



Figure 9-4. Occupational alienation as lack of meaningful relations with others leading to estrangement and exclusion from their occupations.

characterized by lack of meaningful relationships with others, sometimes resulting in depersonalization and estrangement from others¹²⁴ as “a state of estrangement between the self and the objective world or between different parts of the personality;¹²⁵ as “estrangement from society; feelings of being an outsider, foreigner, or outcast; estrangement from one’s self”; as “feelings of unreality or depersonalization”; and, in terms of “affect,” includes “isolation of ideas from feelings, avoidance of emotional situations, and other efforts to estrange one’s self from one’s feelings.”¹²⁶ In Ancient Greco-Roman times, physicians referred to disturbed, difficult, or abnormal mental states as *alienatio mentis*, or mental alienation. This was attributed to a physiological imbalance in most cases.^{127,128}

Since the time when people lived in harmony with the natural environment, with only the simplest of technology to assist them in meeting their occupational needs, humankind has sought to challenge and master nature. It has done so by developing more sophisticated technology and social structures to meet occupational needs and wants, to conquer ill health, and to delay death by ever-increasingly sophisticated medical science. Such technological change can be described as potentially alienating, even if at the time it seems to be a good thing.

Occupational alienation combines many of those ideas and, because it is a concept far from easy to understand, it is useful to consider the analogy of an animal born in captivity. Think about a