

Personal Construct Theory as Radically Temporal Phenomenology: George Kelly's Challenge to Embodied Intersubjectivity

Abstract:

There are many consonances between George Kelly's personal construct psychology and post-Cartesian perspectives such as the intersubjective phenomenological project of Merleau-Ponty, hermeneutical constructivism, American pragmatism and autopoietic self-organizing systems theory. But in comparison with the organizational dynamics of personal construct theory, the above approaches deliver the person over to semi-arbitrary shapings from both the social sphere and the person's own body, encapsulated in sedimented bodily and interpersonally molded norms and practices. Furthermore, the affective and cognate aspects of events are artificially split into functionally separated entities, and then have to be pieced together again via interaction. By contrast, pushes and pulls are conspicuously lacking from Kelly's depiction of the relationship between the construing subject and their world. Kelly complements Heidegger in offering a radically temporal phenomenology and a strongly anticipatory stance. Both authors abandon the concept of subject and world in states of interaction, in favor of a self-world referential-differential in continuous self-transforming movement. A paradoxical implication of Kelly's radical temporal grounding of experience is that it is at the same time more fully in motion and transition than embodied intersubjective models, and maintains a more intimate and intricate thread of self-continuity and self-belonging.

Introduction

As post-rationalist and post-positivist discourses have increasingly made their way into psychological theorizing in recent years, students of George Kelly's personal construct psychology have followed suit in uncovering the many consonances between his approach and overlapping post-Cartesian perspectives such as the intersubjective phenomenological project of Merleau-Ponty, hermeneutical constructivism, American pragmatism and autopoietic self-organizing systems theory. What students of Kelly such as John Shotter (2007), Gabrielle Chiari and Trevor Butt find promising in Kelly's approach is what they see as his attempt to jettison modernist idealist and realist tropes in favor of a non-dualistic, indissociable interaction between subject and world. They also like that Kelly makes affect and intention-cognition inseparable, that thought is embodied in the sense that it is oriented and shaped by felt significance and relevance. The Kelly that they embrace sees cognition as intertwined with bodily feeling, and embedded within interpersonal social dynamics.

I support these readings of Kelly as far as they go, but in this paper I would like to point toward a more radical Kelly, one who ventured a step or two beyond the limits of the embodied and phenomenological perspectives that a number of his supporters and critics are attempting to connect him to. I am in agreement with Gabriele Chiari and others who argue that, despite

Kelly's protests to the contrary, there are strong commonalities between personal construct theory and phenomenological ideas. In fact, this paper is in part my attempt to make amends for the woeful ignorance of phenomenological philosophy I demonstrated in my first published article on George Kelly in 1990. At that time, my only exposure to Husserl and Heidegger had been through secondary sources, many of the same sources that led Kelly to dismiss phenomenology.

But there are important differences among phenomenological writers, and in order to properly situate this radical Kelly, it will be necessary to distinguish between the approach to phenomenology represented by Merleau-Ponty and what I will call a radically temporal phenomenology, exemplified by Heidegger's being in the world.

The thesis I will argue is that a crucial dimension of Kelly's philosophy and psychology is being missed when we read him using Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology as a normative frame of reference. Instead, I argue that Kelly's approach offers a decisive alternative to that approaches' explanation of the role of alterity in one's relationship to one's body as well as intersubjective engagements

I propose this radically temporal Kelly because

- 1) To me he is the most interesting Kelly.
- 2) this Kelly has not been presented yet in the literature.
- 3) This reading of Kelly is consistent with certain interpretations of Heidegger, (Derrida's in particular, which contrasts with Gadamer's appropriation of him).

Concerns about Personal Construct Theory's Rationalist-sounding Language

At the same time that embodied writers identify commonalities between personal construct theory and phenomenology, Kelly's approach differs from embodied, hermeneutic and certain phenomenological approaches in ways that invite concern among advocates of these positions. As I will argue, some of these concerns are legitimate responses to Kelly's vague and potentially misleading use of language. But I suggest that they are equally the result of a misreading of the underlying assumptions of the theory.

Summarizing the main critiques of personal construct theory from an embodied perspective:

- 1) Kelly employs an engineering flavored vocabulary that seems to subordinate an empirical and social outside to the 'top down' structures of the internal system. Kelly's terminology contributes to the impression that constructs are rationalistic templates that resist time and otherness. For instance, Kelly's talk of the person choosing from among a repertory of constructs gives the impression of stored concepts. He says persons "erect", "invent" or "devise" a system of constructs and then "select from their personal repertories the constructs they intend to apply to the situation at hand." (Kelly 1969d).

