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3

THE EI SELF: REAL WORLD IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF EI THEORY

Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul—and sings the tunes without the words—and never stops at all.

—Emily Dickinson

Why are we compelled to change? How do we know we are changing? What is it in us that changes? These are among the most fundamental questions we may ask of ourselves and each other, since any student of the human condition—and who isn't?—is bound to grapple with them to varying degrees on a daily basis, and over the course of a lifetime. I ask such questions of my own doctoral students each year, and am surprised as much by the answers as I am by the difficulty we encounter when posing such questions. That probably is because the questions themselves beg so many more questions that it is difficult to know precisely where or how to enter the waters from which they flow. The goal of this pedagogical exercise is to ask us to reflect upon the deepest levels of our experiential selves and to apprehend what actually is happening "within us," and in others, vis-à-vis change. In the spirit of such inquiry, consider what is, I believe, the most basic of these questions: What is it in us that changes?

When I ask my students to reflect upon this question in light of how they have changed over time and experience, responses typically range from, "Well, I see things differently" or "I don't think in the way that I used to." Alternatively, they may resort to observations about stages of change, juxtapositions among different theories of human behavior and development, or neurobiological alterations. When I press them to "go deeper"—beyond the observation that they learn new information, develop more sophisticated understandings of phenomena, or that synaptic modifications would be associated with such change—the struggle begins in earnest, and may prompt more questions still. When I ask them how they know change is happening within them—or in their partners, friends, or families—they may, in exasperation, finally declare, "I don't know how I know; I just do." From my perspective at least, this question—"What is it in us that changes?"—is difficult to answer in any definitive way because we emanate from its source, which encompasses us and is "bigger" than we are.

In offering this proposition, I am not insisting that our origins are metaphysical in any traditional religious or spiritual sense, although I personally am entirely open to that possibility, if liberated from the theocratic baggage that has encumbered our inclination to encounter these putative aspects of the human condition. What I am

trying to convey is that the nascent unfolding of our human potential from an ontological perspective existed before we were aware of, or could speak to, its existence. We derive from and are defined by it, whatever "It" may be. So actually, this question is one of what "It" is. And that is a hard question to know how to ask, much less answer. But it is an essential question with which to grapple if you wish to "make sense of beliefs and values," or are involved in bending human nature as a "change agent" in one form or another—advocate, educator, leader, parent, policy maker, or therapist—by whatever means, for whatever ends, as I hope to illustrate by returning to Elaine and her family.

ELAINE ENCOUNTERS SELF: A CASE STUDY IN BELIEFS, VALUES, AND NEEDS

Recall Elaine from Chapter 2, the homeless woman who was grappling with fundamental aspects of self, her family, her past, and her future. There are many ways to explain the processes my students and I experienced with this client and her family, and from an Equilintegration (EI) perspective, many have potential merit. However, what was most intriguing—and perhaps at the heart of our quest to "make sense of beliefs and values"—is how the constellation of belief statements that frequently were declared at the outset of the therapeutic process changed over the course of our work together. A number of exemplars could be highlighted, from her initial stance, which maintained that the lot of women was to be subordinate to men, to her active questioning and ultimate rejection of these beliefs, to her husband's evolution from passivity and resignation to active engagement in his roles as husband and father. Such transformation is fascinating and deeply moving to facilitate and behold, but in the final analysis, a singular focus on changes in stated beliefs from Time A to Time B does not explain *why* such change occurs in the first place or begin to account for the underlying sequelae—the collage of confusing thoughts and intense feelings typically accompanying such processes—that clients experience and attempt to express and understand as one session folds into the next. The belief content characterizing each of these phases may indeed be mapped and tracked from session to session; most clinicians are engaged in such processes implicitly at the very least, and often explicitly, as they seek to understand whether, how, and to what degree "change" is occurring. At a complementary level, it is also worth asking *why* a client would place him or herself in a situation where his or her beliefs and values about self, others, and the world at large would be scrutinized and evaluated by someone who—at the outset of the therapeutic process at least—is a stranger at best. To ask a question that is more than rhetorical, why in the world would someone "willingly" place him or herself in such a vulnerable position? At the most basic level, clients do so because they are suffering and do not know what else to do except seek help from those that society has deemed qualified to alleviate such suffering.

In entering that fray, therapists who value and work in depth-based approaches, variously defined, find few meaningful answers from practitioners who are epistemologically insistent upon the exclusive veracity of constructs such as "bad genes" or "chemical imbalances in the brain" or dismiss the question of "why we suffer" as irrelevant, since the modification of "disordered thoughts" or "external contingencies" is all that is necessary to "treat symptoms." That said, such approaches (e.g., psychotropic medications; addressing disordered thoughts and problematic contingencies) have their rightful place if the interventionist—of whatever stripe—avoids

unhelpful dichotomies regarding human nature (e.g., we are *only* "biological," "cognitive," "emotional," "relational," or "spiritual" creatures, rather than an interactive gestalt among all of these "parts") (e.g., Anmuth et al., 2013; Castonguay, 2000; Deacon, 2013; Henriques, 2011; Horwitz, 2002; Lambert, 2001; Magnavita & Achin, 2013; Norcross, 2002, 2005; Wachtel, 1997, 2008; Wampold, 2010).

Such integrative, relational, and depth-based work is neither easy nor simple—as was the case throughout with Elaine—since too many complex and interacting variables are at play to risk über confidence. Recall from Chapter 2, for instance, that we endeavored at every turn to create the conditions wherein she and her family would have the opportunity to encounter "need" in self and other, to learn from and make meaning of their experiences, and in the process discover both causes and cures for the original distress. What is most salient in this regard is first, the inherent linkage between what Elaine said she believed and valued at the outset of therapy; second, the profound emotional distress she expressed at the same time; third, her stated fear about engaging in a therapeutic process with a psychologist who might (for all she knew) be hostile toward her beliefs and values (e.g., her strong religious convictions); fourth, how her fear of the entire therapeutic enterprise gave way over time to a freer and more open focus upon her own internal and external experience; fifth, how the nature of this internal experience simultaneously became more nuanced, complex, and mysterious to her as she began to report thoughts and feelings that were experienced to be in conflict with deeply held beliefs and values (e.g., resulting, at one point, in what might be described as a "psychotic episode" where she felt possessed by the devil); and sixth and finally, how she came, over time, to move at a fundamental level in her receptivity toward and appreciation of a whole range of thoughts, feelings, and, most importantly, needs, that simply were not and could not be experienced at the outset of therapy. Interestingly, Elaine did not know what was happening to her as it happened; and as her primary therapist, although I sought to understand and facilitate what seemed to be a flight toward health, I had no way to know where her specific trajectory would lead. I could only hope, and believe, that the evocation of feelings and needs within her over time would lead us both toward a deeper encounter and sustainable engagement with her own true self.

