing a book is not a cardinal sin, and something that many others have done at one time or another, for me at the time it was a very big deal. It was simple enough: *thou shalt not steal*. This incident marked the point at which an absolute value became downgraded to a relative one.

In summary: I was at L.S.E. I needed to obtain certain sociology books for both courses and research. I had very little money – only what I was making from part-time substitute teaching. I had also just read Dostoievsky's Crime and Punishment and was sympathetic to some of Raskolnikov's arguments for getting his hands on the miserly old woman's money. At the same time, in two to three years of sociological reading-material on 'social change', I had come to the conclusion, that history showed many more examples of needed social change coming from civil disobedience than from the democratic process. The big question of course was which ENDS justify which MEANS? Anyway, the incident involved stealing a book from the L.S.E. library. And it seemed like a big deal at the time.

The second case was when I broke the law by posing to the police as the au pair employer of Francoise, in order to help get her into the country. Here is a brief summary:

It was 1971 and I was sharing a room with Francoise who I referred to in an earlier chapter. Francoise's visa ran out and she was obliged to return to France. In order to get back into the U.K., she needed proof that she had been offered paid work. At the time, Stuart Varney and I had rented very

cheap lodgings (one half of a farmhouse) in Devon. We both used it as a place to do our respective writing projects.

Francoise was dependent on me for help. I decided to pretend to be a family man who needed someone to help take care of my children. I suppose I must have filled out some form. A few weeks later, while Francoise was still in France, I was notified that the police would deliver the work visa to my family house (i.e. the farmhouse in Devon). For three days, I sat by a window overlooking the road, waiting for a police car to appear. I knew the only way I could pull it off was to intercept the police before they knocked on the farmer's door which, unfortunately, was the half of the house adjacent to the road. If they happened to turn up while I was on the john, the game was up. The surprised farmer and his wife would deny any knowledge of a 'Francoise', let alone a wife and kids belonging to 'Ian Brown'. After three days of extreme stress and anxiety, I was at the window when I saw a police car approaching. I rushed out just as the police car pulled up. It seems incredible to me now, but somehow after a few questions, I was handed an envelope containing Francoise's authorized visa and the police car drove off.

(The incident is described in detail in Chameleon, pp. 341-344.

Lastly, three or four years later, back in Canada, I was in transition between 'angry rebellious radical' and 'leftist teacher'. In the early 70's, there was a recession. Jobs were scare in Montreal, there was a high unemployment situation, and to make matters worse, I was an anglophone who (unlike David Payne) had failed to become fluent in French. I was unemployed and getting desperate about finding work. One day, Canada Manpower called to say that they would fly me to Newfoundland to be interviewed for a job as music teacher in an elementary school. I didn't know what to do. In the end I accepted the offer and went to St. Johns. Then in a bizarre incident straight of Theatre of the Absurd, the job offer was withdrawn on account of my stating that I was an agnostic – this in front of three pastors on the school board committee. They told me that they were worried that I was an atheist in agnostic's clothing. When I became angry and started talking about my rights, I was informed that "to teach in Newfoundland, Mr. Brown, is not a right but a privilege" … (which happened to be true at that time – prior to the Charter of Rights). I was certainly seen as 'a bad boy' by those good gentlemen.

(The incident is described in Phoenix, pp. 45-46)

I eventually came to a formula which could be stated simply as follows:

GOOD BOY = I CARE (often too much)
BAD BOY = I DON'T CARE

The good boy and the good girl feels that no-one has the right to get mad at them because they are *de facto* innocent/good/virtuous. The bad boy and bad girl are immoral/amoral enough, or realistic enough, to not care about who's wrong and who's right. Result? They will let out their anger and not feel ashamed about it, even if the other person is offended. They will do what they want even if others get hurt. The problem with women or men who care too much is that they treat others better than they treat themselves.

Later on in life, I realized that I should add an occasional state of 'I don't care' to my ANXIETY MANAGEMENT TOOLBOX' – along with gorilla chest-beating, censorship of in-house phone-use, limiting high-stim meetings with friends and family to three hours maximum, choosing 'B' roads when driving, yoga breathing, physio for lower back, minimal use of cell phone (mainly for emergencies),

minimal use of Facebook, a policy of instant replacement, where possible, for anything lost or stolen, etc.

There was another perspective about good/bad this and that which also addressed questions of identity. It came to me via my reading of Buddhist texts (I began the study and practice of Buddhism about ten years ago around 2007).

Through the Buddhist practice of mindfulness, you come to realize that clinging to your sense of identity creates a separate self, which the Buddha said is the source of all suffering – that 'identities' are part of the 'false self', also known as 'the ego'. Buddhism has made me see 'bad boy' behaviour more as 'missing the mark' than 'morally wrong'.

That said, there were two other 'identities' that I have wrestled with throughout my life – political identity and moral identity. In 1979, I was asked by a bioenergetics therapist to write an 'Autobiography of Feeling'. I decided while I was at it to write an 'Autobiography of Political Purpose'. Here is an extract:

'Autobiography of Political Purpose': Why did I Leave L.S.E.? Retrospective on London & Montreal:
(in response to seeing picture of Ian Anderson as Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee of the Workers Communist Party, #5, p. 162, - from The Forge, vol. 4, no. 30, 7/9/79; real agenda – to justify to myself my political actions, in particular, not joining a leftist party like Ian Anderson)

Leaving L.S.E. was a reaction. A reaction against being pushed, and pushing myself too hard, too fast, and in a direction I didn't even know I wanted. It was a reaction to doing the utmost to please my parents and my school, and coming to the conclusion that the end didn't justify the means. It was a reaction to the exclusive use of my intellect for 3 years. It was a reaction to the narrowness and myopia of the educational system. It was a reaction to, and against, my middle-class and elitist upbringing. It was at one and the same time an action motivated out of political intent, creative anarchy of the spirit, and emotional fear, anger and confusion resulting from the lack of support at L.S.E., the lack of support and betrayal by Ellie, the lack of support from parents, and the improbability of support from old Sedbergh friends.

It was an act of self-destruction and self-preservation. It was an act of self-assertion, a fist being shaken at the heavens and a cry of 'I want to do it my way'. 'I will do it my way, whatever the consequences'.

It led to action and experiences of self-exploration through work in factories and shit-jobs and through writing. ***The political purpose was to remould myself by rooting out the middle-class influences****. However, in London, the political direction was more on an anarchist model than anything else. I was more concerned with 'social experimentation' such as communes and cooperatives (a la Ed Berman's Interaction) than with joining a political party.*

I had two friends at that time who possessed significant political awareness, these being Jerry and Ian Anderson. Ian was exploring different life-styles as we all were. He appeared a dilettante at that time oscillating between his taste for esoteric jazz musicians like Charles Lloyd, experimenting with drugs, and reading voraciously. He also always seemed to have money: money to do a year's studies at Sussex; money to visit Sweden and London, and later, money to buy a car in Montreal. But then his father was an executive with Air Canada. I

found him arrogant, aggressive, into intellectual one-upmanship, and manipulative. I also had lost much trust and respect for him due to: (a) his affair with Lesley (b) his handling of this with respect to me.

During the post L.S.E. London phase, most of my energy went into recovery and survival, self-therapy (writing and music), and my relationship with Francoise. Even if I had wanted to, or had been ready for it, it seemed senseless to join a political party, as I knew I had to go back to Canada. Also, I was too intimidated by working class people I met, too afraid of being branded or rejected for my 'comfortable' upbringing. My penance was working at the lowest-paid and most unpleasant jobs there were. This way, I was able to kill 3 birds with one stone: (1) assuage my middle-class guilt, (2) explore how well I might be able to fit into other social milieu, (3) keep life and limb together.

What time was left over could have been used for political activity, in some party, but for the year following L.S.E., disposable time and energy were needed for the self-therapy of writing.

The closest I got to overt political activity was in my final year in London, '71-'72, when I worked towards setting up an underground newspaper. This is where the diverse strands of my identity were able to attain some degree of focus and integration.

Newspapers such as 'IT' and 'OZ' were a blend of anarchism, dope/sex, hedonism, mysticism, and leftist criticism of The Establishment.

At that time it seemed as if there were only 5 possible directions in which to go:

- *the hippy sub-culture (Leary, A. S. Neill, 'back to the land', Frank etc.)*
- *radical left politics and an appropriate life-style, i.e. factory, cab-driving*
- *back to the warm embrace of the establishment and middle-class*
- *artistic expression and discipline, e.g. Carlos, Frank*
- *the eternal student, e.g. Ellie*

These directions were, of course, not mutually exclusive and most of the confusion and Identity crises that I and others of that era experienced were due to this fact. However, despite attempts to explore and integrate, the ultimate resolution seemed to be to crystallize one's identity along one, or at the most, 2 of these directions.

Where I was most 'political', or should I say 'principled' (in a moral sense) was in my stoical denial of a return to the middle-class.

When I returned to Canada in 1972, it was as an immigrant with nothing, and I mean nothing. I was resolutely unwilling to use the props of my middle-class background to help me. My survival needs, my self-imposed restrictions, and the confusion of my overall purpose, all left me on the fringe of several of the directions mentioned above. Or at least, it left me trying to explore and develop along more than one path at the same time.

In the first few years of the Montreal period, things were probably clearer in terms of political purpose. Return to the middle-class was definitely OUT. The hippy sub-culture, which had never really attracted me anyway, continued not to be an influencing factor. And I was beginning to see through and reject the liberal/anarchist 'solutions' of people like Neill and Miller. The creative humanist part of my self wanted greater involvement in Drama, although this in turn became split into further distinctions (e.g. guerilla street theatre being more politically worthwhile than developmental drama).

Intellectually, I felt the need to write plays. Creatively, I wanted to be an actor. Humanistically, I wanted to teach developmental drama and/or do what Ed Berman had done in London. The fact that I considered going back to University to do developmental drama (at

L'Universite de Montreal with Gisele Barrette) came out of a frustration of not being able, or not knowing how to create a social base of people to instigate an InterAction-type project. Then I got a job that crystallized my political leanings and allowed me to put them into practice.

In Phoenix, I wrote:

For my part, I was experiencing an acceleration of my views on political activism. My contacts with Hoch and Schechter was certainly one factor. Paul Hoch & Steven Schechter were Instructors at Dawson College where in 1973 I had been hired as a 'social animator' by Stuart McLean. Paul had been deported from the UK after his role in leading student riots at L.S.E. in 1968. Paul and I bonded over our respective experiences at L.S.E. and over my intentions to be politically subversive in my job as social animator. The following year, in 1974, Patty Hearst (heiress to the Hearst Newspaper fortune) was kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army. A month later, Paul Hoch confided with me that he was a friend of Jack Scott, a journalist who was involved with the case in as much as he had apparently provided a safe house for Patty Hearst's captors. Hoch then told me that he had been questioned by the R.C.M.P. and that he thought his phone was being tapped.*

Meanwhile, in March, Jonathon Kozol, the radical educator from Boston who had written Death At An Early Age, came to Dawson as a speaker. On one level, the experience was like a master class in how to 'animate' (or organize). This guy was so incendiary that he vaporized any apathy within fifty feet of him. Kozol, a small, slight man, electrified the large audience. He spoke in a deep, resonant, but strangely hushed voice, as he mercilessly attacked the United States' public school system. His arguments were coherent and persuasive. He said that there was little point tinkering with the educational system when the larger social system needed to be changed. He advocated setting up a parallel educational system based on 'free schools'. Such was the energy that was stirred up that by the end of the meeting there were calls from several speakers to 'DO SOMETHING' at Dawson. In the wake of Kozol's visit, a Radical Education Caucus was set up. I was deeply affected by Kozol. He became a role model and a mentor.

** Stuart McLean later became well known as a broadcaster and writer.*

In the ongoing quest to answer the question 'where do I stand politically?' I eventually arrived at certain positions that I was certain of:

It seemed to me that if 'I' was a three part invention of intellect, emotion and spirit, then each part had a different political identity. Intellectually I was a socialist, emotionally I was a conservative, and in my spirit I was an anarchist.

My political philosophy to this day could be summarized thus:

- I am for equal rights and wary of 'special rights'. I am against greed, lies, and the essential core of capitalism – money creating money, land ownership, inheritance that perpetuates inequality and inequity.
- I believe in conserving the good and changing the bad – whether on a social, economic, cultural or individual level. Specifically I believe in the worth of labour not capital. Renting out your labour as a worker is not the same as renting out your space as a landlord. The value should be in the labour NOT in the ownership of space or capital. The two most definable classes are property owner and renter. The gap in power/social control between these two is so huge. Social classes are no longer

identified by accidents of birth (upper class vs working class) the nature of labor (white collar vs. blue collar) but rather the evidence of what you own.

- I am very drawn to the ideas of the American philosopher Henry George on ownership of land. He believed that while people should own the value they produce themselves, economic value derived from land (including natural resources and natural opportunities) should belong equally to all members of society.

* * *

So much for political identity. What about moral identity? What was the definition of 'morality' anyway?

How about this: *morality is a particular system of values and principles of conduct, by which the individual or society can assess the extent to which an action is right or wrong.*

To accept that definition, one must accept the duality of right and wrong – certainly within a cultural or sub-cultural context. My conclusion, after a lifetime of experience with different cultures and classes (through travel, personal immigrant experience, living and working with First Nations people, and at least 20 years of close contact with people of widely ranging cultures in the ESL classroom), is that *despite* cultural differences, there is a great deal of agreement about what is considered right and wrong.

At the core of my morality was the belief that things should be FAIR. Probably one of the central lessons that I have found very hard to accept is that in the real word things often aren't fair. As an early example, at a time when I was considering the possibility of becoming a lawyer, it was a rude awakening to the fact that one could not even trust the system of justice to be fair.

Here is a passage from Chameleon, p. 222, that describes one such awakening:

Feb. 23rd. 1968: Kingston

SHIT!! I don't believe it. Today I get charged with 'Careless Driving'! It was late evening and I was approaching the intersection of Union and University. I could see a car ahead waiting to turn right. I was going less than 30 m.p.h. when I started to brake. Anyway I must have hit some black ice, because suddenly I was in a skid. I forgot about pumping the brakes, and as a result, I kept skidding. For some reason that I'll never know, the car at the intersection still hadn't turned right. After several seconds of what seemed like a slow-motion action sequence, I bumped into the back of him. There was practically no damage to his car but the bastard insisted on calling the cops. So the cop arrives and talks to the other guy who then disappears. Then the cop measures the skid marks and books me for careless driving. I said to him, 'but isn't careless driving when you are going 90 m.p.h. and nearly kill someone?' He refused to talk and just kept saying, 'tell it to the judge'. I can't believe it. I'm going to court. Anyway tomorrow I'll see a lawyer. I'm going to fight this all the way.

Feb. 24th.

Today any thought I ever had of being a lawyer went up in smoke. I went to see a legal aid lawyer and told him what happened. He said that he believed me, and he agreed that 'Careless Driving' was a ridiculous charge under the circumstances. Having said that, he then advised me to plead guilty. I was incredulous and asked him why. He said that if I wanted to hire a lawyer,

it would cost more money than I could possibly afford, and if I tried to defend myself, I would (in his words) 'get ripped to shreds'.

By the time I left London (1972) my beliefs about fairness had gelled into a rigid and completely unrealistic guiding principle:

IT IS IMMORAL FOR ANYONE TO INDULGE 'WANT' WHEN THERE ARE OTHERS IN NEED.

I tried to practice what I preached by applying my own system of redistribution, specifically giving Jennifer (my partner in Montreal) money for food and rent even before I started living with her.

I also became critical of all who failed to aspire to such high standards – meaning just about everyone except saintly figure like Gandhi, Mother Teresa and Mandela. My admiration for Nelson Mandela knew no bounds when in the post apartheid situation that cried out for blame and punishment, he took the notion of 'fairness' to a higher place that combined compassion with truth.

Both he and the First Nations people that I worked with introduced me to the concept of 'restorative justice', in Mandela's case, specifically the 'Truth & Reconciliation Commission'. It only seems 'fair' to me that there has to be an accounting for the wrongs that have been committed and that involves the wrong-doers being confronted with the truth and being prepared to admit that fact. This in turn could open the door to forgiveness, or at least reconciliation.

But in the final analysis, morality is all about how you chose to view Life: Life as a game to be played, a morality play to be enacted, a struggle for power, an opportunity for service to others, a beach to be lain on, etc. For better or worse, too often I have viewed it as a never ending process of proving yourself (coming to the same conclusion as my father on that one) – a punishment akin to the fate of Job or Sisyphus. Life was being a renter with no permanent home. Life was always where the grass was greener. Underlying these visions was fear and resentment.

Every time I played 'Heroes 3' with Michael, lurking somewhere in the background of my thoughts lay the shadowy question of whether Life was a game to be played or a morality play to be enacted. 'Heroes 3' was a medium of entertainment but it was also an educational tool. In all the many years I have been playing with Michael, I have only won a handful of times. But the game has provided continual insights into how we both play, why and how he succeeds in beating me, and the patterns of our interaction while playing the game. In other words, there are always two games going on: the game on the screen, and the 'game' outside the screen.

Here are some of the things I have learned over the years:

(1) That my tendency is to place freedom above security. In the game, you need to explore but not at the expense of vulnerability. I used to send my 'Hero' out into the wilderness underequipped and with too little experience, knowledge or support. I learned that it was foolish to overextend lines of communication and supply, or to take on major skirmishes before winning smaller battles closer to home base. I learned that you needed money (gold) in order to buy resources in the marketplace. I learned the virtues of caution and patience.

(2) I learned that 'Heroes 3' simulated the adversarial nature of Life as I had experienced it and that it made no sense being 'fair' if that meant 'losing' all the time. Michael was quite open about how he wanted to crush 'the white man'. I was less open about my deep shame in being a white man with a heritage of being the historical oppressor. I knew I had a reticence, even a phobia about winning if it meant that I was in some way hurting my opponent. Michael was prepared to be unfair in order to get what he wanted, just as the white man, while pretending always to be on the high moral ground, was prepared to be anything but fair to those in the 'colonies'.

(3) I learned that I needed to develop a thicker skin so as not to allow Michael to endlessly manipulate my shame and guilt to his advantage.

Michael told me on occasion of how he identified with the Haida myths concerning the Raven.

Here is a quote from Wikipedia:

> *The Raven is always a magical creature able to take the form of human, animal, even inanimate objects. He is a keeper of secrets, and a trickster often focused on satisfying his own gluttony for whatever he desires … Raven's creative nature shows itself through circumstance rather than intent, through the desire to satisfy his own needs, rather than any altruistic principles.*

(4) Michael believed there was shame in losing. I had to learn that there was no shame in winning. Michael told me his opinion of me as a game player. In my diary, I have two quotes from him: "you're too bound to fairness", and "you feel guilty for abundance". But it took me a long time to learn from what he was saying.

What I learned was that the cost of being *bound* to fairness was that it bred a lot of resentment about all those who seemed to be taking unfair advantage in one way or another. In turn, I became so bound to that resentment that it became increasingly hard to let go, to forgive and forget. I blamed others for not having the courage and honesty to play fair. And in doing so, I added another layer to my own inner shame and blame.

At the time of writing, the USA has a raven as the President. Trump is "the trickster, the fool, the one the Lakota people call the Heyoka, the contrary".* If Trump viewed Life as a morality play, he would pass judgment on Putin as a 'bad hombre' (how could he not?) but Trump recognizes another good player when he sees one and consequently is/pretends to be respectful as he looks forward to competing in the game. If he makes an ally of Putin, it has nothing to do with morality, but rather with game strategy.