For this reason it could seem as though Kelly had one foot in rationalism and one foot in a post-realist phenomenology, sounding like an epistemological constructivist in some writings but not in others.

As Trevor Butt (2009) argues:

“ PCT can be read as both a somewhat positivistic cognitive theory, as well as a phenomenological approach. One way of understanding the two readings is to see them as occupying the two poles of the lived world/objective thought construct. PCT is open to a reading that implicitly rests on the natural attitude of dualism and, moreover, on the causal explanations that inhabit the objective thought of the natural sciences.”

He adds that, although Kelly’s theory lends itself to interpretation through an empirical naturalist filter, wherein constructs are behind and responsible for behavior, it can be coaxed in the direction of a thoroughgoing embodied approach .

2) Kelly’s choice corollary’s claim that we always make the elaborative choice seems to be an untestable truism. More importantly, it seems to replace the intersubjective basis of experiencing with an inner directed idealism(an internal regulating gyroscope).

3) Kelly’s depictions of a reality independent of the subject that our constructions progressively approximate seems to suggest a dualistic epistemological realism rather than a thoroughgoing constructivism.

I want to begin addressing these concerns directed against personal construct theory by taking a closer look at Butt’s claim that Kelly’s model can be interpreted as rationalistic.

Butt(1998) writes:

“ When the construct is first introduced, it is with this definition: "a way in which things are alike and yet different from others" (Kelly, 1955, p. 104; italics added). The image produced is one of the person standing back and placing interpretations on events in the world rather as they may sort objects.” This “allows (and perhaps even encourages) the reader to think in terms of concepts. The construct is an abstraction that differentiates between ‘things’. In what we may call the ‘later Kelly’ however, the two poles of a construct are not things, but possible courses of action.” (Looking back: George Kelly and the Garden of Eden, *The Psychologist*, march 2012, vol.25)

For Butt the difference between ‘sorting objects’ and recognizing a new event in primordial fashion is the difference between mechanistically applying a pre-existing program vs finding oneself actively exposed to, affected and changed by an aspect of the world, prior to all reflection, theorization and deliberation. Even if Butt is correct that in his later writing Kelly moved away from the articulation of construing in terms of what appeared to Butt like a rationalistic sorting function in favor of an emphasis on ‘action’, Kelly never deviated from his defining of anticipation in terms of the replication of events. As late as 1966, Kelly continued to

define the construction corollary as :

“A person anticipates events by construing their replications.” (A Brief Introduction to personal construct theory)

In order to get a better understanding of what Kelly intended , we need to take a closer look at the language Kelly(1955) used in the construction corollary:

“ a construct is a way in which some things are alike and yet different from others. In its minimum context a construct would be a way in which two things are alike and different from a third. “ “The things or events which are abstracted by a construct are called elements.” (p.95)

In mentioning both things and events, did Kelly mean that there are at least two distinct entities in the world, events and things, and that on some occasions it is events we construe and at other it is ‘things’? No, I think Kelly used ‘things’ as a loose way of referring to events. The word ‘event’ comes up more than 300 times in his first volume, and ‘thing’ or ‘things’ appears 196 times, but predominantly in the context of senses of meaning like ‘things to come’ ‘ things that happen’ , ‘anticipation of things’, ‘one’s way of seeing things’, ‘knowing things’, ‘doing things’, or as a simile for concrete events.

In many passage of the book, Kelly uses ‘thing’ and ‘event’ interchangeably. For instance :

”...it is not things that a scientist accumulates and catalogues; it is the principles or the abstractions that strike through the things with which he is concerned. Thus a good scientist can penetrate a bewildering mass of concrete events and come to grips with an orderly principle.”

I think since Kelly believed that “The universe is essentially a course of events”, such entities as physical objects are not fundamental to experience but derived abstractions ensuing from the construing of unique events. “If we want to know why man does what he does, then the terms of our whys should extend themselves in time rather than in space; they should be events rather than things...”(Kelly 1969a)

Still, I think Butt’s main point is not that for Kelly the elements that a person construes in the world are physical things rather than events. His concern is with how the construct system creates meaning and relevance out of those things, events or elements. More specifically, he is concerned with how the construct system is impacted and defined by the world, how being in the world continuously remakes the subject. In other words, the relevant issue here is the relationship between an event and a construct. To answer this question, let’s begin with what we know about events. We know that events only occur once; they are not temporally extended, self-inhering objects.