In grappling with these levels of reality over the years as a clinician, the working formulation that seems to have the greatest ecological validity for me is the idea that deep therapeutic work occurring in the context of a safe and caring relationship allows for previously blocked "core needs" to be felt and experienced again. To be sure, thousands of articles, chapters, and books have been written in an attempt to account for the inner psychological processes by which healing occurs, and any number of incisive sources across the spectrum of theoretical and applied approaches to therapeutic growth could be cited in this regard (e.g., Castonguay, 2000; Henriques, 2011; Lambert, 2001; Magnavita & Achin, 2013; Norcross, 2002, 2005; Wachtel, 1997, 2008; Wampold, 2010). However, if our quest is to "make sense of beliefs and values"—how, why, for whom, and under what circumstances they are or are not likely to change—we have to consider the relationship between three components of *belief*s, *needs*, and *self*, as described in Chapter 2. We do so via the EI Self.[1]

[1] As an aid to the reader, terminology has been italicized; it will also be helpful to reference the EI Self figure (Figure 3.1) in order to see the interrelationship between various structures, processes, and levels.

UNDERSTANDING THE EI SELF

To begin, as a derivative of EI Theory, the Equilintegration or EI Self seeks to represent in pictographic form the integrative and synergistic processes by which beliefs and values are acquired, maintained, and modified as well as how these are linked to the *Formative Variables* (FoVs), *Core Needs* (CoNes), *and Adaptive Potential* (AP) of the self. By way of orientation, look first at the EI Self as it is pictured in Figure 3.1. You will notice first that there are three circular structures, which increase in complexity, from left to right. Underneath these circles, you will see columns of text, which help provide explanatory information useful in interpreting and understanding various aspects of this framework. At the most basic level, it should be emphasized that the EI Self is a developmental model, in that it seeks to represent the processes by which beliefs and values are acquired, maintained, and modified across the life span. Thus, two basic characteristics of the EI Self should be noted at the outset: first, moving from left to right, the three circles represent increasing development and complexity of the same "self" over the course of a lifetime, from infancy, to childhood/adolescence, to adulthood; second, because we are working in two-dimensional space on paper, what we are able to represent is akin to a cross-section of each "self," rather than a more apt three-dimensional sphere, which is implied by the parts comprising the whole of the EI Self.

Next, turn your attention to the third circle at the right of the page (with "Adult" underneath it). Note that the diagram includes four *Levels of Self*: (a) *Endoself* (Core Self), (b) *Mesoself* (Mediational Self), (c) *Ectoself* (Shell Self), and (d) *Exoself* (External Self). Each of these Levels of Self plays an interdependent and indispensable role vis-à-vis the processes and structures by which beliefs and values are internalized and expressed across the life span. For example, as conceptualized, the beliefs and values that human beings internalize at the Ectoself (Shell Self) level are those that are available for acquisition at the Exoself (External Self) level; in other words, belief/value content (i.e., the beliefs and values that a human being holds to be self-evident about self, others, and the world at large) largely is a function of those beliefs and values that predominate in the primary cultures and contexts in which that human being develops and lives.

As EI Theory maintains, we tend to acquire the beliefs and values that are available for acquisition. Of course, we are speaking in the aggregate here; many Formative Variables (FoVs) interact with other processes to create each person's unique constellation of beliefs and values; nonetheless, the fact that members of a particular culture often share a common set of beliefs and values (e.g., Inglehart, Basáñez, Díez-Medrano, Halman, & Luijkx, 2004; Inglehart, Basáñez, & Moreno, 1998; Schwartz, 1992, 2012) supports the contention that the most parsimonious explanation for such similarity is the simple fact that exposure to common beliefs and values tends to be associated with an endorsement of common beliefs and values at the individual level. Why, for example, do approximately 71% of Americans describe themselves as "Christian" (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2015) whereas nearly all (i.e., approximately 100%) of Saudi Arabians describe themselves as Muslim (International Religious Freedom Report, 2004)? Despite occasional claims to the contrary on various sides of religious aisles, the fact that people who live and work like oneself are, on average, in possession of similar religious beliefs and values says little about the inherent "truth" or "goodness" of such religious beliefs, but a great deal about the FoVs that are associated with the acquisition and maintenance of beliefs and values. As described in Chapters 1 and 2, and as any student of the social sciences realizes,