> * see the article 'Despite his lies, Donald Trump is a potent truth-teller' by James Gordon in The Guardian, 9-2-2017 *(https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/feb/09/despite-lies-donald-trump-potent-truth-teller-shakespearean-fool)*

CHAPTER 9

LESSONS FROM TEACHING

I love teaching. Why? When people ask me 'what do you do?', if I say I am a writer or a musician, they show interest (especially in the latter). If I say 'I am a music therapist', they are often very curious. But if I say 'I am a teacher', or an 'ESL teacher', the conversation usually ends there with an 'oh, that's nice'. In fact, I rarely if ever say 'I *am* a writer, rather 'I write'. Because I have made a living from the other three occupations, I can say 'I am …'.

These have been my main occupations throughout my life. Of the four, teaching has been my vocation and career. And when I was younger, I would often be asked, 'but Ian, you are so creative, you have written plays, you have performed with bands, why do you want to be a teacher?' This hasn't always been the case. I learned early on that other cultures gave teaching more respect and teachers a higher status. The first teaching job I ever had was tutoring a high level Japanese diplomat in the Embassy of Japan in London. Even though I was only 23 years old and a student, at the beginning of each of our sessions, Mr. Yanagi would stand at the entrance of the room, and with a slight bow and a wave of his hand, insist that I enter the room first. In his mind, I was his 'sensei' and therefore should be offered this gesture of esteem.

When I was in Kenya, I taught a few students who clearly showed that a teacher was valued as a source of learning. And then throughout my 20 years of teaching ESL, I encountered the same kind of respect from immigrants and refugees from many different cultures.

The extent to which things are different in North American society is reflected in some statistics I gleaned from a 1977 Montreal Gazette article during my first year of full-time teaching:

Quebec 1st. year teacher:	*$8,232*
Garbage Collector:	*$10,500*
Grocery Clerk:	*$11,674*
Construction Laborer:	*$13,000*
Auto Assembly:	*$13,300*
RCMP Constable:	*$16,100*

O.K. … well, that says it all. In Quebec in 1977, a garbage collector was valued more highly that a teacher! What is the worth of a teacher? Half that of a police officer apparently. I understood why occupations such as scientist or artist are valued more highly than teaching by many. A scientist uncovers mysteries and discovers new phenomena and establishes important facts and principles upon which to build and aid technological advances. An artist can express eternal truths and represent beauty by creating products that can be seen by whoever, whenever and forever. But in my eyes, the intrinsic value of education far outweighed the greater part of what popular culture had to offer.

In my case, I had neither the ability nor interest to be tied down to focusing on a tightly defined area, and engage in a process of detached, 'value-free', objective, scientific investigation. I did not want to be limited to analyzing or artistically representing things or people. What I did want was to see people grow in knowledge and skill.

Teaching has two main functions: to instruct (i.e. to impart new knowledge, or cognitive 'structure') and to educate (which quite literally means to 'lead out of' from the latin verb 'ducere'). Some educators would have you believe that it is one or the other. It isn't. It is *both* depending on which process is more appropriate in any given context. Any individual, including children, have inner resources that with guidance can be tapped, developed and extracted. By the same token, we all have gaps in our knowledge and skills that can be 'filled in' by a competent instructor.

After much confusion in my early twenties as to which occupational path to take, I gradually came to see what teaching had to offer me. It offered me a way of learning about the learning process itself – why I had done so poorly at school and so well in my undergraduate studies. It gave me the

opportunity every day with 18 individuals to talk, listen, pose questions, answer questions, interact, instruct, inspire, explain, extemporize, improvise, explore many different ways to communicate, make jokes, debate serious issues, help others understand and express themselves. It required that I analyze styles of learning, assess levels of knowledge and skill, evaluate rate and level of improvement. It enabled me to see my students as human beings in a holistic sense, to empathize with them, be able to give and receive respect and trust; to provide guidance and, when necessary, referral to counsellors who could help with serious personal problems.

To be an effective teacher continually motivated me to seek ways of improving methods and materials, to investigate different media – written, graphic, aural, audio-visual, recording devices, software applications, etc. And in the case of the adult ESL classroom, it brought the world to me, enabling me to better understand different cultures and attitudes. It was important to show students that just because you were their teacher, didn't mean you had all the answers; that one of the reasons you loved teaching was that you were curious and always wanted to better understand and appreciate others. Over the years I learned how to say and write the phrase 'everybody loves Saturday night' in 35 different languages. The phrase is repeated in four lines of a song with the same title. Every Friday, we would have a music session; I would bring in my guitar and we would sing simple songs that had applications for ESL. Finishing with 'Everybody Loves Saturday Night' always gave students the opportunity to sing in their language and teach the rest of us proper intonation and pronunciation. After 5 days of floundering around with a new language (I always taught beginners), they were empowered, however briefly, to return to their native language. By the same token it was a balancing mechanism whereby I could 'play low status' and show some humility while they got to laugh at my inadequacies (especially in Vietnamese, Mandarin and Cantonese!)

We have all had bad teachers who bored us, frustrated us, mocked us, punished us, But all of us have also had, somewhere along the line, one or two good teachers who inspired us, helped us grow, become role models, people who we never forgot.

For me that meant Erich Fromm and T.H. Bottomore in Sociology; Maslow, Laing and Dr. Claire Weekes in Psychology; Jonathon Kozol, Paulo Freire and Norman Henchey (McGill) in Education; Carl Sagan in Science; Herbert Reid in Art; Eckhart Tolle, Pema Chodron, Ezra Bayda and Tara Brach in Buddhist studies. Unfortunately, often we never get to tell our good teachers how much they influenced us, just as often their efforts (especially those who haven't written a book) are neither seen nor given adequate credit by society at large.

Even before I became a teacher, I was told that I had an ability to simplify and explain in ways that made understanding easier. My friend David always expresses gratitude for teaching him basic harmony and how to play guitar at Sedbergh. Later I formalized learning to play by ear into a course I entitled 'Play It By Ear'. My promotional hook was always that I could teach anyone how to play simple three chord songs on the piano within a month.

What are some of the lessons I learned as a teacher?

My first teaching job in a school was at Middle Row Elementary, Kensal Rise, London. This was a 'depressed' area north of Notting Hill Gate characterized by an unrelenting, grim landscape of crumbling buildings, survivors of the Victorian age and the industrial revolution. Opposite a gasworks, which you could smell for miles away, was the grimy red brick building of Middle Row.

It was September 1969 and I had just started graduate studies at L.S.E. I was an idealist, my head full of what could or should be. I knew this about myself and I wanted to become more of a realist. I was rebelling more and more against a too perfect way of looking at things. I wanted to immerse myself in reality, however ugly that might be. I wanted to see life 'from both sides'.

The first two times I went to Kensal Rise school, reality came as quite a shock. The special ed. 7 year olds that I was given were somehow different from the creative souls described in A.S. Neill's Summerhill. Like many before, I entered my first classroom as a teacher full of ideas of 'freedom', individual learning styles, enhanced creative expression, student-centered classes, the virtues of being non-authoritarian, non-threatening and non-punitive, showing the students that I was their 'friend', etc. And like many before, I found that given my desire to *not* have a teacher-run autocracy, and my lack of skill as to *how to* create a democracy, what I in fact 'created' was an overly liberal, laisser-faire atmosphere - one that ultimately had far more to do with a *student*-run cabal than any kind of participative democracy.

Unlike the tutoring job for Mr Yanagi which I had just completed, here the teacher was *not* automatically revered. Here was the inner city world of the 'blackboard jungle'. I had been working with four special ed. children. There were two West Indian seven year olds, George and Lazarus, and two white boys with Irish sounding last names. Not only did all of them have serious reading problems, they were all, I was informed, 'intractable behaviour problems'.

From the beginning, the group had given me a hard time. I had been trying to apply a 'Summerhill' approach (lots of empathy, understanding, trust, choice - a minimum of rules and imposed discipline, emphasis on the student taking responsibility for his/her learning, etc.). Gradually all four boys began to take advantage of this 'soft' attitude. First, there was a subtle probing of my defences, a checking out of my responses to minor challenges to routine and authority. When it became clear that I wasn't going to punish such infractions as loud burping, inappropriate talking or gestures of boredom/non-compliance, there was a shift into more serious infractions. The more I tried to focus on *really* meeting their needs, e.g. to improve their reading skills, the more their focus narrowed to the serious business of testing my limits. I felt like a martyr to my cause, a victim of their 'unfair' behaviour. What I didn't realize was that I was also a slave to my ideals.

Over the weeks and months, feelings of frustration and resentment had grown stronger and stronger. During February, I could feel the tension building. Increasingly, I felt nervous about going to teach. I tried to share my concerns with one or two of the other teachers, but they always seemed too busy to have time to listen. Besides, I felt that I should be able to cope with the situation myself.

One day, at the beginning of March, shortly after moving into the St. Alban's Road flat with Ellie, things came to a head. I was working with Lazarus, trying to get him to write some letters from the alphabet. George, who liked to tease Lazarus, started saying things like, "that's no good", "that's not how you do it". I told him several times to sit down and get on with his own work. George complied belligerently only to get up again to repeat his taunts. After this happened several times, I could feel that my patience was shot.

"Sit down, George, *right now*!" I shouted. I could see Lazarus flinch out of the corner of my eye.

"Why should I?" said George, jutting out his jaw defiantly.

For an instant I froze, flooded with memories of my father. 'Do as you're told', 'don't answer back', '*never* answer back!' Then suddenly I exploded. Leaping out of my chair, I grabbed George and hoisted him to his feet.

"Don't you talk to me like that!" I said, beside myself with rage.

George was crying but still defiant. "You ripped my shirt. I'm telling my Dad on you." I looked, and sure enough, his shirt was torn at the shoulder seam.

Suddenly, all the adrenaline drained from my body. I felt utterly spent, ashamed and yet still angry.

The next day, I met George's parents in the office of Mr. Pittman, the principal. Naturally they were upset and wanted an explanation. I told them that I had tried my hardest to help George but that I didn't know how to deal with his sabotaging behaviour. When I said this, they seemed to soften a little.

They admitted that he could be difficult but added that it was part of my job to know how to handle problems like that. I agreed. Then I apologized and offered to pay for repairs to the shirt. George's mother said it was nothing, and that she'd already fixed it. And then they were gone.

Mr Pittman, a man whose face was like the outer projection of inner scars, seemed to understand, and simply advised me 'to lay down the law at all times'.

I started this chapter by saying that I loved teaching. I should have added 'I love teaching per se, not behaviour management.' At Middle Row I learned that rules were necessary and the clearer they were explained and reinforced, the less likely frustrations for teacher or student would build up. I began to see that I should keep unnecessary talk to a minimum and to set one task at a time. I also began to realize that no matter what successful adaptations I might make, a couple of years at a school like Middle Row might very well turn me into someone I didn't want to be. I loved the challenge of teaching but still was not at all convinced that I wanted to be a teacher.

My next experience as a classroom teacher was at Dawson College in Montreal. As mentioned before, I had been hired as a 'social animator'. I wanted to form a group that could do 'street theatre' within the campus environment. In the years previous, I had witnessed two kinds of street theatre: one was political agitprop influenced by the theories of Berthold Brecht who said that drama should be didactic, i.e. it should inform as well as entertain. The other kind was not overtly political in intent.

An American, Ed Berman, had set up an organization in London called 'InterAction'. In 1968, the year it was set up, it relied mainly on street theatre but over the next decades grew into an umbrella organization for a range of innovative, creativity-based projects and community training systems. Berman wanted to explore new forms of creative and participatory programmes for the Inner City, and find new ways to motivate learning. The work was targeted at disadvantaged families and young people, children with learning disabilities and people returning to education or seeking training. Ed Berman was a role model for me. He was like a sociologist, social worker, community organizer, teacher, artist and entertainer all rolled into one. And on top of all that, he was a businessman, an entrepreneur who knew where to obtain the necessary funding to keep his projects alive.

Berman's street theatre group was named 'Dogg's Troup'. I named my group 'Bill's Troup'. I had been hired as a 'social animator' to address problems of student apathy. The apathy was such that it seemed that the only way I would attract students to my project was to find some incentive that would be in their interests. I was fortunate in that I persuaded the head of an innovative arts program called 'Reflections' to let me run my program as a course with credit as the incentive.

'Bill's Troup' started in December 1973 with seven students who seemed interested and prepared to make a commitment. Our first meeting was at the house of one of the students. Things got off to a bad start when one student arrived late and two others didn't show up at all. I had bought six large bottles of Labatt's 50 to 'facilitate' discussion. In my attempts to create a 'humanistic ed.' atmosphere, a student-centered group, and a participatory democracy, I had decided on a 'hey guys, I'm not really a teacher, I'm one of you' approach. In a further error in leadership, I did not object when somebody produced a joint and then compounded that mistake by participating in a ritual toke.

Obviously whatever I had learned due to my experiences at Middle Row had not yet sunk in. I was still some kind of libertarian idealist. I was full of good ideas about freedom and growth but didn't necessarily know how to execute them. I hadn't yet learned how and when to set appropriate boundaries. For the second meeting at the start of January 1974, I had prepared various hand-outs. I distributed these and then yakked on about developmental drama and street theatre. By the end of the evening, I could tell I had scored a few points for originality and flexibility, but at the same time had raised doubts about how our group was going to function.

I was concerned. Maybe I had initiated something that I didn't know how to control. One thing was for sure; these kids were just that – they were nineteen year olds, fresh out of High School. They needed direction, and mine had neither been clear enough nor strong enough. I had treated them like they were graduate students in Sociology. All those years of immersion in social systems had made me top heavy with theoretical ideas and underweight when it came to having the skill and experience to know how to implement them.

I felt I had a good plan. Instead of 'the street', we would utilize the lobby and other key locations within the Campus buildings. I wanted to back up the presentation with music, so I had hit on the idea of designing a stage on wheels, one that would be large enough to have an upright piano on it and still allow the space necessary for three or four performers. The only way that would work was to have two smaller units that could simply and easily be hinged together and then unhinged so as to get them through the door of the storage room. I talked to the campus carpenter and he said it could be done but not until the end of February; another delay – more uncertainty. In the month of February, two members of the group dropped out. The stage was finally delivered as promised. I got hold of an old piano and we did finish up using the stage three or four times before the end of the semester. The most significant time was when we organized a 'happening' in the lobby in support of the fledgling Dawson 'Single Mothers Group'.

Basically 'Bill's Troup' was a failed experiment and, as it turned out, a 'one-off' due to the fact that neither I nor the other social animator (an American draft-resistor) were re-hired.

What did I learn? Definitely something about the need for professional boundaries, that no matter how 'folksy' the group, if you take on the role of leader you have to set an example – build respect and trust, work before you play, make your objectives simple, clear, appealing … and workable. At Sedbergh, the path to leadership was one of well defined apprenticeship in which those above you on the ladder were responsible, both formally and informally, for mentoring those below. I had much to learn about how to be a leader in non-hierarchical settings.

When I decided to take the one-year Diploma in Education Teacher Certification program at McGilll in 1976, I was fortunate enough to get my practicum placement at the only Alternative School within the Protestant School Board system. The school, previously called 'The Alternative High School', had just been re-named by the student body as 'Moving In New Directions' (MIND).

MIND was located in a building on Park Avenue near Mount Royal. The students were, by and large, the children of upper-income WASP and Jewish parents. Many of them were precociously intelligent and had been sent to MIND because they didn't fit in at their traditional high school. The atmosphere at the school was creatively chaotic. The school was about as far as you could get from my own schooling at Sedbergh. As such, it was a fascinating milieu to test out innovative ideas and methods and to further clarify my own educational philosophy. I taught a course that I had put together myself entitled 'Teaching Social Studies through Drama'. The course was a kind of amalgam of the Stanislavski method and *'verstehen'* sociology. Students had to select a certain kind of person who aroused their interests. Then they had to explore the inner and outer aspects of this person by observation and interview. The course was quite successful, much more so than the 'Bill's Troupe' experience at Dawson. The students were motivated, no-one dropped out, and I could sense a growing basis of trust, respect and affection that all nourished my growing confidence as a teacher.

A year later I was hired to teach at Laval Catholic High School (L.C.H.S.), a school different from MIND in every way. Whereas MIND was a small experimental school in the heart of the city, L.C.H.S. was a huge, sprawling, traditional High School in the industrial and commercial wasteland of Laval, north of Montreal. For the first month, I had to get to and from work by public transit – first the

Metro to the terminus at Henri Bourassa, and from there a bus to Carrefour Laval, the consumer 'paradise' of a shopping centre close to the school.

In the first few days, I was orientated by my two fellow teachers in the Special Ed. department.

"The other students refer to our department as 'the zoo' and the occupants as 'the animals'," explained Tony Romano.

"Quite a few teachers too," interjected John Cassidy, a calm, kindly-looking man.

"And sometimes that's what it feels like," continued Tony Romano. "But when they get out of hand, you just send them off for a little visit to see Mr. Lemieux, the Principal," he added.

The majority of the Special Education students were Italian-speaking and 'Mr. Romano' was the Godfather – he had respect. Montreal was a city in which successive waves of immigrants had migrated northwards over the years. In my home base of Prince Arthur, I was told that the Jews had been replaced by Italians, then Greeks, then Portuguese, and most recently counter-cultural folks like myself. The Italians had moved north in stages, and a sizable Italian community had grown in Laval.

Tony Romano looked and acted like Barbarino or Fonzie from the TV series 'Happy Days' – street-wise, 'cool', full of macho bravado and put-you-in-your-place quips. John Cassidy was older, in his mid 40's perhaps – a soft-spoken Scotsman whose considerate nature was taken advantage of by some students in a way that Romano wasn't. However, he was experienced enough to know how to handle it. If I needed information or advice, I found I gravitated towards John Cassidy rather than Tony Romano.

I had been hired to teach English, Crafts and Drama. It soon became clear that there was no curriculum and that I could do whatever I wanted with the students. I had fourteen students in my class. Of these, six were Italian-Canadians and five were French-Canadians. Why the latter were at an English speaking High School in the first place, was something I never did find out. It made no sense to me. Maybe they had been 'behaviour problems' in their francophone High School and had been shipped off to L.C.H.S. as punishment. Or maybe their parents were opposed to the recent election of René Levesque and the Parti Quebecois and were using their children as a federalist statement. Who knows? But as with other francophones obliged to speak English, there was a sullen air of resentment with some of them, in particular a fifteen year old named Normand.

Normand became the most potent challenge to my fledgling behaviour management techniques. From the beginning, he realized that here was a 'soft' new teacher – one who openly stated that what happened in the classroom was between him and the students and that he didn't believe in a policy of sending 'offenders' to the Principal. Like Michael and Lazarus before him, Normand took it upon himself to test just how flexible my limits were. He skipped classes, he left early, his manner and tone was off-hand and, at times, rude and confrontational.

I was determined to gain the students' trust as a precursor to authentic learning. Using the Principal, Mr. Lemieux, as my enforcer was not going to help me attain that objective. At McGill, we had talked about behaviour management problems, and that is where I heard about 'learning contracts' as a way of rationalizing student responsibility and accountability. I knew that the approach I was taking required two stages. The first was to assess the situation and gradually clarify classroom rules. The second was to put repeat offenders of the class's 'reasonable' rules on a learning contract in which the consequences of further transgressions were spelled out, including *at this stage*, the possibility of bringing the Principal into the picture.

By the beginning of October, I had clarified to myself and to the students what I was offering. I asked the students to state their preferences in writing between (1) Art (painting, drawing, sculpture, mural painting); (2) Music (piano, guitar, singing, song-writing); (3) 'Language Skills through Games' (word games such as Scrabble, Probe and Password – "to help you read and spell better, as well as develop your vocabulary, to be followed by writing a story from the words you have formed"; (4) Drama and Communication (projects using tape-recorder, developmental drama, etc.)