“...any sequence of events is the only sequence of its exact identical sort that ever occurred. It is inconceivable, then, that any sequence could have occurred in any way other than that in which it did without losing its identity. ““Since events never repeat themselves, else they would lose their

identity, one can look forward to them only by devising some construction which permits him to perceive two of them in a similar manner.”(Kelly 1955)

What else can we say about events for Kelly other than that they only occur once? We can say that, from the perspective of the person experiencing it, the event has no existence apart from, and cannot be separated from, one's construction of it. But the same is true of the construct we apply to an event. Constructs are only ever experienced in the context of an event that they apply to. Constructs give events meaning and events define constructs.

“In this world—past, present, and future ordered by each of us in his own way, constructs and events are interwoven so that events give definition to constructs and constructs give meaning to events.” (Kelly 1969f)

Thus, a construct without an event is like a subject without an object. Construct and event, the subjective and the objective, are the indissociable poles of every moment of awareness, akin to Husserl's noetic (subjective) and the noematic (objective) dimensions of an intentional act. In a personal communication to Dennis Hinkle, Kelly said “the events we so assiduously construe are themselves constructs”. “Construing may itself be considered a sequence of events.” If any given event of construing only happens once, then the entire superordinate system that defines it only happens once in the particular meaning it has in relation to events. This is because the system as a whole adjusts itself to the novelty that each new event introduces into the system.

”... no construct ever stands entirely alone; it makes sense only as it appears in a network.”
“...while it is events that one seeks to anticipate, one makes one's elaborative choice in order to define or extend the system which one has found useful in anticipating those events. We might call this ‘a seeking of self-protection’, or ‘acting in defense of the self’, or ‘the preservation of one's integrity’. But it seems more meaningful to keep clearly in mind what the self is, what it is designed to do, and what integral function is served. Thus we hope it is clear that what we assume is that the person makes his choice in favor of elaborating a system which is functionally integral with respect to the anticipation of events.” “One's construction system is never completely at rest. Even the changes which take place in it must themselves be construed. “

Kelly(1955) says not every event that we construe leads to the creation of a new construct, leaving the impression that constructs are static schemes that resist exposure to an outside world:

“...a new act often involves a new construct and one finds himself on the verge of new constructs as a result of his venturesome acts.”...”the successive revelation of events invites the person to place new constructions upon them whenever something unexpected happens.” “...whether a client develops new constructs to channelize his movement, or whether he rattles around in the old slots, the constructs of his system may be considered both as controls and as pathways along which he is free to move.” Without “permeable superordinate constructs he is limited to a more or less footless shuffling of his old ideas.”

What is one doing with one's construct system when one is not creating a new construct?

Apparently slot-rattling. That is, defining one's current system by rearranging subordinate constructs or repositioning oneself with respect to the poles of certain of one's constructs.

Events which trigger the creation of new constructs clearly represent a more significant degree of change within one's system as a whole than events that do not prompt such revisions. But the fact that a person is presumed by Kelly to be always in motion

("... there is no wish to suggest that we are dealing with anything not already in motion. What is to be explained is the direction of the processes, not the transformation of states into processes. We see states only as an ad interim device to get time to stand still long enough for us to see what is going on. " (Kelly 1966)

implies that even when he is not creating new constructs, he is still creating new meaning in his system as a whole, which is why Kelly refers to the definition of one's network of constructs (slot-rattling) as an elaboration of the system. At the superordinate level, such alteration is subtle enough as to allow us to say that for all intents and purposes, the system as a whole remains the same in the face of ordinary everyday happenings. But the system as a whole, and by implication its subordinate elements, never remains identical from moment to moment. The double essence of a construct as internally generated guidance and externally imposed novelty makes it more appropriate to consider of it as a form of questioning than as an answer. Why is this so? A question implies two dimensions. First, inquiry always takes its direction from a point of view and a context of understanding that projects itself forward through the terms of the question.

Heidegger (2010) expresses this well :

"Every questioning is a seeking. Every seeking takes its direction beforehand from what is sought. Questioning is a knowing search for beings in their thatness and whatness.... As questioning about, . . . questioning has what it asks about. All asking about . . . is in some way an inquiring of... As a seeking, questioning needs prior guidance from what it seeks. The meaning of being must therefore already be available to us in a certain way. We intimated that we are always already involved in an understanding of being."