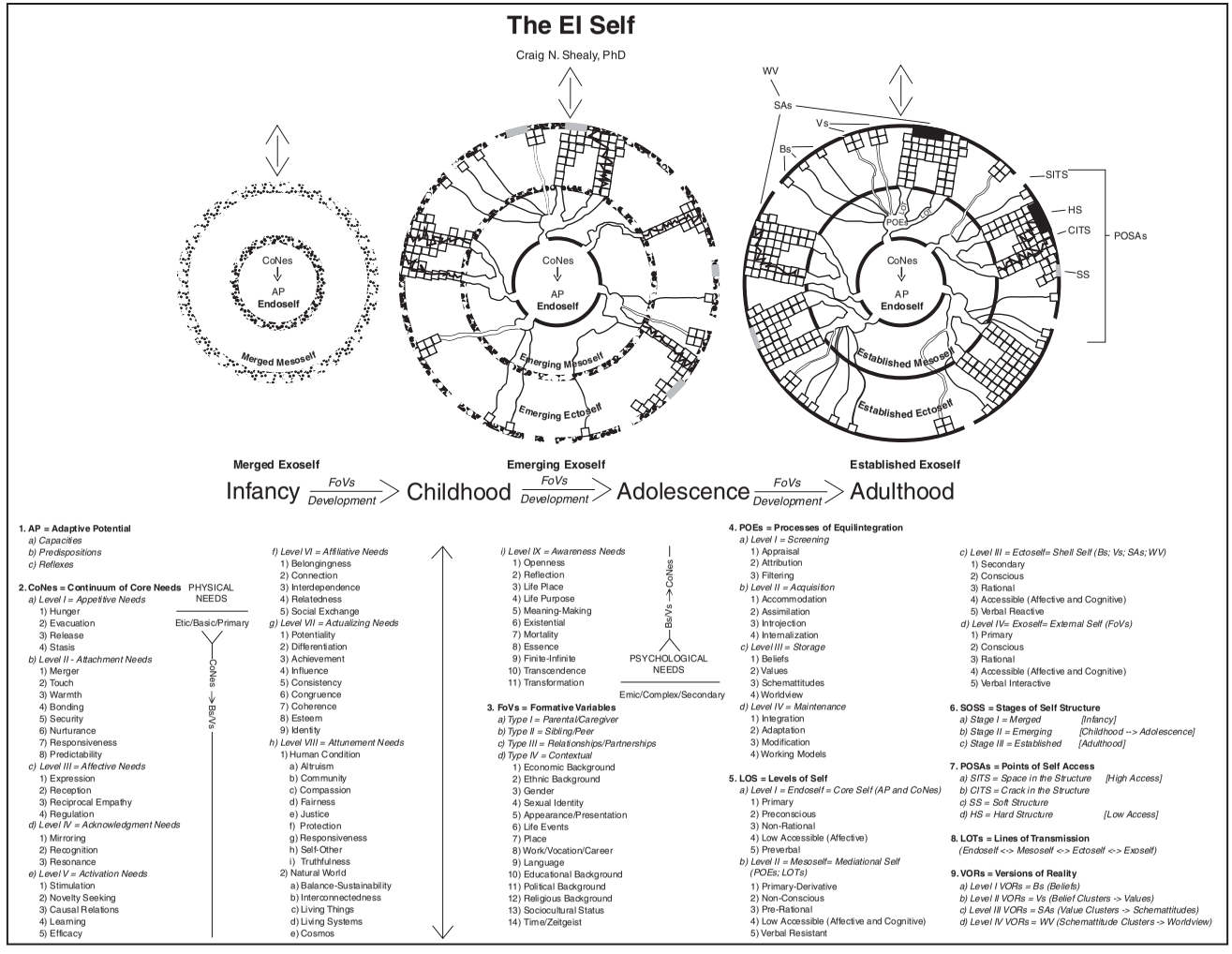

FIGURE 3.1. **The EI Self.**

many complex and interacting variables ultimately are responsible for "shaping" why we believe and value that which we do (e.g., Cummings, Davies, & Campbell, 2000; Feather, 1992, 1994, 1995; Rokeach & Ball-Rokeach, 1989; Schwartz, 1992, 2012; Sroufe, 2009; Toth & Cicchetti, 2013).

The Exoself

So, let us start beyond the boundaries of the circles in the EI Self, by examining the *Exoself* (External Self). Consistent with various aspects of "self" noted in Chapter 2, the EI Self recognizes both from a developmental and experiential level, that "the self" is not confined to the three-dimensional and physical human, but extends far into the larger field in which the physical self "lives and has its being," to include interpersonal, social, contextual, and cultural dimensions. As "social animals" (Aronson, 2012), humans constantly are engaged in processes of adapting to their external environment even as they seek to adapt their environment to them, a hallmark of intelligence, according to Sternberg (1985). As noted in Chapter 2, nearly all subfields within psychology recognize that human behavior cannot be understood without accounting for the interface between the individual human "separate and alone" and the external field in which we all are ineluctably embedded; and in fact, we simply cannot "make sense of beliefs and values" without accounting for this essential interaction between that which is psychologically "internal" and that which is socially "external" (e.g., Cummings et al., 2000; Shealy, Bhuyan, & Sternberger, 2012; Sroufe, 2009; Toth & Cicchetti, 2013).

In recognition of this interaction vis-à-vis the internalization and expression of beliefs and values, the Exoself level attempts to represent the major sources of external influence over the content of our beliefs and values. More specifically, and in full recognition that a definitive accounting of all such factors likely will remain elusive, the EI self posits four types of FoVs that are operative at the Exoself level: Type I = Parental/Caregiver (i.e., those who bear primary responsibility for child rearing); Type II = Sibling/Peer (i.e., individuals who live with and/or spend substantial time interacting with the individual, especially during formative years through late adolescence/early adulthood); Type III = Relationships/Partnerships (i.e., the type and nature of an individual's relationships or partnerships with others, including intimate and friendship relationships); and Type IV = Contextual (i.e., variables that generally are recognized to mediate or moderate human functioning and development) (e.g., Cummings et al., 2000; Shealy et al., 2012; Sroufe, 2009; Toth & Cicchetti, 2013). These "FoVs" include, but are by no means limited to, Economic Background, Ethnic Background, Gender, Sexual Identity, Appearance/Presentation, Life Events, Place, Work/Vocation/Career, Language, Educational Background, Political Background, Religious Background, Sociocultural Status, and Time/Zeitgeist. In short, taken as a whole, the FoVs listed in the EI Self, and operative at the Exoself level, are nothing more—or less—than the gestalt of factors that influence or shape "who we are" and "how we see the world," including our beliefs, values, schemas, attitudes, and worldviews. Metaphorically, such variables comprise the "air we breathe" and "the water in which we swim"; we are encompassed by—and immersed within—them from birth through death so wholly that we often do not consciously realize, without substantive and prolonged reflection, how fundamental such FoVs are to how and why we come to experience self, others, and the larger world as we do.