By the end of October, I had presented the Classroom Rules to the students – again, in writing. By the middle of November, I had presented Normand with my (and his) first Learning Contract. I wasn't completely 'green' anymore. I knew that my 'fair' approach would likely result in an ordeal by fire, but I figured that this was the price I had to pay in order to set up a meaningful learning environment.

There was one student who intrigued me. His name was George Villa. Although I never met them, I knew his parents were from Argentina. George appeared to have several learning disabilities. He couldn't read or write very well and showed disinterest in virtually all subjects and activities. He wasn't overtly disruptive but from time to time he would explode in verbal self-defence when the teasing got too much. And he was teased on a daily basis.

George wasn't shy and he didn't appear to be afraid. He was just different, uniquely different. George had one overriding passion that eclipsed everything else – and that was anything and everything to do with space exploration. His knowledge in this area was simply astounding. George knew the personal biographies of all the Apollo astronauts. He knew technical details of the Apollo rockets. He knew the exact distance from the earth to the moon, and the nearest planets. As with some of the other kids in my class, I suspected that there was an abusive family situation at home. I knew George was afraid of his father. As I started to get to know him better, I felt that he needed to be sheltered, supported, validated and guided. If his wormhole vision into the infinities of space was a symptom of autism, so what? All I knew was that he shouldn't be robbed of his passion, and that his interests could and should be channelled in a constructive direction. Paulo Freire, my mentor, had taught political awareness through reading and writing, and vice-versa. In turn, I was sure that George could be taught the 3 R's through his interest in space exploration.

George! The extraordinary George – my favorite student and a delightful kid. George was the kind of kid who inspired me to want to be a teacher. I saw in him a reflection of my own struggles to be recognized as intelligent, despite my right-brain orientation. I saw the way in which an uncomprehending and inflexible system stereotyped him as 'stupid'. I saw his spirit of resistance and determination to be himself.

George really liked me. We would do tape recorded conversations in which he would impersonate Howard Cosell and I would impersonate the Queen and Ringo Starr. I'm not sure how much learning was taking place but we would laugh and laugh. It was therapy if not pedagogy.

What happened to George? By the end of the school year, his father decided that what George needed was some serious discipline and so enrolled him in a military academy in his home country of Argentina. George came to see me at my house to give me the news and to tell me that he wanted me to be his teacher. I tried to console him but refrained from telling him how aghast I was at the stupidity of his father's decision.

The last thing George needed was a military academy. What he needed was understanding and support. I wished his father could have seen the light by reading the following article:

'Low IQ, but 'genius'
Joyce Rensberger, New York Times

Idiot savants, the seemingly mentally retarded people who are capable of performing certain mental feats far beyond normal human capacity, appear to have brains capable of such extreme concentration on narrow subjects that their minds are simply unavailable for normal human activities, an authority on the subject says.

As a result, such individuals, even though they may, for example, do prodigious mathematical calculations in their heads, or play a concerto on the piano flawlessly after

hearing it only once, have I.Q's in the 40 to 80 range, and are unable to carry on a simple conversation, much less hold an ordinary job.

The researcher suggested that such abilities appear not to be confined to those labelled retarded but may be possessed in some degree by people regarded as eccentric geniuses such as Einstein or Newton.

Idiot savants have long fascinated students of the mind because, it is felt, an understanding of how their minds work may shed light on normal human intelligence. The report was given by Dr. Bernard Rimland, director of the private Institute of Child Behaviour Research in San Diego. He spoke before a symposium on the role of cognitive defects in the development of mental illness, sponsored by the Kittay Scientific Foundation. Rimland's work has concentrated on people suffering from a disorder known as autism. Autistic persons are almost totally withdrawn from social contact, virtually from birth. They rarely even make eye contact with others, much less converse. Many sit for hours in one place, appearing to stare blankly, seemingly oblivious to events around them.

Rimland has found that about 10% of autistic individuals display idiot savant characteristics. This compares with a rate estimated at one in 2000 for the mentally retarded in general, and one in three million for population as a whole.

Many of the idiot savants, Rimland said, displayed autistic behaviour from early infancy. He said the parents of this group are usually very bright, well educated professionals. This fact, noted by others, has led some to suggest that such busy parents may have neglected their children's early emotional development.

Among the cases Rimland described was that of a young man who could understand advanced books on electronics, navigation, astronomy and mechanics but whose I.Q. was 80 and who was employed as an assembler in a Goodwill Store. Another was a boy preoccupied with bridges and nothing else. His bedroom and backyard are filled with beautifully engineered bridges he constructed.

Characteristically, the idiot savant's abilities do not include broad conceptual or abstract matters. Their abilities are almost entirely confined to the details of the physical world of objects, written words, numbers and music. Since these abilities are thought to be confined to the right hemisphere of the brain, while more conceptual or holistic matters are dealt with in the left hemisphere, Rimland suggested that idiot savants may have some ability, or defect, that shuts off the left hemisphere, allowing, or forcing, them to concentrate on right hemisphere matters.

* * *

The rest of my teaching career was spent in British Columbia teaching E.S.L. (although for a brief period I taught Adult Basic Education (ABE) and also private 'play it by ear' piano lessons). For 14 years I taught ESL at a Beginner Level to adults at Kwantlen College in Surrey. Following that I taught student teachers at Vancouver Community College for a few years before making a permanent switch to being a music therapist for the rest of my working life.

After my experiences teaching special ed., teaching ESL was a breeze. 'Behaviour management' was rarely, if ever, a problem partly because of the mature age of the students and partly because the motivation level to learn English was always high. However it took a while to figure out the most effective methods and materials.

By my mid thirties I was an experienced teacher. I was fascinated by the art and craft of teaching. There is more than one way to skin a cat, or to use a less gruesome and more appropriate expression, there are many ways to verb a noun. In other words, there are many ways to teach someone or something, and part of the craft of teaching is exploring and identifying which way works best. An experienced teacher becomes a curriculum *developer*, not just a curriculum *user* or *chooser*. When you are new to a subject area or to teaching in general, it is wise to locate one or two instructional texts that act as a kind of 'how to' and 'what to' guide (curriculum user). As time goes by and you gain more experience, it is natural to pick and choose from an array of materials and methods (curriculum chooser). Eventually, an experienced and creative teacher may realize that he or she can produce better materials than the ones they have been using (curriculum developer).

An experienced and skilful teacher is flexible and doesn't approach teaching with black and white thinking. For example, when student-centred teaching became fashionable, some teachers reacted against rigid teacher-centred methods by becoming rigidly student-centred. In my case, on one memorable occasion, I got an uncomfortable lesson in how a student-centred approach is not always the way to go. In my capacity as a music therapist, in 1998 I had been asked to give a workshop to the Alzheimer's Society of Washington. I had given workshops before and so had planned to do what I usually did – namely organize the attendees into small groups for task assignments. I was not expecting to enter a room of around 200 people. There were too many people to organize into small groups and I found that my usual interactional style was also not working due to the numbers. Fortunately, I had enough experience to hold my nerve and get through the workshop such that the evaluations were mostly good. But what I learned, in retrospect, was that with this number of people, it should really have been a presentation not a workshop. It should have been a mostly one-way, teacher-centred presentation, ideally using power point text and graphics.

There were other waves of 'politically correct' orthodoxy that rolled in. For example, in reaction to traditional over-reliance on tests, in the 60's and 70's, there was a groundswell movement against all manner of 'objective tests'. When I first started teaching ESL, I didn't use tests, partly because I didn't believe in them and partly because I taught in a continuous entry program in which they seemed inappropriate. That wasn't just me – the rest of the department felt the same way with the exception of the initial entry testing which everyone agreed was necessary. But attitudes changed and gradually I came to realize that students wanted and needed tests as a means of motivating them to work harder and as a means for them (quite apart from me) to measure their progress. And in ESL, there were many different aspects of language acquisition to assess: vocabulary, grammar, oral ability, aural ability, writing ability, reading ability, etc. We found, for example, that the typical Chinese or Korean student would usually do quite well on a grammar test while still having great difficulty understanding or being understood when it came to speaking. So entry level testing was needed to evaluate both speaking and listening as well as grammar, in order to place the student in the right class.

Over the years, I produced various materials that I incorporated into my curriculum. I believed strongly in graphics and charts that simplified instructional material. I produced a Resource Book that contained colour-coded charts for key aspects of grammar and functions, chapters by theme, and banks of pictures to accompany and illustrate text. Shortly before I retired, I produced a unique device called a 'Grammar Wheel' which to this day, I believe should be marketed, perhaps as a software application.

(see website: theotherianbrown.ca\education\teaching\ESL\ESL educational resources)

As an 'educational' (as opposed to 'instructional' – see. p. 57) approach, I got the students to write about their experiences, eventually producing a book called When You Are an Immigrant: reflections by newcomers to Canada *(also to be found in ESL educational resources on website).*

Here are a couple of examples:

The Reason For Fleeing My Country (Ethiopia)

Our family belongs to the Gojam minority Christian group and had to fight its way to social and economic success. I too had to fight my way. When I completed my high school, I could not get into the university for lack of political support which was indispensable at that time. Though I had big problems with the communist youth association to which I did not want to adhere, the anti government agents insisted on my joining their armed struggle or declare my adversity to the government. They would not heed to any of the peaceful principles I tried to explain and regarded my abstaining from participating as an opposition to their war. I escaped many attempts of abduction by anti government agents and underwent many detentions and interrogations by the political police for my father's involvement with the Gojam rights movement.

With the fall of the inner communist regime by the outer communist-armed Guerilla fighters, we hoped that our situation would get better. But on the contrary, it got worse because as they came to power they immediately started chasing and arresting the Ethiopians who had refused to comply with their instructions to kill or be killed. I was detained for interrogation about my political activities and about my "past anti-independence conduct". I was released under severe warning against any undesired activity.

My relatives and family friends managed to get me out of the country.

Samson, 29/3/00

My First Job In Canada

I arrived in Canada on 9th. Feb, 1998. After six months, I decided to get a job so I took an application to the chicken factory. At home I had been very bored and frustrated. At the chicken factory, I stood outside the office door for a few minutes. After a few minutes a supervisor came. She was a woman. She was very nice. She told me, "I'll give you your interview." I said OK. She asked me a lot of questions and then she said, 'you can start work Monday afternoon at 4 p.m'. I said 'thank you so much'. I was so happy. I couldn't believe it. I had got a job.

Monday morning I got up early. I made my lunch. I arranged my ride. My husband dropped me off. I was very happy but very nervous. I started my work at 4 p.m. I was very sad when I saw the chickens. There were so many of them and of course they were all dead and frozen. My hands got stiff, I felt very cold, so upset, really bad. After two hours, it was time for coffee break. After ten minutes, I had to go back to work. I kept wondering, 'when will my shift be finished?' When finally my shift was over, I was so relieved. A kind lady drove me home. When I reached home, my hands were so swollen. I wasn't able to knock on the door.

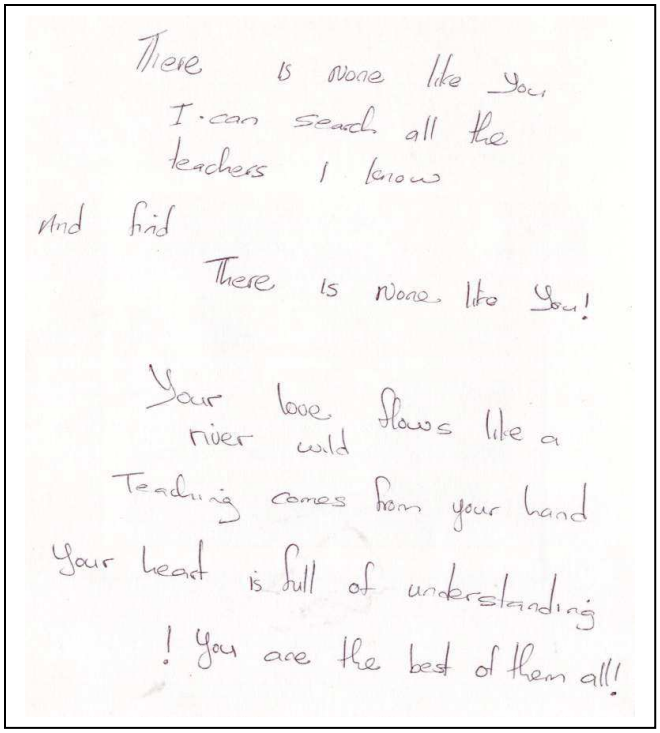
My husband opened the door and asked me how my day was. I started to cry. I said, "I will never go back there again". My husband said OK.

Next morning I got up late in the morning. In the evening, I got ready for work again. I decided that the job wasn't so bad after all. Now I have been working there for three months. Now I feel better than before.

Shanu, 1/12/98

* * *

Teaching ESL to adults was a gift to me. It gave me strength through dark periods. I was fortunate enough to get constant feedback from students showing respect, affection and gratitude. The following is a particularly endearing example:



There is none like you
I can search all the
teachers I know
And find
There is none like you!

Your love flows like a
river wild
Teaching comes from your hand
Your heart is full of understanding
! You are the best of them all!

CHAPTER 10

LEARNING from LIVING CONDITIONS
(Tough jobs; No jobs; Poor housing)

Some kids learn about the difference between work and play early on. At the age of 10, a boy from a low caste in Northern India could well be working up to 16 hours a day in a carpet factory. The Nike soccer ball that 10 year old boys in Canada are playing with was probably the product of labour by boys of a similar age in some third world country. In any culture, more is expected from children of low income families in the way of chores and family responsibilities.

In my case, my early years growing up were all about play and recreation. It wasn't until about the age of 12 that academic toil became significant. It was at that same age I got my first taste of 'real' work. It was in the basement of an architect's office. My friend (whose father was one of the architects) and I had the week-long job of sorting through endless piles of dusty plans and designs in a cramped, windowless, low-ceilinged basement. The work was dusty, tedious and not something that could be made more palatable by transforming it into a fun game. I don't remember how many hours a day we worked. Probably not 8, certainly not 16 like our Indian counterparts, possibly 'only' 4 hours; whatever it was, it felt too long.

A few years later, at the age of 16, I worked as a messenger with another friend from school in the vast Shell Oil building in London. Whereas in the architect's office we had literally been unseen, in the Shell building it just felt like we were invisible due to our status at the very bottom of a tall ladder. The atmosphere in that multi-tiered labyrinth of offices was hermetic and stagnant. I was used to the outdoors and fresh air. This was a concrete mausoleum in which people seemed in a kind of torpor. In my eyes there seemed to be a lot of tea breaks, endless chatter and gossip and not much sign of any real work. Between these two jobs, I learned early on that I did not want to spend my life in an office environment.

Manual labour seemed preferable in some ways – at least at first. Between the ages of 14 and 18, I had attended at least four different Army camps as a cadet. There were lots of manual tasks of one kind or another, but they weren't repetitious and usually had some purpose that I could grasp. However, none of my work experience in my teens had been wage-based. There was some token pay from the Shell job, but it was pocket money and not needed for living expenses. Things began to change in my twenties.

My first job after leaving school (and before starting University in Canada) was as a floor cleaner at the Coylumbridge Hotel, Aviemore, in the Scottish Highlands. It was the largest hotel in Scotland and was built to service the burgeoning ski industry. I had a night-shift job that started at midnight and ended at 8 a.m. My work was to sweep, clean, polish and buff each tile in what seemed like acres and acres of foyer and reception hall – night after mindless night, witnessing tipsy couples head off to bed, later to reappear in their brightly coloured ski apparel as I trundled off wearily past the reflected rays of the morning sun to my bed.

Whereas Shell had been only a week or two, here I had planned to work for several months. At Shell, I'd been with a friend. Here I was both alone and lonely. And I ached with envy. I too wanted to go skiing on those sunny slopes but I was too tired to do so, quite apart from not having the equipment or the lift money.

Just before leaving for Canada in August 1969, I worked as a handyman in a hotel in the Lake District. This job differed from the others mainly because it was, paradoxically, an elite, low-status job. That needs explanation. You couldn't be just anyone to be selected as the next Handyman at the upscale Bridge Hotel, in Buttermere. You had to be from the right 'stock', i.e. a public school. Part of the rites of passage for the public school elite, was to 'get your hands dirty' so that you could at least get a taste, a sniff … of how 'the other half' lived. The pay was minimal but the food was good, there were occasional free drinks, and in general I was granted a degree of trust and respect by the owner.

Lessons learned from that job? Not a lot except that tampons crackle when set alight. (one of my jobs was to burn garbage in the hotel incinerator).

My next job, in contrast to the previous ones, was high status (at least among people my age) and extremely visible. In the summer of '76, I worked as a guide at the British Pavilion in Montreal. This was the job where I first learned something about male-female interactions and the dating game. There were about 15 guides and 15 hostesses. We were generally acknowledged to be the coolest representatives of the coolest Pavilion at the world's fair, It *was* 1967 after all and we *did* have the coolest outfits, designed by John Stephens of Carnaby Street nonetheless. The U.K. was cool. It had the Beatles, the Stones, *the* swinging scene. It was desirable. We were desirable. I knew this as well as any of my fellow guides, but most of them had much more experience and skill in exploiting this situation as far as getting dates. The ones who 'scored' the most were the ones who treated the Pavilion as a giant playground, in which one could roam, mingle, and seek out potential playmates. I was aware that my clothes were cool but beyond that didn't have anything like the same confidence and persuasive powers that they did. I began the job still a virgin. I didn't believe I was attractive to women. I didn't like the competitive aspect of the dating game and didn't know how to take the initiative. With my public school values still determining my actions, it seemed unacceptable to date more than one woman at a time. Didn't that involve deception and disloyalty after all?

By the end of that summer, I had learned that I *was* attractive to women despite all my self doubt, but that I was still inept at reading subtle signals let alone how to respond to them. The 'successes' I had that summer came from women who approached me or at least sent me unmistakable signals of interest. The most notable experience was with a model from Toronto whose 'come hither' signals seemed so obvious that I managed to overcome my doubts and take action.

After leaving L.S.E., I lived in London for another two years. During that time I cut the umbilical cord to my past and set about finding my path from the ground up. I wanted to experience the opposite of being privileged and believed that entailed completely cutting ties to anything that could even remotely be linked to 'the establishment'. During those two years I worked as a dishwasher, a lorry driver's mate, and an usher at the Old Vic, and for an agency named 'Rentastaff' who sent out temporary staff to the nastiest, smelliest, most soul-destroying jobs in London. – for minimum wages of course.

One of the dishwashing jobs was underground in the tiny, hothouse kitchen of a French restaurant. There was no automatic dishwasher. The pots and pans and plates and cutlery had to be cleaned by hand. And they kept coming … and coming … sent down from on high in a dumbwaiter. The other dishwashing experience was in a gay restaurant. It was still the pre-AIDS era and so I learned a lot about the best spots to go cruising and all the graphic details of the previous night's encounters (i.e. size and shape of equipment, power and thrust, etc). I also became privy to the worlds of fine antiques, gourmet cuisine, haute couture and grand opera.

The jobs for Rentastaff had to be experienced, or at the very least, seen to be believed. In one temporary job, I had to throw reject wine bottles (full), like dud Molotov cocktails, at a brick wall for hours every day. At another, I worked at the end of a bottling line, lifting the bottles off and crating them. It was like the scene from 'Modern Times' in which Charlie Chaplin works on an assembly line until he becomes part of it, entangled in moving cogs and wheels. This job also helped me fully understand Marx's concept of the worker being alienated from the product of his labour. It was oppressive and dehumanizing. I was one of only a handful of white guys in the factory. Most of the workers were Pakistani or West Indian. It was at that job that I lost my idealistic illusions about the

sanctity of unions, given that despite deductions for my membership in the T.G.W.U. (Transport & General Worker's Union), I never received my union card. Someone was operating a scam.

