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# Feelings of Enlightenment: A Hermeneutic Interpretation of Latent Enlightenment Assumptions in Greenberg's Emotion-Focused Therapy

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FEELINGS OF ENLIGHTENMENT: A HERMENEUTIC INTERPRETATION OF LATENT  
ENLIGHTENMENT ASSUMPTIONS IN GREENBERG'S EMOTION-FOCUSED THERAPY

A Dissertation

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Doctor of Psychology

By  
Alex A. Gomez

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FEELINGS OF ENLIGHTENMENT: A HERMENEUTIC INTERPRETATION OF LATENT  
ENLIGHTENMENT ASSUMPTIONS IN GREENBERG'S EMOTION-FOCUSED THERAPY

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of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

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**ABSTRACT****FEELINGS OF ENLIGHTENMENT: A HERMENEUTIC INTERPRETATION OF LATENT ENLIGHTENMENT ASSUMPTIONS IN GREENBERG'S EMOTION-FOCUSED THERAPY**

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The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how a mainstream theory of psychological practice might inadvertently conceal and ignore contemporary values and ideologies and their pathological consequences. Through a hermeneutic approach, I interpreted Leslie Greenberg's *Emotion-focused therapy: Coaching clients to work through their feelings* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed), a popular and widely used theory in psychotherapy. As a practitioner with humanistic foundations, this was also an opportunity for the author to understand his own unexamined values as a therapist. Specific EFT constructs and concepts that reflected Enlightenment assumptions and values were examined. EFT was situated within Enlightenment philosophy, particularly its alignment with European movements for increasing individual freedoms and resisting church and other perceived arbitrary authority. An argument of how Enlightenment perceptions were disguised within EFT's scientific and objectivist frameworks was formed based on this contextualization. One way that Enlightenment philosophy contributed to increasing individual freedom was by relocating moral sources within the individual, which led to a configuration of the self that is reflected in theories like EFT. Broadly, the assumptions that were surfaced reflected philosophical ideas promulgated by Descartes, Locke, Kant and Rousseau, as well as essential ideas from Expressivist and Romantic philosophies in general. Several theme were identified

through the interpretation: The Reduction and Reification of Emotion as a Basic Building Block, The Emotional Brain and Interiorized Emotion, Emotion Scheme and the World Inside Our Brain, Immunity from Cultural Influence, Emotion Transformation as a Return to Grace, Internal Guide and the Voice of Nature, and Uniting of the Expressivist and Instrumental Stance. Examining the assumptions of EFT revealed how moral assumptions can become concealed within a mainstream psychotherapy theory, which in turn helped to explore its sociopolitical consequences. The conclusion maintained that EFT perpetuates a one-sided emphasis on individual minds, biological causes, and subjective experience, while deemphasizing social and political problems. In fact, EFT treatment of individual suffering seems to encourage the client to adapt even further to the unacknowledged individualistic ideologies that may have created the suffering. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA, <http://aura.antioch.edu/> and Ohio Link ETD Center, <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/etd>.

*Keywords:* emotion-focused therapy, eft, hermeneutics, sociocultural psychology, implicit assumptions

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## Introduction

On February 14, 2018 seventeen students and staff members at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida were killed and another seventeen were injured by a nineteen-year-old with an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle. This grievous tragedy further inflamed the ongoing American debate over gun control and mental health. While these two issues are deserving of attention, I cannot help but notice a dimension of American life that has been overlooked in this debate. I occasionally encounter articles about loneliness and isolation contributing to mental health problems and possibly violence, which I believe is on the right track, but what are the cultural practices that breed isolation and that fail to endow a teenager with a stronger sense of care and responsibility for others? What are the cultural practices that condone alienating others? What are the cultural practices that strain a family's or community's attention to the social development of children? I rarely encounter an examination of American morals, ideologies, and values, particularly the American brand of hyper-individualism.

I suppose it is more reassuring to perceive the problem as emanating from a singular source like gun control, because the alternative would require tolerating the inconvenience of incorporating values that infringe on one's individual right to be responsible solely for one's own life. Also framing these problems as mental health issues is just another way that pathological behaviors in America are construed as products of individual minds rather than what philosopher Erich Fromm (1941/1994), would have considered a *socially patterned defect*. However, even within the field of psychology, ideologies such as individualism and its consequences are not questioned as much as the inner lives of individuals. Mainstream American, and Western psychology in general, has become so preoccupied with the interior workings of individuals that it seems that many psychologists have come to doubt the impact of the sociopolitical

environment on people's mental states. They approach psychological suffering and abnormality within scientific and individual frameworks. After a tragedy like Parkland occurs, the general population has the sense that something is wrong, but when prominent individualist ideologies are unacknowledged and unknowingly disguised by an institution that people look to for explanations about problematic behaviors and human trends, they cannot see a fuller sociopolitical picture.

The Sociocultural Turn in psychology (Kirschner & Martin, 2010) is a critical movement that has gained traction over the past two and a half decades committed to identifying hidden assumptions in mainstream theory and has advocated for cultural-historical and relational emphases in psychology. Despite the many benefits gained from mainstream psychology over the past several decades, these critics echo and voice concerns that mainstream psychology has come to promote mainly theories that present humans as self-insulated, self-governing, ahistorical beings, whose behaviors can be understood and treated through natural science methods and increasing personal agency. These sociocultural and hermeneutic thinkers believe that these conceptualizations offer narrow, one-sided perspectives about human life, overlooking alternative or supplemental theoretical perspectives that emphasize sociocultural, historical, and moral dimensions of human life, which according to Kirschner and Martin (2010), have always co-existed alongside individualistic and scientific theories, however, eventually lost prominence in modern Western Psychology. Furthermore, these proponents of sociocultural theories argue that these mainstream theories and institutions in psychology unwittingly deny or fail to acknowledge the moral dimension of theories and treatment and have become complicit with the benefits but also the problems of the ideological status quo. Richardson, Fowers, and Guignon

(1999) captured the issue at hand aptly in the statement, "Few psychologists critically evaluate the metaphysical and moral underpinnings of their methods or theories" (p. 173).

Essentially, some theories have developed in a way that endorse ideological assumptions embedded in the cultural landscape within which they were developed, rather than examining and challenging whether those were worthwhile to human life or questioning their moral implications. Now these assumptions have been embedded into the foundation of many theories that throughout our short history have become beyond suspicion due to the claim that such theories can be empirically validated using methods that are applied to natural sciences (Cushman, 1995; Gergen, 2014; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999; Stern, 2012). Also, the modern concept of the self as a disengaged observer further obscures the ability to see people as shaped by shared meanings derived from living in particular contexts (Cushman, 1995). The critical thinkers of the Sociohistorical Turn not only remind us that cultural, historical, political, and moral dimensions of human life need to be included in our understanding of human beings, but challenge the assumptions embedded in mainstream modern Western psychological theories, including their scientific claims.

Concealing these values within a scientific framework justifies an approach to psychology that gets taken seriously by the medical community, because it can explain psychopathology with a putative scientific certainty (Gergen, 2015; Sarason, 1981). However, an overemphasis on abstracted and internalized psychological concepts has resulted in an exaggerated belief in the powers of individual will and the extent of self-responsibility while deemphasizing, in fact nearly excluding, discussions of values on the one hand, and the way that political systems, power imbalances, and relational dynamics contribute to ways of life that are oppressive and undesirable on the other.

Cultural-historical perspectives on psychology demonstrate that concepts of madness and healing have existed in every era and culture and that the shape these take depend on a culture's contemporary and historically passed-on values, perspectives of the self, and technologies of healing (Heelas, 1981). The current era in Western culture perceives humans as self-important and self-determining individuals; understands nature and human nature mechanistically and scientifically; and approaches healing with scientific research and modern technology. Sociocultural Turn theorists contend that the current field of mainstream Western psychology promotes an extreme form of the individualistic self by unknowingly concealing cultural-historical values and ideologies within scientific frameworks. This leads to psychological concepts and constructs being presented as universal absolutes of the human condition. According to Buss (1979), the error of these theories "was to accept the current reality as absolute reality" and to "absolutize...an historically unique situation" (p. 46).

Overall, the purpose of this dissertation was to explore how mainstream psychology might inadvertently conceal and ignore contemporary ideologies and their pathological consequences while perpetuating the status quo. I accomplished this by approaching a mainstream theory of psychotherapy hermeneutically; specifically, I interpreted the theory and practice of Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT). A hermeneutic approach allowed me to examine historical origins of EFT constructs and concepts, and by doing so revealed EFT's embeddedness in Enlightenment assumptions and values. By situating EFT within Enlightenment philosophy's aim of decreasing the power of authoritarian church-states and increasing the freedom of individuals by relocating moral sources within the individual, I was able to see how these Enlightenment perceptions have survived in Western culture disguised within scientific and objectivist frameworks. Broadly, the assumptions surfaced reflected philosophical ideas

promulgated by Descartes (1637/1998), Locke (1689/1996), Kant (1781/1999) and Rousseau (1762/1979), as well as essential ideas from Expressivist and Romantic philosophies in general. For example, an EFT intervention that teaches clients to focus on their inner experience in order to discover messages about their nature, while framed scientifically, shares and perpetuates Rousseau's moral belief of turning inward to connect with one's inner nature.

Examining the assumptions of EFT revealed how this type of mainstream theory unknowingly disguises its underlying moral assumptions, which in turn helped explore the sociopolitical consequences. The result is a theory that perpetuates a one-sided emphasis on individual minds, a deemphasis of social and political problems, and the treatment of individual suffering by encouraging the client even further to the unacknowledged individualistic ideologies that created the suffering.

### **A Two-Way Mirror: A Reflection on Emotion-Focused Therapy as a Reflection of My History**

The arguments and insights of cultural-historical psychology and the Sociocultural Turn (Kirschner & Martin, 2010) have had an enormous impact on my thinking and perceptions toward psychotherapy. Buss (1979), Cushman (1991, 1995), Sarason (1981), Sass (1988) and others have applied social constructionist and hermeneutic methods to the field of psychotherapy and specific theories. Their demonstrations of how the field of psychology has political and moral consequences and how the most popular and accepted theories in practice today perpetuate some of the ills of Western individualism, capitalism, and objectivism have inspired me to take a critical look, both at my own past theoretical beliefs and the theories that I have been subjected to in my training.



I was undoubtedly set on the path to becoming a cultural-historical minded psychologist when I was a teenager. The journey from that point in my life, then into a more traditional psychology training, and then as a student of Sociocultural Turn theories and Hermeneutics, paved the way to this examination. I felt extremely alienated and angry as a teenager. I despised the social politics of high school, especially the expectation of conformity to fit in. I thought Americans prided themselves on uniqueness, yet, from my experience back then truly being yourself was a sure way to be lonely. It was astounding to me that anyone needed to work so hard to belong to a community. When I began personal therapy at age 18, the focus became on my failures and on my willingness (or not) to transform. Ironically, I did not need therapy to instill those values in me, because I already, at least partly, saw my inner turmoil as a consequence of my own inadequacy and stubbornness. These high school experiences ignited my interest in how social politics affect individual psychology and vice versa; but it was not until I was introduced to Erich Fromm's seminal 1941 work *Escape from Freedom* as a junior undergrad that I could begin to put words to these experiences. Fromm helped me to realize there was a systemic deemphasis of the social world within psychology education.

While Fromm (1941/1994) critiqued social ideologies and practices, he was as humanistic and existential as he was relational. He believed that individuals should embrace their individual freedom and be their authentic selves, which would lead to deeper and richer relationships. I ate up the humanistic and existential proclivities reflected in Fromm's work and embarked on a fitting journey to become a humanistic-existential psychotherapist. The attitude I derived from these figures was to care for the outcasts, despise external constraints, rebel against inauthentic forms of living and the injustices of the universe, to idealize the authentic self, and to take responsibility for realizing one's own unique potential.

In my adult psychotherapy concentration at Antioch University Seattle, I was introduced to an eclectic model of psychotherapy. The course reflected the popular “tool for your toolbox” mentality regarding psychotherapy that advises therapists to draw techniques from the evidence-based treatment that best addresses specific issues that arise in therapy. One textbook catalogued what it claimed were common interactions a therapist would encounter with a patient and specified the problem with the patient that these interactions indicated. These interactions were called strategy markers and these markers were paired with the intervention that should be applied in these instances. For example, if a patient made an irrational statement, the therapist would draw from an intervention from Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy. If a patient demonstrated a lack of awareness about the impact of their feelings, the therapist would choose a humanistic intervention, and so on. In class, I called this dial-an-intervention or rolodex therapy.

I remember an article we read about Process-Oriented Emotion-Focused Therapy (PE-EFT) by Elliott and Greenberg (2007) which utilized a *strategy and marker* approach, which was heavily promoted in the class. The article interested me because it was grounded in humanistic principles. At the time, I was curious if integrating humanistic principles with an evidence-based approach could offer me a little more confidence and legitimacy as a humanistic practitioner. However, as I engaged in cultural-historical, relational and hermeneutic psychology I began to see the limitations of an approach like PE-EFT. While these manualized and procedural treatments offer some benefits, the cultural-historical arguments about their emphasis on subjective experiences, interior mental structures, and value-neutral relationships that result in sociopolitical consequences were compelling. I began to see the humanistic and existential psychologies that I once adored as possibly colluding with contemporary values that deserved examination.

Based on that experience I knew I wanted to conduct a hermeneutic analysis of Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT). Not only is it a popular and widely used therapy, but this dissertation represented my own path as a humanistic scholar who was being indoctrinated into an evidence-based scholar-practitioner model; but a hermeneutic analysis allowed me to critically examine my own foundations and to understand how values fit into therapy. An outgrowth of this development was the ability to use this study to advocate for a moral perspective in psychotherapy. I have a true concern that overemphasizing and perpetuating individualistic values will leave patients feeling more isolated, with dangerously elevated senses of self-responsibility and with ignorance about the sociopolitical forces that contribute to their suffering. I believed that if EFT was involved in this reinforcement of contemporary values, critiquing it would aid me in understanding my moral positions as a therapist. Through this understanding I can be more cognizant of the values that I advance in my therapy practice. I learned that Leslie Greenberg is a co-founder of EFT and has built his individual psychological theory extensively since the 1980s. I believed choosing one of his more current texts to examine from a hermeneutic frame would allow me to analyze EFT in its most contemporary form.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Sociocultural and hermeneutic theorists have called attention to several problematic aspects to mainstream psychotherapy. The prevailing theories of psychotherapy, embedded within values of individualism and objectivity, attempt to analyze the individual by extracting the individual from these contexts and seeing individuals as a standalone system of functions, essentially working all upon themselves, which the individual can manipulate in order to achieve “mind over matter.” Hence, the exclusion of contextually constitutive domains of persons in the theorizing and treatment of pathology is an abstraction that excludes pivotal domains of human

life, offers only treatments that narrowly focus on the individual in an instrumental way, and possibly projects social issues onto individuals' psyches.

Hermeneutic thinkers contend that these ideological positions are obscured within the scientific and technical framework of mainstream psychology. Internal mental mechanisms are abstracted from their cultural-historical context. Pathology is located inside of selves, and the sociopolitical dimension of life is either ignored or framed as an impediment to an organismic unfolding true self. If it is true that privileged groups in society preserve certain ideological beliefs through mediums like policy and institutions that advantage themselves while disadvantaging less privileged groups, then psychology is complicit with the status quo when theories and treatments reinforce prominent ideologies and perpetuate compliance among individuals. This certainly complicates the possibilities for creating social change.

Cultural-historical scholars stress the need for theories of psychotherapy to examine their implicit assumptions, believing that most assumptions are not recognized in theoretical development. As Slife and Williams (1995) concluded, "Often these ideas are so hidden that scientists themselves do not know that assumptions are involved in their interpretation, or that interpretation is involved at all" (p. 6). Many of these scholars champion hermeneutics as a promising approach for delineating implicit assumptions. Cushman (1991) called for "a new body of psychological literature" that can provide "historically situated conclusions" (p. 217). However, few detailed studies surfacing implicit values in specific theories have been done (Buss, 1981; Cushman, 1995; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999; Sampson, 1981; Sass, 1988) and those that have, have not necessarily detailed their use of the hermeneutic process and how it resulted in their conclusions. It is important to continue the mission of being a field that reflects historically and culturally and developing as practitioners who reflect on our values.

Since my introduction to Fromm (1941/1994), I have aspired to contribute to a broader awareness of the ways that the influence of social context on mental illness is overlooked. My immersion in cultural-historical and hermeneutic perspectives led me to question my own theoretical foundations in Humanistic Psychology and Integrative approaches that were procedurally similar to Greenberg's Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT). I found it crucial to critically examine the values and assumptions that are implicitly entangled within my own theoretical foundations. I found it just as important to critically examine assumptions and values that are entangled within mainstream psychotherapy. EFT is a popular and widely researched theory, so like many other popular and widely disseminated mainstream psychological theories, it has an impact on Western culture's perspective of what constitutes mental health, illness, and treatment. Values that are entangled and hidden within psychological theories like EFT have the potential to cause real-world damage by perpetuating pathological self and social configurations. Creating a dialogue about values, especially emanating from the trusted institution of psychology, has the potential to change the way we think about tragedies, such as the Parkland school shooting.

I focused my investigation on the way Greenberg's EFT concepts and constructs inconspicuously affirm already-embraced Western values and assumptions. Based on the cultural-historical, hermeneutic and sociocultural interpretations briefly outlined above, these assumptions and values are disguised within scientific and objective frameworks. I used a hermeneutic approach to situate the concepts and constructs of EFT within their Enlightenment philosophy. This application of a cultural-historical lens, which took the form of a dialogue between each of these lenses and Greenberg's text, allowed me to understand how EFT's theories were influenced by Enlightenment positions and, hence, shared similar assumptions.

## **Description of the Study**

Specifically, I examined latent Enlightenment Era and Western assumptions in a popular mainstream theory of psychotherapy, Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT). I engaged in a hermeneutic interpretive analysis to determine what EFT assumptions were embedded in Enlightenment values, how these hidden assumptions perpetuate their entangled values, and to discuss how these hidden assumptions maintain the political status quo. I chose to interpret a text that represents a mainstream theory of psychotherapy that is both popular and widely used, but that was also personal to me. The text represented the theoretical foundations in which I have been indoctrinated throughout my graduate training. Hence, examining values, ideologies, and assumptions of EFT are a self-reflection on some of the assumptions that inform my own practice.

I used hermeneutic interpretation as a method of qualitative textual analysis. The data was interpreted by utilizing Philosophical Hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1960/2004; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999) to create a dialogue between cultural-historical critiques on mainstream psychotherapy and values, a current manual of a widely influential therapy, and my prejudgments about humanistic and evidence-based treatment as a developing therapist indoctrinated into these theories and methods. This dialogue revealed how the individualistic and subjectivistic values and assumptions of the Enlightenment were entangled within the scientific and psychological concepts and constructs of EFT. I then discussed the results of the analysis within a hermeneutic, cultural-historical, and moral frame.

## **Areas of Inquiry and Research Questions**

The central areas of inquiry guiding my study were:

1. How do concepts of Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) reflect current Western ideologies and assumptions about the good life and the good self?
  - a. And how do these concepts disguise these assumptions?
2. What implicit values do EFT interventions reflect and perpetuate?
3. What does EFT reflect about the *cultural clearing* (Cushman, 1995; Gadamer, 1960/2004) by emphasizing the need for emotion to be the focus of psychotherapy?
4. What are the social and political consequences of EFT theory and interventions?
5. What does EFT's insistence on a "nonimposing" therapist reflect about the cultural clearing?
6. What does the nonimposing therapist-client relationship reflect about the predominant Western framing of relationships in general?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The philosophical framework of hermeneutics was applied to interpret the data for this study. The following is a brief introduction to hermeneutics; a more detailed explanation is beyond the scope of this research.

Why are many Westerner's preoccupied with personal identity, personal responsibility, independence, and autonomy? Is it because the existential notion that human individuals are all alone is the truth about human life, or that we are evolutionarily predisposed to compete and rise to the top? Or is it because in Western societies over time, between the progression of individualism and positivism, competing beliefs, influence of groups in power, and transformations in systems (e.g. economical, government, etc.) and technologies, that certain ideals and practices have survived as shared communal beliefs that endow members of such cultural groups with implicit, readily available ideas about how to live and what constitutes the

good life? In this section I will describe relevant aspects of Gadamer's (1960/2004) *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, while drawing heavily from descriptions from Cushman (1995) and Warnke (1987). According to *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, we are inscribed on over a lifetime with these implicit beliefs, derived from our culturally situated way-of-life and lived experience, which make up a cultural lens and allow us a glimpse at the world from a particular vantage point.

Cushman (1995) referred to this vantage point as a *clearing*:

The clearing of a particular culture is created by the components of its conceptual systems and transmitted from one individual to the next and one generation to the next through their communal traditions and shared understandings and linguistic distinctions. It is only within the clearing that things and people 'show up' in certain shapes and with certain characteristics. (p. 21)

Borrowing from Gadamer (1960/1994), Cushman (1995) described the view from the clearing as being like a horizon. Horizons can shift. They are perspectival, socially constructed, and "tied to the moral vision, economic structures, and power relations of the society" (p. 21). I would like to underscore the emphasis on morality in the hermeneutic perspective. So as much as the individual and present community is determined by the past, the individual and present community also contribute in what aspects of traditions endure and are transformed, and these stances come from moral inclinations about which aspects of the traditions should prevail.

Like a horizon depends on the vantage point, so human perspective is beset with prejudices. While horizons can expand and shift, one cannot leave their horizon behind entirely while adopting a new one. While Gadamer (1960/2004) realized the limiting nature of horizons, he stressed that this perspective is what allows one to understand anything at all. He also



emphasized their expandability and the way that the provocation of our prejudices allows us to grow (Warnke, 1987). According to Gadamer (1960/2004), the prejudices that construe one's historically conditioned vantage point do not create the limitations posited by objectivists, but rather these prejudices are the ground through which the unknown shows up as figure:

the prejudices that we bring with us...constitute...the horizon of a particular present, for they represent that beyond which it is impossible to see. But now it is important to avoid the error of thinking that it is a fixed set of opinions and evaluations that determine and limit the horizon of the present...*In fact the horizon of the present is being continually formed in that we have continually to test all our prejudices* (Gadamer, p. 316)

Because hermeneutics identifies humans as interpreting beings, horizons are interpretive frameworks. Hermeneutics is method of defining the socially, culturally and historically etched interpretive frame that makes someone's experience make sense and certain perspectives seem true. Hermeneutics seeks to understand how the historical and cultural confines of a self-interpreting being's place in their social world and in history shape the clearing through which they experience and know the world. It is about the understanding of the world one has acquired through their lived experience within a culture. Regarding hermeneutics, Cushman (1995) stated, "it stands for: a determination to focus on the everyday, lived *context* of whatever, or whoever, one is studying. This approach focuses on situating one's object of study in the cultural and historical context in which it is embedded. People and things exist only within a certain political and moral context, and they are not understandable outside of it....Individuals and their context form a dialogical, interpenetrating unit" (p. 16-17).

Hermeneutics takes a critical stance toward and offers an alternative perspective to natural science assumptions to human sciences, the objectivist position that diminishes human

meaning as unsubstantial, and the subject-object split that views the mind as an entity capable of transcending its sociocultural context in order to grasp absolutes and natural truths. Actually, hermeneutics frames human knowledge as a kind of already-knowing derived from one's saturation in norms, knowledge, expectations and practices of their sociohistorical context. The human self and individual agency are related to human being's self-interpretive nature and temporality. Human experience is shaped by its thrust into future possibilities, its striving for stability, and making meaning to cohere past, present, and future (Richardson & Fowers, 2010). Human interpretations of themselves and the world are constituted and constrained by their temporality and cultural context, but that within these confines one can weave personally meaningful ambitions into a personally meaningful life. Humans can continually update how they perceive the events in their lives, yielding changes in how they interpret their lives and selves over time.

On the larger scale, a community's knowledge of an object or situations is historical, passed on through tenable traditions, practices, institutions and systems. Gadamer (1960/2004) referred to this as *effective history*, defined by Warnke (1987) as "the operative force of the tradition over those that belong to it, so that even in rejecting or reacting to it they remain conditioned by it" (p. 79). Specifically, she is referring to the way a natural science perspective disavows its historical rootedness in Enlightenment philosophy and values.

So how can this theory of historically and socially conditioned ideas, practices, and beings – all beset with prejudices – be applied as a human science? This is answered by examining how humans have come to interpret their worlds. Warnke (1987) summarized Gadamer's position: "Understanding is always interpretation and meaning is always a 'fusion' of the 'horizons' of the interpretation and the object" (p. 82). Hermeneutics applied to an

experience, practice, or discourse, then, requires a dialogue between one's own sociohistorical situation and that of the other, in order to expand one's own horizon to the extent that it can incorporate the other with the outcome allowing the researcher to detail both his own prejudices as they were provoked by the inquiry, and the preunderstandings of the other. Regarding a study of a social practice, such as this dissertation, the researcher should be able to describe the implicit assumptions held by the horizon in which the practice is situated that allow the typically taken-for-granted practice to make sense to the inhabitants of the horizon at all.

This dialogue and expanded understanding spring from what Cushman (1995) described as "most basic to the research process," the *hermeneutic circle* (p. 22). Cushman recommended this be achieved by "tacking between the part and the whole, between the researcher's context and the object's context, between the familiar and the unknown" (Cushman, 1995, p. 22). For Gadamer (1960/2004), this process was related to the anticipation of a meaningful and completed position contained in the text (Warnke, 1987).