The Ectoself

But if the Exoself represents the "external" forces and factors that influence or shape what we believe and value, where in the EI Self do these putative beliefs and values actually "reside?" In obvious recognition that we are working at a construct level of analysis—and as EI Theory specifies, these belief/value constructs ultimately must be codified within (although are not wholly reducible to) a neurobiological substrate—the EI Self contends that beliefs and values are "stored" at the *Ectoself* or Shell Self level. As noted in Chapter 2, the relationship between beliefs, values, schemattitudes, and worldview are juxtaposed in a hierarchical manner (i.e., beliefs → values → schemattitudes → worldview). As represented within the Ectoself, moving from infancy, through childhood and adolescence, and ultimately into adulthood, beliefs (represented by individual "squares") cluster into values (clusters of beliefs), which further group into "schemattitudes" (clusters of values). The Ectoself taken as a whole—beliefs, values, and schemattitudes—may be considered an individual's "worldview." And as will be discussed next in Chapter 4, these different versions of reality (VORs) may be ascertained via a valid and sufficiently comprehensive measure, such as the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (BEVI) (Shealy, 2004; Shealy et al., 2012).

Note that the beliefs, values, and schemattitudes within the Ectoself are differentiated via a range of distinct structural features (e.g., solid black blocks, lightly shaded areas). Consistent conceptually with the definition of "belief" as noted in Chapter 2 (e.g., the "continuum of belief")—and empirically with a range of findings illustrating how beliefs cluster together as they do—such characteristics are included in order to denote that aspects of the Ectoself may be relatively open and permeable (as in *Soft Structure* or *Space in the Structure*), closed and impermeable (as in *Hard Structure*), or structurally unsound (as in *Crack in the Structure*). In short, as will be discussed throughout the chapters that follow, these designations are derivable statistically since various clusters of beliefs and values can be shown to be held along these same dimensions (e.g., strong versus weak; contradictory), as indicated by the "four dimensions of belief" described in Chapter 2.

At this point, to enliven these pictographic elements, a second "case study" may be helpful, this time not from a clinical realm as with Elaine, but rather from the standpoint of educational processes, via intrapsychic dynamics among two students in a doctoral program. To wit, consider the curious difference between Abhay, a male Indian and practicing Hindu who has never been outside of his home state of Kerala, located on the southwestern coast of India, and Alice, a female agnostic Caucasian from Washington, D.C. Early in their first semester in the same graduate program, Alice offers to take Abhay to a local supermarket so that he may stock up on food for his apartment. In the car on the way home, Abhay finds himself feeling irritated and then angry about the experience. Sensing something is wrong, Alice asks, and Abhay explains that he is appalled by the fact that an entire aisle in this huge supermarket is devoted exclusively to food for pets. In his home village, an aisle of that length and breadth might contain the contents of an entire store, and enough to feed everyone. Alice ponders the implications of this perspective about American excess with mixed emotions—agreeing somewhat, but nowhere near as stridently—as Abhay observes further that he cannot understand the "obsession people here have with their pets." Back home, such animals not only were disallowed inside the house, but generally were considered unclean.

A lifelong city dweller, Alice not only had no pets while growing up, she rarely had encountered animals in any sort of setting, aside from dogs and squirrels in the park or occasional visits to the zoo during her childhood. If asked, Alice officially would be neutral regarding these issues, never having contemplated the proper role or place of animals in or out of one's domicile. Abhay's agitation is genuinely puzzling to Alice, who wonders why he is making such a "big deal" of this issue. Her private belief/value narrative runs something like, "What does it matter? Who cares? He should just let it be." Abhay meanwhile is experiencing a range of affectively loaded beliefs, such as how "greedy and materialistic" Americans seemed to be while wondering at the meaning of their intimate connection with their pets. The emptiness Abhay has also felt in his social encounters with Americans, who are all smiles but seem relatively superficial (e.g., "They always ask how you are but don't really care to hear any answer other than 'fine'"), must be compensated for somehow by these animals, who require nothing from their owners, a concept in itself that feels further alien to him (i.e., the human ownership of animals that subsequently are called pets).

How does all of this map onto the EI Self? In the case of Abhay and Alice, the black "Hard Structure" pictured in the Ectoself would be represented by Abhay's deeply held belief that "animals belong outside" or "Americans are greedy and materialistic." Essentially, as suggested by the "four dimensions of belief," "Hard Structure" beliefs are rigidly fixed and strongly held. From her perspective, Alice never has pondered the role and place of animals in the home; never having thought about this issue, she has no "belief" one way or another. That is what is meant by Space in the Structure: an issue about which no beliefs have been internalized. On the other hand, during her upbringing, Alice's parents made her aware of her relative privilege in the world, both at home and abroad. She understands differences at the level of economic class, and knows that her relative advantages in this regard automatically allow her access to opportunities and resources that simply are not available to many others. At the same time, Alice has a long history of "giving back" to the surrounding community through service and resources; she believes it is her duty to do so. She is also aware of the general spirit of charity and care that so many others in her world share toward those who are less fortunate. So, to Abhay's assertion about American excess, Alice is inclined to agree on the one hand, but not completely, and certainly not with the level of certitude expressed by him. In terms of the Ectoself, her beliefs in this regard would be characterized as "Soft Structure," that is, beliefs that are held loosely and are susceptible to change.

This encounter led to further discussion—sometimes heated—between Abhay and Alice in the months to come. One evening, they joined some classmates at a local restaurant for dinner. As often was the case, discussion turned to issues of politics and culture, with a particular focus on recent attempts to restrict access to abortion services. Most at the table were strongly pro-choice and deeply resented state interference with abortion rights. Listening to all of this, Abhay observed that abortion, from his perspective, was a violation of the sanctity of life, a contention that provoked heated debate all around. After some time, Abhay asked, "How many of you are in favor of the death penalty?" Everyone who answered said "no," and most rather emphatically. "Well," Abhay replied, "How can you be both pro-choice and anti-death penalty at the same time? Isn't there an inherent contradiction between these beliefs, in that one allows for the destruction of human life and the other does not?"