But the prize for the most demeaning of all the Rentastaff jobs goes to Anning, Chadwick and Kiver, the fur brokers. In a dank old warehouse by the Thames, furs would arrive from Russia and Sweden, where they would be cured, sorted, stacked and brought out for pre-auction inspections. I was hired as a 'de-stapler'. This entailed going through piles and piles of Persian Lamb, mink and sable and removing the stapled label with a de-stapler, which was basically a long-handled, slot-head screwdriver. The neighbourhood was Jack the Ripper territory. The work conditions were Dickensian – on the one hand, a brigade of cockney women, pallid complexions, raucous voices, dehumanized by the appalling smell, the toxic chemicals of a tannery and prime candidates for dermatitis, respiratory diseases and various forms of cancer. On the other hand, wealthy buyers from Stockholm, New York, Copenhagen and St. Petersburg in pin-stripe suits and chomping cigars.

> *(This experience, and others with Rentastaff, are described in Chameleon, p. 333-349; these accounts mention my workmate and friend at the time. His name was Stuart Varney already mentioned earlier in Chapter 6).*

The urge to see and be a 'blue-collar' worker lasted for about another two years. On arrival in Montreal in 1972 as a sponsored immigrant, I worked as a muralist and then in a piano repair shop, sanding and lacquering the exteriors of uprights.

From the time I left L.S.E., I had spent six long years experiencing what it was like to be at the bottom of the ladder. I was tired of wasting what I knew I had to offer and that was an ability to relate to people, to communicate clearly and to explain things in such a way that they became easy to understand. I had already discovered these qualities in several temporary teaching jobs and by 1975 all the signs were pointing to making a commitment to becoming a teacher/educator. So I suppressed my bad memories of graduate school, and enrolled in a one year Diploma in Education program at McGill University.

When I quit the Masters program at the London School of Economics (L.S.E.), I made a conscious choice to experience hard living. As already recorded, I worked in London and Montreal at the most menial of jobs. I experienced several long periods of unemployment. I found out that getting a job when you didn't have connections was not always easy, and sometimes seemed downright impossible. I learned that poverty was a trap that was hard to get out of. I learned that there are various breeds of the materially well-off, including the super-rich, the wealthy, the urban 'yuppie' middle-class, even the middle-class 'poor' who complained because they couldn't afford a holiday. I came to understand why someone will spend his survival income on cigarettes, because soothing his nerves and exhaling his anger is more important than the state of his lungs. I learned that in the confines of the underclass, day-to-day *survival* replaces *success* as the driving force of daily life.

* * *

Is Life is a game, a morality play, a tragicomedy, or a melodrama? In political terms, it's a game – a game of power. Those who have power, whether a house or a mansion, would rather not acknowledge publicly that we are all caught up in such a game, whether we like it or not. The 'haves' would rather pretend that there is equal opportunity for all, and that success is based on hard work alone. But the truth is that economic power is what drives 'success' and more often than not, that power derives principally from fixed capital assets such as inheritance, trust funds and property, rather

than labor. Inheritance and interest, the financial return on capital ownership (whether liquid assets or property), and tax rates that are 20% for the middle class while only 35% maximum for the super rich make a mockery of our 'democratic' notions of equality, equal opportunity and a fair and just system. Anyone who has even the slightest idea of how the economic and social systems of western societies work, should see that fact quite clearly. And anyone who has had experience of poverty or unemployment must, at one time or another, have felt the urge to change those conditions, whether subjectively or objectively, or both.

Economic class is a reality which conveniently describes the comparative quality of people's lives. Housing is a major indication of people's wealth. Renting a house and being a tenant is vastly different from owning a house or being a landlord. Every month, $1200 of my money goes into my landlord's pocket. However, renting a one bedroom top floor flat like I have now is a luxury compared to some of the rooming houses or basements I have known. If you have a home in which there is space to move and think and be, a home that has sunlight and a view of trees, a yard for your children to play in, a house that is insulated and warm and doesn't leak, a home with running hot and cold running water … you take all those things for granted. You have no idea what it's like to live in a small, dark, cold, cramped space, with loud sounds intruding from the other side of your walls, with neighbours aware of your every move, with electric wiring that is old and dangerous, with plumbing that is leaky, with a smell of mould, with the scratching of mice or rats at night, with silverfish and cockroaches – but despite all that, a 'home' that you're terrified of losing and grateful for compared to the next step down of no longer having any private space at all.

I believe the two most definable classes are 'property owners' and 'renters'. The gap in power between these two is so huge. Renting out your labour as a worker is not the same as renting out your space as a landlord. The value should be in the labour NOT in the ownership of space or capital. If you don't own property, you have to pay the owner to occupy 'their' space and pretend that it is 'your' space. You have the illusion of a home. If you own a house, you can sit back and live off others' rental $$. If you own property, you have the right to order people off the land, and to get the assistance of law enforcement if necessary to forcibly remove them and their possessions.

What about transportation? The wealthy have three or four cars, the upper middle-class two, the lower-middle class one, while low income people (and it should be said healthy, alternative life-style people of any incomes) will take the bus or possibly ride a bicycle. Really poor people will walk, or more probably not go anywhere much beyond their room. Why? Are they just lazy? I experienced how poverty severely curtails your mobility. You either don't have the means to go from A to B, or else it is too expensive. For the wealthy, A to B is Vancouver to Paris or Tokyo. For the middle-class, A to B is Vancouver to Mexico. For hard-pressed working families, A to B is camping at the nearest lake. For the poor, A to B is going to where you need to go, not where you want to go, and where you usually need to go is a Government Office or the comer store. If you are poor but still functioning well, A to B may also be a trip to those sanctuaries of freedom and shelter - the public park and the public library.
If you don't own property, only the streets, the parks, the libraries are 'free' space, and even there, the 'freedom' is limited by a host of rules. 'No smoking', 'no drinking', 'no loitering', 'closed after sundown', etc. The poor are invisible. They feel vulnerable the moment they step outside.

In the parallel universe of consumer capitalism, where glass and concrete are surrounded by 'private property' and 'no loitering' signs as well as security guards and CCTV cameras, those with no money in their pocket are obliged to keep moving. The mind set of someone trying to survive is not even remotely the same as one who measures progress by how much or how quickly he or she is 'succeeding'. Poverty is no fun and is not well understood unless you've been there for an extended period of time.

In a state of merely 'existing', all your resources and energy are needed to 'succeed' in the task of surviving. The environment is cruel, demanding, unyielding. The qualities needed for survival are an

ability to gather information, to be strategic, to use one's wits, to alter one's image to fit the circumstances (i.e. chameleon). If you are in the basement and want to get out then check out if you are living life as a morality play – and if you are, then burn the script. If you want to get out, you need to thicken your skin, learn some street smarts and start developing a competitive attitude. Knowing how to play fair is not helpful at this level. Chivalry may have helped you at an elite level but just seems foolish and inappropriate when the game is every man for himself.

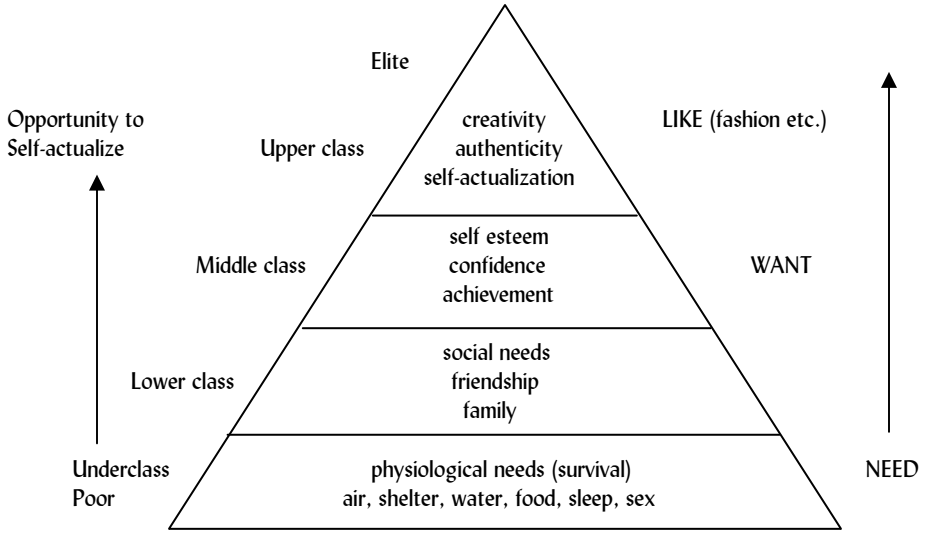
An account of being unemployed from my Journal: 26-7-1975

> *I put in my UIC claim. I should get two-thirds of $164, i.e. $108/week. I had to approach Diane to lend me $100. Sitting in the McGill library. My asylum. Territory that is not charged like 3522 St. Dominique – charged with the expectations that someone may call and offer me a job. There is not that feeling that everyone else is 'out there' working, while I am 'in here', stuck, immobile, useless. In the spacious, clean and comfortable surroundings of the McLennan, there is no reason to believe that others are labelling me as 'unemployed'. There I am at a table with pen and paper. Who's to know I'm not a student?*
>
> *The word 'unemployment' is defined in Websters 3rd. International Dictionary (unabridged) as 'involuntary idleness of a worker seeking work at prevailing wages'. Anyone who has been unemployed for any length of time knows that you only become 'idle' when, after working very hard to find a job and being rejected again and again, you start feeling defeated. And it can always be worse. Not having a job makes you fall back on your friends. Not having friends makes you fall back on yourself. Not having yourself (because your self-esteem is shot) just makes you fall and fall and fall … fall back, fall down, fall out … to beneath society's scaffold. And there you can fall to bits. Your 'self' has nowhere left to go … nowhere to express or explore or egress. So you intend, ingress and eventually implode into fragments.*

It is interesting but eerie when you return to a world that you once inhabited but from which you became estranged for many years. You can play the part of the person you were, at the same time knowing that others around you have no idea who you have become in your years as a stranger in a strange land. In my case, the first emergence back into a middle class world after years in the underclass (or 'precariat' to use the current term), came when I played at the McGill squash club. It was the year that I was doing my Diploma in Education in Montreal. Suddenly I was back in a warm, clean, spacious building – one that had showers and saunas a sitting area and snack bar. In the court with my doctor or businessman opponent, I looked the part, I had the requisite skills, I sounded intelligent and cultured. I could give them a good game.

I could fool them but inside I felt like an imposter. I had allowed a ghost from the past to take possession of my body. And it felt like a time warp. The middle to upper-income identities of these men, comfortable and confident, reminded me of my past and made me feel inauthentic in the present. Although I had the right to be in 'the club', I was still rebelling against middle-class complacency and attitudes. I wanted the opportunity to play the sport without having to dwell in the social milieu. Three identities were clashing against each other; a Sedbergh middle-class identity, a post-Sedbergh 'down-and-out' identity, and a compromise identity that was emerging due to my entry into the middle-class world of teaching.

Probably the biggest aid in making sense of my downward mobility and experiences in the underclass, was not Karl Marx but Abraham Maslow. His 'hierarchy of needs' was so clear, so perceptive, so accurate:



The question "what do you *need*?" is the appropriate one for the underclass. Pondering the question "what do you *want*?" or "what would you *like*?" might seem like an indulgence. Fashion and 'taste' – in food, wine, clothes, furniture etc. is a world that appears on TV and billboards but not in 'real life'.

* * *

In the spring of 1989, age 42, I completed the two year Diploma in Music Therapy program at Capilano College. As in previous years, I was offered a contract teaching ESL at Kwantlen in the summer months. Meanwhile, I had two part-time music therapy jobs with more on the horizon. I figured that by the following year, I would exit the world of ESL and become a full-time music therapist.

Then in January 1990, I was offered a full-time job at Kwantlen with all the bells and whistles – medical, pension etc. It was a hard decision: in my heart I wanted to do music therapy but in my head it was hard to rationalize, given the income and job security offered by the ESL job. And I was anything but secure. My relationship with Joan was on the rocks. We had been to various counsellors but things continued to unravel. Both of our mothers had entered their eighties and there were issues with both of them that had pushed us apart. The writing was on the wall and I was already grieving. I decided to do the Kwantlen job.

In my Diary I wrote about my feelings for Joan:

I have too much pain. I have done my best to change and grow, but not enough. I didn't find a way to assert my anger or perceptions to you in a way that was 'acceptable'. Sorry I wasn't better for you. I desperately wanted this relationship to work. I wanted to learn from it. I so wanted the opportunity to re-write scripts and break through old patterns. I feel sorrow and grief. I mourn the loss of this relationship. I hurt at your rejection of who I am. I feel ashamed that I couldn't have accepted you better than I did. I don't want to lose you. I wanted to grow old with you, to learn from and with you.

Neither Joan nor I wanted to break up and we kept working at trying to find solutions. With my full-time income, financially things were easier. A couple of years passed before Joan and I reluctantly agreed that it would be best if we started a slow process of dismantling our partnership. We worked out a 'nesting' scheme by which each of us had to find somewhere else to stay on agreed upon days while the kids were entitled to 'nest' in the family home. More time passed until finally in 1994, I moved out.

I had two friends who lived on First Nations land outside White Rock and in August 1994, one of them told me of a house for sale. Because residents had to pay land lease rent, the cost of a house was affordable. Given my views on property owners, the fact that houses on the reserve were classified as 'chattels' and not 'property' made the decision easier.

For the first time in my life, I had a home of my own. It was a three bedroom rancher, so both Annie and Ben had their own room on the days they were with me (Joan and I had joint custody). However, the house was in terrible shape. There was little insulation, a leaky roof and widespread mould. The water supply had to be pumped up from a well and there was a question of contamination. I had to pay to get the septic tank cleaned out. The next six years were hard. My full-time job was demanding. Looking after the kids was always challenging. My mother's health was gradually deteriorating and I felt the responsibility to make yearly visits to Edinburgh. My brother in London got in trouble with the law (he embezzled £60,000 from two businesses he worked for as a bookkeeper) and nearly went to prison. My sister in Montreal was reluctant at first to visit my mother. I finally got to meet my daughter Jasmine. However in 1996, both her mother and Joan took me to court for child maintenance, this despite the fact that I had shouldered more of the financial burden while Joan and I were together, and had joint responsibility for Annie and Ben in the post separation situation.

Then in 1999, I got into a dispute with a colleague at Kwantlen College that led to each of us laying 'personal harassment' charges against the other (both were eventually dismissed). In fact I never knew what her 'case' was. We were friends. She had a dispute with another colleague and asked me if she could share my office. Then she invited me for Christmas dinner at her house – one she shared with her partner and his two children by previous marriage. We were both under a lot of stress at the time. I had just broken up with Joan, and Kathy told me that she had issues with her husband because she wanted them to have their own baby and he didn't. The only indication I ever had that something was amiss was one day when Kathy blew up at me about my borrowing pens off her desk. When I heard she was submitting a 'personal harassment' grievance, I was shocked and subsequently regarded her action as harassment in itself and filed a counter claim.

In February 2000, my mother died. In order to avoid a situation in which his creditors could come after him, Robin persuaded my mother to change her Will shortly before she died. Instead of him getting one third of the inheritance, the wording of the Will was changed such that his daughter Shuna became the recipient. This was done with my sister's agreement but without my knowledge, even though my mother had asked me to be Executor of her Will. And then to cap it all off, it turned out that under Scottish law even 'a debtor' was entitled to one sixth inheritance. So in the end, one of my mother's grandchildren (Shuna) got one third while the other three (Annie, Ben and Jasmine) got nothing.

Like property ownership, I had always regarded inheritance as inherently 'unfair'. However, I wasn't about to donate my share to some charity. I had gone through enough shit to feel that I could legitimately call my own situation 'a worthy cause'. I also wanted to create a music space for my son who was rapidly turning into a very talented musician. The money from the inheritance allowed me to renovate the Ranch (the term I used for my house), knock down some walls, and create a sound studio complete with recording equipment (8 channel mixer, microphones and speakers).

In the academic year 2000 to 2001, I received paid Educational Leave from Kwantlen to enable me to do research and produce original ESL materials. I was very upset at the way the harassment charges had been handled and on returning to the College in the Fall, I met with the Grievance Officer in order to approach the Board for a formal apology. The Director who had handled the situation had mysteriously disappeared and was no longer working at the College. To this day I don't know whether or not she was fired. When I received a letter from the Board saying the matter had long been settled but offering no apology, I decided it was time to move on. I had just turned 55 and so was eligible for early retirement. In January 2002, I quit my job at Kwantlen College. My pension was just over $1000 a month out of which had to come $500 land lease rent and money for electricity, phone bills, food and other living expenses.

Meanwhile, for most of the time I lived at the Ranch, the residents on the Reserve (both native and non-native) were being told at regular intervals that there were plans to develop the land and that we might face eviction sooner or later. The Federal Government, as represented by INAC (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) and Health Canada, began first to test the water and septic fields and then later conducted inspections of the houses themselves. We were told that we had to spend upwards of $60,000 (!!) in order to bring our living conditions up to required standards, and that if we didn't comply, we would not get another land lease and consequently would face enforced eviction. I was in an ironical situation. On the one hand, the non-native residents were treated as 'white trash' by the Government, on the other, in 2002, I was employed by an aboriginal friend to write a series of articles on mental illness and the high rate of suicide on reserves across Canada. My friend was head of an organization called NIICHRO (National Indian and Inuit Community Health Representatives Organization).

(these articles were printed in NIICHRO's magazine 'In Touch', vol. 26, Spring 2003: They can be accessed on my website, theotherianbrown.com/writing/non-fiction)

I started augmenting my pension with jobs as an entertainer at Retirement Homes. After I finished my accreditation and became a certified music therapist with the Music Therapists Association (M.T.A.), I changed my status and role from 'entertainer' to 'music therapist' at a couple of these homes. I also started performing again as a solo musician and vocalist, as a duo with my son and also as a duo with my philosopher friend Warren.

In 2006, another layer of stress was added to an increasingly distressing situation. At the start of a gig, Warren accidentally pointed his microphone at a speaker. There was a huge feedback blast. I was standing directly in front of the speaker. I knew my hearing had been damaged and in the following days and weeks discovered that I had lost upper-end hearing and had also acquired both tinnitus and hyperacusis. A month earlier I had bought the piano of my dreams, a Yamaha U3. Now I found I couldn't play it as the sound was so brittle and unpleasant.

My health deteriorated with high blood pressure, thyroid trouble and evidence of increasing anxiety and depression. The situation of the Reserve was becoming untenable. For two years I had been filling up 5 gallon containers of water from a gas station, bringing them back in my car, and then hauling them through the yard into the house. Eventually I paid over $1000 for a 1500 gallon water storage tank and several hundred more dollars for a new pump.

By 2008 I knew I had to leave. I was told my house was worth nothing given the looming threat of land development and evictions. My two friends on the Reserve had each sold their houses a year or two previously for over $40,000. In the end I sold my house for $1 – a story that is still too painful to repeat.

As a postscript, I should add that later on, the Federal government backed off and three years later the person who had bought my house for $1 was able to sell it for $10,000. And meanwhile

Joan, my ex-partner who had been receiving court-ordered child support payments from me for over a year, got a large inheritance after her mother died and bought a house and 19 acres of land on Galiano island as a result. Also, within a year of my quitting Kwantlen, she was working there full time as an ESL instructor in the same department that I had left. I felt I was being crushed by overwhelming and unrelenting stress.