An example would be as follows: if someone is telling me about an experience, I anticipate that this person is providing a completed thought, hence, I will be able to make meaning of it. If the story is incomplete, it would be difficult to understand. While listening to the story, I anticipate the meaning based on my own life experience and prejudices. This is to say that I project my own meaning onto the story. However, as the parts or details of the story emerge, they may challenge my expectations. From here, what I anticipate changes as I incorporate new information, and then that anticipation changes again, until I can formulate an interpretation that coheres the parts and the whole. So, one anticipates the meaning of the entire text, until the bits challenge one's prejudices, and so on until one can produce a meaningful interpretation where the parts and whole fit.

Gadamer (1960/2004) also believed that human beings, by nature, are constantly applying and adapting knowledge from the past to the present situation (Richardson, Fowers & Guignon, 1999). Intrinsically, interpretation involves appropriating the knowledge of the text for one's current situation. However, this is not an uncritical acceptance of the past, but rather a transformation of the past and one's own position, in order to create a new practical condition that can be argued, adds something good to the order. While the expectation is that this revelation will be well-argued, that it will be open to debate and part of the ongoing dialogue of past and present.

Overall, hermeneutics perceives human beings as culturally, communally, and historically embedded points of unfolding experience, beset with ready-available knowledge but also the agency to transform their prejudices and to close gaps between the prejudices of themselves and others. Applied to research, hermeneutics provides a way to surface the prejudices, or uncritical assumptions of texts, experiences, and situations. This process not only reveals the assumptions of the other, but the prejudices of the researcher, and the critical nature of this fusion of positions yields a new position, which aims to improve upon the traditions of the past. This use of hermeneutics has important ethical implications because it clarifies the historical and value-based roots of psychotherapeutic theories. In the next chapter, I provide a review of the Sociocultural turn, relevant studies to our goal (Buss, 1979; Sass, 1988), and of EFT in popular literature.

## Literature Review

### The Examining of Implicit Assumptions: Background Literature

Cushman (1995) illuminated how communities' and cultures' practices are shaped around their vision of the good life. These practices are tied to the way these communities see selves (e.g. Westerners see the self as independent) and these practices and configurations of the self are formed around ideologies (e.g. again, in Western society: everyone should be free and autonomous to choose their lives). Cushman demonstrated how the concept of the self transforms parallel with epistemological and ontological beliefs, and is central to the expectations of the individual, the conceptualization of illness, and the development of treatment practices. According to Cushman these treatment practices have a purpose, "to create, shape, and maintain a particular historical self, that all of these selves have had important political and economic functions within their eras" (Cushman, 1995, p. 35). He added that these professions are convinced that the self of their era is the only possible configuration of the self and that their treatment practices are proven, often through their own evaluative methods, as the definitive approach to healing the self.

According Kirmayer (2007), "Every system of psychotherapy...depends on implicit models of the self, which in turn are based on cultural concepts of the person. The cultural concept of the person that underwrites most forms of psychotherapy is based on Euro-American values of individualism" and the, "individualistic and egocentric concept of the person can be contrasted with...views, which understand the person in relation to the social world, the environment, and the cosmos" (p. 232). According to the arguments put forth by Cushman (1995), Kirmayer, and others, how we define and think about the self – what we believe the self

to be – is a variable cultural concept that not only differs between cultures but transforms over time analogous with prevailing beliefs and attitudes.

Cushman (1995), Kirmayer (2007), and Richardson, Fowers, and Guignon (1999) offer vivid descriptions of the modern Western version of the self. According to Kirmayer:

The current Western view of the self is agentic, rationalistic, monological and univocal. On this view, people are preeminently rational actors. They have a private inner self where they can think and imagine and make personal choices. People can take responsibility for their actions and attempt to modify or restrain their behavior in response to the feelings, requests or demands of others. People have inner workings partly revealed through their self-descriptions and partly intuited by empathy or reconstructed on the basis of models of psychological dynamics. Thus, the person is, first of all, a category in our system of knowledge that provides us with a specific style of explanation and attribution for action and experience (Kirmayer, 2007, p. 240)

Cushman (1995) provided this description of the 20<sup>th</sup> century American configuration of the self:

I will argue that the current configuration of the self is the empty self. The empty self is a way of being human; it is characterized by a pervasive sense of personal emptiness and is committed to the values of self-liberation through consumption. The empty self is the perfect complement to an economy that must stave off economic stagnation by arranging for the continual purchase and consumption of surplus goods. Psychotherapy is the profession responsible for treating the unfortunate personal effects of the empty self without disrupting the economic arrangements of consumerism. Psychotherapy is permeated by the philosophy of self-contained individualism, exists within the

framework of consumerism, speaks the language of self-liberation, and thereby unknowingly reproduces some of the ills it is responsible for healing (p. 6).

Richardson, Fowers, and Guignon (1999) expressed:

A human being, in this [modern] view, appears as a kind of isolated point of consciousness and will standing entirely apart from the world of brute objects. This kind of dimensionless point of conscious activity, what Taylor...calls the modern *punctual self*, is 'ideally disengaged...from the natural and social worlds" (p. 12).

According to such arguments, how we define a self, with its place in society and its aims, is a cultural and historical construction. The understanding of the self in a particular society of a particular era directs one's actions and experiences and informs their interpretations of them, as well as what is important and valuable. While, as cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) asserted, man's possibilities are narrowed and directed by culture, the individual's possibilities are corralled and defined by the concept of the self. The understanding of what constitutes a proper self also implies a conception of a misaligned or pathological self. This is why the concept of self is so pivotal to thinking about psychotherapy. Beliefs about what constitutes a good self or a bad self beget approaches for reinforcing the good and treating the bad, and these treatments are based on the technologies and practices of the time (Cushman, 1995; Rimke & Brock, 2012). Psychotherapy, Psychiatry, Neurology, Biology, etc. constitute the technologies of the time. It is a chore to attempt to understand the implicit assumptions these fields hold about the self because they are obscured by objective and scientific views of human nature. In the transition from premodern to modern beliefs about humans and reality the concept of the self has transformed parallel with epistemological and ontological beliefs, and is central to the

expectations of the individual, the conceptualization of illness, and the development of treatment practices.

Hermeneutic investigations have surfaced a number of Western assumptions of the good life and ideologies underlying Western practices that are concealed in contemporary Western psychological theories. Stern (2012) questioned, “Must it not be virtually certain that our explicit theories of technique are inspired, and even shaped, by our deepest, and often unarticulated, feelings and thoughts about what is most important in living?” (p. 42). These assumptions go unrecognized and unarticulated and have become obscured by the field’s drive to prove itself as a scientific equal. Attempts in psychology to prove it can yield universal facts about psychological problems have resulted in the denial of its sociohistorical context. This attitude was exacerbated by the opportunities to “legitimize” the field in the eyes of the medical community following World War II (Sarason, 1981).

Some of the assumptions and ideologies that have been surfaced and examined include objectivism, subjectivism, scientism, abstraction, and instrumentalism. The objectified worldview that drives Western sciences has much of its roots in philosophy movement of the Enlightenment period. While philosophers like John Locke (1689/1996), Immanuel Kant (1781/1999), and David Hume (1738/2000) disagreed on certain aspects about the acquisition of knowledge, they all carried forward influential philosophies that bifurcated what the mind perceives from what is real. Reality is out-there - to be discovered objectively by the detached, insulated mind. This type of thinking was a catalyst for the burgeoning individualism and capitalism at the time because it fostered the belief that the source of reason and reality were within the individual’s mind. This also fostered an image of a disengaged mind that can rationally grasp and control the material world, including the body. This objectified view of the



self and world fused well with a scientific outlook directed at manipulating abstract variables. According to Richardson, Fowers, and Guignon (1999) within the objectified worldview, “Knowledge consists in the correspondence of our beliefs to an external reality that has determinate properties independent of our beliefs and practices” (p. 12). This requires the proper methods for revealing the natural properties and relations of things without being soiled by subjective fodder. According to this objective view only what is quantifiable is real and nature is seen merely as cold and vacuous world of “physical things that can be mastered through a cool, disengaged methodology” (Richardson, Fowers & Guignon, 1999, p. 33). The embracing of the objectifying perspective fortified the chasm between the individual and the social world, as well as the view of man as, “a solitary self freely choosing its own values over and against a meaningless void and in opposition to a conformist society” (Richardson, Fowers & Guignon, 1999, p. 34). Richardson, Fowers, and Guignon also identified *abstraction* as a component of objectification. Abstraction dismisses social and political realms to something more like humans imposing their thoughts and will onto a reality that already exist. In quantitative psychological research even, feelings are abstracted into quantifiable concepts.

Richardson, Fowers, and Guignon (1999) pointed out that radical objectification of humans also results in a type of radical subjectivism. Subjectivism is the belief that people’s experiences, thoughts, opinions, judgments, values – essentially anything in mind – is not based in reality. Other than what seems an obvious fact that if no part of human experience was grounded in reality, that reality would not be graspable (a problem Kant attempted to solve by unifying Rationalism and Empiricism), they argued this disengaged perspective risks painting a nihilistic picture of humanity. Cushman (1995) added that this contradiction also reflects a type of solipsism.

The privilege afforded to objectivity and the scientific method in Modern western society reflects a type of *Scientism*. Cushman (2012) defined Scientism as the belief that scientific methodology is the sole approach to revealing truths and that such truths are universal. This “dogmatic insistence,” as Richardson, Fowers, and Guignon called it, on the quantifying and objectifying of things, including mental processes, yields a detached, if not degraded view of human experiences, while failing to acknowledge its own reliance on theory and interpretation. Scientism is a belief system in and of itself then – a type of religion that makes individuals into deities via methods of control and prediction.

According to Fowers (2012), *Instrumentalism* is another prominent ideology in modern Western society that has become entangled in theories of psychotherapy. According to instrumentalism, individuals “have subjectively predetermined ends, and they select the best strategies, techniques, and skills to attain those ends. The means are separate from the ends and can be taken up or discarded based on effectiveness” (Fowers, 2012, p. 2). Instrumentalism shows up in most modern theories of psychotherapy: thoughts, behaviors, or feelings are instrumentally controlled in the service of individual goals.

These assumptions and ideologies are found in our scientific thinking because they are part of our modern Western civilization’s thinking. They coincide with the ideology of individualism. Citing Alan Wolfe (1982, p. 2), Richardson and Zeddies (2001) contended, “Modern individualistic ideologies [obscure] the fact,” that people are dependent on social systems far more than they acknowledge (p. 156). Psychotherapy in its current state can help liberate individuals from crippling beliefs, thoughts, or social controls, but does not provide much direction or impart wisdom on how to live life. Mostly, it seems to throw the responsibility back onto the patient to monitor and control their own thoughts and reactions or

manipulate their environments. This increased self-focus seems like it could become yet another internalized standard for which the patient will have to anxiously strive for and possibly fail.

Inherent in the Liberal Individualism that prevails in America and American psychotherapy is an unresolved moral dilemma, which makes individualism as a guiding vision of the good quite incomplete and prone to bestowing problems on those whom embrace it (Cushman, 1995; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). This dilemma consists of the seemingly paradoxical stance implied in Liberal Individualism. This stance values freedom, social justice, and dignity on one hand, but the individual freedom from any imposed beliefs, on the other. Reflected in our theories is confusion about how to frame morality.

Bellah et al. (1996) explained that this confusion stems from how Americans idealize freedom but are reluctant to dismiss the idea of morality or commitment. Through their study, Bellah et al. found that American individuals compromise these stances by framing commitment in terms of self-enhancement and values as subjective, in order to preserve a sense of autonomy. Richardson, Fowers, and Guignon (1999) identified this moral dilemma within different theories of psychotherapy and conceptualizations of pathology. Their argument is that we carry forward this dilemma through our theories, typically unacknowledged, and perpetuate a confusion about freedom and commitment. Most of our attempts either work to isolate people further, or to instrumentalize thoughts and feelings as means to self-gratification. According to Kirmayer (2007), “psychotherapy...from a basically individualist perspective,” makes, “the person aware of the cultural concept of the person and offers them the individual choice of compromise, rapprochement, or divergence from the socially mandated self through a new self-fashioned identity” (p. 243). Kirmayer also added that this demonstrates individual psychotherapy’s “opposition to traditional socially integrated personhood” (p. 243). To put it simply

individualistic values embedded in the society and promulgated through psychotherapy overlook moral positions, the importance of the social world, and narrow the cultural expression of humanity.

Hermeneutic thinkers perceive morality as an inherent part of any system of thought that underlies and shapes a particular culture's practices and traditions around a specific vision of the good. According to Fowers (2012), "commitment to some set of goods and goals is inescapable in any human endeavor, including science" (p. 3). According to many hermeneutic thinkers, morality is at the core of how humans shape their practices. It cannot be stricken from the equation, only hidden among the numbers. Taylor (1988) explained that when premoderns focused on their self it was to make one's self accessible to the greater scheme of things, whereas for moderns we turn to the self to understand better understand the self, to control and correct it to one's own ends.

In regard to the neutrality of modern man, Taylor (1988) contended that you have to be neutral in relation to something, however, objectification adopted as an all-encompassing view of human life makes individual neutrality just seem like a fact. According to Taylor, "Then the disengaged subject appears like a natural fact" (p. 312). To be a moral person in modern times is to access an inner self, a way of looking at moral resources that differs substantially from premodern times, where moral resources were external.

Taylor's argument is that the moral issues that constitute the search for identity should be considered in psychological theory. If morality is a core aspect of human life, embedded in prevalent ideologies and treatment approaches, then psychology cannot escape moral questions or its role as a moral institution. According to Prilleltensky (1989) the field of psychology has the power to influence thinking, behavior, and opinions of the public. He argued that "The

dissemination of psychological knowledge and expertise makes a difference in people's ideas about society" (p. 795). It stands that the assumptions of psychotherapy and its underlying ideologies should be examined because of its large influence on a society's thinking and goals that occurs without self-examination.

**Summary.** Accepting the hermeneutic stance is to acknowledge that humans are self-interpreting beings and that their interpretations are based on the historically enduring meanings, beliefs, and ideas that have constituted their cultural context. Within these webs of meanings there is an inferred good life and how selves are perceived within a society are constructed around this inference. What is perceived as psychopathology within Western society seems to be a self that cannot conform to this vision as evidenced by behaviors or self-reported subjective experience. Hence, ideas about how to treat the pathological self rest on these, often implicit, ideas about the good life.

Many of the values and assumptions about the self are implicit, unacknowledged, and unarticulated. This is partly because these ideas are embodied in practices, traditions, stories and so on. People are enculturated in them; they live them, so they do not need to identify them. But the scientific framework that has come to encapsulate the primary institutions and mainstream information regarding what is healthy and unhealthy for individual is another reason that these values and assumptions remain implicit. This framework that asserts humans have unchanging and mechanistic natures, which are either impervious to, or corrupted by, the social realm, disguises values, assumptions, and ideologies even further within scientific concepts. Cultural-historical and Sociocultural Turn theorists argue that this is detrimental to Western society because we are unable to evaluate whether these values may actually contribute to pathology,

and instead mainstream psychological theories perpetuate a one-sided and potentially damaging view of human life.

Cultural-historical and Sociocultural turn theorists advocate for a hermeneutic approach to these scientifically framed psychological theories. Hermeneutic examinations make surfacing implicit assumptions possible by treating these theories as historical artifact, allowing them to be situated within the values and assumptions of a particular society within a particular era. In the next section I will provide an example of how this type of study is conducted.

### **An Example of Examining Implicit Assumptions in Psychological Theories**

Cushman (1995) has approached his critique of mainstream, modern, Western psychotherapy from a social constructionist position which views psychotherapy as a cultural artifact. Viewing psychotherapy as an artifact is seeing it as a meaningful social practice to a particular community at a particular time and studying it illuminates how that community views or viewed the world. He also utilized a hermeneutic approach. According to Cushman, “the hermeneutic approach requires that therapists historically situate the patient, their professional role, and their healing practices; it also requires that psychotherapy theories acknowledge the intertwined, interpenetrating, interdependent nature of human relating” (p. 290). The shape that practices and views of the self have taken over time in different communities have changed as the understanding of, not only human life has changed, but of what is important and worthwhile have changed in these communities. Cushman argued that practices, such as treatments of illness, are embedded in a cultural and historical context and are aimed at the way the selves have deviated from the values and expectations of the culture and how to return the self to a way of living that aligns to predominant values. Cushman remarked, “There is no universal, transhistorical self, only local selves,” and as such, treatments are based on the local and

historical self, hence, are shaped around those values and assumptions about the good life (p. 23). In sum, Cushman argued that we should be “treating psychotherapy as a cultural artifact that can be interpreted, rather than as a universal healing technology that has already brought a transcendent ‘cure’ to earthlings” (p. 7).

Cushman’s (1991) approach to examining implicit assumptions, or “ideology obscured” as the title of his article reads, was on display in his analysis of Daniel Stern’s (1985) theory of infant development. Cushman observed that Stern’s interpretations of his data yielded claims that infants are universally designed with a sense of self-coherence and agency, with a sophisticated and shareable inner world, and a predesigned capacity to thrive that is contaminated by language and culture. For Cushman, Stern’s interpretations were not supported by his data – and in fact excluded some data that did not fit his portrayal of the infant – and curiously reflected the Western Cartesian self. Cushman, borrowing from Smedslund’s (1985) concept of *circularity*, explained that cultures have a type of indigenous psychology already – beliefs about what goals the self should strive for – and when this indigenous psychology is denied and obscured by scientific claims and goals, it creates a type of circularity between these indigenous beliefs about selves and what is “discovered” scientifically about selves. In a sense, the universal infant presented by Stern, seems so right to the psychological community because it is a reproduction of how Westerners already see the self, but “in the guise of a universal scientific theory” (Cushman, 1991, p. 207). Furthermore, Cushman contended that the so-called universal processes put-forth by Stern actually reflected parent-to-infant practices that shape the infant into what Stern claimed is the universal self.

Cushman (1995) recognized the “humanistic-romantic tradition” (p. 209) and Western Cartesianism reflected in Stern’s (1985) portrayal of humans, “as individual, separate atoms that

relate” (Cushman, 1995, p. 215) and “little, bounded, masterful, feeling selves” (Cushman, 1995, p. 210). One example of the circularity Cushman (1991) identified in Stern’s work was that the interactions Stern defined, such as attunement, reflected “a historically situated tool of the era” that is actually used to construct interiority in the infant, rather than to get in touch with it (p. 213). In other words, he argued that rearing practices shape the child to align with cultural values, and Stern is merely articulating this practice in novel scientific terms, rather than presenting anything new. Cushman also demonstrated how Stern distorted the view of human development in order to make scientific claims. Stern, by indicating there is a period in the infant’s life that is free from the influence of culture, was able to portray the infant as something that can be studied scientifically.

Cushman (1991) criticized Stern (1985) for presenting this Western version of the self as the universal self. Cushman contrasted this supposedly scientifically backed version of the self with cultures that do not nearly see their selves in the same way – so how can Stern, or other mainstream psychologist claim the Western self is the only correct one? Cushman charged that Stern,

By claiming to have found scientific proof that the human infant automatically emerges as a Western infant...implicitly argued that the empty, divided, narcissistic, confused, isolated individual of the modern West, who has such difficulty maintaining intimate relationships and cooperating in communal endeavors, is the natural, inevitable shape of human being (Cushman, 1991, p. 217).

Cushman (1991) asserted that Stern’s (1985) claims have political implications because his depiction of the individual is one of a bounded person who grows and has a self separate from the cultural and political sphere; hence, when an individual struggles mentally, it is



interpreted as a problem with the individual, the individual should be changed, and there is no need to scrutinize, question or change the sociopolitical sphere.

### **Relevant Studies**

I have reviewed studies by Buss (1979) and Sass (1988) here because they are the most similar to my own. Both represented a cultural-historical interpretation of Humanistic theories and concepts. They both described values and assumptions implicit in these theories and concepts based on these cultural-historical interpretations. I conclude this review by describing how they both compare and contrast to my study.

**Sass.** Sass (1988) set out to situate Humanistic and Hermeneutic approaches to psychotherapy within the Romanticist context from which they both are “heirs” (p. 222). His purpose was to compare these two perspectives to introduce Hermeneutics and its application to social scientists. According to Sass, both approaches shared common objections to mainstream objectivism and scientism. Despite the commonality, the Humanistic approach embodies a type of humanism not embraced by hermeneutics that Sass deemed restrictive. He wanted to show the differences between these two schools and reveal limitations and contradictions of the more popular and mainstream humanistic framework from the perspective of hermeneutics. Sass did this by introducing both theories and some of their primary tenets. He then described the philosophical origins of each. He concluded with a description of how a hermeneutic based treatment might look.

Sass (1988) argued that the values of Humanistic psychology included the overemphasis of individuals’ inner worlds and their uniqueness; the equating of self-awareness with truth; the bolstering of individual freedom; and a deep skepticism of the external world. Sass contextualized these values within a strand of Romanticism that embodied many contradictions.

For example, while rejecting scientific reductionism and mechanism, the glorification of individual freedom and self-knowledge within this strand of Romanticism reflected the “mind-body dualism espoused by Descartes” (Sass, 1988, p. 256). Sass presented critiques of the humanistic strand of romanticism that admonished the theory for its destructive and domineering mindset, disengagement from community and transcendental values, its paradox of the endless search for one’s true-self, and the relinquishing of authoritarian responsibility through the self-monitoring aspects of such ideologies.

Sass (1988) introduced Hermeneutics as a counterpoint to Humanistic theory’s emphasis and exaltation of “the isolated, conscious subject” (p. 234). According to Sass, the Hermeneuticists perceive humans as self-interpreting, yet constituted within a social world. Individual interpretations are limited to those “deeply embedded in the public and determining facts of language, culture, and history, and are so pervasive as to be nearly invisible” (Sass, 1988, p. 248). In other words, individual interpretations are interpretations of the communal messages of which they have been enculturated. He contextualized Hermeneutics within a strand of romanticism that “longed for a sense of community...and places as great an emphasis on the need for tradition and social order as on that for self-expression” (Sass, 1988, p. 256). Humanistic approaches believe humans ought to choose a way to live and live it, and in contrast, hermeneuticists believe one ought to seek to clarify why one does what they do based on context, and then consciously as possible integrate their previous perspective with the new one. Sass presented a Hermeneutic vision for psychotherapy. This approach would put less emphasis on the inner life of the patient, while putting more emphasis on relationships, morality, and the patient-and-therapist’s working relationship. This dyad would work to surface their preconceptions in order to understand the roles they inadvertently take on with each other, and

the meanings that they derive from the relationship. This analysis would foster understanding, would allow the pair to reformulate their meanings, expand their interactions and develop new ways of being together and in-the-world.

**Buss.** Buss (1979) set out to “reveal both the nature and consequences of the link between humanistic psychology and the liberal political tradition using Maslow’s theory as a concrete case for analysis” (p. 43). He aimed to demonstrate that humanistic psychology is rooted in liberalism by applying a cultural-historical critique of Maslow’s (1954) theory of self-actualization. Like Sass (1988), Buss also described Humanistic psychology as a response to the mechanistic and deterministic views of Psychoanalysis and Behaviorism. According to Buss, a battle of political ideologies was latent between Psychoanalysis and Behaviorism on the one hand, and Humanistic on the other. He identified the formers as implicitly harboring conservative values and the latter as implicitly harboring liberal values. Buss (1979) interpreted the themes of Humanistic Psychology as the “psychological embodiment of the liberal frame of mind” (p. 47).

First, Buss described assumptions about human beings that were implicit in Maslow’s theory. These assumptions were that human beings are “ahistorical, essential, unchanging, [and] biological” (Buss, 1979, p. 48). Buss noted the similarity between Maslow ‘s and Rousseau’s (1762/1979), whom he regarded as an “earlier champion of liberal ideas,” exalting of inner nature and relegation of the environment. Buss argued that despite the liberal underpinnings of Maslow’s theory, that these assumptions about humans were shared with the seemingly opposed views and underlying conservative affiliation of Psychoanalysis. According to Buss, the problem with humanistic psychology embracing essentialism, is that the idea of a biologically fixed nature contradicts the idea ideas of self-determination and self-transformation.

Next, Buss argued that Maslow's theory contained a contradiction between democratic values and an elitist attitude. The theory reflected Maslow's liberal endorsement of the "equality of rights, individual sovereignty, pluralisms" and inclusion, on the one hand; and the belief that there are better values and better people than others, on the other. According to Buss, this thinking was rooted in Post-war worries of working class support for communism in America and a more political power being disseminated among an "ill-informed or politically unsophisticated mass" (Buss, 1979, p. 50). Identifying and reinforcing the idea of a superiorly endowed group of citizens with liberal values was an underlying influence for a theory that only acknowledged a minority of the population as even capable of self-actualization. Buss depicted this postulation as an unarticulated motivation for liberals to uphold and defend their values in this politically shifting climate. This showed up in the theory as self-actualization being an accomplishment that is only achievable by a special "eupsychic" minority (Buss, 1979, p. 50); and this 1% of self-actualizers were "the psychological embodiment of the social elite who [were] society's decision makers" (p. 52).