Essentially, Abhay's argument went as follows. Because both issues concerned matters of "life and death," if one is generally predisposed against abortion, a common rationale for being so is that "abortion kills a beating heart." Thus, if one objects

to abortion because one opposes "killing an unborn child," would it not follow that one opposes any sort of killing of a human being? Interestingly, from the standpoint of how beliefs tend to be organized, the contradiction that Abhay has identified is illustrated by the fact that individuals on the "right" or more conservative side of the aisle tend to oppose abortion but support the death penalty whereas those on the "left" or more liberal side of the aisle tend to support a "pro-choice" stance vis-à-vis abortion while generally being more likely to oppose the death penalty (e.g., Costello, 2014). One need not be a logician to apprehend such paradoxes. And in fact, adherents for one stance or another often will point out this inconsistency to members of the opposing side, as in "If you're pro-life, how can you support the death penalty?" In short, the possibility for tension (i.e., disequilintegration from an EI perspective) between these two beliefs is high, as any instructor who has ever opened this issue up for discussion will attest.

In making his argument, Abhay encountered stiff resistance from the group (e.g., "the two instances aren't equivalent"; "the death penalty doesn't work"; "a fetus that cannot survive outside of the womb may not be granted full human status," etc.). For her part, as the conversation progressed, Alice felt a vague sense of unease, since she reluctantly found herself believing that Abhay's point made some sense. She was pro-choice, having negotiated a scare with pregnancy many years ago, and seeing the impact of too many unwanted children in the world. However, she viewed abortion as a necessary evil, which could be avoided if only we provided better sex education and greater access to birth control. Regarding the death penalty, she remembered all too well the terror inflicted in her home community by John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo, the "DC Snipers," who killed ten people and injured three others during 3 weeks in October 2002. She was a distant acquaintance of one of the people killed, and remembers wishing guiltily that Muhammad and Boyd would both be put to death for these heinous acts. At the same time, Alice knew and agreed with all the main anti-death penalty arguments; however, she still felt that perhaps some acts were so egregious, the death penalty might in fact be warranted. Unlike what she apprehended in her peers at the table, Alice felt genuine conflict between her two beliefs. She also experienced Abhay's argument as quite reasonable, and found herself in silent agreement that it was illogical for someone to be for the destruction of life in one circumstance, but not in the other. From the perspective of the Ectoself, Alice was experiencing a "Crack in the Structure," the subjective experience of relative contradiction between two or more correlated beliefs. Just why a feeling of discomfort occurs in the first place, is a point to which we turn next, in our discussion of the Mesoself (Mediational) level of the EI Self.

The Mesoself

Return now to Elaine, the homeless wife and mother from Chapter 2 who experienced what appeared to be an acute psychotic episode during one especially intense session of psychotherapy. At the outset of our work together, and frequently throughout, recall that Elaine experienced a range of complex and competing feelings about her participation in therapy. At the very beginning, her concerns largely were about whether or not I would attempt to challenge her religious beliefs (I would not and did not). As the process unfolded, she expressed feelings of deep guilt and fear about whether the process of therapy was changing her in ways that were not in line with her church's teachings, and whether "the devil" might work through this process in

ways that harmed her spiritually. Sometimes, her thoughts and feelings were not shrouded in any mystery at all, even though she experienced guilt when she became aware of them. Wanting to go back to school and obtain a GED (General Education Diploma), for example, was experienced both as deeply desired as well as selfish and potentially antagonistic to what the role of a "wife and mother should be." When expressing such wishes, she often chided herself for doing so, or voiced the overarching beliefs that such goals were not realistic or attainable in any case. From an intrapsychic perspective, how we do make sense of such conflicts in Elaine, others, and ourselves?

To do so, it first should be recalled—as discussed in Chapter 2—that the processes through which beliefs and values ultimately are internalized and "made part of" the Ectoself are neither affectively neutral nor cognitively passive. Instead, from the standpoint of the EI Self, they are nonconsciously mediated vis-à-vis *Lines of Transmission* (LOTs) within the *Mesoself*. Obviously, as with all of these heuristic constructs, such abstractions (e.g., "LOTs") are not intended to map reality's terrain with empirically observable precision, at least with present technology. Rather, we are attempting to illustrate how and why relatively consciously accessible "beliefs" and "values" are tethered to underlying "needs" via processes that actually have been examined quite deeply in clinical, empirical, and theoretical literature via aspects of attribution, defense, dissonance, resistance, and so forth (see Chapter 2). The point here is that as we sink more deeply into self—below the "beliefs and values" that humans experience as consciously accessible and internally rationale—we encounter processes that are charged affectively and largely outside of our conscious awareness; likewise, our vaunted sense of "choice" and "free will" are not really operative at this level of reality, which occurs more or less automatically in response to the interaction between core (Endoself) and external (Exoself) levels of self (e.g., Aronson, 2012; Newberg & Waldman, 2006; Wegner, 2002). Theoretically, this process occurs at the "mediated" or Mesoself level, through (at least) four *Processes of Equilintegration* (POEs):

1. Level I = Screening (appraisal, attribution, and filtering)
2. Level II = Acquisition (accommodation, assimilation, introjection, and internalization)
3. Level III = Storage (beliefs, values, schemattitudes, and worldview)
4. Level IV = Maintenance (integration, adaptation, modification, and working models)

To illustrate how this process operates in real world terms, let us turn again to the experience Elaine seemed to be having in therapy. In our first few sessions, for example, Level I POEs predominated, in that her entire psychological apparatus was engaged in evaluating (a) whether or not the therapeutic milieu was safe and in her best interest (appraisal); (b) evaluating issues of motive on my part as well as trying to make sense of why I was saying what I was saying and why she was feeling what she was feeling (attribution); and (c) what thoughts and feelings were and were not acceptable or tolerable for her to experience (filtering). As a collective, from the standpoint of the Mesoself, such POEs are designed to "screen" in or out beliefs and values that are expressed by others, including but by no means limited to therapists. In fact, from an EI perspective, much of our mental life is consumed by such screening processes. The ubiquitous encounter with "beliefs and values" (e.g., via the Internet, reading newspapers, commentary by public figures, attending lectures, reading books, or simply relating with other human beings across a myriad of interpersonal forms) means we constantly are in a state of evaluating whether and to what degree we agree or disagree with the "beliefs and values" that we encounter.