CHAPTER 11:

LEARNING FROM INTERNAL STRUGGLE

Finding your way is also about the journey inwards. The path through life goes in and out, up and down; sometimes flying, sometimes stumbling, sometimes falling; sometimes shared, sometimes solo. I remember around the age of 13 reading Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan. Our teacher asked us to do a pictorial representation of the book that showed the path taken by the pilgrim. I remember how it started in the City of Destruction, went through the Slough of Despond, the Valleys of Humiliation and the Shadow of Death, the Enchanted Ground and eventually the Celestial City. I loved this kind of right brain assignment (they were rare) where one had free reign to use one's creativity and imagination.

In reflecting on Lessons for Teacher and the sense I have sometimes that I approached Life too much as a morality play and not enough as a game, it seems like I have my own version of Pilgrim's Progress, with all of its inner obstacles to freedom and fulfillment. From my mid-twenties on, I embarked on an inner journey that involved exploration of some deep and dark places. At times my sense of direction became chaotic, and at times I got lost. Then there were the times that I got stuck, confused as to which way to go, paralyzed in fear, or fragmented to the point that I didn't know who I was.

Inner obstacles seem to have much to do with the so-called 'negative emotions', and they in turn have a strong connection to how we handle stress. My brother learned at an early age to defend himself against my father's abuse. I learned at an equally early age to defend myself against my brother's attempts to pass on this abuse to me in the form of teasing/bullying. Unfortunately, at around the age of 3, this involved hitting him with a metal spade in the sandpit. From my parents' response to this incident, I learned shame and guilt. A few years later, I had an experience in which I showed my father that I was angry at him for the way he had treated my mother. When my father turned to me and with eyes blazing said "don't you *ever* look at me like that again," I learned that I should not get angry with either my brother or my father.

At the same time I was being taught that a gentleman should *never* get angry at a lady. It is supremely ironical that Ellie Epp, a woman who sees herself as a beacon of feminism, a woman who felt entitled to get angry at men throughout her life, states that a sign of a good 'bad boy' is that he too never gets angry at a woman. Oh dear, what to do? Can't be macho but can't be a wimp. Don't be a cry baby and don't get angry. Can't be a good boy … however *can* be a bad boy so long as you've been lobotomized.

As I grew older, I was told repeatedly that I was fortunate to be healthy (unlike Robin), fortunate to always have food on the table (unlike 'poor people'), fortunate to have a first class education (unlike working class folk). At the age of 12, a teacher wrote in my end of term report that he was concerned that I was 'over-conscientious'. It didn't help when in my twenties, I was told that I was privileged to have a middle-class background, to be white, and to be a man. It was as if I had to atone for sins I hadn't committed.

I did my degree in Sociology for two main reasons: first I wanted to understand the structure and functions of society and its institutions; secondly I wanted to be of service, and mistakenly viewed 'sociology' as synonymous with 'social work'. My studies in sociology made it abundantly clear how unequal and unfair our society is, as well as the kinds of actions that might improve the situation. I didn't buy into a Darwinian interpretation that lamented that 'life is the survival of the fittest' and that's just the way it is. Even if that *was* the reality, I knew that 'the reality' could be changed to a different and better reality.

Musicians talk about how you 'have to pay your dues', meaning you don't deserve success until you have slogged it out though all kinds of challenging circumstances. After my fall from grace at L.S.E., I developed an attitude that one couldn't change social reality without helping the 'have-nots', and one couldn't do that without becoming a have-not. That was the only way to exorcise the demons of entitlement, the only way to expunge shame and guilt, the only way to establish some credibility and

authority. But in this transition to a radically new path, I experienced increasing stress and along with that, an ever-expanding repository of 'negative emotions'.

When I first came to Canada in 1966 as a student, I was full of positive emotions. I was confident, excited about the future and sociable. When I returned to Canada in 1972, after three years in England, I was brimming with negative emotions. I was insecure and withdrawn. I had unresolved emotional pain due to disastrous relationships with Lesley and then Ellie. I had psychological pain stemming from a nervous breakdown following leaving L.S.E. I had a lot of unexpressed anger – at my father, at 'the system', and at all those who seemed to lack a critical consciousness (to use Freire's term) or political awareness. I had transformed from someone who genuinely felt fearless to someone only too aware of growing fears and anxieties – fear of being betrayed again, fear of failure, fear of abandonment, fear of loss of control and incapacitating mental illness. In six years I had gone from being very trusting to someone full of doubts about who he could, and could not trust. And I had lost the inner belief that I could achieve anything I set my mind to, and instead had become plagued by deep feelings of inadequacy and lack of self-worth.

These inner obstacles had piled up in my path like a rock-slide. Given that negative emotions are seen as a sign of weakness in our smiley-face culture, I began to alternate between being a 'stuffer' and a 'venter'. By the time I entered my thirties, my well of anger was spawning states of rage, contempt, disgust and alienation. I was seen as intense, over-sensitive, volatile and judgmental. I was told that I used my intellect and 'way with words' as a weapon of attack when feeling threatened. However, when I entered the classroom, I became a different person – one who was patient, kind, and a role model for what a good teacher should be. My students had immunity against the way in which I would assess people according to where I saw them on a left-right continuum, or a have/have-not scale. In the classroom, I was able to link up with my genuinely caring and compassionate inner core and in so doing restore some self esteem.

So what had I learned from wrestling with these inner obstacles by the time I turned thirty? Probably the biggest lesson was that I could not clear the rock-slide by myself. Despite my deeply imprinted conditioning in self-reliance, I realized I needed help. I couldn't rely on friends and partners. Nor could I rely on my own strategies of stress management, these being exercise, meditation and yoga. The first time I went to a professional counsellor was when I went back to University to get my teaching diploma. I knew it was going to be one year of intense stress, some due to institutional demands and some of my own making. I resolved to use my weekly counselling session as a chance to vent all my frustrations. It was like a safety valve on a pressure cooker. By letting off steam regularly, I could stay in control and prevent an explosion. It proved to be a good plan, one that worked out as I had hoped.

The next time I sought help was a year after I moved to B.C. in 1979. Jennifer and I had split up in August. In September, I started sessions with a woman called Ellen, a bioenergetics therapist. Bioenergetics (derived from the work of Wilhelm Reich and Alexander Lowen) is an approach that is based on the idea that emotional and psychological obstacles end up as physical symptoms. So, for example, if you go around thinking most people you meet are 'a pain in the neck', or more to the point that you yourself are a pain in the neck, then chances are you will start experiencing your own psychosomatic pain in the neck. In Montreal, I often experienced a lump in my throat. When I had it checked out, I was told there was no physical cause and that perhaps I had 'globus', a psychosomatic condition derived from strong emotions of feeling 'all choked up' from, for example, anxiety or anger. At the time I was taking singing lessons and beginning to perform solo as a vocalist and piano player. I got intense performance anxiety, especially if I was trying out some of my own dark lyrics. It was the start of my body trying to tell my mind to go easy on my nervous system, not to be such a task master.

I didn't get the message. At the end of 1979, I had a brief affair that led to Chloe becoming pregnant and in September of 1980, the birth of Jasmine. Before I got the news from Chloe, I had broken off with her and started a live-in relationship with Joan. In November of 1980, my second daughter Annie was born.

In January of 1980 I had started teaching E.S.L. at Capilano College to the first Vietnamese 'boat people' to arrive in Canada. Things were going well in the teaching arena. I was becoming an experienced and confident teacher. However, in the dark, gloomy rain-filled days of January, I still felt fragile following the split with Jennifer.

Three times a week I drove my van on the one-hour journey from White Rock to North Vancouver and back. One evening, after a day's teaching and a departmental meeting, I was driving back along Highway 1 on the desolate stretch beside Burnaby Lake, when I felt my breathing getting shorter and shallower. My chest constricted and I felt a rising panic as I wondered if I was having a heart attack. All I knew was that I had to get off the Highway and seek help. After what seemed like an age, I saw the exit for Cariboo Road with a sign that said 'R.C.M.P. post'. I managed to get there although I felt like I was about to black out. The police were friendly and immediately called for an ambulance. Two paramedics arrived and, after doing some tests, informed me that I had had a "panic attack". They gave me some kind of tranquilizer and said I would probably be O.K. to drive home in 20-30 minutes. However one of the policemen said that he could give me a ride because he happened to live in White Rock. He said he could see that I was really shaken up and that it was better if I didn't drive.

That was the first time I ever had a panic attack and it was a very scary experience. From then on, for quite a considerable length of time, I felt reverberations of the fear and panic every time I drove that stretch of Highway.

In my ongoing sessions with Ellen, I would bang cushions with a tennis racquet (anger), curl up in a foetal position (fear) and cry a lot (pain). I had hoped that this therapy would act like a sponge mopping up all the negative emotions, especially the 'pain body' (to use Eckhart Tolle's expression). However, after a year of weekly sessions, it seemed that despite temporary relief, the well of pain, fear and anger would refill of its own accord.

Up to this point, I had not used any medications, except one of my sister's valium pills on occasion when the performance anxiety seemed like it might end up in on-stage paralysis and/or premature exit. During the break-down in London, I had employed will power, self-reliance, transcendental meditation, writing and raga-type piano improvisations as ways of coping. The first time I started taking prescription medication with any regularity was due to persistent insomnia. The earliest mention of sleep problems in my diary is in July 1982.

In 1986, I experienced a second breakdown following a traumatic incident in an Ultralight plane. Along with panic attacks and heart palpitations, I entered a vicious cycle of insomnia and anxiety about not being able to sleep. This in turn fed further anxieties that I wouldn't be able to teach, that I would lose control and that I would experience ongoing shame and humiliation with my children. How could I argue with the possible side effects of valium or xanax when they so effectively helped me cope when meditation, yoga, exercise and various forms of therapy (including bioenergetics, hypnotherapy, massage therapy and naturopathy) had collectively failed to solve the sleep problems? In the years that followed, and up to the present day, I have relied on a benzodiazepine to sleep, as well as anti-depressants. As to side effects, at the age of 70, my memory doesn't appear to be much worse than my friends of the same age.

It is worth trying to describe the torture of insomnia as it is a case in which inner and outer darkness become one.

Passage from my diary- November 1987:

Having made it through a day that involved teaching and child minding, you are exhausted. The day also involved hot and cold flashes, sweating, stomach churning, shortness of breath, jumpiness, agitation and the occasional heart palpitation. Time drags. Isn't it time for the kids to go to bed? All you want is some escape. All you want is some sleep. You watch a bit of TV, have a shower and around midnight you collapse into your bed. Last night you got to sleep within an hour of laying down.

But then you woke up at 2 a.m. and couldn't get back to sleep. You tried progressive relaxation in bed – slowly tightening and releasing muscles from feet to head and back again. You tried listening to the hypnotherapy recording. You tried counting sheep with that new tactic of inserting a black sheep every tenth sheep. The night before you visualized them jumping over a fence – easier to count that way. But the thoughts wouldn't stop: 'how can I keep going on a couple of hours sleep a night?'; 'the students will see I'm a zombie'; 'what if I have a panic attack while driving?'; 'what if, yet again, I break down and cry and the kids see me?'; 'what can I say to them?': 'what if Joan says she's had enough?'; 'why is my right foot and leg numb?'; 'why does it feel like my buttocks are on a block of ice whenever I sit down?' And now tonight, how long have I been laying here? I check my alarm clock.

It's only 1 a.m. Joan is asleep. The kids are asleep. All is quiet. And it is dark – so dark. Dark in the room. Dark outside. Dark in my inner core. I have to get up. Maybe I can tire out my body by doing some exercise. Maybe I should go up and down the stairs 10, no 20 times. And then meditate.

I tried that. Back in bed. Check the time. It's only 2.15! Another 6 hours before anyone gets up. Why can I not trust my body to say 'enough is enough' and take me into blissful unconsciousness? I never had trouble sleeping in the past. Maybe it's my mind I can't trust? Maybe I am going crazy? Maybe I should forget chamomile tea and hot milk and buy a bottle of brandy. Maybe I need medication. But if the doctor sees me like this, he'll send me to a shrink. And if a shrink sees me like this, he'll send me to a psych ward. Maybe I should get up again and read some more of that book by Harold Kushner, 'Why Bad Things Happen To Good People'. And the more you think, the more you can't get to sleep. And the more you can't get to sleep, the more you worry, the more bizarre your remedies become; walking though the night; driving through the night or 'killing time' with yet another cigarette.

And yes, after weeks and weeks of this, you get really worried because you are now visualizing not only driving out and driving back, but driving into or driving over … and escaping that way. You struggle to understand what has happened. One moment you had broken free as a solo performer, the next you had come crashing down like Icarus. You go to a bookstore and buy the Merck Manual and try to make sense of page upon page on 'dissociative disorder' as you try to self-diagnose what is causing the numbness and cold sensations. It just adds to your anxiety. You get lots of advice from others but very little seems to help – except, that is, what your friend Veronica has to say. You listen to her. She's been there, in one way or another. She tells you that driving off a bridge is not the answer. "Think o f the pain it would cause your children." That stopped you in your tracks. You hadn't thought of that. You thought you'd be doing them a favour, that they'd all do better without you.

Yes, she was right, think of the shame and embarrassment they would have to live with for the rest of their lives. And then she said that it was OK to take medication, that she did, that the doctor could prescribe sleeping pills. The thing is I had done it before but I had been so determined to get off them that one day I had stopped cold turkey and there had been withdrawal symptoms that had included trouble getting to sleep. Another vicious circle. Veronica says I have had 'a breakdown' and that it is 'cleansing'. She gives me permission to stop struggling.

Apart from night time, the worst time of day was 5 pm – 6 pm. This was the time that I had experienced the trauma in the ultralight. Every day around this time, I felt gripped by fear. I felt as if there was a titanic inner struggle going on between forces of good and forces of evil. I understood why Scott Peck had come to believe the devil existed as an objective reality. I took note of the fact that EVIL was LIVE spelled backwards.

And then two books fell into my hands from which I learned profound lessons. I had been introduced to a small group that met weekly to discuss their spiritual beliefs and experiences. The guiding text for this group was a book called 'The Science of Mind'. I was grateful for people's understanding and acceptance of the fact that I was in a shattered and very needy state. At the end of the second or third meeting, one of the members gave me an old-looking hard backed book. The title was Letters Of A Scattered Brotherhood. At first glance I wasn't too enthusiastic. It seemed to be a collection of Christian writings, edited by a Mary Strong. But I was desperate for any information or advice that would help me deal with my condition.

Over the course of the next year, that book became a source of insight and hope. Although God and Christ were mentioned from time to time, the main topic was the relationship between fear and faith. The connection between the two was stated in a few words. '*Fear is faith in your antagonist.' (p. 146)* In my fog of confusion, I was aware that there *was* an antagonist and that antagonist was the combined forces of negativity, the major inner obstacles that impeded and blocked my path, and crushed my spirit with the weight of huge boulders. Fear was the core of these forces. I grappled with the memory of how at Sedbergh I had felt fearless. I kept reflecting on the statement 'he became unglued'. It seemed to fit. The experience in the Ultralight had lead to a massive shock and trauma that had unglued me. The question then arose what was the nature of the glue? Was 'the glue' fear, or faith … or perhaps both? Many of the writings in Letters Of A Scattered Brotherhood expounded on the difference between 'the outer you' and 'the inner you' as in the following quotation:

> *There is an outer ring of yourself surrounded by turbulence, chaos and anxiety; great moments swirling about, cosmic in potentiality. Within this ring is another circle outside of which are your responses to all these alarms and insistent shocks, excitements and dismays. Inside this ring is another ring. This is a place where you sense your ignorances, your unawarenesses, your inadequacies. Here is where you are sorely tried, for this is your human self. And so these rings get smaller as you near the center where you find a place in you that longs for peace, calmness and spiritual understanding. Finally there is the center which seems to the imagination within a very small circumference. Here is where you are, here is a place where you decide; here is where you are yourself. Most people seldom find it except in great moments; and yet when found and realized it encircles the universe. This is the quietness, this is the peace promised to those who seek. For this center lifts you high and clear of all the rings into eternal omniscient vision; here, when your mind is fastened to it and all your thoughts and all desires are pointed toward it, is the Spirit that will lead you through the valleys of the shadows of death, violence and hates and all the confusion that beset you and your country and your world at this time. (p. 180)*

This was the kind of writing that if judged by my intellect alone, might seem so simple or obvious as to be trite. All I knew was that it helped. It was what I needed to hear.

In my experiences as a solo performer, I felt at the limits of my outer self. Unlike the contemplative piano improvisations, being paid to play and sing in front of an audience with whom I also needed to present a certain image and interact verbally, was a process that obliged me to be very

outer directed. That said, the irony was that at the performances just prior to the ultralight (at a place called 'Charley Don't Surf' in White Rock), I had experienced a breakthrough from outer fear to inner belief. The timing of the ultralight incident could not have been worse. My adrenaline was still flowing from the gig and I felt giddily open to 'flying high'. But I wasn't prepared for a drunk pilot who without any warning, and without my prior knowledge or consent, took the flimsy aircraft into a barrel roll with the words "wanna do some acrobatics?" At that moment my world was quite literally turned upside down and inside out. It didn't help when back on terra firma, the pilot tried to explain "that's what we do to get out of a box canyon" and then "don't tell anyone". One result of this traumatic experience was that my growing, but still tentative belief in myself as a performer, was shattered. My inner self was thrown into a place of darkness and conflict and my outer self felt like a cracked eggshell, fragmenting still further under even the slightest pressure.

As in my first breakdown in London, I experienced an intense need to cut out any unnecessary stimulation. Once again, 'Letters Of A Scattered Brotherhood' had passages that spoke to me directly. Again and again, the writings talked of the importance of finding the light within as a protection against the incessant demands of everyday life. If '*Fear is faith in your antagonist*', then the light of understanding and faith was the protagonist. I began to realize that you didn't have to be a Christian (or a Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist for that matter) in order to experience faith. The notion of light, spirit and God being synonymous was not crazy. It was obvious: FAITH was the direct antidote to FEAR and for me that meant holding on to the belief that somehow I could recover from this devastating experience.

'Letters' talked of the need for courage. I knew I had never lacked in that area. It seemed important to me to go up in an ultralight again (with a pilot who was not drunk) so I did it. It seemed important to drive routes on which I had experienced panic attacks so as to directly face my fears. I did that too. But that was just a start. I needed to 'build' a solid foundation of faith and that would take time. I tried going to church a few times but the formal rituals did not move me. So 'Letters' became my bible.

As weeks turned into months, I became aware that something profound was going on within. Inner light was beginning to eclipse the darkness in my mind, heart and soul. I started getting insights. The song 'This Little Light Of Mine' took on a much deeper significance. 'This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine'; 'I won't let anyone snuff it out, I'm gonna let it shine'. And then suddenly the words of 'Amazing Grace' revealed their true meaning. I had never understood the real meaning of 'grace' before. Grace was a gift from God, from the Spirit, from the Source. I understood in wonderment the line 'I was blind but now I see'. My sceptical, sarcastic intellect was ineffectual in arguing the point; 'it' just didn't see, didn't get it. I began to clearly understand the notion that there is nothing to fear but fear itself.

The other book previously alluded to was called Hope and Help For Your Nerves. The book helped me understand in medical terms the way in which fear manifested physiologically. The book had been recommended to me by the psychiatrist that I had agreed (fearfully) to see. He turned out to be a kind, elderly man who explained to me that I was experiencing an 'anxiety state', or what others might refer to as a 'nervous breakdown'.