Buss concluded that Maslow's theory directly reflected the contradictions of political reality. Hence, Maslow's psychological theory incorporated the "structure of his society" and his construct of "self-actualization [consisted] of social categories projected onto the individual" (p. 52). Further, Buss believed the theory was an unacknowledged attempt to synthesize the contradiction of the Elitist mentality with liberal values, but the political consequence was democratic elitism. Buss proposed a solution requiring the transformation of political reality and encouraging political participation. According to Buss, the resolution to democratic elitism would have to be practical. This would involve mobilizing the masses in a democratic way, so that citizens "actively participate in those decisions that affect him/her" (p. 53).

**Summary.** Both of these studies were reviewed here due to my study's parallel to their aims. They interpreted Humanistic theories from a cultural-historical lens by situating the concepts within the values of Enlightenment context. These examinations both argued that implicit assumptions reflected in these theories included the extreme emphasis on the inner mental worlds of humans, the belief in the universality of internal mechanisms, the belief in human's possessing an essential nature, and the deemphasis of social and political worlds. Buss also interpreted Maslow's concept of self-actualizing within an American political context. These studies surfaced contradictions among the values implicit in Humanistic psychology. My study differs in that Emotion-Focused Therapy, while rooted in the Humanistic tradition, openly attempted to integrate Humanistic and Cognitivist principles through a complex conceptualization of emotion. EFT represents a more contemporary evidence-based and procedural/manualizable theory. These studies are 30 – 40 years old, so examining implicit assumptions and values within psychological theories should remain an ongoing project. Also, the sources from which I based my interpretations differed from these studies. Lastly, my evaluation of assumptions and values implicit within EFT was more finely detailed, so how I arrived at my interpretations is much clearer.

### **Review of Emotion-Focused Therapy Research**

In order to explore if arguments put forth by Interpretive Turn theorists (Buss, 1979; Cushman, 1995; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999) – that unreflected values and moral assumptions underlie scientific, objective, and value neutral assertions – it is important to review the most accessible literature about Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT). In this section, I reviewed ten of the most contemporary EFT studies based on relevance. This means that within the

database, I sorted the results by relevance, but limited the dates. I categorized this section based on common emphases across the selected studies.

**Therapeutic outcomes of EFT.** The primary emphasis of EFT is the experiencing and processing of emotions. Many EFT researchers set out to support the theory that emphasizing and facilitating these experiences with their clients in psychotherapy results in improved outcomes. Auszra, Greenberg, and Herrmann's (2013) research explored the therapeutic properties of emotional processing by studying the predictive value of Client Emotional Productivity (CEP), a measure of a specific type of emotional processing, in 74 clients suffering from depression. Referring to Greenberg and Saffran's (1984, as cited in Auszra, Greenberg, and Herrmann, 2013) conceptualization of "emotion as a fundamentally adaptive basic mode of information processing that generated personal meaning" and psychological problems as reflective of maladaptive emotional states that can be transformed into adaptive emotional states (Auszra, Greenberg, & Herrmann, 2013, p. 733). Since positive therapeutic effects have been shown to result from emotional states being activated – so that they can be transformed through new meanings and new feelings – optimizing *emotional productivity* has become an important endeavor to EFT researchers. Emotional Productivity was defined as "Reflecting on emotion to create meaning and generating new emotional responses to transform old ones" (Auszra, Greenberg, & Herrmann, 2013, p. 733).

For this study, Auszra, Greenberg, and Herrmann (2013) hypothesized that the results of the CEP would be more predictive of outcome than other variables, reflecting their efforts to support the predictive ability of emotional productivity as it is measured by Client Emotional Productivity (CEP). They compared a measure of CEP – which was developed by the authors –

with a measure of solely, emotional arousal (Client High Expressed Emotional Arousal – CHEEA), and the working alliance (Working Alliance Inventory – WAI).

The sample consisted of 74 clients who met formal criteria for major depression. The sample had a mean age of 39.93, 49 were female and 25 were male. They were randomly assigned to experiential treatment for depression groups, one Client-Centered Therapy (CCT) and the other Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT).

Outcomes were measured with the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), The Symptom Checklist – Revised (SCL-90-R), Helpful Aspects of Therapy form (HAT), General Session Evaluation Questionnaire (GSEQ), Client Task Specific Measure (CTSM), Therapist Session Questionnaire (TSQ), and the Client Emotional Productivity Scale-Revised (CEPS – R). Many of these were quantitative self-report and Likert scale style measures, with exception of the HAT and TSQ, which are qualitative measures, the former measuring the client experiences and the latter measure the therapists’ sense of the clients’ experiences. According to Auszra, Greenberg, and Herrmann (2013), the CEPS – R is “applied in the form of a decision tree” and requires coding to determine if the client is being emotionally productive in the way determined by the authors/developers of this measure (p. 736). The inter-rater reliability between the two raters was determined to be high following the experimental procedure. They rated each minute of these two sessions for CEP, CHEEA, and Client Emotional Expression (CEE), which measures verbal or nonverbal expressions of participants’ emotions.

They found decreases in depression and general symptomology from pre-treatment to post-treatment. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to create confounding variable models to determine the strongest predictor variable from the beginning phase of treatment (first three sessions) to the working phase (between fourth to fourth to last session). CEP was found to be

the strongest predictor of outcome when differentiated from other variables, such as WAI or beginning phase CEE, for example. In regard to depression, “Working phase CEP explained 34.2% over and above what was explained” (Auszra, Greenberg, & Herrmann, 2013, p. 742) by other confounding predictive variables, and CEP accounted for 18.9% over and above confounding predictors regarding general symptomology. The overall models for BDI and GSI (CEP in addition to other predictive variables) accounted for significant reductions in symptoms.

Auszra, Greenberg, & Herrmann (2013) found the results in line with their hypothesis, that “working phase CEP was the sole independent predictor of outcome on both the BDI and GSI” (p. 742). They concluded that CEP must be integral to success of experiential therapies and that CEP “may be measuring an important therapeutic variable that relates more strongly to symptom change” (Auszra, Greenberg, & Herrmann, 2013, p. 742). Finally, they found the results to coincide with EFT theory that suggests cognitive processing beyond just emotional arousal is necessary for successful treatment.

**Measure development.** Some EFT researchers set out to support the impact of EFT through varying methods, whether qualitative or mixed methods. As mentioned above, a co-founder of EFT developed a method, as an alternative to solely quantitative studies, in order to measure the efficacy of EFT. McLeod and Elliott (2012) set out to provide additional support for Hermeneutic Single Case Efficacy Design (HSCED) as an alternative to Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) that demonstrates not only the efficacy of interventions but also how interventions lead to change. They described HSCED as a “robust qualitative and quantitative combined method for measuring efficacy of single cases” that establishes “whether the client changed, whether therapy had a causal role in client change, and what processes brought about client change” (McLeod & Elliott, 2012, p. 7). HSCED collects quantitative and qualitative data



throughout the treatment, and then three judges, in this case, make arguments for and against what kinds of changes, and to what extent changes, occurred. These judges were not co-authors but rather trainees and a clinical associate, all with an eclectic knowledge of treatment strategies. Using clinicians who are familiar with, but not over-committed to, the theory under study, was said to be in line with emerging HSCED standards; however, the relationship of these judges to the researchers was unclear. These arguments are labeled Affirmative Brief, Sceptic Brief, Affirmative Rebuttal, and Sceptic Rebuttal and result in final judgments. HSCED can be applied to differing outcome cases, from poor to good, to answer these questions. They portrayed HSCED as a perfect match for Person-Centered Experiential Therapies (PCE), such as Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT), due to “its emphasis on the client’s own narrative and understanding of their experience” (McLeod & Elliott, 2012, p. 8).

Their case was chosen from the “Strathclyde Therapy Research Clinic Social Anxiety Study data archive” and was the “client with the lowest residual gain score who had received EFT...from first 20 clients” (McLeod & Elliott, 2012, p. 9). He was a single, mid-30’s, male with no children, and no serious relationships in the past. He received nine years of previous treatment for depression and was currently in therapy for fear of being a victim of violence, fear of rejection and fear of humiliation. For the study, this participant received 20 sessions of EFT with a PCE identified therapist with 15 years of experience. He met criteria for Social Anxiety (SA) based on the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV (SCID), Personality Disorders Questionnaire IV, Social Phobia Inventory, and Personal Questionnaire. Quantitative outcome measures included Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation – Outcome Measures (CORE-EM), Strathclyde Inventory, Personal Questionnaire, Social Phobia Inventory, and Inventory of Interpersonal Problems (IIP), all administered before the first session, after the eighth, and again

at completion. A qualitative measure, the Helpful Aspects of Therapy (Hat-qualitative) and semi-structured interviews were also employed. The therapist completed the Therapist Experiential Session Form (TESF) following each session.

The results showed no clinically significant gains on quantitative measures, although the qualitative reports indicated some improvements of mood and anxiety. According to the judges, while no substantial change was found to be likely, minor changes were seen and the evidence suggested “his therapy had a clear but modest effect on his outcome” (McLeod & Elliott, 2012, p. 16). However, judges’ ratings were averaged, and sometimes varied considerably. Macleod and Elliott (2012) concluded that “the provision and development of a warm and consistent therapeutic relationship, characterized by acceptance, empathic understanding and care was the primary mediator of change in Ross’s case” and that:

the consistent emergence of this theme may indicate that the PCE approaches, and particularly the elements of empathy and unconditional regard (which, of course, rely on the presence of congruence), offer a helpful therapeutic match with the needs of individuals experiencing SA (McLeod & Elliott, 2012, p. 17).

In other words, the results identified the interpersonal realm of therapy to have the most impact, even in a poor outcome case. While reviewing limitations, Macleod and Elliott (2012) identified the absence any negative findings as a possible bias in their approach to the evidence, as the questions they developed contained more of a positive focus. As a result, mediators of poor outcome were not determined.

In an adjudicated version of this method conducted by Elliott et al. (2009), an Affirmative team (AT) argued that change occurred and resulted directly from a Process-Experiential Emotion-Focused Therapy (PE-EFT) while a Skeptic team (ST) played devil’s advocate, so to

speak; and these cases were presented to selected judges. Treatment was provided to a 61-year-old Caucasian married male to address phobia, personality and interpersonal issues. Following 23 sessions over 11 months, minimal quantitative changes were found, but qualitative changes were reported. The Skeptic brief put forward that the client was misdiagnosed and minimal to negative change was found. They added that changes were not attributed to therapy by the client, inconsistencies in interviews may reflect a desire to impress the interviewers, the client's expectations for change may have influenced reported change, and other external events may have affected change. The Affirmative rebuttal conceded that there was not quantitative change, however, the specific-stated goal of the client, to reduce fear of crossing bridges, was achieved. The Skeptic brief followed the Affirmative brief and the Affirmative rebuttal was followed by a Skeptic rebuttal.

Following this procedure, the judges reviewed the data and offered their positions. The judges concluded that the client did change, having given more credence to the qualitative data. They also agreed that therapy was "at least partly responsible for the client's change" (Elliott et al., 2009, p. 554). Interestingly, they found the therapeutic relationship to be central to this change, and only the PE-EFT oriented judge believed changes were specific to EFT techniques. Follow up assessments showed that the client was still able to cross-bridges. Follow up assessments also showed gains on quantitative measures pertaining to personality and interpersonal problems. In a follow up interview the client's positive reflections "focused on relational aspects of therapy" (Elliott et al., 2009, p. 554) and he requested to continue therapy for interpersonal problems. What seemed to be the most emphasized aspect of treatment from both the judges and the client himself were the relational components, and despite conquering his bridge-crossing phobia, interpersonal issues shifted to the forefront for this individual.

Shahar (2014) set out to show EFT as a viable alternative treatment for Social Anxiety. According to Shahar, while Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is the most studied approach to social anxiety and the only APA-recognized empirically supported approach to Social Anxiety, CBT clinical trials also show that only 50% of patients improve at best. Hence, the focus of this particular study was to outline an Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) approach to Social Anxiety, show how it would treat Social Anxiety, specifically the change processes involved, and to relate the results to an ongoing efficacy study. Shahar provided an outline for EFT case formulation, presented a case example, and provided pre- and post- treatment measures of anxiety for this case example. Shahar believed EFT could provide additional treatment options for those who do not respond to CBT.

Shahar (2014) described EFT as an approach with the primary goal of “[helping] patients pay attention to their internal experiences, symbolize these experiences into words and utilize them to construct new meanings and to promote new experiences” (p. 537). Shahar described the theory behind EFT succinctly, “Emotions are fundamentally connected to our basic needs and are activated when important needs are compromised. Therefore, adaptive functioning is assumed to be based on being aware of our emotions in order to fully utilize the information they contain” (Shahar, 2014, p. 537). Shahar agreed with dominant conceptualizations of EFT, that adaptive emotional responses get disrupted by events such as traumatic experiences and then these experiences and their associated emotional responses become intricately combined into painful memories. To activate the particular affect is to evoke the history of pain associated with it. Emotions can also be maladaptive when they serve as defenses against feeling other painful emotions.

Social anxiety creates a fear of being judged and an expectation that the self will not be validated. According to Shahar (2014), relationship principles of EFT are well-suited to make the patient feel more at ease to explore emotions. Shahar framed this process as an “inward” exploration (Shahar, 2014, p. 538). He also considered how the relational context can help change patient’s views through, “[disconfirming] negative views” (Shahar, 2014, p. 538). According to Shahar, patients internalize the therapist’s validating and accepting attitude, in line with attachment theory. Consistent with other studies reviewed in this section, Shahar conceptualized Social Anxiety as a dynamic of internal voices, representing splits in the self. He conceptualized voices underlying social anxiety as criticizing and shaming, and EFT can be used to transform these emotions into more adaptive emotions.

The case that was presented in this article was based on 28 sessions over the span of nine months. In general, throughout the case, certain points were identified as generalized *markers*, which signaled certain conflicts and that a specific concordant intervention was needed. Two chair technique was used in order to facilitate and bolster voices of anger, self-compassion, and self-forgiveness. Dissociative symptoms reportedly ceased and avoidance of social situations decreased. Outcomes were measured by a diagnostic interview, the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale, and Social Phobia Inventory; the subject presented as extremely self-critical on the Inadequate-Self subscale of Self-Reassurance subscale of The Forms of Self-Criticizing/Attacking and Reassurance Scale. Following treatment, the subject reported diminished symptoms. Social anxiety remained high but decreased significantly two months post-treatment. Social phobia and self-criticism scales dropped by nearly half and all three maintained well up to 12-month follow-up timepoint but self-report inventories indicated no significant change in self-soothing and that significant anxiety still remained. Shahar concluded

that further treatment may be indicated by the anxiety the subject continued to report; however, the study supports the claim that EFT is effective for treating Social Anxiety, although further studies are required to validate it as an empirically supported treatment. While Shahar presented the important role of the therapist as a voice to be internalized, a la attachment theory, this interpersonal component was not touched upon in the results or conclusion.

**Therapeutic interventions.** Some researchers set out to prove the efficacy of specific processes or interventions facilitated in EFT. Conversational Analysis seemed to be the method of choice for these studies. Sutherland, Peräkylä, and Elliott (2014) wanted to support the literature demonstrating the benefit of increasing self-compassion in therapy clients. They set out to understand how therapeutic practices, particularly verbal and nonverbal communication, are used to establish, maintain, and dismantle the interactional frame in which the self-soothing task is conducted.

They utilized the method of Conversation Analysis to delineate communications and micro-communications that occurred between therapist and client during two-chair interventions. The method of Conversation Analysis, “examines the everyday methods people use to produce social order and accomplish practical interactional tasks” (Sutherland, Peräkylä, & Elliott, 2014, p. 741). This is accomplished by analyzing transcripts of therapist-client interactions and coding unique features and micro-features of dialogue, unique sequences and unique patterns. These features and patterns are categorized into a fitting description.

Eight recordings (five video and three audio) of the self-soothing task were analyzed. These recordings were from another study involving one of the authors. Three therapists and seven patients, identified as predominantly white, middle-class, and between the ages of 20 – 56, were studied. Most of the participants were already part of a larger study that offered up to 20

sessions. Six of the seven patients were diagnosed with moderate to severe social anxiety based on the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV (SCID-IV) and the sample represented good, average, and poor outcomes. Two authors analyzed the data, while the third audited. The three authors were described as well practiced and trained in Conversation Analysis. The first author chose a sample of segments that exemplified conversational activities, practices, and other features believed to be associated with the self-soothing task prior to analysis. The first and second author applied Conversation Analysis categories and labels to the chosen segments and their team “refined the list of structures and practices employed to accomplish the self-soothing task” (Sutherland, Peräkylä, & Elliott, 2014, p. 742).

The self-soothing task was divided into two distinct categories, the structure and the activities. Sutherland, Peräkylä, and Elliott (2014) decided to focus on structure. The structure was described as the frame in which the therapist and client interacted, whereas the activities referred to the client engaged with the task. The self-soothing task was viewed as having a particular trajectory and involved shifting between interactional frames, identified as the *Ordinary Frame* and the *Soothing Frame*; the former referencing the common therapist and patient interaction and the latter referencing the context where the patient performed dual roles of self and *soothing agent* while the therapist facilitated. The analysis revealed practices for maintaining the soothing frame represented in each phase of the task: establishing the frame, maintaining the frame, and dismantling the frame. These practices were labeled *Directives and Accounts*, *Person Reference and Repair*, and *Response Tokens*. Directives kept the client on-task, while accounts were justifications of why they were doing those activities. Person reference and repair reflected the therapist making sure the patient switched to the right pronouns when acting as the imaginary person. The therapist’s affirmations and encouragements were

labeled Response tokens. Sutherland, Peräkylä, and Elliot (2014), concluded that “micro-practices” of discourse can produce change and talk therapy is a “valid and valuable source of evidence of change” (p. 749). They suggested that this study demonstrated the consistency between EFT’s process-experiential principles and the self-soothing task’s experiential nature. They also concluded that this study supported the use of Conversation Analysis to “inform and support clinical theory” (p. 749). It appeared that the success of the self-soothing task hinged on the therapist structuring, guiding, and encouraging the patient through the process.

Similar to Sutherland, Peräkylä, and Elliott (2014), Muntigl, Knight, and Angus (2014) applied Conversational Analysis to 15 video-taped sessions of five completed cases from an EFT study, published in 1998 to show that participants with narratives that lacked emotionality would improve when processes were applied that are meant to surface the emotional aspect of the narrative. Participants in that study were offered 20 sessions of EFT and all were diagnosed with “clinical depression” (Muntigl, Knight, & Angus, 2014, p. 756). Three sessions from each case representing beginning, middle, and end phases of treatment were analyzed. Muntigl, Knight, and Angus used a specific transcription method that also examined the effects of nonverbal features of conversation. Coding was used to detail pre-determined components of conversation. The point was to determine how and to what degree psychotherapists focus patients on their emotions and facilitate the treatment.

They identified and analyzed 105 instances of client storytelling. Stories revolved around client problems and functioned as complaints about a non-present third party. According to Muntigl, Knight, & Angus (2014), “Within the sequential context of storytelling, we paid particular attention to how the client’s displayed affectual stance was built up and negotiated and how affiliation about the client’s stance was accomplished moment by moment” (p. 757).



The researchers found that patients had emotional currents in their narratives but that they were not clearly expressed. They found three primary types of therapist responses involved in achieving affiliation between therapist and client and building up and negotiating the client's affectual stance: Eliciting, Naming, and Illustrating. Detail was provided for each response about what made them most effective. Illustrating was found to be the most effective at securing affiliation and the client's "endorsement" that the therapist's remarks conveyed accurate understanding. The researchers concluded that the therapist's attainment of intersubjectivity and empathy were the qualities most important in successful treatment.

Paivio et al. (2010) set out to compare two EFT treatments for Trauma (EFTT): Imaginal Confrontation (IC) and Empathic Exploration (EE) of trauma, each which employ different interventions. According to Paivio et al. (2010), "Both versions emphasized client experience and expression of feelings and needs concerning particular attachment figures and offenders and particularly emphasized accessing adaptive emotions, such as anger and sadness and their associated meanings" (p. 364). They hypothesized, based on their previous research, that EFTT with IC would yield more decreases in symptoms of trauma, state and trait anxiety, depression, level of discomfort associated with individualized target complaints, interpersonal stress and attachment related problems than EFTT with EE and increases in self-esteem. Likert scale type measures were used to measure these dependent variables, while therapeutic interventions and client processes were rated by coders.

Participants were all victims of childhood mistreatment and most met the criteria for PTSD, and were all randomly assigned (n=20 EFTT with IC, n=25 EFTT with EE) to both treatment groups. Also, "all clients identified unresolved issues with attachment figures (parents) as a focus of therapy." It was reported that the "clients in both conditions reported

comparably strong alliances and levels of emotional engagement and distress during the different reexperiencing [sic] procedures” but “Significantly lower alliance scores (WAI) for clients who withdrew...compared with completers” (Paivio et al., 2010, pp. 359 – 360)

Pretest, midtreatment test and posttest data showed, “a steady rate of improvement in both groups on all dependent measures,” particularly, “significant effect for time...but not for group” (Paivio et al., 2010, p. 360). They reported all dimensions improved in both conditions with a “small advantage for the IC condition” (p. 360), and significant reductions in the number of participants who met criteria for PTSD in posttreatment. At post-treatment follow-up, just over 45 weeks for each group, both participants from both treatment conditions maintained treatment gains, although the IC condition’s advantage had leveled out at that point.

They concluded that the “Results more likely reflect different routes to change in different approaches” (Paivio et al., 2010, p. 364), which flew in the face of their previous research that showed IC to be more beneficial. This study supported the IC approach but also supported EE as a possible alternative treatment. However, this study did not support their hypothesis that IC would have a superior effect and speculated that these effects might hinge on client engagement. Although IC appeared as possibly a better treatment option for those with personality pathology. Maybe, this is because personality *and* relational issues were found to have a negative influence on change in the EE condition. Additionally, the IC condition also saw higher withdrawal rates with lower WAI. This might be an indication that the relational aspect, which is missing from their interpretation about client engagement (i.e., that engagement is low because WAI is low), is more integral to successful treatment in terms of engagement and despite treatment approach.

**Intrapsychic processes.** Some EFT studies were developed to support theoretical concepts of clients' intrapsychic processes. Ribeiro, Mendes, Angus, Sousa, and Gonclaves (2014) set out to support the notion that depression in the individual, in general, is sustained by a process of unresolved ambivalence between a rigid, problematic dominant internalized self-narrative and non-dominant self-narratives that challenge the dominant narrative from time to time. They drew from a previous study that labeled the expression of non-dominant internal voices as *Innovative Moments* (IMs), and framed IMs as the target of psychotherapy when they surface. IMs were identified as causing ambivalence by disturbing an individual's stable self-concept. According to Ribeiro et al., therapeutic changes occur when unacknowledged and/or non-dominant voices (IMs) emerge and are integrated with the dominant voice. This is achieved through *amplification* of the non-dominant voice through a variety of interventions, such as the two-chair technique. Ribeiro et. al. described a client's efforts to dismiss or avoid contemplating the alternative voices as *Return to Problem Markers* or RPMs (Ribeiro et. al., 2014). Depression, from their view, reflects ambivalence experienced between the discrepant non-dominant voices and the dominant narrative working to maintain the status quo.

Ribeiro et. al. (2014) hypothesized that high rates of RPMs following IMs, coded from a previous study comparing 6 adult cases (4 women and 2 men) that underwent EFT treatment and Client-Centered treatment conditions for Major Depression, will correlate to poor outcome cases. Each case was measured with the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), an Innovative Moments Coding System (IMCS) and a Return-to-the-Problem Coding System (RPCS), the latter two of which the primary author was involved in developing. The IMCS and RPCS were measured using two coders for each. The IMCS reliability was established in the original study (Mendes et al., 2010) by yielding agreement between 50% of coding from one coder with 50% of the other.

RPCS reliability was established by the coders coding each case independently, followed by meetings to compare and reach consensus on all discrepancies. They measured RPMs to IMs in percentage and plotted changes over time. Statistically significant differences ( $p < .0001$ ) were found between good and poor outcome groups, in favor of the hypothesis. Changes over time were statistically significant as well ( $p < .001$ ). In other words, IMs were followed by RPMs significantly less in the good outcome group as predicted, and the proportion of RPMs to IMs in this group, dropped significantly at each time marker. The proportion of RPMs to IMs in the poor outcome group remained static over time. They concluded that the resolution of ambivalence, as evidenced by the reduction of RPMs following IMs, was conducive to recovering from depression (based on a Reliable Change Index applied to BDI pre- and post-treatment scores) and supportive of “EFT’s dialectical constructivist view of the self” (Ribeiro et al., 2014, p. 708). Also, as reviewed above, Shahar’s (2014) work to support therapeutic processes hinged on a conceptualization of anxiety as a result of the intrapsychic processes the client adopts, specifically, being the result of conflicted internal voices. He also attributed the internalization of the therapist’s supportive voice as a benefitting aspect of therapy.