To take but one of countless potential examples, consider the following actual excerpt from a government committee in India, entitled *Report on Introducing Sex Education in School, 2009*:

> According to the Committee, "adolescence education program" is a cleverly used euphemism whose real objective was to impart sex education to schoolchildren and promote promiscuity. The Committee recommends that there should be no sex education in schools. Messages should appropriately be given to schoolchildren that there should be no sex before marriage, which is immoral, unethical, and unhealthy. Students should be made aware of the marriageable age, which is 21 years in the case of boys and 18 years in the case of girls, and that indulging in sex outside the institution of marriage is against the social ethos of India. (Khanna, 2010, p. 17)

From an EI perspective, take a moment to become aware of what your reactions are to the preceding report. Do you agree? Do you disagree? Are you undecided? How do you know what you think and feel about what you have just read (what information "within you" tells you what your reaction is)? Why do you believe that which you do (i.e., where do your beliefs regarding these issues come from or why do you have them)?

Generally, we do not engage in this sort of focused reflection upon encountering such belief/value stimuli. If we did so, it would be difficult to get through our day much less each passing moment mainly because we are surrounded if not bombarded with such stimuli on a constant basis. The automaticity of our reactions to such stimuli—where we have and register our experience internally, without necessarily being aware of, or attending to, the fact that we are doing so—is what is meant by "screening" from an EI perspective. From the perspective of this model, remember also that that which is being "screened" is an experience that begins at the level of the "Exoself" (e.g., the report that you read previously—an external stimulus), which is relatively more or less aligned with the organizational structure of your own "Ectoself" (e.g., beliefs and values that already have been internalized, which exist in a relative degree of congruence or incongruence with the beliefs that are conveyed through the given report from India). In fact, the function and purpose of Level I Screening POEs are to evaluate (e.g., appraise, attribute, filter) (a) the degree to which experiences at the Exoself level are consistent with the extant structure of the Ectoself (i.e., the "Shell Self") and (b) the degree to which experiences at the Exoself level have the potential to meet Core Needs at the level of the Endoself (i.e., "Core Self"), a point to which we will return.

So, if the Mesoself is in the business of screening content at the External Self level, how is it that beliefs and values get "laid down" as part of the Ectoself? From an EI perspective, Level II "Acquisition" POEs (Processes of Equilintegration)—including (but not necessarily limited to) accommodation, assimilation, introjection, and internationalization—are among the theoretical constructs from extant scholarship that essentially are describing these sorts of processes. Accommodation and assimilation, for example, are well known Piagetian perspectives, described as part of EI Theory in Chapter 2 (e.g., Kegan, 1982; McLeod, 2009; Piaget, 1976, 1977). Introjection and internalization, on the other hand, are constructs derived primarily from psychodynamic, schema-based, and cognitive-developmental literatures, which describe the process by which human beings come to "internalize" various "VORs" (e.g., how people or relationships work; what is "normal" and "appropriate"; what the definition of a "good person" is) (e.g., Bruck, Winston, Aderholt, & Muran, 2006;

Carr, Szymanski, Taha, West, & Kaslow, 2014; Shealy, 2004; Taubner, Zimmerman, Kächele, Möller, & Sell, 2013). In general, beliefs/values are "laid down" over a long period of time via exposure to FoVs that predominate for a given individual. As the EI Self indicates, the foundation of one's worldview (again, defined as *the gestalt of internalized beliefs, values, and schemattitudes through which self, others, and the larger world are experienced and explained*) is established before one understands that such a process actually is occurring, especially throughout early development, but also throughout the life span; that is, fundamental beliefs and values become part of the self without the self necessarily possessing the capacity (early in life) or inclination (later in life) to reflect upon the occurrence of such internalization processes.

That is why it typically is difficult to answer the question, "Why do I believe what I believe?" with clarity or specificity, because the fact of the matter is, Level II Acquisition POEs largely occur outside of our conscious awareness that these processes are occurring, especially from infancy through early adulthood (i.e., the first two circles, from left to right, in the EI Self), but also throughout life. In other words, we "end up with"—and embrace—our beliefs and values, but typically do not know why. What is most intriguing about such a process is, we are basically disinclined to ask such a deconstructing question, precisely because of the "disequilintegration" to the self-structure that such a reflective process can evoke (Shealy, 2005).[2]

As a result of specific experiences that typically last a long time in a given culture and context, Level III "Storage" POEs result in the "beliefs," "values," "schemattitudes," and "worldview" that become the primary self-referencing content of the Ectoself. In other words, when we talk to ourselves and others about who we, they, and the larger world are—or should be—we are really doing so in relation to the content that has been stored at the level of the Ectoself. That is, we are describing, and often defending, the belief/value content that already has been internalized by us at this level of self, which is our VOR, without really knowing (must less acknowledging) how such content came to be "ours" in the first place.

To be clear then, our experience of self, others, and the larger world is mainly determined by (a) the content that has been stored at the Ectoself level interacting with (b) the degree to which our stored beliefs and values are or are not likely to meet Core Needs. As in the experience you may have had when reading the committee report from India, this process tends to be largely nonconscious, in that the thoughts and feelings we experience, on the basis of exposure to particular belief/value stimuli at the Exoself (External Self), are not "selected by us" as thoughts and feelings that we *will ourselves* to experience, but largely are a determined outcome of a lifelong developmental interaction between the Ectoself (Shell Self) and Endoself (Core Self), which is mediated by the Mesoself (Mediational Self), within a particular context at a given moment in time. That is one reason why our belief in "free will" or "choice" largely is illusory, since we really do not have access to "choices" that are not already available to us (e.g., Aronson, 2012; Newberg & Waldman, 2006; Wegner, 2002). In other words, at any given moment in time, it is hard to imagine how we could "choose" to think or feel in ways that are different from the possibilities that already are established by, for, within, and around us. That being said, clinical, educational, and other evidence from experiences that are designed to "transform" how people experience self, others, and the larger world suggests that we may *free will* over time, essentially through a process of disentangling previously internalized

[2] Of course, a primary purpose of education writ large, and higher education in particular, is to facilitate such reflection upon one's own beliefs and values about self, others, and the world at large (e.g., see Wandschneider et al., 2016).

belief from the underlying core need to which it is associated (e.g., Shealy et al., 2012). In other words, as with Elaine, our "will" is "freed," if by "will" we mean the powerful aspirational drive associated with meeting core need through our unique Adaptive Potential (AP), as evidenced by the fact that over many months of work, Elaine became much *less likely* to revisit her former self or behave in ways that emanated from, and were determined by, her previous experience of what and who she "must be."