The author of 'Hope and Help' was an Australian GP named Claire Weekes. She talked of 'first fear' and 'second fear' and how it was the latter that led to overproduction of adrenaline in the sympathetic nervous system which was the direct cause of a whole host of nervous symptoms such as sweating, cold feet. tightness in the chest, shortness of breath and heart palpitations. She explained panic attacks as being a result of hyperventilation in which excessive breathing creates low levels of carbon dioxide in your blood. When you breathe rapidly, the body receives more oxygen than it needs and the result is respiratory alkalosis (high pH). Claire Weekes didn't just explain the cause of panic

attacks, she also gave a simple solution – breathing into a paper bag so as to "re-breathe" your exhaled carbon dioxide (CO2) and by so doing bringing your body back to a normal pH level. Amidst all the self-help books that I had read and the various health practitioners I had visited, I had never heard of either this explanation or cure. It was a vital lesson that I learned and could then teach to others who were worried about going 'over the edge'.

> *(for a more complete account of the ultralight experience and the aftermath see 3 Strikes, Not Out, pp. 14-25 on website, theotherianbrown.com/writing/memoirs)*

* * *

And there were other changes. In my weakness and vulnerability I had become dependent on others, especially Joan. However the roots of that predated the ultralight incident and subsequent breakdown. In my 'good boy' quest to be a worthy partner and father, I had become too flexible and too prepared to capitulate to Joan's will, especially when it came to childcare. The notion that we had an essence and a source at the centre of our inner self was reassuring. I found that the phrase 'Joan is not my source' became a mantra that was empowering in terms of addressing the ways in which I had become dependent (and co-dependent).

I was seeing nature and people through new eyes. I understood how Christians talked of being 'reborn' and people such as Stanislav Grof talked of 'breakdown' as 'breakthrough' or 'spiritual emergency'. It felt as if my senses had been washed clean. Now sights and sounds were welcome, not intrusive and oppressive. I started going for walks into wooded areas and marvelling in awe at the beauty of the leaves and trees and flowers that I saw, and at the exquisite diversity of the bird song that I heard. People around me seemed kinder and more compassionate. I was more interested in listening than talking.

And I became aware that I had been released from a prison in which I had deprived myself of three essential keys to inner peace, these being GRATITUDE, HUMILITY and FORGIVENESS. In the darkness, I had lost sight of even the most obvious things such as gratitude for being alive and gratitude for my beautiful children. I was grateful to Joan for her love and loyalty and there were times that I became aware of lessons I could learn from her. There is a passage in 'Letters' that says:

> *When you meditate, you do not charge in and say 'I will now be good and move mountains by my act of faith.' No, you water your garden … the indwelling spirit doeth the work, not you, you merely water it … a very gentle, calm, unemotional selfless and patient attitude towards your spiritual growth is essential – such as all old gardeners know.*

Joan was a gardener. She patiently cultivated whatever she planted, whether in the soil or in her relationships. On the other hand, I was more likely to charge in and expect too much.

Lack of gratitude went along with arrogance, the arrogance of ego and intellect. Gratitude led to humility in the sense of the more you know, the less you know. When I studied Transcendental Meditation in London, I read the Science of Being and Art of Living by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in which he expresses this idea beautifully when he writes: 'the wider the circle of light, the greater the perimeter of darkness'.

As for forgiveness, I knew I had reached a point where I had a long list of grievances and a lot of people that I resented or blamed for one thing or another. At the top of this list was my father. Over time I learned that holding on to my anger toward him was only hurting myself. A few months after the

ultralight incident, I had a profound experience of forgiving my father. I was driving home in pouring rain after having had a very unpleasant cystoscopy from a urologist. (I had been anxious about how often I felt the urge to pee – another nervous symptom). Driving home through the pouring rain, I thought of my father and suddenly started crying as I thought of the suffering in his life – not the suffering he had caused but that he himself had experienced. He had gone completely blind by the age of 72 due to glaucoma. In 1985, I had gone for a check-up with an opthamologist and had been told that my intra-ocular pressures were too high and that I had glaucoma in its early stages. This sudden identification with my father marked the first indication of being able to let go of my anger towards him, the first sign of forgiveness – both giving it and asking for it. Later in my diary I wrote:

> *Dad, you had so much pain. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. It broke you when I sided with Mum and didn't go into the Army. I was your hope. It broke you. Now I understand. Now I understand your anger and your rejection. I'm not sure I can forgive your behaviour, but I forgive you and I ask for your forgiveness. Wherever you are Dad, I hope you hear me. I'm so sorry. I love you. I'm sorry I didn't understand you better.*
>
> *Does it always take 10 years to get around to grieving someone? All I saw was the father that I'd finally grown strong enough to face, to struggle with, to strike down. I couldn't and didn't see the old man, bitter, broken, blind, ready and yet afraid of dying, trying to find an opportunity to show me that he loved me, that he'd always loved me.*
>
> *'I was blind but now I see.'*
>
> *I'm sorry Dad. I love you. God bless you.*

Many if not most accounts of transformative experiences read like a 'before/after' script in which once illumination occurs, darkness is banished forever. The thrust of this book as a whole is that learning is not a linear process. Rather, in my experience as both student and teacher, learning is a spiral: you learn, you forget, you have to re-learn the same lesson, hopefully on a deeper and more complete level. There are always other, and frequently better ways to let your little light shine as sure as day follows night.

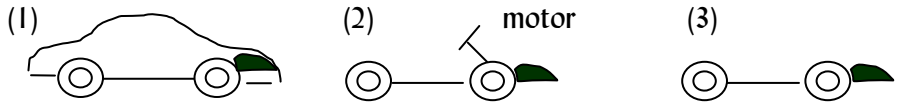
CHAPTER 12:

PERCEPTIONS, EMOTIONS & WILL

For what it's worth, I have been told by an astrologer that I have six signs in Scorpio, including sun, moon and ascendant. Scorpios are meant to be intense so I have not been surprised at being told that by others. This chapter is focussed on the three areas that I have experienced as being at the heart of that intensity. Of the three, will or will-power is the easiest to deal with.

In addition to being called intense, on occasion I have been described as 'driven'. Somewhere along the line, I reluctantly had to agree with this too. In one of my diaries, I have a picture that I drew while reflecting on this characterization:

<u>Driving yourself mad when 'WILL' is the driver</u>



integral

disembodied, unnerved
electrical system burned out

just left with 'WILL'
i.e. 'drive', and then if
that falters, you have
have major breakdown

At that time, in my forties, I had already experienced two breakdowns. Both my physical and mental health had deteriorated. It occurred to me that if I were an automobile, everything but the engine (will) was in poor shape: the battery (start up motivation) was low; the body was bashed up from various accidents; the shocks were almost gone; the radiator's (hypothalamus) cooling system didn't always function; the brakes (forcing the will to slow down) needed fixing as the stopping power was minimal; the electrical (nervous) system would short out from time to time due to frayed and cracked wiring. Meanwhile, however, the motor (motorvation/will/drive) was in great shape and firing on all eight cylinders. The motor was an obvious representation of my will. If 'I' was the driver, my will was so powerful that at times it drove 'me'.

The analogy also found expression in a reoccurring dream in which I found myself on a train that was out of control and headed for a precipice. In panic I frantically searched for a solution. Suddenly, I gained a different perspective and could see the train from the outside. As I became a witness to what was happening, my perception was no longer contained by the train. I could see that there was a way to save myself from imminent death and that was to jump off the train. The shattering insight was that I did in fact have this option. I could *choose* not to be driven to destruction. I could choose to remove myself from the situation. I could detach myself from whatever was driving me. My will did not have to be trapped within a train of thought or propelled by e-motion.

To draw out this analogy still further, let's bring 'over-conscientiousness' back into the picture. OC (the word is too long to keep writing it out in full!) as I pictured it, would suggest or demand that 'I', as the supposed driver *should* have several destinations at any one time ('voiceS of conscience' to accompany the 'trains of thought'). That meant several train tracks and hence the decision, if things got out of control, of having to decide whether to jump off one, two, or all the trains. Did it matter if I didn't arrive at the 'good father', 'loyal son', 'non-patriarchal' stations on time? In time?

There were various lessons to be learned from these sub-conscious messages:

(1) I needed to pay attention to the value of what I was doing and how I was being.

(2) I needed to see and heed warning signs about dangers (whether external or internal) to my well-being.

(3) I needed detachment so as to permit clear perceptions, and so as to make accurate assessments and intelligent choices.
(4) And … I needed to offset the controlling aspects of my will-power by staying in constant communication with my heart and mind and being prepared, when necessary, to surrender to a greater will.
(5) I needed to priorize my own self-care, and in particular, find ways to take care of destructive emotions rather than beat myself up for having them.

When I first encountered the concept of samsara and the 'wheel of suffering' in Buddhist writings, it resonated deeply. I began to see how many of the most painful experiences in my life had originated in 'clinging' – being intensely attached and being afraid of letting go; also not knowing what to let go of, when to let go, how to let go. Two of the most frequently used exhortations of my generation were 'let go' and 'move on'. My children's generation have re-introduced the contrary values of 'hold on' and 'stay put' – values that I had been conditioned with despite the 60's cultural revolution.

I had always wanted to defend my core values but by my forties, I had to admit that I was so attached to certain ideas, values and beliefs that in certain ways, I perpetuated my own suffering. I had become stubborn and hardened and this in turn had led to irritation and frustration that others didn't see things my way. I became impatient and angry and judgmental.

I began to understand the Buddhist concept of 'two arrows', in which being struck by an arrow = pain. If we don't accept that pain, then we are effectively shooting a second arrow at ourselves. That second arrow = unnecessary suffering. I began to see how certain values and beliefs influenced my emotions in either a constructive or destructive way. I began to see how certain painful experiences had repeated themselves so as to become a pattern woven with negative trains of thought and destructive story lines, both of which acted as a 'second arrow'.

An example of a value that I held dear, but one that paradoxically seemed to lead to trouble, was loyalty. My upbringing had inculcated the belief that I should be firmly attached to the virtue of loyalty. My father was an army officer during the Second World War. His father had been an army officer in the First World War. I attended a strict boarding school that wasn't that much different from being in the Army. My uncle was awarded a V.C. for the highest bravery (and loyalty) by rescuing members of his company in the face of fire.

I had played on competitive sporting teams from an early age and cannot recall anyone ever talking about 'loyalty'. Why? It didn't need to be talked about. It was assumed. It was an accepted and valued article of faith.

Then there was my mother's loyalty. The loyalty that she exhibited in both her relationships with *her* mother and my father was exemplary.

And what was the opposite of loyalty? The thing that was considered the most dishonourable, despicable act of all was the action of being disloyal to a friend. B-e-t-r-a-y-a-l … yikes! Trust me. That's the way it was. You did not cheat in exams, you did not cheat on your friend, you did not just leave someone high and dry. You did not miss opportunities to show your loyalty to your friend.

The community that I knew and had lived in and considered my home, was a *moral* society, leaving aside the qualitative assessment of those morals. When I left Sedbergh in 1965, I had an inner foundation of values that was like bedrock

* * *

And then it was 1966 and I was reborn into a world that I hardly knew. A world where I was hearing things like "do your own thing man", "we're all free to do our own thing man", "it's all cool man," "don't sweat it". And I would have inner thoughts like: 'yes but your 'freedom' is different from mine … if your 'free love' thing means you coming on to my girlfriend, are you saying that's OK – with you? with her? with me?' Somehow it seemed that the line between freedom and license had become blurred.

I had gone from a socially warm climate to a cool one, one symbolized by the immortal words "don't sweat it", and "chill out". My experience was that sweating was seen as natural and associated with good things like physical effort and endorphin highs. I didn't want to 'stay cool' all the time, laying around smoking dope and listening to music. I wanted to be active and out there and doing things and getting my highs from running and hiking, and as far as music was concerned, I wanted to be *producing* it more than *consuming* it.

That said, of course I was being influenced by this new culture and the result was (1) major cognitive dissonance between an inner world of self-restraint and an outer world of self-expression, and (2) the inception of a life-long quest to balance 'holding on/back' and 'letting go'.

But as I entered the world of relationships with women, I had a combination of Sedbergh values about loyalty, the will to be a better man than my father, combined with a total ignorance about the opposite sex. I wanted to prove the sincerity of my attachment. If there were problems, I wanted to prove that I would hang in there, hold on and try to fix whatever wasn't working. I wanted to show my girlfriend that she could trust me completely which meant not only would I not 'fool around', I wouldn't even flirt with another woman. I would take every opportunity to emphasize our 'we-ness'.

However the reality was that neither I nor my girlfriend were surrounded by male team-mates so she soon became aware of the intensity of my focus. I had a romantic notion that in a healthy loving relationship, the couple would spend most of their time together: being together, doing things together, sleeping together. At first (with Lesley), I wanted us to have mutual friends. At that time, having just worked at Expo '67, I had lots of friends. Given that I still had the deep sense of trust of the Sedbergh boy, I willingly introduced 'my' Lesley to them. In my value system, and hence my expectations, my girlfriend would be free to express herself while staying close to me, physically and emotionally, and taking opportunities to show others her allegiance to me. But in my first two relationships, with Lesley and Ellie, that's not what happened. Perhaps because of the anarchic spirit of the times, perhaps because of their personalities and upbringing (and reaction to it), perhaps because my over-attention became suffocating … gradually detachment replaced attachment to the point of eventual betrayal.

The result was that by my mid-twenties, my emotional make-up had changed significantly: less trust, more fear (leading to a greater propensity towards anxiety and jealousy), a growing repository of pain, anger and blame, and less self-confidence. The other factors in this change were the culturally divisive experience of being an immigrant, and the radical changes in my career path. As far as my will and values were concerned, I was in a state of confusion. There was a disconnect between my internal value system and the values (or lack of, as I saw it) of those around me. To better integrate the two, either I had to let go or at least modify some of my values, or I had to influence others to change theirs.

Both of these things happened although mostly on the self-help level. Here is one example of how I began altering my values. If it smoothed things to deny being attracted to my partner's friend, I became prepared to bend the absolute truth. My moral conditioning was much more about absolutes than it about partial or relative truths/values/principles. My value of honesty had been absolute. That meant no black lies, no white lies, no withholding of relevant information, completely forthright transparency with respect to actions, thoughts, feelings etc.

The shifts away from this were subtle. If I thought it might upset my girlfriend to tell her that I was meeting a friend (it could be male or female), I began to keep it to myself. The next shift was that if

she asked me directly where I had been, I began to consider the possibilities of tiny white lies to better 'package' my story. The time span is important here. There weren't any shifts to white lies until my thirties and there has always remained a baseline aversion to outright black lies. But despite growing signs of realistic expediency/pragmatism, at the same time the moralist in me was trying to influence others – not by imposition but rather by example, or by argument and persuasion.

By my mid to late thirties, I had become entrenched in a pattern of intense emotional attachment with my partner that more and more was becoming a fearful clinging, a source of ongoing friction and conflict that led ultimately to break-up. I had developed a deep 'pain-body' (as Eckhart Tolle would call it). I had become very aware of the role destructive emotions were playing in my life. These included anger, rage, fear, envy, jealousy, resentment, shame, blame, grudges. These emotions were mostly internalized and suppressed but would be released from time to time in explosive form.

At that time, I believed that emotions were at the core of who I was. This belief was strongly influenced by the cultural climate of the times which decried the 'stiff upper lip' values of our parents, and emphasized being in touch with your feelings and expressing them freely. The self-help books and in-vogue therapies were also centred around the primacy of one's emotions. So in my thirties, when I realized that will-power and my value system were not enough to 'fix' my problems, and I needed help, I became involved with bioenergetic therapy which took expression of emotions to the point of beating cushions with a tennis racquet when angry, curling up in foetal potion when afraid or in pain, and putting a finger down the throat to induce vomiting when feeling disgust. One was encouraged to shout, scream, swear, punch and let the tears flow. 'Let it all hang out' – the apex of self-expression and absence of self-restraint.

I began to question this view when it seemed that expressing emotions in this way, while being therapeutic as a pressure valve, did not appear to significantly reduce the size of, for example, the pain body. I also became aware that when I approached these destructive emotions in a cool detached medium such as writing, meditation and yoga, I gained perspective and insight and a certain peace of mind.

I began to reflect on the difference between 'feeling' and 'seeing' – whether in a perceptual or conceptual mode. I recalled the lessons of Don Juan in Castaneda's books where he emphasized the importance of being a 'man of knowledge' rather than someone ensnared in their personal history. And then one day I came across a quote from Arnold Mindell that resonated deeply and has continued to do so 'til this day'.

> *"Your perceptions are all you've got."*
> *"The spiritual component is the belief in the flow of our perception. After all, what else is there? Our perceptions are the only reality we know. If we believe other people's perceptions instead of our own, we've disavowed ourselves and pretty soon we've stopped loving ourselves too. But if we value our perceptions and follow them, we can eventually become whole. This is very different from what we usually do. Everyone says we should believe in our perceptions, but very few actually do."* (***IAB: unfortunately I do not have the source of this quote)

I realized that in addition to becoming over-attached, I tended to lose myself in a partnership. 'I' surrendered 'me' to 'we'. And so, in my quest to learn about myself and my world, the focus shifted from emotions to perceptions.

Many years later, I noted this quote from Mindell in his book <u>The Quantum Mind and Healing</u> that articulated more clearly what he meant by 'trusting your perceptions'. In talking about subtle energies that comprise realities beyond everyday definitions of what he calls 'consensus reality', he says:

"*You must use and depend on your own subjective experience and ability to sense things that are not 'consented upon' by others."*

It's not that you shouldn't be in touch with your emotions but rather that it is possible to locate one's consciousness in the 'witness' and hence use you perceptions to observe phenomena, including emotions, as they arise. You can gain the perspective to identify inner states as opposed to identify *with* them. This allows self-restraint, not in the sense of suppression or avoidance, but rather having the opportunity to choose whether to express the emotion to another person or deal with it internally. So, for example, rather than venting anger, Buddhists such as Thich Nhat Hanh would advise treating the angry state as you would a screaming infant in distress, recognize that it needs holding and comforting.

In addition, rather than my will being harnessed to my emotions, I could hitch it to perceptions in selecting where to direct my consciousness. And as a related but separate process, I could let my perceptions guide me into 'being led'. I began to better understand when to let my will be the leader, and when to surrender my will. Probably the first deeper understanding that I gained about this process was from improvising at the piano. I came to understand two important principles. The first had to do with the process of learning how to improvise *in general.* The second had to do with how to improvise *in the moment.*

How to improvise *in general*:

(1) Understand basic harmony (CONCEPTION)
(2) Look at the keyboard and convert the inner conceptual picture into what you see and what you want to play (PERCEPTION)
(3) Practice and play (SKILL)

How to improvise *in the moment*:

(1) Don't 'say' anything unless/until you have something you want to say (like at a Quaker meeting)
(2) Right hand (R.H.): brief melodic statement (no chords) of something it/you want to say
(3) LISTEN to what you have just played
(4) Left hand (L.H.) considers response while R.H. repeats statement
(5) L.H., when ready, gives response (could be just one note, i.e. 'I heard you', or it could be a reflection or elaboration of R.H. statement, i.e. 'is this what you said?' or 'let's explore that further')
(6) R.H. listens and responds
(7) Introduction of intervals/chords
(8) Introduction of tempo/beat/rhythm (if desired)

As in taking time and making space to 'see', the approach to an improvisation requires taking the time to 'listen' and really 'hear'. This process facilitates 'being led' by something other than will, pre-conceived thought or venting of emotions. It allows for the release of imagination, creativity and subtle energies. It allows for the experience of the mind and body being a channel through which a deeper reality can emerge. In a free improvisation, two musicians who are really listening to each other, who are really 'tuned in' and engaged in a back and forth conversation can produce spontaneous music of a higher order. In the solo situation described above, quantum physics would say that there are two wave functions, one from the player to the piano, the other from the piano to the player.