**EFT treatment modalities.** Some researchers also tested EFT concepts incorporated into alternative treatment modalities. For example, Robinson, McCague, and Whissell (2014) wanted to combine the helpful aspects of humanistic group therapy for anxiety and depression with evidence-based Emotion-Focused Therapy and found previous support for this effort lacking. They recruited eight participants. Sufficient pre/post treatment data was collected from six participants and only 4 completed the follow-up measures and semi-structured interview in the final phase. The mean age was 41.5. Personality disorders, active suicidal ideation or drug abuse were ruled out. Participants presented with severe depression, moderate anxiety,

emotional regulation problems, and unhealthy emotion regulation strategies. Treatment was two hours weekly over nine sessions. Group sessions were facilitated by two clinical psychologists, one with 100 hours training in EFT and supervision in EFT. The group was designed with an EFT expert and combined group formalities with EFT intervention strategies. The first session included taking measures and providing participants with psychoeducation on EFT conceptualizations of emotions and how “the ways in which emotions are implicated in psychopathology” (Robinson, McCague, & Whissell, 2014, p. 267). Post measures were gathered upon exit and follow-up was a year after.

Measures included the Beck Depression Inventory – Second Edition (BDI-II), the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), and the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS). Changes of BDI scores were not statistically significant but effect sizes showed changes in depression from the severe clinical range to the moderate clinical range post-group and at follow-up. Again, Anxiety scores depicted no statistically significant changes, but a notable effect size was found. For the four participants that completed follow-ups, anxiety scores dropped from moderate clinical levels to the mild range. Statistically significant change was found on the DERS, although scores remained above the average range for clinical populations, still there was even further improvement on follow up. Post-interview analysis (again, four people) revealed significant themes: Benefits of interacting with other participants, personal chair-work and reflection as most powerful in-session experience, Other powerful EFT specific in-session experiences, Post-therapy effects on personal healing and growth, and Preference for group EFT and desire for follow up. (Robinson, McCague, & Whissell, 2014, p. 269).

They concluded that with a larger sample size “statistically significant improvements on measures of anxiety and depression could be expected” (Robinson, McCague, & Whissell, 2014,

p. 272). Interpersonal or “common factors” were identified as critical to success, including group cohesiveness, empathy, and validation. They also concluded that the group intervention heightened the impact of emotional production and the effectiveness of the chair work. Beckner, Howard, Vella, and Mohr (2010) set to find out if level of social support and satisfaction of social support would moderate depressive symptoms in Multiple Sclerosis (MS) patients with depression. They randomized participants into two treatment conditions, Telephone-administered Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (T-CBT) and Telephone-administered Emotion-Focused Therapy (T-EFT). They hypothesized that the former would prove a more effective treatment for those with higher baseline social support, while the latter would show more improvement in the treatment group with lower baseline social support. T-EFT because it emphasized the therapeutic relationship and targets barriers to social relationships, while T-CBT is expected to be more productive for individuals who can focus on treatment objectives without the distraction of a lack of social support. Telephone-administered therapy was used to address barriers with mobility, and transportation. Also, they cited a study that found telephone-administered therapy to be as effective as face to face therapy for Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

This study was described as a secondary analysis of a randomized control trial measuring the effectiveness of telephone-based interventions on depression. Participants had a confirmed diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis, substantial functional impairment, considerable depression scores on the Beck Depression Inventory – 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (BDI-II) and Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HAM-D), were English-speaking, and over the age of 14. Regarding demographics, 77% of participants were female and 90% were Caucasian, which the researchers believed to be

congruent with the demographics of MS patients. There were 127 participants overall, 62 randomly assigned to the T-CBT condition and 65 randomly assigned to the T-EFT condition.

Sixteen weekly, one-hour, manualized T-CBT and T-EFT were delivered by “licensed, doctoral-level psychologists with one to five years of post-doctoral experience. Similar to Auszra, Greenberg, and Hermann (2013), Likert-type rating-scales and semi-structured interviews were used to measure social support, depression, and MS-related disability at baseline and post-treatment outcomes. A student t-test and chi-square analysis were used to determine the integrity of randomization and found that both treatment groups were practically indistinguishable at baseline regarding demographics and level of depression symptoms.

Similar to Auszra, Greenberg, and Herrmann’s (2013) quantitative analysis, Hierarchical Linear Regression techniques were used to determine the predictive value of the variables. While levels of received support and satisfaction of support did not significantly change, these variables appeared to moderate treatment outcomes. Higher baseline received support resulted in lower “residualized end-of-treatment BDI-II and HAM-D scores” (Beckner et al., 2010, p. 52). Baseline social support predicted BDI-II and HAM-D scores in the T-CBT treatment condition but not the T-EFT condition. In other words, people who reported higher satisfaction with social support to begin with, fared better in T-CBT but not T-EFT. The more that participants reported high received support, the more they were found to report significantly lower levels of depression on the HAM-D, and non-significant scores on the BDI-II that, however, trended in the same direction. Participants who reported higher satisfaction support also enjoyed significant decreases in depression symptoms on both measures in the T-CBT treatment condition, compared to the T-EFT condition. Those who reported low social support or low satisfaction with support did not result with significant decreases in depression symptoms, but improvements

that were observed were similar between treatment conditions. They concluded that, “depression outcomes do vary depending on the baseline levels of social support and treatment type, but that the important differences are only seen in participants with high social support” and CBT might be a better treatment fit for these individuals (Beckner, et al., 2010, p. 55). Overall, the quality of relationships that depressed people maintain seems to improve their chances for successful treatment.

**Summary.** A review of current research articles about EFT represented a still developing theory, whose proponents focused on demonstrating the efficacy of their interventions through outcome studies. Many of these studies tested burgeoning mixed-methods measures, some of which were being developed by the proponents and originators of EFT. In some cases, EFT researchers sought to prove the benefit of integrating of EFT concepts and interventions with well-established modalities and interventions. Some of the studies sought to proceduralize the therapist approach in treatment by determining the most effective behaviors of the therapists. Much of the data collected from subjects was self-report or qualitative reports, although some was observation, such as with Client Emotion Productivity (Aszra, Greenberg, & Hermann, 2013). Some of the qualitative data judged by a panel of researchers to determine outcome. The constructs being measured were generally conceived of as intrapsychic and subjective, although the concepts related to therapists’ verbal and nonverbal communications (Sutherland, Perakya, & Elliott, 2014) were based on basic assumptions about how therapists implement their techniques.

The general theory of EFT as represented by these studies reflected the stance that psychopathology results from maladaptive emotions or problems accessing emotions. At the core of this emphasis were also beliefs that emotional access is adaptive and that emotions begin



adaptive in one's life but can become maladaptive based on personal experiences. Interventions aimed to help subjects articulate and express emotions or resolve maladaptive emotions and to develop the ability to resolve one's maladaptive emotions on one's own. Studies that accounted for quality of relationships, whether strength of therapeutic alliance or a subject's outside social support, demonstrated that quality of relationships improved outcome; however, some of these studies also sought to prove that their interventions made more significant contributions to outcomes than relationship factors alone. Overall, these studies exhibited minimal research validation of EFT efficacy. The study samples were predominantly very small, gains typically insignificant to modest, and despite frequent use of mixed methods or qualitative methods, generalized claims of how effective the treatment is were often made. In addition, a search for studies of EFT that examined and reflected on EFT's implicit values and assumptions yielded zero results on Electronic Journal Center, Proquest, PsycInfo 1967-, and Psychology and Behavioral Sciences databases, reflecting an absence of the type of hermeneutic inquiry into EFT that I am intending to conduct.

### **The Examined Text**

The primary text that I interpreted in my study was Leslie Greenberg's 2015 text *Emotion-Focused Therapy: Coaching Clients to Work Through Their Feelings 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. In this section I summarize this text, particularly Greenberg's adopted theory of emotion, his conceptualization of healthy and unhealthy psychological functioning, and the interventions he has developed to treat psychopathology.

EFT is a theory that emphasizes the primacy of emotions in psychological functioning. According to Greenberg, emotions are meant to guide people to adaptive and productive actions and choices and to promote overall well-being. Greenberg perceives emotions as evolutionary,

universal, and action-mobilizing mental messages about the needs of the person that are generated from the limbic system. In Greenberg's (2015) own words, "Emotions are primarily designed to facilitate adaptation" (p. 45). He further explained that emotions guide one to "pre-wired" adaptive benefits (p. 45). Greenberg described humans as innate problem solvers and makes the case that emotions are the guides to solving these problems. Capitalizing on this inner guide requires the ability to recognize, access, verbalize, think about and make meaning of emotions. Emotions are part of our natural adaptive strivings for growth and health, hence, if we can pay attention to them and decipher them correctly, we will grow properly, be adaptive, and be healthy.

Greenberg described that emotions travel two paths, an amygdala-based *low road* and a neocortex-based *high road* (p. 55). EFT focuses on the former, the low road, automatic and survival-conducive emotions. EFT delegates the cognitive error that can become of high road emotions, which Greenberg (2015) described as "far more cognitively derived and culturally influenced," to interventions based on "cognitive change principles" (p. 55). Emotions are further distinguished between primary or core emotions, as well as secondary and instrumental emotions. Greenberg (2015) categorized these types of emotions as adaptive or maladaptive, depending on whether they direct you to your needs or are a result of "past unresolved issues" such as those related to trauma or attachment issues (p. 75). Maladaptive emotions can either disrupt one's ability to understand emotion's call or result from avoidance of primary emotions.

Greenberg was convinced of some very specific properties inherent to emotion and referred to a trove of neuroscientific and physiological research to confirm his ideas. Greenberg contended that there are different types of emotions. Already mentioned above are primary, secondary, and instrumental, as well as adaptive and maladaptive. Hence, emotions can be good

or bad, manipulative, and signal different things. Greenberg (2015) also distinguished basic and complex emotions and “me” and “it” emotions (p. 79-81). It seemed that basic are the variety that EFT is more focused on because they lead to action, although complex emotions need to be considered. He described “Me” emotions as reactions to internal processes, and “It” as responses to external cues.

Greenberg was adamant about the universality of emotions, emphasizing the similarities of emotion across cultures, and people. In other words, reasons for emotions and emotional expression can vary culturally, but what is experienced is the same. He described emotions as universal “regardless of culture” and as “pretty immune” from cultural influences (Greenberg, 2015, p. 40). Perhaps, from Greenberg’s view, culture can be seen as the software, whereas emotions are seen as the hardware.

It is clear from the text that Greenberg intended to address, and maybe challenge, what he perceives is a cognitive overshadowing of emotion in the field. He reviewed several studies, some of which were carried out by him and his colleagues, that supported why focusing on emotion is equally, if not more important. He tied emotion to adaptive intelligence through studies that demonstrated how emotion contributed to intelligence by narrowing choices to what feels right versus choices resulting in a feeling of “don’t go there” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 15). According to Greenberg, emotion makes certain experiences poignant and memorable, and informs one about what things to move toward or away from. In other words, emotions provide cues as to how-to-be, what to expect, and what to do within certain environments or relational contexts. Furthermore, Greenberg depicted emotion as having an over-arching mental quality resulting in “emotional schemes,” which are based on synthetically interacting appraisals, which include contextual cues, bodily perceptions, neural circuit firing, subjective feelings, and

cognition. In other words, “emotion, motivation, cognition, and action occur as an integrated response package” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 47).

According to Greenberg, schemes develop from past repetitive and intense early patterns and can be activated in contexts like those in which schemas were formed. This seems like quite a scientific variation on classical analytic theory that connects pathological patterns in one’s relationships, thinking, or behaviors to one’s earliest experiences.

An important quality of Greenberg’s emotion schemes is their conceptualization as an “internal processing mechanism,” based on his premise that emotions “have inner causes” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 48). According to Greenberg, emotion schemes serve as a mediator between the external world and the internal world. Schemes are stored in memory, almost as a snapshot of all of the physiological processes and the feeling that were activated by a specific stimulus, along with a (usually) preverbal connection of this snapshot to the object or context that triggered this state. This “package” of processes, or responses, constitute “bodily states” that are “affectively meaningful markers” or representations of specific experiences stored in memory (p. 48). In other words, this constellation of processes and experiences and the stimulating context are stored in memory, and body memory, in a meaningful way – according to Greenberg’s brand of constructionism, in a narrative way. Accordingly, these states are reactivated automatically, “by input that matches some of its representations” (pp. 48-49). Overall, Greenberg identified schemes as “internal, networks represented as wordless narratives consisting of beginnings, middles, and ends; agents; objects; and intentions” (p. 49).

Emotion schemes are pertinent to Greenberg’s EFT. Generally activated automatically and operating out of reflective awareness, emotion schemes embody some of the most meaningful knowledge belonging to a person. According to Greenberg (2015), “these memory-

based emotion schemes guide appraisals, bias decisions, and serve as blueprints for physiological arousal and action” (p. 49). Hence, they underlie the action-oriented and decision-making products of emotional experience, or the “guidance system” aspect of experience, which informs the therapist and individual of whether an emotion is adaptive or maladaptive. More than targeting just this or that emotion, entire emotion schemes are the target of EFT.

Greenberg termed EFT practitioners as “coaches” and the application of EFT as coaching. Greenberg clarified that this is because coaching refers to a way of approaching emotion that could be generalizable to other professions. Again, it is the purpose of EFT to coach patients in feeling and understanding their emotions and utilizing them for adaptive living. Emotional Intelligence (EI) is required to regulate emotions and to reap the benefits derived from understanding the needs one’s emotions direct them to meet. According to Greenberg (2015), Emotional Intelligence includes emotional awareness, as well as being able to use emotion to “inform reasoned action” (p. 15). Beyond understanding, awareness, and utilizing emotion, EI also includes the ability to regulate emotion. It is the therapist’s role to aid the client in re-connecting to their adaptive emotions and bringing meaning to these new emotional experiences in order to consolidate them. Greenberg described the therapist as an expert on methods, not on the client’s experience. Hence, the therapist takes a neutral, or “non-imposing” stance toward the client’s experience and values. According to Greenberg (2015), “The purpose of [EFT] is to increase patients’ emotional intelligence” (p. 13).

Speaking of the therapist’s stance in relation to the client, Greenberg emphasized the role of the therapeutic relationship in the treatment of maladaptive emotions. Along with “the facilitation of therapeutic work on emotion,” Greenberg depicted “an empathic therapeutic relationship” as one of the two major treatment principles upon which EFT is based (p. 4). EFT

adopted Rogerian Humanistic Person-Centered values, such as empathy, genuineness (otherwise known as congruence), and unconditional positive regard. The therapist must be fully present and completely in the moment with their patients. In regard to the emphasis on empathy and a nonjudgmental attitude, these attitudes facilitate the acceptance and validation of emotions, which is part of the treatment. According to Greenberg, this approach to the patient helps to coregulate the patient's affect. While much of EFT is focused on coaching patients to self-regulate their emotions, Greenberg acknowledged the role of relationships in helping developing humans to regulate their emotions.

Greenberg (2015) presented several types, or levels, of empathy (pp. 94-96). *Empathic understanding* reflects the essence of what the client is communicating. *Empathic affirmation* provides validation of emotional experiences. *Evocative responses* use vivid, imaginal expressions to evoke and “access” client feelings. *Empathic exploration* is an aspect of intervention in EFT; it emphasizes what seems “most alive” in the communication, or what is implicit – to draw attention to the edges of the client's awareness, and to symbolize this experience. *Empathic conjectures* are therapist guesses or hunches. Overall, “therapist empathic responses need to focus on growth-oriented possibilities” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 95). The therapist must be very measured with their empathic responses, staying only “up to one step ahead” of the patient and the “Emotional approach and awareness should be used when the emotions are below some manageable level of arousal, say 70%,” otherwise, “distraction and regulation” are the recommended interventions (Greenberg, 2015, p. 96). Greenberg has pronounced the crucial role of empathy in EFT. He has detailed an instrumental use of empathy, referred to predominantly for what it can accomplish. For instance, some types are described as

aspects of intervention. Ultimately, empathy is utilized to promote adaptive growth and health as defined by evolutionary theories of emotion.

Agreeing on goals is another important aspect of the therapeutic relationship. According to Greenberg (2015), genuineness, constancy, collaborating and agreeing on goals, “creates an optimal therapeutic environment” with “curative and productive properties” (p. 96). According to Greenberg, it can further help promote collaboration and reduce one’s fears to face his or her feelings if the therapist provides rationales for focusing on emotions and this includes providing scientific, evidence-based, or theoretical explanations. The therapist is also expected to have accurate awareness of their own emotions and to represent their emotional states transparently, as aspects of congruence. The importance of congruence is described as it’s tendency to foster trust with and reduce anxiety within the client. While the therapist is not expected to always express affirmation of the patient, they are expected to always maintain an “affirming stance” (Greenberg, 2015, pp. 112-115).

Relationships in general were presented as pertinent to both the development of emotion regulation (or dysregulation) in one’s life and treatment focused on emotion regulation. According to Greenberg, humans have an interpersonal nature, that implies social needs, such as love, connection, and attachment. Attachment, along with mastery, are perceived as basic to human nature, formed to promote adaptiveness, and meeting both needs leads to individuals being “active agents” rather than “passive victims,” which is a prominent duality that is highlighted within Greenberg’s theory (Greenberg, 2015, p. 52). Greenberg referred to a more current nervous system theory that accounts for how positive social interaction “optimizes healing” and “dampens stress-related physiological states” (p. 59). The therapeutic relationship not only facilitates emotional exploration, but “attunement and connection in current

relationships can heal or exercise the neural muscles to feel safe” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 59). In other words, whatever dysregulation that is rooted in early social experience, can be healed later in life in new relationships.

Greenberg distilled emotion coaching into nine steps, divided into two phases. The implication is that the first phase (arriving) involves the discovery of a primary experience that was hidden or disrupted by other emotions or types of defenses. This is followed by determining if this is a) an adaptive emotions experience or not, b) acknowledging the need associated with it, and accessing new emotions and narratives (leaving phase). Ideally, the work requires increasing level of emotions arousal, determining adaptivity, and then forming new narratives to help consolidate new emotion experiences through meaning. According to Greenberg arousing productive emotions predicts good outcomes and transforms negative emotions to positive emotions. Greenberg (2015) developed the Client Emotional Productivity Scales to “extract” useful information from adaptive emotions to solve a problem or assess potential for transformation (p. 83).

## **Summary**

In this chapter I introduced concerns regarding implicit assumptions in psychotherapeutic theories and how cultural-historical theorists have begun examining and articulating these assumptions over the past four decades or so. These theorists examine mainstream psychotherapy as a cultural-historical artifact. As such, they have construed these theories as reflections of societal values. The culmination of values a society strives for, whether implicitly or explicitly, are described by some cultural-historical theorists as the good life (Cushman, 1995; Taylor, 1989). One way that these values become apparent is in the configuration of the contemporary self. For example, Cushman (1995) labeled the post-World War II self as the



empty self. This is a description of a person who is self-contained, has unmoored values, that can socially disengage at will, and defines the self through the consumption of material goods. Some of the ideologies and values underlying this self-configuration were reviewed.

Many of these theorists have applied some form of hermeneutic thinking to culturally and historically situate mainstream theories of psychotherapy. An article that demonstrated this approach (Cushman, 1991) was reviewed to present the reader with an example of how a hermeneutic interpretation of a theory is carried out. Two investigations of sociopolitical values latent in humanistic psychotherapy theory were presented to compare and contrast to the current study. These theorists posited many concerns about unacknowledged assumptions in psychotherapy.

EFT warrants its own hermeneutic evaluation for three reasons: first, these studies were carried out over three decades ago; second, hermeneutic interpretations of the same phenomenon can either broaden or challenge the perspective of other hermeneutic studies; and third, EFT represents a merge of humanistic theory, cognitive, and neuropsychological theories. It is *neohumanistic* (Greenberg, 2015) and contemporary, therefore, it has far-reaching influence. This means that implicit values and assumptions can be unknowingly disseminated and perpetuated. Without being able to scrutinize these disguised values it cannot be determined if they are beneficial and acceptable.

In this chapter I also presented a brief review of current EFT research that is most relevant to Greenberg's EFT applied to individual psychotherapy, as opposed to Susan Johnson's (Johnson, 2004) couples-oriented EFT. These studies exhibited minimal research validation of EFT efficacy. The study samples were predominantly very small, gains typically insignificant to modest, and despite frequent use of mixed methods or qualitative methods, generalized claims of

effectiveness were often made. For example, the Hermeneutic Single-Case Studies reviewed showed minimal to no quantitative evidence of improvement. Only the qualitative data demonstrated some support, but this data was admittedly prone to bias. However, judging panels for both studies emphasized the role of the therapeutic relationship in the changes they did see. Shahar (2014) presented a single-case study that, while demonstrating effectiveness of EFT based on the progress gained, resulted in a patient whose anxiety remained clinically significant. Studies using conversational analysis implied a strong need for rigidity and direction. Despite emphasizing the importance of the therapeutic alliance, it seemed there was little room for spontaneity. Paivio et al. (2010) did not prove imaginal confrontation (IC) to be a superior strategy to mere empathic exploration (EE), which was less structured and relied predominantly on the therapists demonstrating empathy. Also, withdrawals from the study were associated with lower levels of therapeutic alliance.

Overall, these EFT studies did not seem to provide strong support for their efforts to prove efficacy or clarify the usefulness of proper techniques. It was also notable, that the relational dimension of these studies was understated as part of any gains that were made, even though the therapeutic relationship was commonly described as highly valued in EFT. Most relevant to this study was the lack of examination of the values underlying EFT's centralization of emotions in human experience.

Lastly, an overview of Greenberg's (2015) *Emotion-Focused Therapy: Coaching Clients to Work Through Their Feelings 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* was presented. This is the text that will be hermeneutically examined in this dissertation. It was outlined in this chapter to familiarize readers with the concepts and ideas that will be critiqued in the Results and Discussion. In the next chapter I will detail the hermeneutic approach that I applied to this text.

## **Method**

### **Application of Hermeneutics**

Gadamer (1960/2004) would argue that hermeneutics is not a method for understanding, but rather a description of the process of understanding. The reviewed research utilizing hermeneutics or similar interpretive approaches often differed in the application of theory, although many principles overlapped. Also, in keeping in the spirit of hermeneutics, most of these authors only provided an outline of their process as a demonstration, not as authoritative rules or step-by-step procedures. For example, Richardson, Fowers, and Guignon (1999) presented three overlapping principles common to ontological hermeneutics, while Klein and Myers (1999) presented seven principles fundamental to the broader realm of interpretive science. Fleming, Gaidys, and Robb (2002) cited works that criticized the current application of hermeneutics, particularly in nursing research, because there is a tendency to combine hermeneutics with phenomenology and because there are so many differing ideas about how to apply hermeneutics. It is also crucial to mention that these phases do not necessarily occur linearly and step by step but occur fluidly and sometimes come as a kind of awakening. I drew most heavily from Gadamer (Gadamer 1960/2004; Warnke 1987) and Stigliano (1989) to devise some guidelines and procedures for the organization and interpretation of data. Stigliano (1989) clarified four steps comprising the hermeneutic circle: (a) text generation; (b) distancing; (c) appropriation; and (d) reconstruction. One presupposition to this process is that all the phases described comprise the hermeneutic circle.

### **Establishing the Research Question**

Hermeneutic understanding begins with a question or a questioning. Questioning is a natural process that occurs when one's prejudices or biases are provoked. Gadamer (1960/2004)

explained that, “All suspension of judgments and...prejudices, has the logical structure of a question” (p. 299). In other words, the question comes from a dialogical interaction in which the researcher’s interest was provoked as a result of a challenge to his or her presuppositions. So there has to be a desire to gain understanding and broaden one’s horizon in order to make one’s point-of-view flexible enough to entertain another perspective. In research this usually occurs through the researcher’s involvement with particular fields, treatment modalities, theories, etc. In this particular study, the question appeared after the I noticed he took for granted a belief that psychotherapeutic interventions do what the theory proposes and for the reasons it states. This prejudice was challenged from another horizon that perceives that there are underlying assumptions to psychological theories that contradict those theories’ explicit descriptions and align with broader ideological structures.

Generating questions is part of the hermeneutic circle. Initially, I generated questions based on a literature review of research on Emotion-Focused Therapy; however, those questions set me on a path, and the most crucial questions were those that came to me as I read. For example, when I read about Greenberg’s (2015) concept of an emotion scheme, I asked “Is this like Kant’s (1781/1999) intrapsychic structure?” This question led me to emphasize Enlightenment philosophy more than I originally intended.

In general, I generated questions by paying attention to what in the reading challenged my previously held understandings. I came to an understanding of how new information contrasted with and highlighted my previous understanding and developed a question that closed the gap between the two. Occasionally, I pursued an answer before I articulated the question. It was not until I found the answer, that I understood the question. I began by reading the selected

Greenberg (2015) text with the research questions outlined in the Introduction in mind; however, new questions emerged as my understanding of the topic evolved.

### **Identifying Preunderstandings**

Geanellos (2000) paraphrased Heidegger (1927/2010) by suggesting that, “As soon as we ask a question about any aspect of experience we are making some assumptions about that experience: ‘every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought’” (p. 11). Based on this statement, it seems fitting that identifying preunderstandings is the next phase in this process. This was not a step proposed by Stigliano (1989), but the recognition of presuppositions occurred nearly automatically as I reflected on why this project was important to me. Derived from Heidegger, Smythe, and Spence (2012) described three types of “ready-made understandings” as a guide to identifying and formulating preunderstandings that a researcher can identify (p. 16). The three types are:

1. Fore-having: This includes the knowledge and understandings that a researcher or author already has about the subject under investigation.
2. Fore-sight: This can be understood as a sense of knowing where to look for information next, based on a general sense or intuition about what one needs to know.
3. Fore-conception: This can be understood as an anticipation or immature expectation of the results. For football fans, this is the rookie wide receiver mistake of looking up the field before securely catching the ball. More simply, this is when one thinks he or she knows what he or she will find ahead of time.