By extension, then, the typically entrenched natures of beliefs and values should not imply that they cannot or do not change over time; they can and do as the "7Ds" from Chapter 2 specify. From an EI perspective, these Level IV "Maintenance" POEs consist of integration, adaptation, modification, and working models of the self. Note that "integration"—the I half of the EI model—is the first and primary function of belief/value maintenance. That is because the complex and interwoven network of beliefs and values that is internalized at the Ectoself level is designed—to the degree an individual human organism has the capacity to effect such an outcome—to be integrated. In fact, the final purpose of the self is to seek integration, regardless of whether and to what degree the content to be integrated readily lends itself to this fundamental task, which is at the heart of self-coherence (or the lack thereof) as discussed via the "I" of EI Theory in Chapter 2. Any practicing clinician lives this reality on a daily basis with clients, all of whom present—from an EI perspective—in a relatively integrated or "dis-integrated" state. As educators, we too grapple with this dynamic constantly, via the relative capacity and inclination of our students to integrate information that they receive into their existing belief/value structures. In fact, all of us are change agents to the degree that we exert influence on how and why other humans experience self, others, and the larger world as they do (Shealy & Bullock, in press; Cultivating the Globally Sustainable Self, 2015). Oftentimes, the conflict or resonance we experience in relation to others has to do with the relative degree of alignment between our respective "Ectoselves" (i.e., we experience connection, or the lack thereof, with others to the degree to which we experience alignment or misalignment at this level), which is in the service of meeting need within the Endoself or "Core Self," a process that is discussed in the next section.

Like all human beings, then, clients typically do not have the luxury of "choosing" which content they will internalize, especially during infancy, childhood, and much of adolescence. Again, we become as integrated as our innate capacity for integration allows, which interacts further with that which is available for acquisition, which further is delimited by the degree to which such acquisitive content aligns with our Core Needs. As such, by the time that clients, students, employees—or any other role state that human beings assume—come before us as adults, we are experiencing the end result of that integrative process up until the point at which we first encounter them. From a clinical standpoint then, our "assessments" and "interventions" are all about understanding what happened to create a specific integrative structure, and therefore, what is needed by the client in order to become less "dis-integrated" and more coherent and whole (i.e., in order to facilitate the pursuit of their Core Needs) in the context of their unique AP and FoVs (e.g., Coates et al., 2016; Cozen et al., 2016). From the standpoint of the intervener, such a gestalt of competencies has been referred historically to *the person of the therapist* (Aponte et al., 2009), and could rightly be extended to the person of the assessor as well. By extension then, as has been the case with *therapy common factors*—"those aspects of treatment that are associated with positive or negative outcomes across all therapies or therapists" such as empathy, acceptance, and understanding (Shealy, 1995, p. 567)—perhaps it is possible to identify *assessment common factors* through an integrative

Psychological Assessment as a Therapeutic Intervention (PATI) lens (Finn, 2007; Finn & Tonsager, 1997; Poston & Hanson, 2010). Such possibilities are explored more fully in Chapters 11 (assessment) and 15 (therapy) of this book.

In any case, the corresponding cascade of Level IV "Maintenance" POEs that are part and parcel of "integration"—namely, Adaptation, Modification, and Working Models—all are different phases and facets of the integrative process. New beliefs and values that are "allowed to pass" Levels I, II, and III POEs of screening, acquisition, and storage are dynamically and simultaneously adapted and modified into extant structure at the Ectoself level. Ultimately, they become what scholars have described as "working models" of the self (e.g., Ainsworth, 1990; Bethell, Hung-Chu, & McFatter, 2013; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980; Wachtel, 2008)—relatively automatic frameworks by the self, of the self, and about the self—that are mediated largely by the nature and quality of our attachment-based relationships. It also should be noted that by extension, the Ectoself has illustrative compatibility with what we are understanding about synaptic processes at a neuronal level more generally in terms of their extraordinarily interconnected nature. Again and of course, as EI Theory maintains, all beliefs and values have a neurophysiological basis (i.e., they must be "laid down" at a brain-based level, and have underlying neurochemical correlates), even if they may not be reducible to, or readily apprehended at, this substrate level of analysis (e.g., Newberg & Waldman, 2006; Schacter, Gilbert, & Wegner, 2011), which leads us to the Endoself, the most basic level of analysis, and theoretically at the core of who we human beings are, and have the capacity to become.

The Endoself

As the EI Self illustrates, the POEs of the Mesoself occur between the Ectoself (Shell Self, which is described in the previous discussion) and the Endoself (Core Self), which consists of the self's Adaptive Potential (AP) (i.e., each individual's genetically mediated and unique capacities, predispositions, and reflexes) and a *Continuum of Core Needs* (CoNes) as noted in Chapter 2 (i.e., Appetitive, Attachment, Affective, Acknowledgment, Activation, Affiliative, Actualizing, Attunement, and Awareness). As may be evident, this continuum spans Level I (Appetitive Needs) to Level IX (Awareness Needs); here, the Core Needs on the "left" side of this continuum are seen as basic, primary, and foundational (Etic Needs), emerging immediately at birth and in less variant expressive form whereas those on the "right" side of this continuum are seen as aspirational, complex, and secondary (Emic Needs), emerging gradually through early development and in more variant expressive form. For example, and more specifically, Appetitive Needs (e.g., food, water) are relatively fixed and invariant defining characteristics of the human condition whereas Awareness Needs (e.g., meaning making, life purpose) ultimately may be expressed in highly variant form depending upon the FoVs (e.g., language, religion, culture) that predominate at the Exoself (External Self) level.