Earlier I talked about how my values began to change in my late twenties and thirties. Whereas initially I had resisted taking any mood-altering drugs, I gradually began to accept both psychotropic drugs and marijuana. One day, when I was living in Montreal, I had an extraordinary experience of 'seeing' subtle energies. I had been invited to a party by a gay man who I had met through a drama workshop. I had nothing better to do so I decided to go. At the party, I didn't know anyone and felt like the token 'straight' guy. I was offered a joint and accepted. It must have been very powerful weed because before long I began to experience significant heightening of my senses.

I was sitting in an armchair by myself in a hallway between the living room and the kitchen. Both rooms were full of guys talking, drinking, smoking and flirting. Gradually. I became aware that I was 'seeing' auras or pulsing emanations around each individual. Some were well defined and powerful, others were weaker. I could see these auras interacting with others. For example, with one couple, I could see the man with the strong aura becoming restless, his body beginning to incline away from a straight-on orientation, his eyes beginning to wander. The guy with the weaker aura became aware of this and appeared to move closer, his movements taking on an air of agitation. As the first guy *clearly* began to detach, the other guy began to cling. Then, I observed the first guy making eye contact with another guy across the room. To my astonishment, I began to see a field of energy emerging that connected them. This was accompanied by body language by both men indicating interest and attraction. Then, in another shift, I became aware that I *knew*, I could predict the exact time of the split and the 'moving on' to the new object of interest. For the following hour, I sat in my armchair, observing and making predictions of who was going to move where. Time and again the predictions were accurate. What was also evident was that the verbal interactions were more often than not a smokescreen for what was *really* going on.

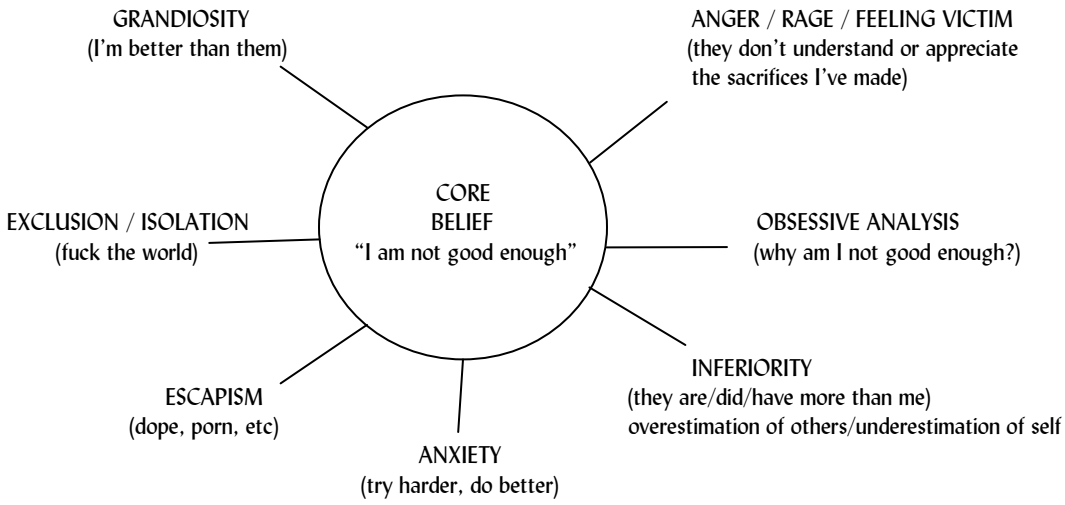
As a final example of how being centred in perceptions rather than emotions seemed to produce beneficial results, there is the case of my mother. My mother was a classically trained pianist. She was accepted by the Royal Academy of Music but decided not to enrol in the program. As a young boy, I have memories of my mother playing the baby grand in the living room. She played Chopin, Beethovan and Debussy. I loved hearing her play but noticed that she often seemed sad. When my parents moved to a much smaller residence in 1962, they had to carry out a considerable downsizing. On returning to Edinburgh from Sedbergh for the Christmas holidays, I was shocked to find that my mother had sold the piano. It seemed as if she had got rid of an important outlet for her feelings. However, a few years later, my mother started expressing herself through her art work – mostly drawings in coloured pencil. On my trips over from Canada, I began to notice how her interest in developing her technique, and her commitment to a very productive output, continued to increase. It became evident just how therapeutic this activity was for her. Whereas the piano took her into her tortured emotional self, her art work was all about her perceptions – both from here and now experience and from memories of childhood events. Both the process and the product seemed calming to her. She worked slowly and methodically from her favourite armchair and behind the desk, observing street scenes from the bay window. Eventually I concluded that if playing the piano had triggered anxiety and depression (which it had), then I was glad that circumstances had obliged her to turn to drawing.

In my case I discovered that working in a spatial dimension, whether video production, rearranging my furniture, drawing or painting affected me similarly. It took my conscious awareness away from being time-bound. It somehow made it easier to be in the moment.

* * *

When my kids were growing up, it was easy to think that I was in the moment most of the time. The passage of time each day was marked by a series of planned actions. But both the planning and the later sharing and reviewing of what had happened involved future and past reflection respectively. As my involvement in Buddhist theory and practice began to deepen, I realized just how little time I spent 'in the now', and just how much time I had spent in my life being stuck in both feelings and thought loops. My biggest mental attachment was an obsession with understanding how and why things happened the way they did. When I reviewed decades of my journal writing, I could not escape the fact that the majority of the entries were expressions of the angst of relationships with all its painful feelings and confusion. Again and again there would be a repeated pattern of the same old feelings with the same old attempts to analyze the causes and the remedies. Much of this wheel of suffering involved the kind of identity confusion already talked about in Chapters 6 and 7. I came to realize that I had a core belief that I was not good enough, that I was ashamed of being inadequate in one way or another, and that this manifested as various symptoms.

Here is a diagram I drew in my Journal at one point:



Even before Buddhist writers, I found Eckhart Tolle's book The Power of Now useful. In fact, now that I re-read Tolle, I am struck by how he reframes many of the Buddhist axioms in language that is clear and easy to understand. There are only three writers that I would put in a master-teacher category: T. H. Bottomore in his book Introduction to Sociology; Erich Fromm for his various syntheses of Freud and Marx; and now Eckhart Tolle.

In my own struggles to understand identity and answer the question 'who am I?', I had developed a holistic curriculum that conceived of different aspects of 'the person' and how they could be developed through the learning process (see diagram on p. 38), but this model didn't really clarify who the person was – the person that was the totality of these aspects.

First of all, Tolle makes it clear what we are not. We are not our rational mind. We are not our thoughts or feelings. We are not our ego. According to Tolle, we are "the watcher not the thinker" – we are our consciousness that can act as a witness to what we think, feel or do. And in order to *be* who we really are, we need to learn to live in the present moment and that involves *disidentification from the mind.* That it is hard because the ego is so dominant. What we have to do is end the delusion of Time,

i.e. "the compulsion to live almost exclusively through memory and anticipation, a compulsion which arises because the past gives you an identity, and the future holds the promise of salvation." As Tolle puts it, *"the mind/ego resists the timeless NOW because it cannot function/remain in control without past/future time," and "the ego is the unobserved mind that runs your Life when you are not present as the witnessing consciousness, the watcher."*

Just when you think you have enough to digest for weeks to come, Tolle gives you more. He ties in another area that for years I had sought clarification, namely destructive emotions – especially states of anxiety and depression:

> Tolle quotes Byron Katie:
> *"Unease, anxiety, tension, stress, worry – all forms of fear – are all caused by TOO MUCH FUTURE and not enough presence," and then points out that one always imagines the future as better or worse than the present. If it seems better it gives you hope. If it seems worse it gives you ANXIETY."*
> He then goes on to say: *"Guilt. Regret, resentment, grievances, sadness, bitterness, and all forms of non-forgiveness are caused by TOO MUCH PAST and not enough presence." (my emphasis)*

(Quotes are from Eckhart Tolle, A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose, Dutton, 2005)

So Tolle is saying that in addition to attaching itself to the past and future, the ego is what attaches itself to different identities and roles, none of which are our true self. As examples of ego identifications, he mentions: possessions, social status, knowledge and education, physical appearance, special abilities, relationships, personal and family history, belief systems (political, religious, etc).

And then he deals with emotional pain by saying that we all have an emotional 'pain body' which is "a dark shadow cast by the ego" based on accumulated pain from the past. It manifests as a sense of lack, not being good enough, not being worthy and incompleteness. Tolle says that people try to fill this emptiness with possessions, success, power, a special relationship or escapist pursuits of one kind or another.

The key to not being fooled into thinking you are your thoughts or feelings is *disidentification*. It is important to identify your thoughts and feelings but not to identify *with* them as being who you are.

However with some problems, I could not find the answers in books or other external sources like Internet.

Tinnitus for example: tinnitus produces a ringing in the ears, except it feels like it's in the back of your head. Anyone who has experienced ear pressure, popping and/or pain in aircraft take-off or descent, knows that it is unpleasant and stressful. You just want it to go away. And within an hour or a day or two, it does go away. In the case of the acoustic trauma incident, one minute my hearing was normal, the next it was radically changed. And it stayed that way. At first the noise in my head, although unpleasantly loud, was intermittent but after a week or so, it became constant and remained loud.

I am a musician. My hearing had always been sensitive and acute. I was distressed by what had happened. I expected, then hoped, then begged for things to return to normal. But they didn't. For the past eleven years there has been a constant ringing that hasn't let up even for a second. At first I thought I would go crazy. Then I tried to get perspective by shifting my focus from my feelings to my perceptions. It was 2006 and I had been reading and practicing being in my 'witness'. What I found was that the witness was able to say 'well, this noise is certainly unpleasant but it's not going away so

you have a choice … you can either let it drive you crazy or you can realize that the noise is not 'you' … you can learn to accept it … you will still hear it but to the extent that you can shift your awareness elsewhere, you will suffer less due to your detachment … just get good at changing the station (and train of thought … just tune in to something nice, and you'll be fine.
THE NOISE FROM THE TINNITUS IS NOT YOU.

And gradually I got better at doing that. I stopped shooting the second arrow.

Another problem I had to sort out on my own was the hyperventilation that accompanied panic attacks. The incident with the ultralight was so traumatic that it led to years of anxiety states. When the bodymind experiences extreme fear, the rate and depth of breathing rapidly increases. Chemical changes can happen with overbreathing. Hyperventilation causes the carbon dioxide level in the blood to decrease. This lower level of carbon dioxide reduces blood flow to the brain, which may result in the following nervous system and emotional symptoms: weakness, dizziness, confusion, agitation, a feeling of being outside yourself and feeling as if you can't breathe. In my case, this last symptom gradually intensified to the point where I began to lose my trust that my body could breathe itself, i.e. normal, automatic breathing. This was something I hadn't encountered in my self-help research so I began to analyze what was involved in my normal breathing process. I discovered that in an anxiety state, my chest got frozen and my breathing 'stuck' at the end of the out breath. As a result, I had to learn how to consciously direct my breathing. I observed my natural, automatic breathing rhythm.

It was as follows:
· INBREATH: count of 3
· OUTBREATH: count of 5 or 6
Slight sound as air is puffed out through nostrils

Overbreathing happened when I anxiously breathed in after only about 3 seconds outbreath. If I did that, I lost the automatic figure-of-eight 'loop' back from the abdominal outbreath. I found that the best thing to do was to focus on the outbreath (slow it down and deepen it). I gained the insight that 'the grip of fear' literally describes the sensations in the chest and that to loosen that grip, it helped to breathe with the stomach (lower, middle, upper portions of the lungs), and to be conscious of a slow inbreath and a rapid outbreath. The grip also seemed to jam the automatic triggering of the inbreath – the automatic switching from outbreath to inbreath got stuck. The knot of tightness in the chest felt like frozen energy that held one in an 'icy grip.'

One day the image of a gorilla beating its chest came to mind. I had previously associated that with anger but I had learned that what was usually behind anger was fear. That made me think that perhaps the gorilla was beating his breast so as to loosen the fear and keep the blood pumping so as to be ready to fight if necessary. I tried to think of instances of breast beating with humans and came up with the example of Greek or Persian women doing just that when in a state of grief.

My intuition says that beating the breast is a bioenergetic way of releasing such deep emotions as fear, pain and rage. The idea is to channel overwhelming emotional and psychological pain into physical pain. I can understand that even the Shia custom of *matam* (male self-flagellation with chains and blades) is a ritual whose purpose is to lessen *emotional* pain by channelling it into *physical* pain.

In the weeks that followed the ultralight incident, I felt I should confront my fear by not only going up in the ultralight again but also by driving in the dark. That was when I found the chest pounding worked to lessen the panic. It was quite literally 'drumming up the courage' to face the fear.

There were other cases in which, rather than fighting inner fears, a passive mode of accepting and surrendering to the symptoms of fears worked best. In the aftermath of the ultralight incident, Joan

and I bought and installed a flotation tank. We both had some experience of 'tanking' and had experienced the calming benefits of an hour or more of floating in an environment devoid of stimuli other than subtle ripples of the brine solution responding to any body movement. In one of my first floats, I suddenly had heaving heart palpitations. It wasn't the first time. I had been having them off and on and, thanks to Claire Weekes and Hope & Help For Your Nerves, knew they were one of the symptoms of an anxiety state/nervous breakdown.

However in that pitch black, sound-deadened environment, I was aware of my racing pulse and the intensity of my beating heart. My raw anxiety led to thoughts of 'what if I had a heart attack?' 'what if I couldn't get the tank door open … no-one would hear my cries for help'. At that moment, I realized that I had to detach from such thoughts by shifting my consciousness to 'the witness'. When I did that, I heard the voice of my heart saying in a hurt tone, 'when have I ever let you down?' 'you have pushed me and driven me with your controlling will and I have taken it and continued to serve you faithfully'. As I listened to this voice, I felt compassion for (and in) my heart. Rather than beating my breast, I wanted to stroke it, soothe it, comfort it, show gratitude. And as I did that, I began to feel my pulse slow down and the pounding vibrations lessen. It was as if the hurricane had passed and the storm surge no longer posed any danger. And then the ripples ceased and it felt as if my heart had opened and surrendered and was at peace. It was a profound experience and one of several that deepened my understanding of trust and faith as antidotes to fear.

In the years that followed, I started to learn what it meant to 'take care of oneself'. I had toenail fungus and they were brittle and yellowed. I had tooth decay that had got to the point where my dentist announced that one tooth after another could no longer be 'filled'. Some extractions led to bridges being removed because the gap would now require an implant.

It's not that I lacked the ability to care. I had been taking care of my students for decades. I had been taking care of my children. I was doing my best to care for my mother. I had taken care of my beloved dog Rusty every day for over twelve years. But taking care of *myself* had been trumped by struggles to survive. I had finally begun to identify lack of *self*-care as a problem; so much of my reading of Buddhist literature had to do with loving yourself, being kind to yourself, taking care of yourself.

When I retired as a teacher and shifted my focus to music therapy, I observed how men in general didn't know how to take care of themselves as well as women. In the geriatric facility at which I work, it strikes me that there is an institutional double standard. For the most part, there isn't much 'healing touch' with the exception of visits to the hairdresser. For the past six years, I have seen how much the half hour of washing, drying, trimming, styling gives pleasure to the women residents; how it helps bolster a sense of self-esteem and pride in appearance. However, this pleasure isn't extended to the male residents. Maybe the thinking is 'well they don't have much hair left anyway', or 'men don't care about anything over and above a quick back and sides', or 'well, they've never asked about it'.

As I reflected on what it might mean to take care of myself, one question led to another. What could I do to have a better diet? What treats could I allow myself? How could I improve my appearance with respect to clothes, shoes, grooming? What could I do in terms of gaining greater peace of mind? What things could I do for my body that would be healthy and/or pleasurable? Maybe I could buy some sheets that feel really good?' I felt like I'd enrolled in Male Self-Care – Level 1. A very large door was gradually opening.

* * *

One of my favourite Buddhist writers was Pema Chödrön. I had been practicing Mindfulness Vipassana meditation, a technique used to create awareness and insight by practicing focused attention, observing, and accepting all that arises without judgment. Pema Chödrön introduced me to Tonglen meditation. 'Tonglen' means 'giving and receiving' and this approach involves an attitude of openness towards suffering and an awakening of the heart towards giving and receiving compassion. In talking about emotional pain, Pema says:

> *"We put up protective walls made of opinions, prejudices and strategies, barriers that are built on a deep fear of being hurt. These walls are further fortified by emotions of all kinds: anger, craving, indifference, jealousy and envy, arrogance and pride. But fortunately for us, the soft spot—our innate ability to love and to care about things—is like a crack in these walls we erect." ('Bodhichitta: The Excellence of Awakened Heart', by Pema Chödrön in 'Lion's Roar – Buddhist Wisdom for Our Time', June 17, 2016).*

The purpose of the practice of tonglen meditation is to cultivate that soft spot. The approach seemed counter-intuitive to me at first. The instruction was to focus on an internal or external source of conflict and to breathe in the negative feeling associated with that, and then to breathe out the positive energy of kindness, compassion, and often forgiveness. One day, a few years after Joan and I had separated, I was in touch with a lot of anger toward her. I was sceptical about whether tonglen would help but decided to give it a try. I knew from past experience that when Joan allowed herself to be vulnerable with me, it had the effect of softening the hardness of my feelings. I had a photograph of her with her two older sisters, taken when she was seven or eight years old. She was the youngest and tended to be dominated at times by one or both sisters. In the photo she looks skinny and frail.

I sat cross-legged, still fuming, and stared at the picture. Then I started breathing in the black smoke of my anger and breathed out my underlying feelings of compassion for Joan. The shift in my feeling state was remarkable. Within a relatively short time, the anger had been replaced by my underlying feelings of love for her and I felt I had ceased shooting myself with 'second arrows'.

CHAPTER 13:

THE LAST 8 YEARS: FROM 62 TO 70
2009-2017

When I was at Queens, I remember a Psych professor describing Freud's model of the personality as being like a hamburger where the top bun is the superego (conscience), the bottom bun is the id (instincts) and the meat patty in between is the ego. Having conjured up such a memorable image, he added "yes, and sometimes the ego is squashed and squeezed between the superego and the id."

Even as early as my twenties, I was aware that my superego was outsized while my id exerted a relentless force thrusting upwards. My id was a driving desire saying 'do it'. At the same time my superego was insisting 'don't do it'. Meanwhile the poor old ego was finding it hard to mediate between these two counter-opposing forces.

My conscientious (or over-conscientious) self had originated with my father's 'musts' and my mother's 'shoulds'. But the real development had taken place at Sedbergh. The lessons I had received at Sedbergh were centred around having an indomitable will, an unselfish attitude, an ability to face pain, and a distrust of gratuitous, temporal pleasures. As quoted before, the school song described this value system perfectly:

Strain and struggle might and main
Scorn defeat and laugh at pain
Never shall you strive in vain
In The Long Run

One of the hardest lessons I have had to learn (and am still learning) is that pushing myself repeatedly to the point of pain is just p(l)ain stupid. I was too indoctrinated in the necessity to struggle and strain and put up with pain. How come the notion of pleasure was so questionable? My inner critic could scorn Robin for making Life a Beach, but honestly … he did have a point!