The basis of my Fore-having was described in my Introduction and Literature Review. In the introduction, I revealed my biases that led me on the path that led me to this dissertation. In the literature review I presented the knowledge that I already had regarding the interpretive lens I

used and the theory I was examining. Those preunderstandings informed my interpretations, but also led to new meanings interpreted from the data. These preunderstandings were also at work in the texts themselves and I learned that an aspect of hermeneutic research was identifying those preunderstandings in the texts. In order to identify those preconceptions, I followed Stigliano's (1989) recommendation of reading through texts and identifying what is either incomprehensible or what should be obvious. This led to forming some conjectures to challenge through further reading (i.e. circling back). As ideas generated, I tested them against other documents. Fleming, Gaidys, and Robb (2002) recommended discussing the topic with a colleague and recording the emerging preunderstandings. I often found myself discussing my emerging thoughts with anyone who was willing to listen (or to pretend to be listening!). I would often record any emerging ideas using a cell phone note-taking application. In line with Fleming, Gaidys, and Robb (2002), as preconceptions evolved through engaging with data, reading texts, and journaling, I was sure to repeat this exercise.

I began this process by reading and noting quotations and remarks that stuck out to me. I documented these quotations in a spreadsheet. I labeled them by themes and added my own thoughts. It was apparent that I was already primed to see possible ideological issues. This led to re-reading the text from a position promoted by Gadamer (1960/2004), which required me to assume what I am reading is true and to question how I can advocate for that position. This allowed me to develop a stronger and less biased understanding of the material.

I also incorporated to some degree what Smythe and Spence (2012) phrased as reading "widely" and "seeking the strange" in order to provoke preunderstandings (p. 20). These ideas are based on Heidegger's reference to Aristotle's "kinesis," and Gadamer's reference to Aristotle's claim that insight is dependent on context (Smythe & Spence, 2012). Both of these

suggestions required engaging in texts of all sorts (including art, plays, classic fiction, etc.) as well as from different fields and eras; however, I did not stray too far from psychological and philosophical content. Although, I did notice ideas emerging as I read certain news articles. The new understandings I identified began to dialogue with these articles. Not only did these strategies help to make preunderstandings more apparent but they expanded my horizon to think contextually, creatively, and historically. Identifying preunderstandings was an ongoing task throughout the study.

### **Dialogue**

This step is an arbitrary distinction and overlaps heavily with the previous and next phases, because characterizing the hermeneutic circle as a method is an attempt to proceduralize a non-linear process which conflicts with the approach of hermeneutics. However, it is important to acknowledge the massive engagement hermeneutic reading is, as well as the nature of that reading. Gadamer (1960/2004) referred to engaging texts as dialogue. In between identifying preunderstandings, research requires an engagement in texts and thinking. For instance, while this study was about analyzing one specific text, in order to provoke preunderstandings, implement distanciation (explained below), and to situate the texts culturally and historically, a wide range of literature was reviewed as part of the hermeneutic process. While some readings were selected quite intentionally, other reading selections emerged as a natural part of the hermeneutic circle. Smythe and Spence (2012) introduced the processes of *Inclining* and *Moments of Vision*. These were described as a kind of calling and surrendering, respectively. In this process, certain work inexplicably grabs one's attention. This occurred during the course of this dissertation work as Taylor (1989) transitioned from a peripheral source to the most central source of my interpretation.

## **Distanciation**

This phase of the hermeneutic circle was only encountered in two sources (Geanellos, 2000; Stigliano, 1989). This might be due to its applicability to text but not face-to-face situations, like an interview, or because it is a bit of an abstraction from a fluid process. While complex and often unexpressed, this concept contributed a valuable step to this research approach. This process of distanciation implies a type of objectification of the studied content. It means to explore the language of the text being interpreted with an almost naïve curiosity in order to recognize the categories, distinctions, or themes into which the text falls. As an example, an interpreter who encounters the line, “the darkness inside of her,” might think curiously about the framing of human beings as light and dark, but perhaps more intriguing is the *location* attributed to these abstractions. This particular framing locates qualities inside of the human being, again – similar to the previous example – like a receptacle for what drives the person. However, if one were to frame it, “Darkness was all around her,” then it paints a completely different picture. This process reveals themes in the work. This concept was applied to this hermeneutic study through these steps, although this application was not consistently a linear process.

1. Collecting quotations that provoked preunderstandings or that revealed a pattern of significance within the text and/or the body of data altogether.
2. Breaking down or distancing the language of the quotation from its prose. This illuminated the usages of language that seemed obvious yet spoke to cultural assumptions. This was akin to looking at everyday language as idioms.
3. Making sense of what was required to understand the meaning of the quotes in a casual way. In the above example, for instance, one might need to know about



psychology or the construal of mental states, internalization of problems, dichotomized thinking of human attributes, and so on.

4. Perceiving the discoveries from step 3 in terms of a theme or image. A theme in the above example might be *internal/external self* or *location of feelings*.

An example of this process would include the many quotes that I reviewed that emphasized intrapsychic properties and attunement. Having perceived an EFT construct called an Emotion Scheme as a type of internal machinery or computer program, prompted me to explore the mechanistic properties of the mind promulgated within the Enlightenment era.

### **Appropriation/Fusion of Horizons**

Geanellos (2000) described the appropriation of a text as the point where it no longer seems alien. Stigliano (1989) described it as the point in interpretation where one becomes “fluent in the understandings constitutive of a particular practice” and added, “One can then become engaged in the practice, anticipate the actions of those in the practice, and recognize meanings, implications, ideologies and possible crises in the practice” (p. 67). This phase is where the fusion of horizons is most evident. One is able to understand the subject or practice researched from the inside of the perspective from which it comes, yet it is appropriated into the researcher’s prior contextually situated and developed ways of understanding as well. It is a synthesis – something new of something old.

In this study, the horizons came from myself, Greenberg’s (2015) EFT text, cultural-historical/Sociocultural Turn critiques, and Enlightenment philosophy. I struggled to appropriate EFT. One might say that I kept attempting to put Descartes before the horse! Initially, my eagerness to critique EFT made it difficult to slow down enough to really understand it expertly. It became helpful for me to employ Gadamer’s (1960/2004) instruction to assume there is a truth

in what the other is saying and to learn what is that truth. At this point, it became my mission solely to grasp the EFT concepts and, essentially, how to do EFT. The theory began to make sense and to feel intuitive. I actually felt comfort in it and also noticed that I employed similar strategies in my own work at times. This also felt a little scary, because I had originally perceived EFT as embracing ideas that I began maligning against over the past several years; but it is this feeling that signaled that I was now on the right track.

As I came to feel well-versed within the perspectives of each horizon, I began to make each more my own; or perhaps it was that I became more aware of how my own preunderstandings had been provoked. As I felt my mind wrap around concepts both foreign and familiar, they truly felt like my knowledge. This was the point at which I knew I could finally begin analyzing Greenberg's (2015) EFT text, which itself might be seen as a further fusion of the horizons I had newly incorporated.

### **Reconstruction/Situating the Work Culturally and Historically**

Reconstruction is where the interpretations begin to set in and the researcher distinguishes the interpretation with the most support. Appropriating the meanings of the subject, or practices, under investigation leaves the researcher with a slightly shifted perspective. In some ways the researcher might understand aspects of the phenomena better than those who live within it (Stigliano, 1989). It is from this vantage point that the researcher begins to weave together his or her interpretations. The researcher will likely be standing with competing interpretations but will seek to situate these variations into a historical and cultural context until one emerges as most consistent with the research, as well as the most generative in terms of provoking interest and impacting social practices (Stigliano, 1989). Reconstruction involves

presenting the topic from a historically grounded view and being able to advance new social thinking.

In this study, Reconstruction took the form of a discussion, conclusion, and the identifying of implications. Once I had adequately appropriated the texts, I developed ideas about where to look in the grounding texts (cultural-historical and Sociocultural Turn) to situate EFT concepts and constructs. Sometimes this felt intuitive, other times it came from memory, and other times it came from connecting notes that I kept in spreadsheets and word documents. What I found at this point was that a narrative within a grounding text called attention to a concept within EFT, or occasionally, the other way around. I would then read between these parts in both texts. Sometimes clear interpretations would emerge but other times they would not. After I had established several interpretations, I was able to narrow them down to the ones for which I had the strongest arguments.

### **Validity**

Hermeneutics disagrees with the objective stance that there is one true explanation for phenomena under study. Hermeneutics embraces plurovocality, that is, the belief that multiple interpretations can be true for a phenomenon. However, this is not merely subjective. A concluding interpretation should have been considered from several possible interpretations (Stigliano, 1989). The surviving interpretation should be the most consistent with and supported by the researcher's data, which, if gathered across fields, genres, media, and historical eras, should be ample enough to support his or her argument (Geanellos, 2000; Stigliano, 1989). Because the interpretation is affected by the researcher's historical era and unique perspective, it is not an endpoint for the study of the phenomena. Therefore, a strong interpretation should generate further thinking (Smythe, Ironside, Sims, Swenson, & Spence, 2008; Stigliano, 1989).

Lastly, the surviving interpretation should be practical and transformative. Stigliano (1989) contended that “Validity lies in the observation and possible transformation of practices which clearly would improve the social order not only by increasing effectiveness, but also by loosening the grip of ideology” (p. 63). Therefore, validity is established by the strength of the argument among others, the ability to provoke new thinking, and its practical implications for society, or the moral order.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this section was to outline my application of hermeneutics as a research method. A subset of psychologists, particularly postmodern and psychoanalytic, have challenged mainstream psychology’s claims to be purely scientific and value-neutral. They argue that implicit values and assumptions undergird the practice of psychotherapy, and therefore perpetuate these values, politically and on an individual basis. The question is how these implicit values and assumptions influence the patient’s perception of what is a good way to be in order to be healthy. This brings me back to my opening comments about the Parkland, Florida shooting. How do we understand concerns that are limited to mental health services or gun control?

Hermeneutic analysis has been the preferred approach by many of these critical thinkers because of its ability to situate practices historically, and thereby, bringing ideological underpinnings of the practice to light (Cushman, 1995; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999; Stern, 2010). Gadamer (1960/2004) presented hermeneutics not as a method, but as a description of human understanding. However, an understanding of the hermeneutic circle and its processes allow researchers to step into the circle more creatively by provoking

preunderstandings and challenging themselves through engagement with texts. In the next section I will review the results of my analysis.

### **Results and Discussion**

In this chapter I present the results of my interpretation of several concepts formulated in Greenberg's (2015) *Emotion-Focused Therapy: Coaching Clients to Work Through Their Feelings*. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how implicit assumptions and moral outlooks are embedded in EFT, the ways in which these assumptions are disguised and taken-for-granted, and to contemplate the consequences of these assumptions. Everything that I state from Greenberg in this section is from his 2015 text unless otherwise cited, and everything that I state from Taylor is from his 1989 text, *Source of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, unless otherwise cited. My interpretations situated Greenberg's Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) theory within the context of Enlightenment Philosophy, including Descartes (1637/1998), Kant (1781/1999), Rousseau (1762/1979), and the general stances of Expressivism; particularly from incorporating Taylor's (1989) point-of-view and others who draw heavily from Taylor's work in their sociocultural critiques of mainstream psychotherapy. In total, these describe identity as located inside the self. They affirmed the ordinary life and established "nature as an inner moral source" (Taylor, 1989, p. x). Enlightenment thinkers sought to locate interiorly the moral sources from which we draw in order to live in accordance to the good as it is understood in one's life and within one's society and culture (Taylor, 1989). Taylor's profuse use of the word "good" to describe the most valued ways-of-being within a society's moral framework, as well as the most valued goals of an individual or group within that society. In other words, there is a template to live by, a template which is perceived as a moral aspiration in one's society. One sees oneself in certain ways in relation to this ideal – even if these ideas are taken-for-granted –

and one draws from certain sources to obtain the drive, knowledge, and motivation, to live in that way. I will maintain this use of the word good throughout this analysis.

This chapter presents a selective analysis of the implicit assumptions embedded in EFT and describes how many of these assumptions are rooted in Enlightenment Philosophy that emerged between 1600-1800 CE. Some of these assumptions include mind-body dualism, objectification of and instrumental control of the body and passions, transparent subjectivity, self-determination and nature as a source of identity and moral choices. Understanding EFT from the perspective of the Enlightenment is only one of many possible frameworks from which to interpret these concepts. I believe that my examination of concepts was thorough and done from a solid framework to demonstrate the way that these particular assumptions are embedded and disguised in a modern psychological theory, which will also allow a discussion of the consequences of this unreflected, but common affirmation of ordinary life. The results of the analysis of these concepts is presented below in the following seven themes.

### **Theme 1: The Reduction and Reification of Emotion as a Basic Building Block of the Mind**

In this section I demonstrate that Greenberg's conceptualization of emotion as a basic building block of the mind is embedded within individualist and subjectivist ideologies, as well as the assumption of mind-body dualism, which assumes the objectification of parts of the individual mind and treats these abstractions as universal aspects of human psychological life. Building block theories exemplify the illustrations of Sampson (1981), Cushman (1995), Taylor (1989), and others referenced throughout this dissertation of how Descartes (1637/1998), Kant (1781/1999), and other influential Enlightenment thinkers conceptualized the mind as separate from the body and the external world.

According to Greenberg (2015), “EFT theory...takes emotion as the fundamental datum of human experience” (p. 67). Greenberg described emotion as “an essential aspect of being human” and depicted it as the basic building block of human experience (p. 14). It is the carrier of truth around which the human self organizes. Indeed, Greenberg, with a playful twisting of Descartes’ “I think therefore I am” (Descartes, 1637/1998, p. 18), declared that, “EFT is based on the idea that ‘I feel, therefore I am’ and that in any significant personal experience, we think only inasmuch as we feel” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 5). When treating a patient with EFT, the first three steps are devoted to increasing awareness of emotion, promoting acceptance of emotions, and describing and expressing emotions. And, in fact, he is “thrilled that everyone is acknowledging the centrality of emotion” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 6).

Greenberg contrasted the assumptions of EFT with theories that put drives ahead of emotions, such as those that postulate drives like libido or attachment are the primary human motivation. According to Greenberg (2015), “In an emotion-focused view, emotions, rather than needs, are the basic mental units that provide the initial values or preferences that bias the self in one direction or another” (p. 50). He does concede that survival is the most basic human motivation, but even that is dependent on emotion. Greenberg stated:

Over and above the motivation to survive and thrive as the starting point, which includes a motivation to regulate affect and to create meaning, all other needs emerge from what is more basic, emotional preferences plus interaction. Thus, the infant is prewired through the affect system...[hence, needs...derive from affect (p. 50).

Greenberg (2015) took a stance on the long-running debate in psychology over what comes first thought or emotion. While he believes emotion and cognition interact, it was important for him to specify that “it is not thought that produces emotion” (p. 45). Actually, he

described emotion as an elaborative cognitive process where emotions are activated in conjunction with several cognitive and sensory processes simultaneously. However, Greenberg specified that because emotion can occur prior to conscious awareness, that emotion is more dominant and primary in this equation. Greenberg's construct of an Emotion Scheme, which will be discussed in more detail below, is an "integrated response package" of emotion, motivation, cognition, and is "a basic mode of processing more fundamental than thought" (p. 47). According to Greenberg's theory, emotion and cognition interact, but his label of Emotion Scheme for where these two facets are intertwined revealed his preference.

EFT fits Sampson's (1981) description of a cognitive psychology; which includes "psychological approaches which emphasize the structures and processes within the individual's mind that are said to play the major role in behavior" (p. 730). This conceptualization re-located ways-of-knowing and moral sources inside of the individual mind, and Kant (1781/1999) in particular argued that innate internal structures produced humans' ordered perception of reality. Sampson referred to this as a building block theory, whereby the implicit Subjectivist and Individualist assumptions of the cognitive perspective in psychology result in an emphasis on a person's inner experience, their mental structures, and how these mental structures construct one's reality, while undermining the impact of relationships, society, and history on one's experience. According to Sampson (1981):

The combination of subjectivism and individualism converges to yield a picture of reality that gains its coherence and its order by virtue of the orderliness and universality of the building blocks of the individual mind. It is the order of human thinking and reasoning that grants an order and meaning to the world of reality. (p. 731)



He demonstrated how these ways of thinking, which he referred to as Subjectivism and Individualism, are pillars of current psychological thinking and theories:

A growing number of cognitive psychologists have either implied or directly stated that they have uncovered the basic building blocks of the human mind, the very forms of understanding of which Kant wrote, the transhistorical, transsituational forms of knowledge (Sampson, 1981, p. 739).

According to Sampson (1981), attempting to prove these building blocks is essential to the attempts of mainstream psychologists to show that these are universal psychological constructs, because only when constructs are universal can they lend themselves to scientific research using a physical science model and a one-size-fits-all product. When science is applied to human beings, such as in psychology, personal experiences get abstracted from the way they occur in the regular flow of experience, in order to make them measurable. These processes are also construed as products of structures in the mind. In Greenberg's EFT, emotional experience is the product of a structure called an *Emotion Scheme*. According to Sampson this psychological practice of separating cognitive and psychological processes from their sociohistorical context is called *reification* and "[grants] it a timeless, objective standing" (p. 737). Sampson argued that there is something true that is represented by the reified concept, but also something false. The reified concept does reflect commonly accepted thinking about how to live within the culture and era from within which it was developed; however, this common way of thinking is disguised as a fundamental scientific truth, rather than a product of sociohistorical situatedness. By adopting Sampson's point-of-view, Greenberg's construct of emotion can be interpreted as one that reflects important values and beliefs about how-to-be that are implicit in our society; however, this "social and historical process has been translated into a fundamental

psychological process” and raised “to the status of a fundamental property of the human mind” (Sampson, 1981, p. 738). In other words, Greenberg argued that emotions come from within mental structures, as opposed to stating that this description of mind reflects the value of interiority within our specific and current cultural clearing.

Greenberg’s theory of emotion in EFT presented emotion as a universal, reified building block of human experience. The reification of a such experience into innate and universal structures are interpretations of aspects of human experience that are based on philosophical ideology as far back as Descartes (1637) and his mind-body dualism and the kind of objectivism that sprang from the Enlightenment. Because the mind was posited as morally higher than the body – whereas the body was subject to the laws of nature – there was hope among Enlightenment philosophers like Descartes, Locke, and Hume that application of the emerging scientific empiricism in the 17<sup>th</sup> century would reduce human nature to a set of knowable and predictable laws and patterns (Cushman, 1995). This attitude has been maintained in contemporary society through the type of scientism, or belief in the power of science to solve problems across all domains including human experience, endorsed by the medical community, which was readily adopted by the mainstream field of psychology to gain legitimacy and funding (Gergen, 2015; Sarason, 1981). This understanding that the focus on inward psychological structures and individual subjective experience resulted in a one-sided mind-out-of-context and asocial and ahistorical study that is presented as scientific truth will be expanded on further below, so will the problems that result from this mainstream frame-of-reference.

## **Theme 2: The Emotional Brain and Interiorized Emotion**

A major project of Enlightenment philosophers was relocating sources of, or guides to, the good from outside to inside (Cushman, 1995; Taylor, 1989). During the High Middle Ages

and to an extent during the Renaissance, European countries like England and France were under the authority of church-states and monarchies. Morality followed an ultimate cosmic or spiritual order, which could be ascertained by grasping the design of things or seeing signs in the universe. Reason was seen as the way to understand the order so that one could get back on the right path. Descartes's legacy was to direct the individual inward, inside of the self, in order to determine the good. The path to moral understanding went from gleaning the correct template to trusting one own's ability to figure it out.

Descartes' (1637/1998) philosophy successfully disconnected the soul/mind from the body, at least conceptually. He characterized the two as two distinct and separate substances, which interact but are not equal (Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). The mind was the seat of reason and the body's urges, emotions, functions, and abilities were all to fall under the observation and control of reason (Taylor, 1989). This depicted a mind that was rational and without need of external controls, and a body that was subject to natural laws and rational control (Burston & Frie, 2006). The mind, also being associated with the soul, was considered the higher good, hence utilizing the powers of the mind was the highest moral action.

So, in contrast with Plato, Descartes (1637/1998) placed the sources of morality inside the individual, and in contrast to St. Augustine (400/2009), he kicked God out of the body and, instead placed Him into a parallel substance, or existence. According to Cushman (1995),

Descartes found order and truth through the interiorized searching of the individual, logical thinker. By doubting everything, even his own existence, Descartes began the process by which he could arrive at certainty that his calculations were true. Through the exercise of the private capacities of doubt and logic humans could construct a conceptual

order that they were absolutely certain of; they could then live their lives in harmony with it. (p. 375)

The mind became the seat of power and reason became the tool by which one can discover the truth and control his or her own destiny. Sampson (1981) captured this conceptualization when he described that, “Objects are seen to be the products of individual mental operations; the world ‘out there’ is constituted by the individual’s thinking and reasoning process” (p. 732). The instrumental side of this equation will be discussed in more detail later in this analysis, the important point in this section is to demonstrate how Greenberg’s EFT locates Emotion, which guides one to healthy and adaptive actions, in the brain. This reflects the type of interiorization of morality that originated with the social and political shifts that Descartes and his contemporaries were addressing.

It would be to Descartes’s delight that Greenberg’s construct of emotion has such governing power for the individual. The following description portrayed one’s emotion or rather, “emotional brain,” as a commander who is monitoring the situation, passing on alerts, and orienting the crew: “The emotional brain enhances decision making by rapidly reducing the options that one can consider. The emotional brain highlights certain alternatives with a feeling of rightness and eliminates other alternatives with a feeling of ‘don’t go there’” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 15). This is a primary example of how emotion, from its position in the brain, interacts with the body to serve many functions. Indeed, the title of Chapter 2 is “The Purpose of Emotion,” which begins by declaring, “Emotion is a brain phenomenon” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 37). Another implication of this description, which is a running theme through this analysis, is that – parallel to Descartes’s (1637/1998) concept of mind - the emotional brain is also the moral

source of a person, because it highlights what is right and what is not (this also means that right and wrong is both individual and universal).

This emotion-brain machine serves multiple functions, such as enhancing learning and memory, and searing sense impressions into the individual: “emotions enhance learning” by “[earmarking] certain things with the stamp ‘not to be forgotten’” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 15). Emotions motivate action and organize cognitions: Citing Izard (2010), the “most common features of emotions” are “neural circuits, response systems, and a feeling state/process that motivates and organizes cognition and action” (as cited in Greenberg, 2015, p. 38). Hence, emotions are products or aspects of neural circuitry and bodily systems and processes that are geared toward motivating and organizing cognition and action. Overall, Greenberg captured the functionality of the emotion-brain machine when citing LeDoux (2012) who presented emotions as “integrative sensory-motor survival circuits that serve specific adaptive purposes” (as cited in Greenberg, 2015, p. 40).

Greenberg’s construct of an Emotion Scheme is something that basically exists in our brain, within our neuro-wiring and the limbic system, particularly the amygdala; but it is also a construct that reflects the kind of internal mechanisms Kant (1781/1999) hypothesized in the 1700s. Kant’s introduction of internal mechanisms advanced Descartes’s (1637/1998) mind-body split and interiorization of the self, the need to separate the mind from external authority, and the intellectual move added to the social forces at work that were in the process of undermining the church and justify the burgeoning individualism at the time. Kant also advanced David Hume’s (1738/2000) ideas about inference and association. Hume also believed in a mind that was disengaged from reality and believed that people make inferences about dimensions of reality based on experience and associations. While Hume believed sensations

and perceptions mediated reality and human experience, Kant postulated that human mental structures are what allow us to grasp different categories of reality. Interiorizing reality served to justify the desired way of living by relocating authority from external structures to innate structures. In Greenberg's theory we see how this internalization of authority and moral sources survives, disguised by scientific abstraction and reification. Greenberg's theory reflects Hume's ideas about knowledge coming from sensations, particularly the way Greenberg described emotional content being processed through neural and nerve pathways. Encapsulating these processes within the Emotion Scheme reflects Kant's presumptions of internal structures. The prized values of individualism, subjectivism, and self-determination all remain untampered by the Emotion Scheme construct, if not fortified. I will examine Emotion Scheme in light of Kant's *structural-rationalism* (Slife & Williams, 1995) below.

### **Theme 3: Emotion Scheme and The World Inside Our Brain**

The most representative construct of reification and the interiorizing of social and historical processes are reflected in EFT is Greenberg's construct of the Emotion Scheme. Greenberg depicted the Emotion Scheme as the most fundamental and determinant mental structure within individual human beings. It is located within the mind, or more specifically, the brain. According to Greenberg (2015), "*emotion schematic processing*" is "more fundamental than thought" (p. 46). Indeed, according to Greenberg, "Emotion schemes are responsible for the majority of our emotional experience" (p. 46). Emotion Schemes are "internal organizations" of certain kinds of experience which are stored in the body and mind as a type of knowledge that are activated by relevant situations and provide a pre-reflective inclination about what is happening and what to do (p. 48). An emotion scheme is an automatic, rapid, preconscious, preverbal, cognitive-affective mode of processing, which judges a stimulus based on previous

learning related to ‘that kind of’ stimulus and, hence, appraises the stimulus’s significance to the individual, and sends signals to the individual to prompt assessment and action. Greenberg posits:

Basically, emotion, motivation, cognition, and action occur as an integrated response package. There is a type of program or script that is activated automatically and then runs a set of preprogrammed operations. People thus feel, desire, think, and act all in an unfolding synthesized whole (p. 47).