Second, a question implies the possibility that it could be invalidated, and such invalidation can apply either to a subordinate detail within the outlook under which the question was generated, or it could mean an invalidation of one's entire outlook. The expression "not even wrong" points to this second possibility.

"...any proposition we contrive must be regarded as a crude formulation of a question which, at best, can serve only as an invitation to further inquiry, and one that can be answered only through personal experience and in terms of the ad interim criterion of anticipated events. Indeed, the answer we get is not likely to be exactly an answer to our question at all, but an answer to some other question we have not yet thought to ask." (Kelly 1969c)

" To ask a question is to invite a reply. If the question is relevant to anything of human account then presumably the reply will change one's perception of himself and his world. Sometimes one anticipates a reply which will confirm a position he has already taken, that is to say, one from which he has been accustomed to launch his inquiries . But the confirmation, if it occurs, will

nonetheless alter his experience only because it puts his position in a more presumptuous light.” (Kelly 1969c)

It is not simply that a construct MAY at some point be subjected to a test of its validity. The radically temporal nature of experience guarantees that such a test will ensue with every new moment of time. We may at times deploy strategies (hostility, constriction, loosening) to stave off the most chaotic of changes in our lives and thereby delay or minimize the emotional impact of a potentially massive invalidation of our outlook, in which case validation may be incidental, vague or fragmentary. But even in these situations, our system remains at some level exposed to, interrogated and modified by the events it warily encounters. Butt’s concern about a construct system that ‘stands back’ and mechanistically processes, orders and sorts the world doesn’t jibe with the model of constructs, and the entire system of which they are a part, as actively altered by the events they interpret. In the sense that a construct organizes worldly happenings so as to recognize them in terms of familiarity, it can be said to ‘sort’ them. But then, in the embodied approaches Butt endorses, elements of the world are anticipated and recognized also. It is not anticipatory recognition per se that he objects to in the Kellian process of construction, it is the aim of the construct system to recognize the most unusual future “in terms of a replicated aspect of the familiar past“.

Replication and Strong Anticipation

The key to understanding the role of anticipation in Kelly’s approach is bound up in the meaning of ‘replication’, a notion that is indispensable to the understanding of Kelly’s organization, sociality, and choice corollaries, and is closely linked to his notions of validation and elaboration. If we were simply to conclude that an anticipatory tendency characterizes at all levels Kelly’s project, then we could justifiably claim that he has this in common with Merleau-Ponty, whose approach also is oriented around anticipatory temporality. But it is not simply that Kelly claims anticipation as a general going beyond itself of one’s experience of an event, rather that his going beyond itself has the character of a peculiar implicative consistency. Butt is right that Kelly’s organizational dynamics give great emphasis to assimilative subsuming of events within the system.

The fact that anticipation is directed toward replicative themes defines Kelly’s model as strongly anticipatory. Kelly and Butt agree that one’s system, at the same time, in the same moment, recognizes its world and is changed by that world. Where they part company is Kelly’s insistence that an irreducible dimension of belonging characterizes the system’s relation to even the most shockingly chaotic experiences. Even in difference, negation, senselessness, irrationality, alterity, there is no experience in consciousness that is not in an overarching way variation on a thematic for Kelly, a similarity-in-difference. The Construction corollary defines construing in terms of dimensions of similarity. Combined with the organization corollary, we get a system in which differences are subordinated to superordinate themes and relationalities.

Kelly says a person “must develop a system in which the most unusual future can be anticipated in terms of a replicated aspect of the familiar past.”

Kelly(1969c) on how even the most surprising events are anticipated to some degree at a superordinate level:

“ There are first-time occurrences in the history of mankind too. Again, as in the lifetime of the individual, it is these, rather than the repetitions of history, to which thoughtful appraisal must, in retrospect, attach greater significance. Yet human history records no event as utterly unexpected. The posture of anticipation, which is the identifying psychological feature of life itself, silently forms questions, and earnest questions erupt in actions. Unprecedented consequences ensue. But when the novel contingencies occur, who, knowing how it was they came about, can say they fell wholly outside the realm of human anticipation.”

The title of Kelly’s paper ‘Confusion and the Clock (1960)’, which could have been aptly but more clumsily named ‘Impermeable Construing and Anticipatory Temporality’ nicely encapsulates both the theme of that piece and what is most radical about his philosophy. The ‘clock’ refers to the anticipative nature of becoming for Kelly, its irreducible basis in construing as a dimensional way of movement that foresees beyond itself. And ‘confusion’ refers to Kelly’s understanding of such affectivities as guilt, anxiety and hostility as situations of immediate or threatened confusion and chaos resulting from impermeable construing. In the paper , Kelly makes the argument that even the most intense and disorganized forms of emotional suffering and confusion, such as those he experienced after his heart attack, point to an overarching or superordinate thematic of recognizability and foresight within which disturbing events are assimilated.