Among other implications, the EI Self suggests that the beliefs and values that human beings acquire and maintain are a functional result of the interaction between developmental/FoVs (which effectively establish the naturalistic or real world parameters for what may be acquired in the form of beliefs and values about self, others, and the world at large) and the Adaptive Potential and Core Needs of the self (which are realized along a continuum, based upon the relative congruence with, facilitation of, and/or receptivity toward this potential and need at the Exoself level). And, these beliefs and values are not just about others or the "world out there," but

also about one's own self; in other words, they are experienced and expressed *by the self*—to the self, others, and the larger world—*as the self*. In this regard, *identity, as the self's narrative about itself, may productively be understood as a representation of the individual's beliefs about self to self, others, and the larger world, which manifests at any moment in time as the most recent culmination of a complex interaction between core needs, formative variables, and external contingencies.*

Consider the experiences of Elaine along these lines. Basically, her work in therapy may be understood as a process by which she learned to allow herself to feel and experience, and ultimately consciously articulate, core needs that previously had been negated by her toward her, without consciously recognizing that she was doing so. Of course, this process was aided and abetted by how such needs in her were experienced by others, namely her primary caregivers and sociocultural context, throughout her development and life, which came over time to determine how she experienced her own core needs. For example, her stated desire for education, to be recognized as important and credible, to have warmer and more connected relations with her husband and children, and to make betters sense of herself, all map directly onto multiple Core Needs from an EI perspective, including at least the following:

- *Level III = Affective Needs* (expression, reception, reciprocal empathy, regulation)
- *Level IV = Acknowledgment Needs* (mirroring, recognition, resonance)
- *Level V = Activation Needs* (stimulation, novelty seeking, causal relations, learning, efficacy)
- *Level VII = Actualizing Needs* (potentiality, differentiation, achievement, influence, consistency, congruence, coherence, esteem, identity)
- *Level IX = Awareness Needs* (openness, reflection, life place, life purpose, meaning making, existential, mortality, essence, finite–infinite, transcendence, transformation)

In many ways, the apparent effectiveness of therapy resulted from the subjectively experienced reality on her part that these needs not only became consciously recognizable to her, but were actively and successfully pursued. By her own assessment, in other words, she knew she was "better" at the conclusion of our time together because these needs had been increasingly able to be apprehended and subsequently accessed by her. The fact that she felt "more alive" testifies, from a clinical standpoint, to the phenomenological outcome of meeting these Core Needs. Of course, as described at the outset of Chapter 2, the means for getting to such ends were extremely "disequilintegrating" for her, which makes sense from an EI perspective, and brings us full circle in our understanding of the interaction among these different levels of self. For example, harkening back to the "7Ds" of transformation as noted in Chapter 2, by finding herself in a therapeutic environment, the FoVs to which she was accustomed suddenly were dramatically *different* (D1) from those to which she now was exposed. Moreover, the *duration* (D2) of our work together—over a year—was of adequate length to modify her beliefs about self, others, and the larger world. Finally, Elaine happened to have a necessary and sufficient capacity and inclination for *depth* (D3), which allowed her to experience the process of therapy at a very deep level of self.

Ultimately, as discussed previously, the self-protecting processes of the Mesoself (e.g., appraisal, attribution, filtering) were attenuated sufficiently through the therapeutic alliance such that the Core Needs that always were there no longer could be "contained" by the existing belief/value structure of the Ectoself. The ensuring "cracks" at that level—during her experience, which appeared consistent with a brief psychotic episode—led to a fundamental realignment between the Ectoself and Endoself, allowing her much greater and more immediate capacity to feel and attend to the

pursuit of her Core Needs, which previously had been "off limits," as they were associated with an Ectoself that was organized in a way to prohibit their expression. Why? Because, as with all humans, the organizational structure and content of her Ectoself were a functional results of the Formative Variables (FoVs) to which she had been exposed at the Exoself level throughout her life, which were reinforced further by the religious "sect" and all its vestiges. Implied by such analysis, and returning to a question that was asked at the outset of this Chapter—"What is it in us that changes?"—a great ally to any practicing clinician or another change agent (e.g., teacher, parent, leader, etc.) is that a persistent longing for any human being, at least from an EI perspective, is to meet one's own Core Needs. This overarching motive, a legacy of our adaptive history as described in Chapter 2, drives us forward throughout our life span in a quest to meet such needs. To the degree that the capacity to feel and esteem such needs in ourselves, others, and the larger world is cultivated within us by others who care for us, we are that much better able and willing to understand why human functioning and development unfolds as it does, and respond accordingly throughout our lives, for better or worse. In this sense, we truly do reap what we sow, from micro (i.e., family) to macro (societal) levels of analysis. In other words, the degree to which we *sow* alignment between the Core Needs that are, and become, our human legacy—and the FoVs that are relatively attuned and responsive, or not, to them—is the degree to which we will *reap* a greater degree of fulfillment of our true human potential, on an individual and collective basis (e.g., Cultivating the Globally Sustainable Self, 2015; Shealy et al., 2012). In short, among many other sequelae of long-term exposure to relatively attuned alignment between our own Core Needs, and how the caregiving contexts in which we are embedded respond to them, is the degree to which we become that much more likely to experience and express the capacity and inclination to live according to the "golden rule" (e.g., to do onto others as we would have done onto self), as advocated by the great religious traditions of our world.

From a clinical standpoint, it is a rather straightforward proposition, actually. In the case of Elaine, by knowing, feeling, seeing, and respecting that her fundamental process really was an epic struggle to encounter self—to have and to hold her own Core Needs—we cocreated a space and a place for realignment to occur, between her Ectoself (her beliefs and values, now transmuted, regarding who she was, could be, and become) and Endoself (her deepest yearnings and capacities, which no longer were to be denied or suppressed). The benefits for her world and those in it were profound, as she tearfully described in a spontaneous phone call many months after our work had concluded. Mainly, she called just to say "thank you" to all of us who had listened to and cared for her and her clan. In addition to expressing heartfelt delight on behalf of the entire team, I also thanked her. Truly, as any change agent who is privileged to engage in transformative work with other human beings will attest—despite the angst, confusion, and fatigue that inevitably accompany such a process—when we care deeply for others we gain more than we give, by learning about ourselves and how the world could be, if we would but understand who we are and meet what we need.

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