There is a network of circuits in the brain associated with memory, thoughts, perceptions and feelings that pull together cause and effect sequences between a stimulus object or event, how the body feels in response, and what the outcome was. This is like an implicit cause and effect story or computer program that activates so the body knows: when this happens, I feel this way, and that means..., so I should...; hence, it helps the individual to anticipate what will happen next, which is represented by gut feelings. In Greenberg’s words, “In this way, the body is used as a guidance system, and it is emotions that guide our decisions by helping us to anticipate future outcomes on the basis of previous experience stored in emotions schemes that activate gut feelings” (p. 49).

Basic emotions like anger and sadness are produced by emotion schemes, but there are higher level emotions that are produced by emotion schemes too. They are automatic, informed by experience and learning, they anticipate future outcomes, and cue parts of the brain to make relevant changes in the body and other changes in the brain. The resulting bodily states are embedded with implicit meaning and these provide one with an “embodied sense of self in the world” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 49). In conscious awareness, this sense is symbolized and “formed into narrative explanations of self, other, and world” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 49). Higher order

emotion schemes and basic emotion schemes are both automatic processes but distinguished by the former's "acquired trigger" (Greenberg, 2015, p. 49). They are vital because they are internal guides to appraising feelings and situations, they guide our decisions, and point us to our needs and values. However, some can be maladaptive, and then need to be the focus of therapeutic treatment.

An indication of this construct is that the environment does not cause emotion directly, rather the emotion is caused by what happens inside the body, especially the brain. According to Greenberg (2015), "Emotion and thought are highly integrated into conscious experience" by the emotion scheme because thought depends on "mood or rapid emotional orientation to objects presented in consciousness" (p. 47). Notice that Greenberg did not say objects encountered in the world but presented in consciousness. In other words, meanings exist in the internal emotion, not in the world; hence, everything one needs to know comes from inside.

Greenberg's Emotion Scheme reflects Kant's (1781/1999) structural rationalism. Kant was in the tradition of Descartes's (1637/1998) turning to the self as the source of order, organization, and goodness. However, unlike Descartes, he did not believe that one's mind was transparent to the self. Also, in contrast to other successors of Descartes, Locke and Hume, Kant disagreed with the idea that all knowledge compiles from learning and association (Burston & Frie, 2006). Kant, instead, postulated that the human mind contained intrapsychic structures that allow us to categorize and understand the material world. Kant believed there was *phenomena and noumena*. Phenomena are human perceptions of reality (the material world) and noumena is reality. He believed that we cannot know the noumenal world but that our phenomenal perspective is ordered by these intrapsychic structures (Cushman, 1995; Sampson, 1981). Hence, we only know reality through the mediation of these structures. For Kant, these



structures represented how we are supposed to be, since they are rational; hence, we just have to be ourselves, or strive to be what comes from inside. External moral direction was expunged and the move to self-determination originating from Descartes (1637/1998) was reinforced.

Greenberg has integrated cognition and affect to produce an emotional construct that improves one's grasp of reality, capturing the essence of Kant's cognitive structures. Greenberg (2015) described an Emotion Scheme's mediating role between an objective reality and one's subjective reality in the following quote:

When an external object causes an emotion in us, there is no direct causal link between the object and the changes in the body. A slithering snake cannot cause one's skin to crawl without a mediating link in between. Some internal processing mechanism, what we will call an *emotion scheme*, detects the snake and then causes the physiological change to take place. Emotions therefore have inner causes (pp. 47-48).

This description seems to place an Emotion Scheme directly between an objective plane and our own internal world. This reflects Burston and Frie's (2006) explanation that for Kant, "*there is no such thing as passive or unmediated sensation*" (p. 41; italicized by author). The crux of the individual and its moral guidance comes from an inner structure.

Kant anticipated the unconscious or preconscious psychology (Burston & Frie, 2006). Kant believed we could not know these structures directly and that their operations were pre- or unconscious. According to Burston and Frie (2006), "Kant attributed the mind's ability to sort out and synthesize sensory data *prior to* its entry into consciousness to an entity he called the 'transcendental ego'" and "its operations transform our sensory worlds prior to any given conscious experience (Jaspers 1962)" (p. 41). Greenberg also described the operation of an Emotion Scheme as precognitive and including cognitive aspects, such as attentional and

evaluative processes and personal meaning. As reflected in the quote above about reacting to a snake, one can see that an emotion scheme is automatic and rapid, because of its preconscious ability to sort out stimuli and organize our experience and reactions.

Burston & Frie (2006) described Kant's insistence on the limits of reason. For Kant, "The knowing subject can never grasp reality fully in consciousness because consciousness is shaped and constrained by the categories that make the world intelligible and therefore render experience possible" (p. 42). Greenberg (2015) also depicted the orienting yet limiting role of cognitive-affective structures:

we construct what we feel by attending to a bodily felt sense and symbolizing it in awareness, and our construction is informed by and constrained by what we feel in our bodies (Angus & Greenberg, 2011; Greenberg & Pascual-Leone, 1995; Greenberg, Rice, & Elliott, 1993; Pascual-Leone, 1991). (p. 66)

Also, similar to Kant's (1781/1999) structures, the adaptive formations of Emotion Schemes enhance reason, particularly when they are strengthened by self-reflection. Greenberg (2015) clarified that integrating reflection and emotion does not hamper spontaneity, but rather enhances it "by recognizing when free expression is appropriate and adaptive by creating special times for it and even greater opportunities to develop abilities to be spontaneous" (p. 31). Kant (1781/1999), too, believed that the constraining features of these structures actually implied freedom, freedom for one to be the rational being which one was intended.

This section demonstrated how Greenberg's concept of Emotion Schemes reflected Kant's (1781/1999) structural internal mechanisms. For Kant and for Greenberg, a mechanism like this is the reified abstract object referred to in the previous sections. This is a structure that is located in the mind, is preconscious and the content is not entirely knowable. This structure is

cognitive and mediates information between a supposed objective reality and the internal reality of individuals and processes and orders human experience. There is an implication with this structure that internal experience is generated from within and is more important than external objects or situations and that moral sources reside within. There is also a shared idea that despite the constraints of these mechanisms, they also provide one with a sort of freedom by directing us to who we are supposed to be – in Kant’s case a rational being and in Greenberg’s sense, an adaptive human. This kind of structure deemphasizes the external as a moral source and undermines external influences on the results of one’s life. In order to live a good life, one merely has to live in accordance to one’s nature, whether that is a rational being or an adaptive, health-striving individual.

#### **Theme 4: Immunity from Cultural Influence**

Locating psychological problems solely within individual mental structures creates a kind of immunity from culture. When psychological phenomena are abstracted and located within reified structures within the individual mind, the problem necessarily will always be found within the structure. For example, Greenberg described maladaptive emotions as resulting from a damaged system and as wounded feelings that “have a mind of their own” and “hold people prisoner” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 75). While this is relevant elsewhere, Greenberg (2015) depicted emotions as an innate guide toward acceptable, or moral, behavior that is derailed or damaged by outside forces. If someone is not under the influence of drugs or in a bad environment, then the emotion system unfolds in an adept way, while “perpetrators are more often motivated by their heads than their hearts” (p. 53). While he does not discount the role of culture and relationships in the shaping and regulating of emotion, he downplays the significance meaning-embedded situations have and undercuts the social values that dictate which emotions are most

acceptable/desirable in society. In other words, he ignores the implicit assumptions that underlie which emotions are determined to be adaptive or maladaptive and the implicit assumption that underlie separating emotions into adaptive and maladaptive in the first place. On the surface, Greenberg indicated that emotional problems result from the internal emotion systems inability to adapt to circumstances, even if those circumstances were deficient. It is not an outright dismissal of the external, but an emphasis on the internal structure over external influences regarding where to target the problem from the standpoint of psychotherapy, or coaching.

Even when Greenberg identified subculture, family system, attachment-regulation or “poor learning” as contributors to maladaptive emotions, the targeting of the emotion scheme structure, portrayed as a broken device, seemed to significantly dismiss the pathogenetic quality of some cultural norms, values, and ideologies and the possibility of identifying maladaptive social systems. The only system that needs to be changed is the one inside. Greenberg’s depiction of a divide between emotion and culture is highlighted in the following quotes. First, Greenberg established that emotion is part of an innate system that is universal. He stated, “All people, regardless of where and when they were born, thus come into the world with the same emotional system that serves as the basis of a common humanity” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 40). If there is one aspect of a common humanity that can connect people, according to Greenberg, it is emotion. He also stated that, “Despite varied experience and [cultural] training...people are all pretty much alike” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 40). Greenberg underscored his split of inner emotion and external culture, by postulating an emotional part of the self that is completely untouched by culture. He stated, “Cultures have different rules of expression, but basic emotional experience seems pretty immune from these influences” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 41). From a sociohistorical perspective, it is not an innate universal language of emotion that would connect people. Instead,

one would have to infer the other's state based on their shared cultural perspective and experience. For instance, if I see someone crying within my own culture, I might imagine the situations they are facing in attempting to interpret why they are crying, or if I know the situation first, I might expect that they will cry, because it is a "sad situation". What if this is not because of sharing innate universal emotions, but because in my culture of and the culture of the other, we have an understanding of sad situations and sad events. This is a way of thinking about emotion in a more social way. Greenberg rather, is utilizing a concept of emotion that separates out an intrapsychic emotional construct that can become the target of individual change in therapy, which makes his therapy and research as immune from cultural influence as these emotions! Separating innate, universal aspects of emotion from secondary, culture-narrative sphere allows Greenberg's theory to be universal and subjective at the same time. This move maintains or perpetuates values important in Western culture and to the field of psychology.

### **Theme 5: Emotion Transformation as a Return to Grace**

According to Taylor (1989), philosophies of the Enlightenment attempted to develop a concept of a disengaged rational mind, as well as affirm an "ordinary way of life" (p. 211). Taylor made clear that Christian beliefs, particularly Deist forms, became intertwined with Enlightenment philosophies. The Deist tradition holds that God exists but does not intervene with the universe. Taylor described how what is referred to by Christians as "The Fall" in the book of Genesis influenced Rousseau's philosophy (Taylor, 1989, p. 357). I cannot help but notice a similarity between Greenberg's adopted neural conceptualization of High Road and Low Road emotions and his constructs of Primary and Secondary Emotions and this familiar Biblical tale. In this section I will demonstrate how this kind of deeply embedded religious narrative survives in a contemporary theory such as EFT.

First, it might be helpful to outline Greenberg's labels for types of emotion because they can become a bit confusing in comparison to the emotion processing systems that he described. For instance, he argued that low road emotions travel through the Amygdala; they travel very fast and produce unreflected automatic emotional responses. He recapitulated a neuroscientific view that postulate high road emotions travel more slowly through the Hippocampus where emotional information travels through the thalamus to the neocortex where it can be thought about and reflected on. He later described basic emotional responses and "higher order feelings," where the former are basic emotional responses such as anger or sadness, and higher order are a "more cognitively complex type of emotion" (Greenberg, 2015, p. 49). However, because he described higher order as occurring in "the pit of one's stomach," this higher order emotional experience clearly represented first order. This became clearer as Greenberg specified that "The trigger is clearly acquired, but the process is still automatic. Regardless of whether the experience can subsequently be fully articulated...the experience nonetheless is tacitly generated" (Greenberg, 2015, p. 49). It is confirmed six pages later that the basic and higher order feelings both belong to the Low Road process; in contrast, High Road emotion was more cognitively and culturally based and better treated with "cognitive change principles" (Greenberg, 2015, p. 55). In all, High and Low Road emotions are related to the neural pathways that emotions travel and their immediate impact on the individual. Basic emotions and higher order feelings refer to the complexity of the emotion and the degree that cognition has been involved in it, while Primary emotions are gut responses and Secondary emotions are emotional responses to Primary emotions. Higher and Lower order and Primary and Secondary are referred to in reference to Low Road emotions.

Taylor (1989) referred to Rousseau's (1762/1979) pre-Expressivist philosophy as the "point of departure" for Romanticism, which was a strong counter movement to Enlightenment Naturalism and Deism, as well as "neo-Classical norms in art and...literature" during the late eighteenth century (p. 368). According to Taylor (1989), Rousseau who was apparently influenced by Augustine (400/2009), believed there were two orientations for the will, or two loves, as Augustine described. For Augustine, these two loves or orientations were God and the material world. One became disconnected from God if one was too engaged in the lower of the two loves, the material world. This situation required one to turn inward (inside the self) to reconnect to God, and He would refocus the individual on the important matters in life. The source of higher love changed with Rousseau. According to Taylor (1989), "In the orthodox theory, the source of higher love is grace" but "For Rousseau...it has become the voice of nature. The doctrine of original sin, in its orthodox understanding, has been abandoned. Nature is fundamentally good, and the estrangement which depraves us is one which separates us from it" (p. 357). According to Taylor, Rousseau saw nature, rather than God, as the source of good in the world, and believed that individuals could get in touch with this nature inside of themselves.

According to Rousseau (1762/1979), "impulses of nature are always right; there is no original sin in the human heart," (as cited in Taylor, 1989, p. 357); however, Taylor referring to the Christian influence from Augustine (400/2009) continued, "But there has been a Fall" (Taylor, 1989, p. 357). Humans are separated from some natural paradise-like state due to sin, and yet some opportunity to return, through grace, survives in our thinking today. In the Enlightenment, particularly in Rousseau, this was the separation, or distortion, of a universal nature that resides like a spark within each individual, which is returned to by tuning into some inner voice or impulse.

While Greenberg's framework of emotions described above has its differences from Rousseau (1762/1979) and does not seem to demonize culture to the extent that Rousseau does, Taylor (1989) contended that some variation of these beliefs have "bulked large in the self-consciousness of moderns over the last two centuries" and I believe the influence is clear in Greenberg's model (p. 367). According to Greenberg, emotions have a purpose, especially in their most innate, Low-Road, form, which is to facilitate adaptive behaviors. The theories of emotion that Greenberg has adopted are evolutionary, promoting adaptivity and survival instinct. Greenberg endorsed LeDoux's (2012) framing of emotion as "integrative sensory-motor survival circuits that serve specific adaptive purposes" and "allow organisms to survive and thrive" (as cited in Greenberg, 2015, p. 40). Elsewhere, Greenberg (2015) stated, "emotions evolved to enhance adaptation" (p. 16). Greenberg (2012) puts this clearly: "the low road, fundamentally, is highly adaptive because it allows people to respond quickly to important events before complex, time-consuming, reflective processing has taken place" (p. 698). While these emotions are thought to be developed for adaptive purposes, Greenberg (2015) also stated, "there are several ways in which this system can become maladaptive" and he attributed these derailments to poor learning, attachment dysregulation, or being guided by the head rather than the heart (p. 40). Rousseau's ideas about external impediments to development are also reflected the Humanistic tradition in which Greenberg is steeped. Family demands and contention with a developing child are perceived as infringements and impediments to one's unraveling authentic self within the general theory of Humanistic psychology.

Greenberg perceived culture and social systems as impactful on emotion but as separate. Emotion is pure and universal; the basic building block of human experience that underlies and forms existence. His position on this separation is most clear in his statement that "basic



emotional experience seems pretty immune from these cultural influences” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 41).

According to Greenberg (2015):

In early human history, when primitive people sensed danger or violation, the emotional parts of their brains led them to feel basic emotions such as anger or fear, and they simply fought or fled. With the development of greater cognitive abilities, more complex feelings – such as guilt, remorse, resentment, and embarrassment – emerged, as well as subtle feelings of wonder, appreciation, compassion, and love. These complex emotions integrate a lot of information, blend emotions with each other and with cognition, and give people a very high-level sense of themselves and the world, but they do not have as clear an action tendency as the basic feelings do (p. 81).

In Greenberg’s quote above, the impulse is always right; and through EFT, one can get back in touch with the messages that emotions are sending. According, to Greenberg (2015), “Emotions are signals, ones worth listening to” .... “[that] give people information related to their well-being” (pp. 14-15). EFT helps to reconnect one with one’s internal guide. Greenberg stated, “After arriving at the emotion, dwelling in it for a while, and gleaning what it has to say, the EFT therapist then asks, ‘What do you need?’” (p. 7).

In summary, from Greenberg’s perspective these basic emotions evolved in human beings to provide us with innate life-saving action tendencies, but with complexity the innate internal messages that were meant to guide us can get distorted. While “These complex feelings need to be acknowledged for the helpful information they can provide;” they “are more a source of information than action tendencies” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 81). In the way that the Western concept of The Fall surfaced in Augustine (400/2009) and Rousseau (1762/1979), the same

process shines through here in Greenberg's model of emotion. Here we see the influence of Christianity on modern philosophical theories and another influence, that of Expressivism, although it is apparent that Expressivism was influenced by Christianity. Also, the Christian notion of a fall from grace, which showed up in Rousseau as the separation from or distortion of an inner nature, persists in mainstream psychotherapy theories, or at least in EFT. Emotions in their most basic form, Greenberg argued provide us with useful information to listen to, but as they grow more complex through learning and participation in culture and language, or if we ignore them and live too headily, they can distort these useful messages. EFT can help reconnect us to this inner voice through its technique, which is to say, reconnecting us to our intended form in nature.

In Christianity the Fall is remediated through either confession (in Catholicism) or in individual communion with God (as in Protestant faith); but in late modernity a scientific technique has taken the place of religious grace (Foucault, 1961/1988). This is reflected in EFT, but, of course this is expressed in its own unique way in EFT. The Christian influence does exist and the idea of humans becoming imperfect, or falling from grace, yet finding a way to be saved and reconnected is part of what Taylor calls ordinary life, which humans continue to affirm through philosophies and scientific theories. That there is a good and right way to be and a bad and wrong way, and we have to try to live within the light. According to the theologian Erre (2010)

Because God created the world, telos exists, and the life lived under God's good rule will be the life of true human flourishing. The good life is the life lived according to God's purposes and order. Morality is likewise only situated within the creation story...What is

good turns out to be identical to whatever works toward God's purposes in creation (p. 53).

This type of good versus evil morality is ingrained in Western culture and reflected in disguised ways in Greenberg's theory of EFT.

In this section I demonstrated how Greenberg's EFT treatment reflected religious ideology that is deeply embedded in Western culture. Augustine (400/2009) and Rousseau (1762/1979) both adapted a religious belief about the battle between good and evil to the individual and postulated that a "transformation of the will" or re-focusing of one's attention inward toward something pure and away from the material and cultural world was required to return from the fallen state to a state of grace (Taylor, 1989, p. 356). In EFT, one must also re-focus his or her attention inward to the feelings to find which truth he or she have been misdirected from through faulty learning or being overly guided by reason. In the next section, I will go further into detail about the influence of Rousseau and the subsequent Expressivism as it appeared to me in EFT.

### **Theme 6: Internal Guide and The Voice of Nature**

Accessing emotions is purported to be a crucial task for what is called Emotional Intelligence, hence, an essential goal for Emotion-Focused Therapy. EFT devotes a phase of treatment, which includes four steps, to accessing emotions and determining which of the emotions surfaced by treatment reflect primary adaptive emotions. This is called the Arriving Phase of treatment (Greenberg, 2015, p. 98-104). According to Greenberg, there are a few ways that people are not in touch with their primary adaptive emotions. This can be due to unacknowledged, vague, or maladaptive primary emotions, due to secondary or vague emotions, or due to avoidance or to self-deception. Here I will build on the previous theme and situate the

Arriving Phase of EFT treatment and the use of emotion as an internal guide within the framework of Rousseau's pre-Expressivism and Enlightenment Expressivism (Rousseau, 1762/1979; Taylor, 1989).

The articulation and acceptance of inner emotions is integral to Greenberg's EFT treatment. This is because emotions can provide vital information and because identifying primary emotions can get a client in touch with their identity, specifically adaptive primary emotions. According to Greenberg (2015), "these primary feelings tell people who they really are" (p. 74). While Greenberg sometimes described these emotions as obscured, unveiled, or "stored in memory," he also sometimes described them as avoided, unarticulated, and as being at least partially constructed through thought or dialogue. According to Greenberg, emotions "do not reside in the unconscious fully formed waiting to be unveiled" (p. 56). Instead, they are "undifferentiated," existing as schemes and bodily senses. Reflecting on and naming emotions imbues them with meaning, and this meaning gives us a sense of ourselves. This meaning is an integration of personal, "cultural and social knowledge with their emotional sense of being" (Greenberg, 2015, p. 67). So, overall, Greenberg believes that emotions are to some degree constructed through interpretation and shared cultural meanings. However, when reading the text my prevailing impression was that Greenberg emphasized emotions as residing inside the person. Greenberg also portrayed some emotions as truer than others and that some interpretations of meaning are more right than others. The way to determine which emotions are adaptive is by inward reflection, a.k.a. listening to the feeling, particularly in this phase of treatment. An example of the former is Greenberg's (2015) explanation that emotions "provide...an interior sense of ourselves," and that, "They comprise intimate, inside information that pervades consciousness, providing people with very subjective information" (p. 41). The

subjective experience is primary, the emotion schemes are intrapsychic, and subjective experience is then targeted in therapy with interventions. An example of how meanings are constructed comes from a sample case presented by Greenberg. According to Greenberg, “Jonathan’s bodily sense, if he really listens to it, will tell him if this meaning fits. If it does, he will again feel a shift in his body. The bad feeling will...open up and lighten” (p. 150). Some meanings feel right and are spoken about as a type of truth and can be known by what sounds like a natural transformation of emotion.

Accessing, experiencing, and verbalizing emotions is the goal of the Arriving Phase. There are four steps to the Arriving Phase. The Arriving phase is aimed at: 1) Helping the client become aware of the emotion, 2) Allowing, welcoming, and accepting these emotions, 3) Helping clients describe and express their emotions, and 4) “[arriving] at...primary, or core, feelings” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 153). A primary goal in Step 1 is to help clients identify ways that they interrupt their emotions and how “he or she does this to himself or herself” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 144). When one becomes aware that some emotion was being interrupted, then one is guided to proceed to Step 2, allowing emotion, which is typically evidenced by client descriptions of the feelings. In the third step, the client has developed a vivid sense of the emotion but has not yet named it, received validation, or further symbolized it. The coach provides empathy and may attempt to help the client name the emotion. According to Greenberg (2015), “Coaches...can be most helpful by being highly attuned to their clients’ feelings and by helping them to stay focused on their internal tracks” (p. 152). A technique termed *focusing*, which is described in more detail below, is implemented during this step to get clients in touch with their feelings. The fourth step is arriving at primary/core feelings, which is based on observation and self-report of the client. It can be determined what type of emotion has surfaced,

and then if needed, the primary emotion that underlies either secondary or instrumental emotions can be discerned.

Focusing appeared to be an important exercise in surfacing, describing and ultimately arriving at the emotion. Greenberg (2015) described focusing as “an internal search to get a clearer sense of what they do feel” (p. 149). In focusing the coach directs the client to focus on and describe a feeling and encourages the client to stay with the feeling. Greenberg described focusing as a kind of body-focused free-association that has less to do with reasoning and thought and, instead, being a “recipient of impressions” (p. 151). According to Greenberg, Focusing can result in the client noticing an “inner bodily feeling...change” and the client becoming mobilized by the new feeling. The coach is directed to be accepting and supportive, a kind of “surrogate experiencer” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 152). The coach’s stance of confirmation and acceptance was said to “help [clients] internally concentrate their beams of attention to capture and solidify emerging, newly felt alternatives” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 152). The implication seemed to be that as the problem becomes clearer, so does the solution.

Arriving at the primary emotion requires evaluating if the new emotion encountered is primary, secondary, or instrumental. At this point the emotion needs to be experienced and during this process it may get named. According to Greenberg (2015), there are a couple of indicators that an emotion is primary. He specified that primary emotions can be recognized because they are, “internally generated...poignant and full” (p. 156). Greenberg portrayed the primary emotion, once discovered, as nearly having a mind of its own. Greenberg stated, “This part, once awakened, will resiliently exercise itself, given half a chance” (p. 157). He then described the primary emotion as a part of, or a kernel of, an essential self. He asserted, “By

going into the wounded part of the self, people can find the gem of their adaptive, essential self” (p. 157).

The process of Arriving, then, is one of searching internally for truth, for what is essential, and what is right. The client is directed to be receptive to the sensations and feelings in their bodies, to fully experience them, describe them, and then with the guidance of the therapist, determine if the emotion is primary, secondary, or instrumental, and if it is primary, if it is adaptive or maladaptive. It is not only the adaptive or maladaptive quality, however, but the essentialness of the emotion that reflects one’s identity, although it seems these are seen as one in the same thing.

These steps of treatment reflected the Expressivist Turn as Taylor (1989, pp. 368-390) outlined it, and reflected Greenberg’s background in Humanistic Psychology. As described in the previous theme above, the Rousseauan (1762/1979) perspective is that there are two loves, one is the cultural world and the other is the world within. According to Taylor, “the inner voice is our mode of access, but we can lose contact with it; it can be stifled in us” (Taylor, 1989, p. 370). According to Taylor (1989), this philosophy developed in opposition to rationalism and the power of reason; “It is through our feelings that we get to the deepest moral and, indeed, cosmic truths” (p. 371).