Kelly(1960) on anticipating his heart attack:

“Was all this that happened something that was, in some measure, anticipated? Had I seen them behind my Cousin Leander’s mask? Yes, I think so... In general, then, was it not, on the one hand, a passage of human experience whose strange unprecedented notes derived significance that early morning from the underlying theme of my life, which they so sharply embellished, and, on the other, one whose meaning stemmed less from the repetitive familiarity of its details than from what it seemed to foretell.”

Kelly ‘s strongest statement of his faith in the potential of a replicative organization of experience is the following :

“... ordinarily it would appear that there is a closer relationship between the motion of my fingers and the action of the typewriter keys than there is, say, between either of them and the price of yak milk in Tibet. But we believe that, in the long run, all of these events—the motion of my fingers, the action of the keys, and the price of yak milk—are interlocked. It is only within a limited section of the universe, that part we call earth and that span of time we recognize as our present eon, that two of these necessarily seem more closely related to each other than either of them is to the third. A simple way of saying this is to state that time provides the ultimate bond in all relationships. “ (Kelly 1955)

Meaning Organization and Temporality: Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Kelly

How can we understand Kelly's strong anticipatory approach without resorting to accusations of rationalistic 'sorting'? Based on Butt's various writings on phenomenology, when Butt said that personal construct theory could be read as a phenomenological approach, it appears that what he had in mind was Merleau-Ponty's gestalt-based version of phenomenology. In my view, in order to do justice to the philosophical implications of personal construct theory we need to look beyond Merleau-Ponty's thinking. The remainder of this paper will explore the hypothesis that Kelly's notion of replication is at the root of the disconnect between personal construct theory and the critiques I have been discussing. My reading of Kelly's notion of replication depends on the claim that Kelly's approach is built upon a principle of psychological movement that differs in fundamental ways from the causative accounts of hermeneutic, pragmatist, autopoietic and radical constructivist approaches, as well as Merleau-Ponty's corporal intersubjective account. Kelly's model of movement is packed into the seemingly benign word 'way' as it is used in Kelly's fundamental postulate:

"a person's processes are psychologically channelized by the WAY in which he anticipates events", and in his definition of a construct: "The WAY in which two or more events are alike and differ from a third"

What is entailed in being a 'way' of making sense, relevance and meaning? We can begin by stating the obvious: constructs, as ways of making sense, are defined by their relation to other ways of making sense belonging to networks of similarities and differences, both within and between individuals and larger social groups. But there is more to say about the primitives of psychological meaning than that their identity is inextricably bound to larger personal and interpersonal ensembles. Modern phenomenology got its start with Husserl's assertion that stripping away the layers of historically acquired philosophical and scientific dogma via the reduction, in order to get to 'the things themselves', reveals to us an irreducible primitive of immediate present experience. But rather than this primitive subsisting in an objectively present 'now' point appearing once before being replaced by another in an infinite series of past and future punctual 'nows', Husserl proposed the 'now' as a tripartite structure composed of a retentive, primal impression and protentional phase. In doing so, he replaced a temporality justifying objective causation with the temporality of the intentional act. Events don't appear anonymously as what they are in themselves, they appear to someone, are about something, and reach out (protend) beyond their immediate sense.

So for Husserl, the WAY that we experience a present event is always a complex relating process weaving together past, present and future in an indissociable unity. One can clearly recognize Kelly's anticipatory person-in-motion in this model. If for Husserl, the isolated self-inhering presences forming the 'nows' of objective time are derivative abstractions of the fundamental relationalities composing phenomenological time, there is still more that can be said about what is internal to a moment of time. A way of being a sense of meaning implies a valuative content. What can we say about the internal content of meanings apart from the retentive-protentional structuration within which they are ensconced?