I realized that I should shift my attitude. Buddha discovered that the kind of suffering that came from self-inflicted stoicism and self-denial was unnecessary. It took me half my life to really become aware of the fact that the most obvious antonym of pain was pleasure, and that pleasure could refer to self-*care* as opposed to self-indulgence. The 'lesson' from Sedbergh that needed to be unlearned was the notion that the pursuit of pleasure was inextricably linked with selfishness, indulgence and greed *unless* it was the intrinsic reward of achieving some worthwhile goal.

When I arrived at Queens in 1966, I was well acquainted with the pleasure to be had from an endorphin 'high' after a long run. I would resist the temptations of the drug culture by arguing 'why would anyone want to get high from drugs when there was this worthy natural high'? I resisted the lure of drugs for years. Why would I want this passive ingestion of chemicals? It wasn't worthwhile because it hadn't been earned. I even extended this argument to the practice of meditation. Maybe repeating a mantra was akin to taking a drug, maybe Karl Marx would include it as just another opiate of the masses. The Sedbergh boy was a warrior, trained for action and combat not sitting on a hillside with a bunch of stoned hippies. There were more important things to do than stopping and smelling the flowers. In my twenties I didn't take any drugs at all and that included aspirin and Tylenol.

But all that changed in my thirties, initially due to my struggles with insomnia. Having tried all the natural (worthy) treatments available (yoga, meditation, camomile tea, valerian root, massage, hypnotherapy, long runs, etc), I reluctantly acquiesced to accepting benzodiazepines. From time to time, I even accepted a puff or two of a joint from a friend. I wouldn't do hard drugs but weed was beginning to become acceptable.

In my forties, an enlightened psychiatrist referred me to the Compassion Club – a legal dispensary of medical marijuana. Her opinion was that I did not have a disorder but that I had experienced a lot of psychological trauma and that weed could replace some of that internalized pain with 'in the now' pleasurable sensory experience. It was around this time that I started taking Buddhist

thought/practice more seriously. The Freudian hamburger immediately spoke up and warned that Buddha would not approve of chemical highs. But by this point in my life I was clear that I would make my choices according to what felt right rather than any dogma, whether from Buddhism or English public school ideology. Hard exercise had its place, as did yoga, meditation, good food, soulful music … and sensory enhancers.

By my sixties, I had become a regular visitor to the Compassion Club. I would buy a gram or two of indica or sativa and take a puff or two from time to time. I liked getting a 'buzz' not a full-blown 'high'. Then, as I had increasing problems with anxiety and depression. I became more clinical in my approach. I began to observe and record what happened in different circumstances. There is no question that marijuana takes me out of my overactive thinking mind and into a calmer place of sensory appreciation. It *has* been a medicinal drug with respect to states of both anxiety and depression.

* * *

The past ten to fifteen years has been a time of trying to learn from my mistakes and chart a simpler and happier course, one that avoided both sharp rocks and stormy weather if possible. The main allies on this path have been inner exploration guided by Buddhist philosophy/practice and an attempt to understand and implement 'self-care'. But before I get to that, I need to deal with a series of experiences over an extended period of time that tested me to the limit. These experiences are described in 3 Strikes – Not Out and refer to my third trip to the underworld of mental stress, distress and breakdown. Reflection on this period has given rise to insights that have deepened my understanding of questions concerning identity and mindful choice.

In 1994 Joan and I separated. I moved into a three bedroom Rancher on First Nations land outside White Rock. Three years later, I was taken to court by both Joan and Chloe (mother of Jasmine) for child maintenance payments. Even though I was working full time at Kwantlen University College, the close to $1000 payments on top of the land lease rent and other living expenses, meant that I had little disposable income. After my divorce with Joan, I had joint custody and continued to arrange equal time child care with Joan. I didn't begrudge paying towards Jasmine's upkeep because previously I had not supported her financially. However I was bitter and angry at Joan for reneging on a Provincial Court mediated settlement and insisting on forced arbitration. Whereas she had representation in Court from a Legal Aid lawyer, I didn't qualify for Legal Aid and instead had to pay for coaching so as to represent myself.

At this same time, my mother was in her mid eighties and I was taking most of the responsibility for her care which, amongst other things, meant an annual visit to see her in Edinburgh. For years, my sister had put my mother's care as a low priority and I resented her lack of support. Then my brother was charged with embezzling £60,000. Facing the real possibility of a prison sentence, he approached my mother to bail him out. She refused. My brother pleaded his disability situation and persuaded the court to let him off as an undischarged debtor. Then, with my sister's support and without my knowledge, he managed to get my mother to change her Will so that his daughter would get his one third of the inheritance.

In the year 2000, my mother died. In the wake of brother and sister's collusion over her Will, I felt like I wanted to distance myself from both of them. Years of estrangement ensued. Bit by bit I felt I was being crushed by events beyond my control. And there was no let up. In 2007-2008, there was a global financial crisis. Despite misgivings, a few years earlier, I had been persuaded to put the majority of my mother's inheritance into mutual funds with an investment bank. The crisis in 2008 caused the value of my stocks to plummet and eventually, in consternation, I transferred them to a charter bank.

And then there were the choices that I could have made but didn't, the lessons that I should have learned but didn't and/or still haven't. Most of my painful experiences had come from intimate relationships. Following the breakup with Joan, I could have decided 'enough is enough' and opted for a life of platonic friendships. I could have made establishing some emotional stability a priority. But that's not what happened. Instead, the pattern of financial/emotional needs, attraction, temptation, involvement, attachment and entanglement continued. In 1995 I became involved with a Polish woman called Anya and in October 1996 we got married. Joan and I had been common-law partners due to the fact that neither of us believed in traditional marriage. Anya had two grown up children and, given that meetings between my kids and them had seemingly gone well, I had visions of a functional family in which Anya's son and daughter would be like older siblings to Annie and Ben. This led me into thinking that formal marriage might stabilize both my relationship with Anya and the new 'blended' family.

I hoped for too much. Annie and Ben loved Joan and I in equal measure. Our separation had been particularly hard on Annie who was a teenager at the time. She had held-in pain and anger, and the stress and distress of what had happened may have been the cause of her developing Crohn's disease. Anya wanted me to put her above my kids and I couldn't do that. At the same time we were trying to make things work out as parents to our respective children. I was dealing with the court case with Joan, working full time, and trying to make the dilapidated Rancher habitable. For a year I tried to keep things together both externally and internally but I couldn't do it. In 1997 Anya and I separated and a few years later went through a formal divorce. I vowed I would not get involved again and for ten years I didn't.

In 2006, I had to have my beloved dog Rusty put down. Later that year, as already mentioned, I had the feedback incident that seriously affected my hearing. I felt like I was falling apart both physically and psychologically. I was taking eye drops for glaucoma, medications for both high blood pressure and hypothyroidism, clonazepam for anxiety and agitation, welbutrin for depression, and zopiclone for sleep problems. In addition, I was dealing with threats of eviction by the Federal Government. In the midst of all this, I got involved with a South African woman who I had met on one of my music therapy engagements. That relationship and the previously mentioned factors tipped me from a general state of depression into the depths of a serious major depression – a 'clinical depression' – the third strike of mental illness in my life. This period of almost three years is described in the memoir 3 Strikes, Not Out, pp. 26-60.

* * *

My life started changing for the better in the Fall of 2009 when I moved to Vancouver. I moved into a one-bedroom unit on the top floor of a hundred year old heritage house on East 10th., close to Broadway and Commercial Drive. Ben's best friend Diego and his partner Ellie had decided to settle in her home country of Australia. Ben knew I was looking for a place and when he told me about the upcoming vacancy I jumped on it.

Right from the start, everything felt 'right' – the size, shape and feel (feng shui) of the apartment, the neighbours, the majestic chestnut trees lining the street, the proximity to the shops and skytrain, the multicultural and politically 'left' nature of the neighbourhood, the funkiness of the Drive. True, the attic and walls had virtually no insulation but it only troubled me when the external temperature went lower than -5 degrees C.

However when I first moved in, I was still recovering from depression. I was shaky and unconfident. Fortunately, I had some anchors, these being my part-time music therapy job and my relationships with my three children and my best friends – Lynne, Tony and Warren. My job was at an

intermediate Care Home in Richmond, only a 25 minute drive from my new home. I am still working there at the age of 70 and hope to keep going another 3-5 years depending the overall state of my health. I love my work as a music therapist. Getting positive feedback, support, and encouragement from residents, relatives and staff, is therapeutic for me. I run a choir and a large sing-along group. In addition, I do more focussed work with small groups and one-to-ones. The three mornings a week are not taxing and provide over $1000 a month income. This covers my rent while my pension income covers food and other expenses. And I have some disposable income at the end of it. I can take my children to a restaurant, maintain the car, upgrade the contents of my living-space, and buy audio-visual equipment as needed.

When I first moved here, my son Ben was still at music school and hating it. He had never been a 'good student'. Like me, he learned informally by osmosis and following his own sequence of development. He was a gifted musician and 'knew' more than many of his instructors. In the end, he became convinced that spending more money (and piling up more student debt) in order to get a Diploma didn't make sense unless he wanted to be a teacher. But Ben was clear. He didn't want to be a teacher. He wanted to play and perform and experiment. He wanted to explore free improvisation with other musicians and, in particular, with dancers. It was a hard road he had chosen. He was making a name for himself locally but there was little money in it.

However in 2013, his band 'Pugs and Crows' won a Juno award for best instrumental album of the year. That was the breakthrough he needed. He gained confidence and amongst other projects, set up MAMM (Music and Movement Mondays) – a vehicle for some of Vancouver's best musicians and dancers to meet and explore ideas and artistic forms. More recently, he has received Arts grants to work in Amsterdam and Berlin. He has also studied, on two separate occasions, with the world renowned percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie in the U.K.

Meanwhile Annie was earning a steady income as a Celtic music teacher and making a name for herself as a performer. She had gone through her twenties angry at both Joan and I and had found her 'family' elsewhere. Gradually she and I made headway and when I moved to Vancouver, we began to see each other on a regular basis. Slowly, respect and trust increased and with it, an opening of her heart and mine. I have more to say about Annie in the next (last) chapter.

Although both Annie and Ben had met Jasmine and her mother Chloe, they hadn't had much opportunity to get to know each other better. We came up with the idea of a once-monthly movie and pot luck night at my house. There was a need for the four of us to become a family. We called ourselves JABIDI (Jasmine, Annie, Ben, Ian, Domus Inspiratus). The plan was put into motion and things worked out really well. Over the months, the bonds between us strengthened and a sense of group identity and belongingness developed. Annie, Ben and Jasmine accepted each other as siblings and as friends. At the same time, I felt I could be the father I wanted to be.

As far as Joan and I were concerned, we gradually emerged from outright hostility (as long as the subject of money matters or what was 'fair' wasn't brought up) and came to recognize and accept that we were a 'deep river' and had a lasting love for each other, despite all the bad stuff that had happened. As parents, we were both immensely proud of Annie and Ben and I was grateful for the way that Joan warmed up to Jasmine. We had always had interests in common, and the fact that we both entered the world of Buddhist philosophy and practice at the same time was a healing energy between us.

In May 2015, Annie and her long time partner Mike got married. At the ceremony, Joan met Chloe and Jasmine, and Joan and I got to meet Mike's relatives. Out of the ashes, it seemed as if a functional extended family was taking shape. My brother Robin unfortunately died in 2012 but Ben has started to get to know his daughter Shuna and her family on his visits to Europe. Over the past 5-10 years, all three of my children have got to know my sister Joy, especially Jasmine who lived in Montreal while at University. Her caring and consideration for my children has touched me and slowly I have been

able to detach from negative feelings about what had happened with my mother. We finally met in November 2016 and it was wonderful to see how everyone accepted Joy into the fold. By everyone, I mean Annie and Mike, Jasmine and Paddy, Ben and I and Joan. And of course she met Sebastian (Jasmine's son) and now is Great Aunt to another baby boy – Annie's son Desmond.

Times have changed. Rather than compartmentalizing and trying to keep people apart, I am now secure enough to want to bring them together. The fears of rejection and abandonment are receding. Rather than viewing family get-togethers with alarm, I have begun to see and welcome the possibilities of positive experiences for all.

As far as friends go, Lynne, Tony and Warren remain my best friends. We are all getting old. Tony had a quintuple heart bypass, Lynne is just coming out of a year in which her life was completely disrupted due to a serious medical condition that had involved inflammation of the brain. And Warren has developed Parkinson's disease which is now affecting his mobility, amongst other things.

* * *

This memoir is entitled Lessons for Teacher. I started it with the following questions:

Is LIFE a game to be played, a contest to be won (fairly or by whatever means), or a morality play in which one must strive to facilitate equality and equity – a stage upon which to play one's part? Or perhaps it is just a tragicomedy with histrionic undertones.

Here are some things I have learned and continue to learn:

(1) I push myself too hard to the point of being perfectionist – and this coming from a fear of not measuring up
(2) I need to learn to let things go (especially resentments and grudges) while at the same time knowing what to hold on to (e.g. my perceptions, the 'I' in the 'we')
(3) I need to know who I am and trust who I am without feeling I have to please others all the time or that I have to explain or justify myself to others.
(4) I need to detach myself from an obsessive need to be right.
(5) I need to identify thoughts and feelings (e.g. fears) without identifying WITH them (e.g. knowing that the voice of depression or anxiety is not 'me')
(6) I need to accept and believe that self-care is not 'selfish'.
(7) I need to protect myself by having boundaries so that I don't lose the ego capacity to function.
(8) I need to recognize and be grateful for what others give me.
(9) I am a dualist. On the one hand, I believe in the spiritual qualities of love, compassion and forgiveness. On the other hand, we exist mainly on a material level in which power (economic, social, etc) is a key determinant of happiness and greatly influences one's capacity to love.
(10) I need to be mindful of being in the present and conscious of sensory experience rather than stuck in patterns of thought.

Question: *And what have you see my blue-eyed son, and what have you seen my darling young one?*

I've seen how power corrupts and blinds. The further up the socio-economic ladder you are, the less you want to look down at those below you. And if you do, you see only the tops of their heads, an amorphous, undifferentiated mass. I've seen how those at the top gain freedom of movement but can

become spiritually impoverished by their wealth, living in fear behind gates and the guardians of their security. And I've seen how those at the bottom can become imprisoned on both a material and a spiritual level, to the point where they yearn for escape, any kind of escape.

I have seen how resilient we can be, how able to meet challenges, keeping hope alive, trying to find a better way. But I have also seen how trauma can leave a lasting imprint. I have seen the deep pain within Aboriginal peoples due to centuries of injustice and suffering and how they have to keep their anger hidden lest it explodes and leads to yet more suffering.

I have seen how myths are continually created to justify power and entitlement, and how that can occur at the other end of the ladder in some of the assumptions of victim entitlement.

I have seen how group pressure to conform to a current ideology can have far-reaching creative and/or destructive consequences, depending on whether one belongs to the 'IN' group or the 'OUT' group.

I have seen how good people with open hearts and minds yearn for the day when racial, ethnic, religious and gender differences will be overlooked.

I have seen how the individualism of the 'me' generation has gradually fragmented authentic community involvement into numerous interest groups.

I have seen how music is no longer heard on the streets of our cities as the inhabitants of the houses have become 'plugged in'; how conversation on the buses has been replaced by the silence of those plugged in and the unwanted noise of those on their cell phones

I have seen how everyone is speaking a different language; how alienation and estrangement have eroded a sense of common purpose.

I have seen how class divisions have become more pronounced. I have seen how inheritance and the property market are the main determinants of increased wealth not hard work or education. I have seen how those who start with little wealth can benefit from the social power of large, united families and how those who are single renters are the most vulnerable.

I have seen how mental illness has not yet emerged from the closet. There is still a stigma. It's OK to say you've been to a 'counsellor'; it raises eyebrows to say you've been to a 'psychologist'; many people would not admit to seeing a 'psychiatrist'; and the stigma really kicks in if you've been in a psych. ward. There is little understanding of what is involved in schizophrenia, clinical depression or an anxiety state. There is even less understanding of the experience of psychological pain, as opposed to emotional pain. Major funding for mental illness is not widely supported.

I have seen lines of homeless and drug addicts outside the Carnegie Centre, and lines of BMWs, Mercedes, Porsches and Range Rovers crossing Knight Street Bridge every time I drive to work.

I have seen all the old people warehoused in Care Homes (most with few if any visitors) in my work as a music therapist. And I have seen the inevitable aging and death amongst my family and friends.

I have seen my daughters blossom as they experience the first years of their sons, and the love and pride in the grandparents' faces.

I have seen and experienced quite a bit.

But I haven't gone skydiving … yet.

CHAPTER 14:

EPILOGUE
Lessons from children & other sages

At the beginning of this book, I made the point that many of Life's lessons seem to be about RE-learning what we already know. What strikes me in reflecting on what I have learned from my children is how similar some of this wisdom is to lessons I have been engaged in learning over the past ten years of Buddhist study and practice.

For example, children know how to live in the present moment. They are open to new experiences. They don't distinguish between 'mine' and 'yours' until enculturated with ideas about possessions. They are carefree. They know about 'letting go'. They don't hold on to anger or grudges. They have a natural propensity to forgive. They understand innately 'non-attachment' and don't have to read about it.

When the Dalai Lama first came to North America, he couldn't understand the prevalence of feelings of inadequacy and shame. Children in Tibet were brought up without that self-consciousness. When my children were very young, I saw their fearlessness in speaking or acting out their truth. I saw their willingness to take risks. They didn't have to work on believing in themselves – until their 'compulsory miseducation' (as Paul Goodman would call it) taught them to doubt.

When they were very young, I saw their innate trust; their instinctual and intuitive 'knowing'; they way they were unafraid of letting their imagination run wild; the way that they could dream big; the way that they would immerse themselves in one thing at a time, and through their single-minded concentration, find pleasure in small things. And this trust extended to others.

Young children have the ability to see everybody as special. They have an inbuilt attitude of seeing the good in people. They don't have to read books or take courses in order to love unconditionally. They are non-judgmental. And most, if not all of this, *before* we teach them to multi-task and look out for number one, and prove themselves 'again and again'.

And now as a grandfather, I see my two daughters experiencing the wonder and beauty of their young sons. And they start to re-learn as mothers what it means to love unconditionally. And as a grandfather, I re-live their experience and get to see once again what's important and what isn't.

* * *

The purpose of this book was to look at lessons I have learned by asking the 'big' questions like 'who am I?' and 'what is important in Life?' I would like to end with some quotations on Life by others that resonate with me.

First off, some whimsical quotes:

"I have a simple philosophy: Fill what's empty. Empty what's full. Scratch where it itches."
Alice Roosevelt Longworth

"Life is10 percent what you make it, and 90% how you take it."
Irving Berlin

Next are some quotes that I take as validation of insights I had arrived at through my own experience and process of self-learning:

"It is not length of life, but depth of life."
Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood."
Helen Keller

"All the art of living lies in a fine mingling of letting go and holding on."
Havelock Ellis

"I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world."
E.B. White

Now some advice about living in the present:

"Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans."
John Lennon

"You will never be happy if you continue to search for what happiness consists of. You will never live if you are looking for the meaning of life."
Albert Camus

"Life is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced."
Soren Kierkegaard

"Beware the barrenness of a busy life."
Socrates

And lastly some quotes that seem to directly answer some of my initial questions:

"Life is a tragedy when seen in close-up, but a comedy in long-shot."
Charlie Chaplin

"The true object of all life is play. Earth is a task garden; heaven is a playground.
G. K. Chesterton

"Life is a dream for the wise, a game for the fool, a comedy for the rich, a tragedy for the poor."
Sholom Aleichem

"Life is a song – sing it. Life is a game – play it. Life is a challenge – meet it. Life is a dream – realize it. Life is a sacrifice – offer it. Life is love – enjoy it."
Sai Baba