In the Expressivist Turn and Romanticism that followed it, simply possessing certain feelings was becoming associated with high morals. This contrasted with pre-Enlightenment attitudes, where emotions signaled that one was living in accordance to an external order (Taylor, 1989). In other words, Rousseau and the subsequent Expressivism made feelings central to the individual and heightened their importance. Feelings in and of themselves dictated the good life over the actions they compelled. One’s internal experience gained substantial significance.

Rousseau's attitude, according to Taylor (1989) was that, "Goodness is identified with freedom, with finding the motives for one's actions within oneself" (p. 361).

As described in the above theme, this view developed within a religious perspective, but God was supplanted from nature as a source of perspective, and eventually the source became detached from moral outcome or moral place, and access in and of itself became the moral endeavor: Taylor (1989) stated, "If our access to nature is through an inner voice or impulse, then we can only fully know this nature through articulating what we find within us" (p. 374). Expressivism involves the expressing of the inner through a medium – such as our voice, through writing, or through painting on a canvas – to bring it out into the world. It is not always readily understood, so the use of a medium "makes what was hidden manifest for both myself and others" (p. 375).

Sass's (1988) hermeneutic critique of Humanistic Psychology, in which he noted the Romantic influence, highlighted a similar fixation on the inner world. According to Sass, Humanistic Psychologists exalted human subjectivity or the "essential quality of innerness" (Sass, 1988, p. 227). Inner reality became held as more primary and important than external reality, and the most reliable data about reality was seen to come from the private and hidden subjective experience of an individual, and this reality gets discovered through internal exploration.

By turning to Taylor's and Sass's interpretations of Western philosophy, the similarities in thought between Greenberg's EFT and Expressivism is already quite apparent. In Expressivism one has to conduct an inward search to hear the voice of nature. In EFT, the therapist facilitates clients in conducting an internal search and being a recipient of their impressions. The language is even very similar. In an illustration of this process, Greenberg



(2015) stated, “He fully received the feeling. Once he did this, he was able to tease apart the different messages the feeling was sending him” (p. 153). The emotions under examination are only those that arise inside of the client, not those that occur between the client and the therapist, and they convey, as mentioned above, something essential about the client. According to Greenberg, “When clients arrive at primary emotions, a type of internal bell often rings and tells them, ‘Yes, this is it. This is what I most truly feel’” (p. 154). In Rousseau’s (1762/1979) perspective, one’s inner voice gets distorted by culture. In EFT it gets distorted by secondary emotions, which are less pure forms of emotions because they are integrated with cultural knowledge and social learning.

Initially, I believed Greenberg’s theory evolved somewhat from this Expressivistic position by denying that any fully formed emotion lies within and by emphasizing the interpretive processes in which the client constructs his or her own experience to some extent; however, Taylor (1989) also clarified that, “talk of ‘making manifest’ doesn’t imply that what is so revealed was already fully formulated beforehand...I am taking something, a vision, a sense of thing, which was inchoate and only partly formed, and giving it a specific shape” (p. 174). One creates, or constructs, as much as one expresses the nature within. So even in Expressivism the inner voice was not always seen as fully formulated until it was expressed in a unique way by the individual. Therefore, the requirement of EFT for the client to construct his or her own story about his or her feelings absolutely reflects Expressivism.

The act of articulating what is discovered inside is as important in Greenberg’s EFT as it is within Expressivism. Taylor (1989) said, “What the voice of nature calls us to cannot be fully known outside of and prior to our articulation/definition of it” (p. 376). According to Taylor Expressivism is the expressing of the inner through a medium to bring it out into the world and

“this makes what was hidden manifest for both myself and others” (p. 374). There are EFT interventions that occur as early as Step 4 that function as a medium, or one might even consider the therapist’s empathetic stance as a medium. The therapeutic interventions are the mediums that bring the client’s inner messages to light. These steps actually continue with emotion evaluation well into the Leaving Phase (Greenberg, 2015, pp. 104-115), which proceeds to identify what need is reflected by the primary painful emotion. Here the call of internal searching comes to fruition as an unmet need of the client that needs to be addressed. This is a transition period between understanding the inner voice of emotion and the more self-determining phases that follow.

Taylor (1989) contended that these Expressivists ideas from the Enlightenment era reflected a resurgence in “biological models of growth” (p. 173). An example of a biological growth model that surfaced in Humanistic Psychology, which was grounded in Romantic values, comes from Buss (1979), who noted that Maslow fastened a biological conceptualization to his theory of Self-Actualization. Something to note is Expressivism’s noncoincidental advancement alongside emerging scientific trends and how that has really come to fruition in a theory like EFT. The Enlightenment saw the relocation of the connecting point to God to the interior. As Taylor stressed, this turn inward had the political motivation to eradicate the authority of the church-state and reinforce the burgeoning individualism – or as Taylor phrased it, this was an “affirmation of ordinary life” (p. 209). When Deistic perspectives took hold, the moral transitioned from connecting to God to connecting to the self. From this step, it was only a matter of time in the modern era before God was replaced by rational powers of the individual and the confirmatory power of science. These scientific explanations were applied to explain human motivation in order to reinforce societal goals.

Here I would draw the conclusion that Greenberg's emphasis, indeed his need to emphasize the anatomical basis to his theory, unintentionally, reflects current societal values and, especially, the values of the institution of Western psychology. Greenberg's theory attempted to reinforce the certainty of the inner domain as a reliable source of the good. Appropriating science to justify the attentiveness to one's own experience and serving one's own feelings, and not having to think too much about the impact of one's two-way interaction with the social world, is a powerful way to affirm the way we live. However, the domain of reason remains important. This is maybe where the perceived emphasis on emotion is an illusion, because reason is required to modulate the emotion. The end game is emotional intelligence, which centers on regulating one's emotions and being an individual who can meet one's needs and desires, while still being a mindful part of a group. This takes place in such a consumer-heavy and reactionary society, and where impulsivity diagnoses like ADHD have risen a staggering 41% over the past decade (Schwarz & Cohen, 2013), Greenberg's EFT theory seems to reflect the current state of society and an ideal of how to get what one wants while also controlling one's emotions.

In this section I demonstrated how the Arriving phase of Greenberg's EFT treatment reflected Expressivistic values, particularly an inward focus and search for self-identifying and directive messages from within and making these messages manifest. In EFT we clearly see the attempt to manifest something internal and individual that requires articulation and formulation into something new and creative that becomes self-defining. Taylor (1989) and Sass (1988) described the eventual and convenient interpretation of these internal messages as reflecting biological processes. In EFT, the justification for the processes described above is biologically based, and what is discovered within the individual is the greatest moral truth – for that one

person. As Taylor (1989) explained, Expressivism's reinforcement of the value of individuation is predicated on the belief that "each individual is different and original, and...this originality determines how he or she ought to live" (p. 172). Similarly, Greenberg (2015) explained, "A major premise guiding intervention in EFT is that if you do not accept yourself as you are, you cannot make yourself available for transformation" (p. 4). That statement seemed to capture the essence of Expressivism.

### **Theme 7: Uniting of the Expressivist and Instrumental Stance**

As discussed throughout this chapter, when interpreted through the lens of the Sociocultural Turn in Psychology (Kirschner & Martin, 2010) and Taylor's (1989) description of Enlightenment philosophy, Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) is saturated with aspects of the philosophical framework of the Enlightenment period, especially those stemming from Descartes (1637/1998), Kant (1781/1999), and Rousseau (1762/1979). According to Taylor, Kantian and other types of disengaged, instrumental philosophies should be incompatible with Rousseau and the Expressivism he so much influenced, yet Taylor stressed that attempts to unite the two views continue to today. I believe this is illustrated in several concepts that Greenberg has outlined; however, I will specifically examine the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in his theory. Greenberg's presentation of EI exemplifies the implicit, although unstated, attempt of Greenberg to continue the ideological project of combining the positions of Kant and Rousseau.

Emotional intelligence is the goal of Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT). According to Greenberg (2015), "The purpose of emotion-focused therapy (EFT) is to increase patients' emotional intelligence" (p. 13). Emotional intelligence is about emotional awareness and managing one's emotions, or as Greenberg stressed throughout this section, EI is all about integrating the head and the heart. Greenberg reviewed six skills of emotional intelligence;

however, because several of these overlap with concepts that I have already explored, I have decided to narrow my focus to *emotion regulation* which appeared to be the EI skill on which there was the most focus.

Greenberg (2015) explained that EI concerns, “reappraising situations, creating new meanings, and putting things in a broader perspective,” and that these are, “all important emotion-regulation strategies” (p. 22). Greenberg described these skills in self-determining terms: “People need to be able to govern what they choose to express and what they suppress” (p. 20). Regulating emotions is about one being able to control emotions – having the right amount, not too little not too much, and this is because the in 21<sup>st</sup> century America, moderation is adaptive. Greenberg specified, “the relationship between emotional intensity and adaptive value can be considered curvilinear...adaptive value increases to a point as intensity increases and then begins to decrease as intensity increases” (p. 20).

Emotion regulation and meaning-making are discussed in terms of what is helpful and not helpful, useful or not useful, effective or ineffective, adaptive or maladaptive. Emotions signal a problem to solve, and “people need to guide their emotions toward constructive action or transform them into ones that are more favorable and more helpful to problem solving” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 22). Greenberg favored reason and cognitive strategies for transforming emotions; he asserted, “Reason is best integrated with emotion to help guide it once it is aroused” .... “With good regulation one can integrate personal values, social and cultural knowledge, and body-based emotional knowledge” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 22). He described ways that people can suppress or intensify their own emotions. Greenberg’s (2015) stance is summarized by the statement, “Emotional intelligence thus involves not only having emotions,

but also handling them” (p. 20). Ultimately, the emotion that was the guide, now needs guidance from reason.

Dimensions of Greenberg’s description of how to be productive with emotional processing in session overlapped with categories of EI. According to Greenberg, beyond activating emotions, arousal of emotion has to be productive for therapy to be effective, as opposed to an unproductive process. To be considered productive the emotion encountered has to have specific properties and the manner of processing must reflect certain qualities.

Greenberg measures and defines a productive emotion as either (1) a primary adaptive or maladaptive emotion that contains information that can be utilized to solve problems or (2) an emotion that has potential for transformation (Greenberg, 2015, p. 83). A manner of processing that is characterized as productive requires the client’s emotional experience to exhibit at least four of seven qualities: attending, symbolization, congruence, acceptance, regulation, agency, and differentiation.

Regulation and agency are the two qualities most relevant to this critique. While they are just parts of the process, I believe that they reflect assumptions about the importance of finding sources within the individual, the exercise of self-control, and self-determination. In step with Expressivism, Greenberg depicted living in harmony with emotions; however, emotions in Greenberg’s theory embody a motivational state. Hence, it is not merely enough to articulate from the well of the self and to formulate new meaning, but emotion summons one to have agency, autonomy and to act in a way to improve one’s life. The call of nature requires finding a way to use one’s agency via reason to fix what is wrong. According to Greenberg (2015), “Productive emotional processing also involves the client being an active agent rather than a

passive victim of the emotion” (p. 87). The active agent vs. passive victim is a persistent trope throughout the text:

This involves the client taking responsibility for his or her emotional experience and acknowledging it as his or her own personal construction of self and reality. That means that a client should not regard other people and their actions as responsible for the way they are feeling...Rather, the client owns his or her emotions as based on personal goals, needs, and concerns in particular situations (Greenberg, 2015, p. 87).

He emphasized the work and effort the client needs to demonstrate and how a focus on external factors is unproductive. It is detrimental to see one’s self at the whim of the external and to not be able to control one’s emotions. Greenberg consistently reiterates his belief that once emotion is accepted and understood, motivation will almost automatically follow – it is hard not to see this as a conceptualization of a decontextualized, isolated, punctual self who can instrumentally control, if not just his emotions, his life, as part of a process of resetting his emotions back to their natural state. According to Greenberg (2015), “Emotion coaches try to facilitate agency in their clients by having the client speak from an ‘I’ position...to take responsibility for the emotion...relating the emotion to the self...and finally connecting the emotion with what he or she wants or needs” (p. 87). Obviously, the fit between the self Greenberg described and the predominant Western 20<sup>th</sup> century self Taylor described is an excellent fit.

**Subtheme 1: Humanistic psychology, romanticism, and Cartesianism.** Sass (1988) and Sampson (1981) both critiqued the humanistic description and prescription of the human as an active agent. According to Sass (1988), “humanistic psychologists share an emphasis on the proactive rather than reactive nature of man and on ‘self-reflective awareness’ – qualities that

clearly imply freedom, privacy, and self-transparency” .... “a valorizing of innerness and uniqueness and a faith in the validity of the person’s self-awareness combined with a distrust of external sources of value” are also reflected in concepts of humanistic psychology (p. 231).

There was also a strong implication that humans could transform in a way as to transcend context and history. Sass criticized the humanistic emphasis on individual freedom, subjectivity and uniqueness. He contrasted Humanistic psychology with Hermeneutic philosophy to demonstrate how humanistic psychology was embedded with and perpetuated Enlightenment and Romantic philosophies, and how the humanistic tradition was a response to the “objectivism and scientism of the mainstream” (Sass, 1988, p. 223)

Sampson (1981) critiqued cognitive psychology’s emphasis on the active versus passive agent, which was often repeated in Greenberg’s 2015 book. According to Sampson (1981), cognitivism reversed the passiveness of the individual that was implied by behaviorism, only to yield the complete opposite and one-sided view that sees “a passive reality upon which the cognitively active person writes” (p. 734). Sampson argued that this stance – which sees the objective world as more or less unchanging, and instrument of change as being a mental process rather than a true dialectical interaction, as embedded in ideologies of subjectivism, individualism, and instrumentalism. According to Sampson, “When we fail to examine how the objects and situations that the subject confronts get there in the first place...Our psychology implicitly affirms the values represented by the existing objects and situations” (p. 735). In other words, dismissing the impact of the world of objects, situations, and the social/political realm reinforces the existing subjectivist, individualist, and instrumentalist values of the status quo.

In order to promote the value of freedom within the theory of psychology, humanistic psychology outright rejected the more deterministic theories of behaviorism and psychoanalysis,



and centralized uniqueness, subjectivity and agency. Cognitivism was able to locate agency within internal structures, justifying agency as an innate biological tendency. One's uniqueness became a product of one's internal structure, and the complex structure of Greenberg's Emotion Scheme allows for various unique combinations of processed experiences and expressions. Even the type of humanistic theories that Sass (1988) was critiquing depended on the Cartesian mind-body dualism to justify their prescription of freedom, despite their embeddedness in Romanticism. EFT has served as an illustration that this type of embedded contradiction within theories of psychology, which Taylor addressed, has only become increasingly prevalent since the popularity of humanistic psychology. This point will be expanded on further in the following sub-theme.

**Subtheme 2: Leaving phase, empowerment and letting go.** Greenberg's theory claimed to propel a client into an inward focusing, voice-of-nature-listening, and rational agent, and these goals coalesce in the *Leaving Phase* of therapy. At this point, an emotion coach can assess productivity. According to Greenberg (2015) the following is required for productive treatment:

For therapy to be productive, needs must be expressed as belonging to and coming from the self and with a sense of entitlement, rather than as a protest about deprivations or as accusations of the other. Thus, the person is asserting that he or she deserved to have the need met rather than expressing desperate neediness. This step is crucial in helping people establish their sense of the self as agents, separate from the other, and as existing in their own right. Self-affirmation and self-assertion are an important aspect of resolutions (p. 276).

This is an example of phrasings throughout this text that assert the boundaries between the self and others and emphasize how the client can take charge of his life.

Greenberg emphasized that the focus should be on “letting go” in times where a client cannot work through unmet needs or get them met by another, which might include grieving the other before letting go of them. Greenberg suggested that the therapist provide empathy, but also that the client should be directed to self-soothing. According to Greenberg (2015), “At this point, you can encourage the client to do some cognitive reorganizing and to work on affective regulation, especially self soothing” (p. 227). These views on regulation and agency reflect the deep subjectivism of Expressivism, but also the instrumental power of reason, contained in Descartes’s (1637/1998) Rationalism and Kant’s (1781/1999) Transcendental Idealism. One does not need to lay blame outwardly or scrutinize the social conditions, when one can cognitively reorganize and regulate one’s own emotions and find one’s detached singular truth deep inside one’s own subjective experience.

Greenberg’s stance on emotions and regulation of emotions recalls Taylor’s (1989) presentation of Descartes (1637/1998), the animal passions, and instrumental control of the passions. Taylor portrayed Descartes as so confident in the power of reason to bring matter and emotions under instrumental control, that his belief that the intensity of one’s emotions, or passions, does not matter so long as one’s reason is strong, was radical for his time. In this case, he did not believe emotions were to be gotten rid of, but that they contained useful information and could serve a useful purpose. Descartes (1637/1998) saw emotions as animal spirits of the soul, “which have as their function to strengthen the response which the survival or well-being of the organism requires in a given situation” (Taylor, 1989, p. 150). Passions provide reflexive action, instinctual alert, and in combination with rational understanding of the situation will

strengthen the response in the future. According to Taylor, Descartes' approach to emotions was much like his approach to anything else he saw of value, a "detached engagement" that objectified everything from the material world to aspects of the self (p. 151). Descartes located moral sources inside of the self and developed a notion that we can use reason to instrumentally use emotions in service of one's own personal goals. In this description we encounter something similar to Greenberg's description of the emotions as containing adaptive information that can be used in combination with reason in order to control the length and intensity of the emotions, or to transform them altogether; by arousing the emotions, one can determine their messages, and use one's powers of reason to correctly identify the adaptive emotions and utilize these them to meet one's needs.

Taylor (1989) noted that, "Descartes constantly enjoins efficacious action for what we want, alongside detachment from the outcome" (p. 151). This echoes two aspects of Greenberg's description of productive emotional processing – the need for a working distance from emotions and the need for the client to be effective. To the former, Greenberg stated, "The client needs to develop and maintain working distance from the emotion (Gendlin, 1996) and to cognitively orient toward it as information, thus allowing for an integration of cognition and affect" (p. 85). In regard to efficacious action, Greenberg dictated that for clients, "gaining a sense of agency in their construction of reality and in their responses to it, gives people a sense of being effective rather than being a victim of circumstance" (p. 23).

This rational and instrumental control indicated that there was a sense of dignity in believing one's own goals are worthy and in one's ability to use reason to ascertain them. Greenberg (2015) made clear that the valued path is in a client "gaining a sense of agency in their construction of reality and in their responses to it," and that this "gives people a sense of

being effective rather than a victim of circumstance. Choosing how to respond, rather than being a victim of circumstance provides a sense of self-determination” (p. 23). Descartes’ (1637/1998) notion of dignity, depending on one believing that one has worthy goals and is able to be committed to them, indicated that he conceived of a strong notion of self-responsibility and self-determination. Greenberg’s position even recalls Locke’s (1689/1996) view of radical personal reformation. According to Taylor (1989), Locke believed that we are motivated by what we desire the most, but we can use disengaged reason to evaluate these desires and convince ourselves that something else is the greater good” (p. 171). This coincides with Greenberg’s description of emotion as both communicating some sort of truth about our desires and healthy goals and yet we have to articulate these and formulate them to make them stronger. The highest good for Locke and Descartes (1637/1998) is to be someone who can think for oneself and who’s transformations comes from one’s own individuality. This reflects Greenberg’s positive stance on the need for transformation, and the need for the narratives and meanings that consolidate the transformations to come from the self, and demand for the client to be an active agent.

However, Greenberg’s theory is more subtly Cartesian, or at least is a bit confused in its assumptions about agency versus nature as a guide. The difference between these positions being that the good for Descartes (1637/1998) was the will to do what one judged to be the best for him or herself, where Rousseau (1762/1979) believed reason should be tempered so that one can honor their inner nature. As Taylor (1989) pointed out, modern Western thinkers have been trying to merge these positions; examining EFT revealed that this effort continues in today’s Western institutions. The reason for the attempted merge of these seemingly polarized qualities has to do with the philosophies’ overlapping values and the belief that each quality was missing what existed in the other. They both located sources of identity and the good interiorly and both

prized freedom, but Taylor argued that Kant's separation from nature did not allow the deep and special identity allowed by Expressivism, and the view of nature as a source did not leave enough room for agency, self-determination and self-transformation. Perhaps what Greenberg's EFT theory reflects is the contradictions inherent in these assumptions as he carries on the centuries-long mission to combine the two.

This theme demonstrated how Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) is embedded within prominent and sometimes contradictory from each other Enlightenment ideas and values and merge positions of listening to and following one's inner nature with that of a detached, objective agent who uses reason to instrumentally control his or her own destiny. These were reflected in the concepts of Emotion Regulation, Agency, and Productive Emotional Process, which are thought to be integral to building Emotional Intelligence. In one phase of treatment clients are directed to an inner search, focusing on bodily sensations and feelings, and then are directed and supported through the articulation of this experience, but in other phases of treatment clients are directed in tasks that essentially require the client to use a rational reflective process to control their emotions and to take responsibility for the meanings they choose to develop and for forging their own path.

### **Summary**

In this chapter I outlined my interpretations of Greenberg's (2015) Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT), which led me to conclude that his theory of treatment is embedded with prominent and contradictory Enlightenment assumptions that originated mainly from Descartes (1637/1998), Locke (1689/1996), Kant (1781/1999), and Rousseau (1762/1979). These assumptions included:

- The human mind is comprised of universal building blocks that can be understood, controlled, and repaired like other types of objects;
- Sources of reality and moral decision are hardwired in the brain;
- Humans have inborn mental structures that automatically and preconsciously mediate reality, orient the self, and produce experience. Reality is shaped to the individual perception, a personal translation of an external world that is only partially knowable (implies individual's own construction of reality);
- Emotions have a decontextual nature, nearly immune from cultural influence; hence, underlining the separation between sociocultural context and the individual. Conversely, external reality can impede on or distort one's realization of their inner nature;
- Humans have a natural state of perfection, from which they can fall and return. One can become misdirected from a higher or more correct way of living. Returning to the superior path requires inner reflection and a matter of will (this religiously influenced ideal is entangled with essentialism);
- Individuals have an interior where sources of motivation, morality, identity, and information reside that is accessible and explorable;
- The goodness of nature resides within each individual and can be connected to, particularly through expression;
- Individuals are endowed with inner impulses and feelings that reflect both, a universal nature and an individual nature, which take on significance and meaning through articulation and expression. These inner impulses stem from a force that, when properly attuned to, can only incline one toward the good life. These are like messages from

within that individuals can decode through experiencing, articulating, expressing, and reflection;

- Humans have active minds in a passive world and with strong rational powers and disengaged minds can instrumentally control their emotions, shape their lives, and take responsibility for their feelings, thoughts, and choices. To gain insight about and scrutinize one's habits and reshaping one's life in accordance to one's own values is a morally superior aim.

Many of these assumptions reflect values of independence, self-responsibility, self-creation, and self-control; self-discovery and self-knowledge; radical reflexivity; and liberation from external control and authority. They reflect ideologies such as individualism, subjectivism, cognitivism, scientism, and essentialism.

The kind of self that is reflected in Greenberg's EFT is one that has a deep searchable interior filled with layers of emotions that one can attune to for evolutionary guidance as a source of the good. The pure emotional messages from the interior get distorted by cultural learning and poor interpersonal regulation, but the adaptive properties can be summoned through focusing and listening to the messages beneath these distortions. Besides assuming the good of self-awareness, this is a self that also uses the power of reason to modulate emotional responses to a productive level, then to interpret and construct the meaning of these emotional messages in order to take responsibility for one's life as it is and, ultimately, take action to live in a healthy and happy way. Here the Enlightenment values of freedom, agency, being oneself, self-determination and self-control get rehashed. The most moral accomplishment implicit in this theory is that of using the mind and self-awareness to discover internal truths and to bring the emotions into alignment with these truths.

The agency of this self is somewhat confusing because the description of self-correction occurs, somewhat automatically, if true adaptive primary emotions are processed. I believe this reflects the contradiction between the implicit ideologies of Rationalism and Expressivism, to which Taylor referred. The depths of this self contain components that are asocial, ahistorical, and universal – aspects of these theoretical universal components organically direct one to healthy and adaptive responses. While cultural learning and social interaction can be useful to inform emotional expression and aid affect regulation, these influences can also harm and derail one's natural emotional adaptive system. The ultimate goal of treatment is to develop the mind of a self-contained individual to be able to be a reflective, regulated, rational user of emotion. Emotion is like an instrumental tool for achieving one's needs and goals and being healthy, as long as reason can be employed to make measured use of it.

These tasks, goals, and achievements reflect a particular construction of the self and particular values rooted in the Enlightenment era, approximately 1600-1800 AD. Enlightenment philosophy began to formulate human identity that reflected persons as “beings with inner depths, and the connected notion that we are ‘selves’” (Taylor, 1989, p. x). It also was a period that established, “the expressivist notion of nature as an inner moral source” (Taylor, 1989, p. x). Masterfully, yet not unexpectedly, Greenberg situated the inner voice of nature within a Kantian-like psychological structure, which merges these seemingly opposed positions. For the Expressivists, listening to one's inner voice would tell someone who they are, and acting in synch with who they are was the moral good. For Kant (1781/1999), humans are endowed with inner structures that when exercised properly would lead to moral principles. Greenberg provided a bit of both with EFT, because the inner voice is part of an innate structure and listening to the inner voice allows the proper exercise of innate structures. The implication is



that morality resides inside of the individual, hence, understanding the subjective experience and resolving distortions takes precedence over thinking about contextual factors. Greenberg (2012) truly did establish emotions as the “great captains of our lives” (2012).

According to Taylor (1989), Kantian and Expressivist perspectives were combined because both lacked dimensions required to reflect the burgeoning Western self and the values of the time. Rationalist concepts of humans as rational and instrumental agents lacked rich and unique inner worlds and discounted the popular notion of a connection to nature. Expressivism’s embrace of nature, on the other hand, did not leave enough room for autonomy. Likewise, a contemporary theory like EFT needs to reflect the self of the current era, and due to the deep embeddedness of these remaining values of connecting to inner and being autonomous agent, and free in Western culture, the result is quite a contemporary attempt to merge these positions, while presenting this configuration of the self as a scientific condition and, hence, universal. In order for humans to be perceived as so fiercely autonomous and agentic requires their human nature to be framed as ahistorical, essential, unchanging and biological (Buss, 1979). In order for humans to be perceived as special and to justify each individual being the center of his or her own universe, truth has to be found in subjectivity. Greenberg’s EFT meets these requirements; however, he becomes hampered with similar contradictions that have limited this project over the years. The most significant of these contradictions, as it was surfaced in Greenberg’s EFT, was that when adaptive emotions are defined by nature, the client is limited by what is prescribed by EFT as adaptive. Is one truly free, or only free to be “who one truly is,” which is defined by nature, hence, humans never escape the pattern of falling from and returning to grace – a project that is deeply individualized and overlooks the impact of society, culture, and history.

## Conclusion

In this study, I used a hermeneutic approach to situate Greenberg's *Emotion-Focused Therapy: Coaching Clients to Work Through Their Feelings* within prominent ideologies, values, and moral assumptions of the Enlightenment era. Greenberg's EFT was interpreted predominantly within the framework of Taylor's perspective on Enlightenment era philosophy and its impact on modern selfhood, although, several other Sociocultural Turn and cultural-historical theorists were also referenced to a considerable extent. Within this framework, EFT was shown to disguise assumptions, values, and ideologies that stemmed from the Enlightenment era – particularly those advanced by Descartes, Locke, Kant, Rousseau – within an evidence-based, neuroscientific, and neohumanistic framework.

In the first chapter, I introduced the topic of research, stated the problem, described the study, proposed questions to guide this study and described the theoretical framework used. I also described how my own path from Humanistic clinical foundations to the adoption of Relational and Hermeneutic principles inspired this research. In the second chapter I reviewed the importance and scope of sociocultural and hermeneutic examinations of implicit assumptions in mainstream theories; two relevant hermeneutic studies (Buss, 1979; Sass, 1988); current research in EFT; and I introduced Greenberg's EFT text. The review of EFT research demonstrated that proponents of this theory were predominantly focused on outcomes, theory building, and methods testing. These studies did not include reflections on moral values or assumptions around which their theories were built. This absence indicated a benefit to be gained by this study. In the third chapter, I presented an approach to interpret EFT hermeneutically. In chapter four, I presented my interpretation of the text. Situated within philosophical ideas of Enlightenment philosophy, I interpreted Greenberg's depiction of emotion

as a messenger of inner truths that generate from within self-contained individuals. These messages then require instrumental rational management for their incorporation into one's self-responsible and self-determining lifestyle. In this chapter, I remark on the broader consequences of unacknowledged and unarticulated assumptions in EFT and mainstream psychological theories besides EFT. First, I discuss the limitations of the study and topics for further study.

### **Limitations and Topics for Future Research**

Hermeneutics is an interpretive approach that can be used to understand implicit and unacknowledged values and assumptions that permeate the perception of oneself and others. The data yielded in this study are based on speculation, insight – including insights of the many authors included in this study – and arguments rooted in historical material and the current context of the other. The best one can do to support one's research claims based on a hermeneutic approach is to collect good data and to create a strong and well-constructed argument. Also due to the circular nature of hermeneutics, interpretations could go on endlessly as well as evolve with each reading. Others may interpret the same text differently; however, additional interpretations can be seen as valid additional perspectives. I did not include alternative approaches to psychotherapy that might address the one-sidedness of therapy. For this I would refer readers to Cushman (1990, 1991, 1995), Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon (1999), and Stern (2010) for a starting point. Lastly, I was unable to answer all of the questions that I initially put forth at the beginning of the project. This was due to a matter of time, space, and scope. I found topics such as EFT and the therapeutic relationship to be rich enough as to warrant their own individual studies.

**EFT and the therapeutic relationship.** Greenberg's (2015) construal of the therapeutic relationship deserves more attention in further study, as it was depicted as an integral part of

treatment. However, it was also another component of treatment that led to some confusion. The therapeutic relationship was construed as having corrective properties in-and-of-itself, but also as non-imposing. According to Greenberg, a strong bond contributed to coregulation of emotion. However, this seemed to be discussed briefly and came across as more of an auxiliary to developing the client's ability for self-focused healing, with goals always focused on self-sufficiency and self-responsibility. It is acknowledged that an EFT therapist or coach can contribute to the client's construction of meaning, but if the coach is meticulously attuned, the interpretation should be helpful in capturing *the client's* experience. The dyad is always working to define the subjective experience of the patient. Overall, the practitioner is meant to be a non-imposing guide. In Greenberg's own words, EFT is a, "coconstructive process in which both client and therapist influence each other in nonimposing ways to achieve a deepening of client experiencing and exploration and the promotion of emotional processing" (Greenberg, 2015, p. 5). Understanding the mainstream construal of the therapeutic relationship as integral to improvement, while the therapist is also depicted as neutral, could be derived from hermeneutic situating within a cultural-historical framework. This was beyond the scope of this study.

### **Emotion as Inner Truth, Rational Instrumental Control, and Sociopolitical Consequences**

Greenberg's theory reflected a contradiction like the one that Sass (1988) indicated was inherent within Humanistic psychology. Particularly, Sass (1988) argued that the exaltation of individual subjectivity in Humanistic theory implied an embracing of Descartes' (1637/1998) mind-body split, which is a central assumption of the Cognitivism and Psychoanalysis against which it pitted itself. Taylor (1989) noted even more crucial contradictions rooted in Enlightenment philosophy. He argued that contradictions exist between the philosophies of Rousseau and Kant that should render them incompatible, yet there has been a centuries-long

attempt among various disciplines and institutions to combine them. Kant's (1781/1999) theory overemphasized reason and excluded the natural domain of life, while Rousseau's (1762/1979) theory undermined the autonomy of the individual agent. Inner experience was emphasized to the near exclusion of a physical world in both theories. The Expressivist stance promotes a connection to nature, but when inner nature was no longer perceived as an extension of outer nature, or something spiritual, the reason to turn inward became hazy.

In the long run, attuning to inner or outer nature has become a taken-for-granted compulsion. People want to connect to something, but 21<sup>st</sup> century Americans want to be free; they do not want nature or other external impositions to dictate that they must do this or that. Taylor explained that later Enlightenment developments that attempted to integrate the two conceptualized a synthesis of nature and reason. He explained that according to these theories that people needed to break with nature in order to develop higher human rational skills but then – and this referred back to the Christian roots of Enlightenment thinking – needed to redeem themselves with nature; however, rather than a return to the original state of nature as proposed by Rousseau and the Expressivism he inspired, the integration of reason and nature was perceived as a superior state. Sound familiar?

I found this remarkably congruous to what Greenberg is unintentionally attempting to accomplish – an inadvertent endeavor; however, the order of this synthesis is tailored to the individual. The interventions are supposed to facilitate acceptance, expression, and processing of emotions. Sometimes during these processes, Greenberg described a kind of automatic shift from maladaptive to adaptive feelings and from vague understandings to clear meanings; however, the development of EI includes the expectations of self-regulation and agency. Unlike Expressivism, it is not enough to merely receive and express the emotion. Greenberg (2015)

emphasizes working productively with emotion, which can only happen if someone can handle the emotion well enough to “maintain a working distance” from it and to “cognitively orient toward it as information” (p. 85). This sounds like the kind of Cartesian objectivism that allows one to take a bit of a detached view and instrumentally manipulate what is objectified. Also, one needs to be able to cope with overwhelming emotion, so they can *do something* with the emotion.

Emotion regulation dovetails into the expectation of agency. Agency emphasizes the client’s role in the work it takes to transform their emotional experiences. According to Greenberg (2015), client’s emotional experiences are their “own personal construction of reality” (p. 87). This is about the client taking responsibility, not blaming others, and not being passive. According to Sampson (1981), the emphasis of cognitive theories on active minds reflects the deemphasizing of the external. According to Sass (1988), the emphasis on human’s proactive nature is tied to the valuing of freedom, “innerness and uniqueness...self-awareness combined with a distrust of external sources” (p. 231). According to Greenberg (2015), as a result of the types of automatic shifts mentioned above, “clients are helped to experience themselves as free to choose how best to respond to the other and as capable of taking responsibility for those choices, independent of what the other does” (p. 264). There is a strong emphasis on clients establishing, “their sense of the self as agents, separate from the other, and as existing in their own right” (Greenberg, 2015, p. 276). These ideas sound very much like the synthesis that Taylor described. In addition, Greenberg seems to sense that people are not independent enough in contemporary society!

The emphasis on being an active agent and taking responsibility for one’s emotions, and the claim that holding external situations accountable for these emotions is being passive,

reflected the values of self-determination, self-control, and rational instrumentalism brought forth by the likes of Descartes (1637/1998), Kant (1781/1999), and Locke (1689/1996). These philosophers believed the highest good for individuals was for them to construct their own singular realities, thus blaming of anything outside of the self puts one in the devalued position of being a passive victim. Greenberg's conceptualization of a healthy adaptive person portrayed a decontextualized, isolated, emotional-savvy, and rational agent who can instrumentally control, if not just his emotions, his life, as part of a process of resetting his emotions back to their natural state.

The maintenance of these combined philosophies by emphasizing the interior domain and diminishing the external serves a societal function. I believe the adaptive messages of nature account for the moral dimension of the self and address one's unique preferences, values, and overall identity. The use of reason and reflection cover the bases of self-determination and self-transformation that are so popular and prized in Western Society. The use of Kantian-like structures, Emotion Schemes and basic emotions, internalize and reify emotion and free it from being seen as a social phenomenon, so that emotion can remain in the realm of the sciences. This allows the theory to both take the shape of something familiar and popular, while keeping the theory scientific in order to maintain its relevance and legitimacy in the world of healthcare.

The consequences of the Enlightenment-rooted assumptions of inner truth and instrumental rationality that operate implicitly in psychological theory and are components of individualist ideology, have been expounded on by the cultural-historical and Sociocultural Turn theorists introduced in the second chapter and referenced throughout this dissertation. I will review some of those here briefly and expand on those concerns. The centralizing of subjective experience to the near exclusion of the sociocultural realm implies that inner reality provides the

most reliable data about human existence, while ignoring the impact of external sources of pain or comfort. The location of problems inside of abstract psychological structures within the individual, the exaltation of subjective experience, the reinforcing of personal agency, and the diminishing of the sociopolitical world result in an enormous degree of perceived and expected personal responsibility. One has not only the power to make one's life the way one desires, but moral obligations become a matter of individual insight and any personal limitations are framed as deficiencies of the individual.

The cultural-historical critics that I have drawn from argue that mainstream theories, such as EFT, unknowingly reinforce and perpetuate current values and the current configuration of the self, which preclude contemplation about how the field of psychotherapy itself contributes to the ills it is responsible for treating. For example, regarding Greenberg's EFT, Westerners would typically judge unchecked emotions as bad, so to say that reflecting on our emotions is scientifically supported is simply reiterating a value that already exists in society. It is not anything out of the ordinary, so if something sounds familiar about the theory and its premises seem reasonable and correct, it could be that the theory is basically a conceptual translation of common values (Cushman, 1991; Smedslund, 1985). In fact, Eisenberg, Champion, and Ma (2004) reported that emotion-regulation went from nearly unmentioned to widely popular during the late 1990's to early 2000's. This is why I realized that EFT interventions and attitudes come naturally to me in my own practice. This is not only because of my Humanistic background, but also because these are the common beliefs in which I am embedded as an American.

As the Enlightenment project of freeing individuals from external commitments began to leave people isolated and disconnected with a sense of emptiness, rather than scrutinize how social conditions and values might be contributing to their experience, they were compelled to



fill the emptiness with consumer goods or other trends, including psychotherapy, due to ingrained beliefs that self-fulfillment is important and a matter of self-responsibility (Cushman, 1995). While the political atmosphere and history of the United States that Cushman (1995) analyzed in-depth is beyond the scope of this dissertation, suffice it to say that this inward focus combined with minimizing the social and political spheres can leave individuals to wallow in their own groundlessness while shaping them into a politically docile and compliant population who contribute to the economy through consumer activities aimed at filling the empty self. According to Richardson and Zeddies (2001), the modern age is defined by a moral ideal that individuals are self-contained, autonomous and free from the binds of the past and of obligations to others; however, the break from social ties, traditions, and purposes beyond self-realization leave individuals at risk of being severely alienated and emotionally isolated.

Reinforcing the self-contained and self-controlled individual, while diminishing the influence of culture, contribute to people losing what is valuable about traditions. Cushman (1990, 1991, 1995) described tradition as a guide that imbues people with knowledge and can orient people with a sense of purpose. The loss of community and tradition contribute to the empty self as major losses that need to be replaced by consumer goods, but these losses can also influence individual conformity to the harmful or questionable values of various institutions or organizations, from dehumanizing political sects to manipulative cults.

Other consequences include reinforcing selfishness and reinforcing the devaluing and instrumental views of others and promoting civil apathy. According to Bellah et al. (1996), in the face of social injustices and harmful practices, there is a temptation for people in Western society to disengage from the broader society. Civic consciousness, or the idea that we belong to a society and are responsible for shaping it, has weakened (Bellah et al., 1996). When applied to

the elite, the lack of the sense of social obligation along with the moral encouragement for self-success creates self-serving, self-motivated people of influence, who earn their success at the expense of others and do not consider what happens to others as a matter of their concern.

Simultaneously, Westerners, especially Americans, exhibit a tendency to resist moral commitments and define relationships in terms of what they do for the individual (Bellah et al., 1996; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999).

EFT equates reality with one's internal life, so that the external world is rarely perceived as a significant problem. While Greenberg described emotions as activated internally or by external triggers, he depicted the external world somewhere between benign and a medium with the potential to interfere with one's access to their interior self. In fact, Greenberg (2015) blamed external factors like "political and religious idealism", "violent sub-cultures," and drug use for "human atrocities" (p. 53). This construal makes one perceive one's self as entirely responsible for healing psychological anguish, rather than suggesting interpersonal or relational strategies. In fact, EFT is certain that one can heal interpersonal wounds by one's self through interventions such as the two-chair or empty chair techniques. These interventions facilitate the client to talk to his or herself. EFT does very little to promote looking to others for help, other than the occasional psychotherapeutic pit stop where a therapist or coach provides a little putatively non-imposing guidance to get one back in shape to take care of one's self. In those cases, the therapist must be seen as barely involved. The therapist's impact on the client and therapy is understated, and the *interpersonal field* (Stern, 2010) is an untapped source of understanding clients' conflict. Without scrutinizing the impact of individualist ideology or any ideologies on psychological functioning, Greenberg cannot understand how these ideologies helped to create the suffering his clients experience, yet he treats these ills by strengthening

individualistic qualities. He believes he is restoring individuals back to their natural state. This further self-absorbed individual will not consider if political or social structures are in need of change or critique the values his or her society hold dear. In fact, any critical sense the client may have had about sociopolitical ills may get eradicated through this form of therapy. Transformation will be conceived of solely at the individual level, while maintaining the social and political status quo.

At the outset of this dissertation, I asked how taken-for-granted societal ideologies could have contributed to a tragedy such as the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida. I wondered how cultural practices and prominent institutions, such as mainstream psychology, could play a role in reinforcing and perpetuating ideologies. I believe this analysis of EFT has demonstrated one possibility. It is not difficult to imagine the anger, bitterness, and loneliness experienced by someone who is feeling empty, who is socially isolated, and surrounded by others who feel no obligation to include him or her in the community or their cliques. This is particularly germane to someone who's history alludes to severe attachment problems. It is not difficult to imagine the scorn of one who has a skewed belief that these others who disengage from him or her are actually supposed to be serving his or her interests somehow but are not. It is not difficult to imagine this same person filling this emptiness by conforming to violent trends and coping through indifference and violent fantasies. Finally, it is perceivable that this angry, groundless, and disconnected person would confuse punishing others for what he or she is lacking as a solution. However, even in the political sphere, ideologies such as individualism and its consequences are not questioned as causes for violence as much as gun control or mental health problems.

In addition to gun control measures and mental health funding, it would be a benefit to understand these situations in terms of the societal values and ideologies that beset them. Starting with, “this kid couldn’t control his emotions,” seems less productive when not also trying to understand under which social structures do these events tend to occur or not. If psychological ideas that address values and traditions in society could also make it into the mainstream, whether as a counterpoint or as well-integrated with intrapsychic models, there would be the possibility of addressing the foundations of these types of problems, rather than solely treating the symptoms. There has to be an extent that individual freedom can include explicit commitment to values and to others. It is possible to have values and traditions that assist in guidance, rather than continually attempting to find guidance from within. Quite obviously, some of these values have to center around relationships, social consciousness, dialogue and nonviolent solutions to problems.

### **Relational Solutions in Treatment**

Descriptions of what the client is supposed to do and achieve through EFT interventions sound like they take place in an inner world, some separate realm that the therapist is facilitating. Like directing someone who is playing a Virtual Reality game. The experience of new emotions is more about shifts of self-experience. This was despite the fact that EFT prominently promotes the importance therapeutic alliance. I will introduce Relational ideas to treatment to demonstrate how therapists can think about a client’s experience outside of a rigid individualistic and objectivistic stance. *Relational Psychoanalysis* focuses on how intrapsychic and interpersonal realms interact (Ghent, 1992).

The literature review of EFT studies demonstrated the efforts of the EFT therapist to generate content and healing directly from the client. In one example from an intervention

transcript excerpt from Sutherland, Peräkylä, and Elliott (2014), the therapist directed the client to produce self-positive statements based on the inferred need of the client at that juncture. I sensed that in some instances *the therapist* could produce the positive soothing statements based on the therapist's knowledge of the client; or, perhaps the therapist could reflect on the way the client might feel strong or vulnerable in the moment based on his or her perceptions of self, other, and the current interpersonal configuration. EFT did not seem to allow the flexibility for this type of exploration. On the contrary, it strived to create a rigid and predictable encounter.

A Relational psychoanalyst like Donnel Stern (2010) might argue that the predominant interpersonal field within which the patient developed did not allow for certain emotions or experiences of identity. While projective identification may recreate this interpersonal field with others, the allowance or witnessing, the containing, and the grasping of meaning that the therapist endures with the patient creates a new interpersonal experience with an allowance for new self-experience. This approach also holds the therapist accountable for his or her own implicit assumptions. The idea is to notice when the therapist has fallen into an enactment with the patient and work out of it together by understanding and then transforming the meanings that are taking place in the room. What a radical idea in contrast to the dominant value-neutral stance that permeates mainstream psychotherapy!

Stern's (2010) idea indicates that the therapist can become immersed in the therapeutic situation and then use that frame-of-reference to make sense of how parallel interactions contribute to the patient's suffering. This encourages a dialogue of the therapist's and patient's points-of-view and these *partners in thought* develop new meanings together. Why postulate about emotional-mental mechanisms that shift and slide into the right place like a sliding tile puzzle? When the patient cannot experience these changes without the entanglement that is the

interpersonal field, why downplay the therapist's role contributing to the change of these mechanisms?

Greenberg does explain how relationships effect emotional development and change, but it is cursory. He described being supportive, empathetic and genuinely accepting of the client. He also described the importance of seeing different possible mental states that the client could occupy. But he also emphasized that as the therapist he can only offer support and it is the responsibility of the patient to change. First, being genuine, or transparent, which is a requisite of the humanistic approach, seems to contradict constant acceptance; however, that is an argument for a different time. More relevant here, is how this perspective does not seem to consider the dynamics of the dyad. Could some aspect of the client's emotional reactions in-session be in response to the therapist and something that is really happening in their relationship? While I would refer readers to Stern's (2010) concept of enactment here, my point is that this neutral stance depicts the therapist and client as separate entities, where as long as the therapist follows procedure, he or she is doing everything right, while the client's woes only occur in a self-contained bubble; hence, the client's world happens in his or her head, his or her feelings are his or her responsibility, and the external world is not implicated for examination.

One way this could look different is for the therapist to talk about the therapy situation itself as full of meaning and emotion. What this does is say it is out there and it is a matter to which we can pay attention. How does the emotional conflict felt within, reflect conflict that is happening without? This way of thinking allows emotion to be brought between the therapist and patient. Is this in here? Are there things you or I do in here that represent this? This does not mean that an exploration of the inner world is invalid, but that by giving as much credence to the patient's relational world, the therapist can develop a more complete picture of the patient's

struggles while challenging the value-neutral/it's-all-in-the-client's-head mentality and imparting values that indicate healthy interdependence. This dialogue can expand beyond the dyad to consider how sociopolitical situations and meanings contribute to the suffering of the patient and also others within the society.

The incorporation of these kinds of dialogues in therapy can help foster a critical approach to the sociopolitical world and suggest more supportive and communal ways-of-being. Perpetuating this type of perspective from the mainstream position of the well-respected institution of psychology can help people make sense tragedies like the Parkland, Florida shooting and maybe contribute toward decreasing them. People can attempt to understand the inner and outer world of a young man who becomes violent. In the long run it might be possible to scrutinize and transform the values and ideologies embraced in society so that violent reactions bred in isolationism do not occur to an individual as an option.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This dissertation really began all those years back in high school. My social experiences led me to question social values and practices. I realized even then that there were consequences to the social goals striven for in my high school, whether they were implicit or quite explicit. I did not understand the scale and complexity of values and assumptions entangled with how people in the United States, or elsewhere, lived their lives or of political and institutional influence on visions of the good life. I did understand that some people adopted values without reflecting on them. Throughout my undergraduate experience I began to recognize how the vision of the good life for some oppressed and alienated others. And again, I noticed how some people's insistence on some positions seemed taken-for-granted, with their origins never reflected upon and their implications never examined.

I was introduced to cultural-historical perspectives of psychology at Antioch University through the University's integration of social justice perspectives with clinical psychology. More specifically, through classes with historian and hermeneutic scholar, Dr. Philip Cushman, I learned how to think critically about societal values and my own field. I gained perspective on how theories in which I had been indoctrinated contributed to some of the concerning social practices that I have noticed over my lifetime. Ultimately, this dissertation is representative of how I attained a perspective through which I could channel my concerns, disillusionment, and desire to improve the field and myself; and, I know these are not only my concerns, disillusionments, and desires. These feelings are shared by my hermeneutic colleagues, social psychologists and social scientists across fields, as well as those carrying the weight of precarious social values who may not be able to quite articulate their concerns and anxieties. I learned that these concerns, and the accompanying frustrations, can be channeled through hermeneutic engagement with the theories and practices in question. Ironically, I am left feeling like an active agent, rather than a passive victim. However, I have used my agency to attempt understanding a system that has the potential to victimize. Victims are not always passive, just because they are not behaving according to the definition of an active agent.

EFT comes from psychotherapeutic traditions that are creative and caring. It attempts to merge these foundations with popular and widely-accepted contemporary evidence-based and manualized methods and strategies; however, EFT has not adequately reflected on the assumptions implicit in the theories and methods from which it has drawn. Unresolved contradictions between Expressivism and Rationalism, or Rousseauanism and Kantianism, do not resolve the moral issues that they set out to, individually, or when integrated. We are still left in the United States to grapple with the tension between freedom and commitment (Bellah et



al., 1996). As the balance seems to be tipping in the favor of unlimited personal freedom (at least the perception of it and predominantly for privileged groups), we are left to address the consequences of isolation, alienation, and inauthentic strivings (Fromm, 1941/1994).

Hermeneutics can be applied by psychological researchers to interpret the potential ills of this era within this context.

EFT seems less to me about receiving internal messages than learning how to effectively interpret affective states, with the possibility of expressing the associated feelings and linking them to associated meanings and causes. In this case, EFT's version of understanding emotions bears similarity to Peter Fonagy's use of the concept of *mentalization* (Lemma, Fonagy, & Target, 2012). Mentalizing pertains to one's ability to understand how one's mental states play a role in interactions and feelings. However, mentalization is much more of a social construct in that it includes one's ability to understand the intentions and feelings of others also. Again, this reflects how theories from particular cultures and eras represent ideas that affirm currently accepted implicit notions about the good.

Finally, this dissertation is not only a personal accomplishment but a reflection of a gap in psychotherapeutic theory development and practice. I have demonstrated how pervasive assumptions, values, and ideologies can operate implicitly within theories of psychotherapy and how a researcher can utilize hermeneutics to surface these hidden operatives. In the end, theories of psychotherapy require further examination of unacknowledged assumptions in order to create dialogues about values, ensure development of theories around explicit values, promote reflection about the institution of psychotherapy's role in society, and ensure that the institution of psychotherapy deliberately contributes to the shaping of the good life, rather than unwittingly perpetuating the status quo.

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