Before I address the way that Kelly's project deals with this question, I want to introduce Merleau-Ponty's corporeal intersubjective theory as a point of contrast, since his thinking informs the critiques of personal construct theory that this paper is centered around. Merleau-Ponty adopts Husserl's tripartite structure of temporality and then inserts into it a gestalt organization as the irreducible 'way' of being any kind of valuative content. A figure appears always against a background. The background is the system (ensemble, constellation, environment, setting, scene) that the figure belongs to but also stands out against. For Merleau-Ponty, there is, outside of memory and anticipation, a concatenation of parts appearing in consciousness in the present moment all at once as 'this object'. Intrinsic to this 'all at once' ensemble, giving it its unity as gestalt, is a dimension common to each part but not reducible to it, a centering identity of the whole configuration both belonging to each part but beyond each particular: A gestalt system is "a signification common to an ensemble of molecular facts, which is expressed by all the facts and which is not contained completely in any one of them." (Merleau-Ponty 1967, p.143). Merleau-Ponty makes internally centered structure irreducible. Gestalt is a founding configuration of experience.

Merleau-Ponty sees intersubjectivity as a simultaneous configuration of parts just as he does perception of objects. Sense always co-implies body, and subjectivity belongs to intersubjectivity. Being in the world for Merleau-Ponty is occupying a position within a shared gestalt (the same world for everyone). I am primordially situated in an intersubjective world. Merleau-Ponty's notion of intersubjectivity is driven by his founding of the temporal 'now' structure as an irreducible gestalt field. How does Kelly's approach differ from Merleau-Ponty's corporeal intersubjective model? To begin with, Kelly's model of psychological movement unravels the notion of a gestalt background field of meaning framing a foreground. The construct replaces figure and background field with a referential dimension whose two poles together comprise a single unitary sense of meaning. The idea I am advancing is of the irreducible 'now' of temporality as a differential SENSE rather than a composed field, body or pattern. In order to get a sense of the difference between Kelly's starting point in a bipolar referential differential and Merleau-Ponty's configurational grounding, we have to think of Merleau-Ponty's gestalt structure as over-stuffed. Merleau-Ponty means to make the configurational ensemble an absolute, irreducible beginning, but what he conceives as primordial may be seen from a wholly different vantage as a derived abstraction of a more intricate, insubstantial beginning.

In Merleau-Ponty's irreducible gestalt perceptual organization, the whole gives birth to each of the parts, but it does so, not as a history formed out of its elements over time, but simultaneously, equally to all. When I see this textured shape in front of me at this instant of time as a unity of mutually configured elements, each part is dependent on the SAME genesis, and because each part is at the same time different from each other, this comes down to saying that, in a single moment of perception, these senses are independent of each other even as they are united by the whole. In other words, Merleau-Ponty's dependent pieces of a whole function as a plurality of related independent parts. The thinking of plural structure as a simultaneous spatial unity implies a multiplicity of parts or senses (even if completely dependent on the

whole), captured in that present instant of the now that is sandwiched between retention and protention.

Whereas Merleau-Ponty finds it necessary to begin from configurational structure in order to assure that an element of meaning is carved out of otherness rather than solipsist positivity, the construct as an irreducible WAY of likeness and difference is a sense of meaning that is so minimal that it has no patterned or configured internality, no properties, or textures within itself. It has no essential internal valuative content beyond what is necessary to distinguish it from other meanings. Everything that we associate with affectively and cognitively relevant and significant meaning is dependent on process, on how intimately, multi-dimensionally and assimilatively we embrace new experience, and none of it on content. But would not the following comments from Kelly(1955) appear to contradict my assertion?

“Quite frequently the client’s difficulty arises out of the intrinsic meaning of his personal constructs rather than out of the general form [dilation, constriction, anxiety, preemption, impulsivity] which they have assumed. A person who believes that punishment expunges guilt is likely to punish himself. If he is hostile he will extort compliance with his construct from other persons too. If a middle-aged woman believes that she will not be loved by her husband after menopause, she will act as one faced with the loss of love. If a person is convinced that the flesh and the spirit are antithetical, he will make decisions on the basis of that dichotomy—and the decisions may cause trouble. The therapist should be concerned with what the client construes to be taking place as well as the form of his constructs.”

I suggest that Kelly’s examples of construct content in the above quote demonstrate that the way the intrinsic meaning of a construct causes difficulties for a person is a function of its permeability to new elements. This is itself a formal consideration, but it is necessary to attend to the intrinsic content of a construct in order to gauge to what extent it may be brittle, dogmatic, constellatory or otherwise limited in its ability to embrace new elements. It is true that a construct’s bipolar ‘way’ of sense acts as a unique node of relational possibilities and constraints, otherwise there would be no benefit to re-construing meanings. But it is the organizational integrity and coherence of the relations that constructs afford that give us our passions, our loves and hates and ambitions, not the valuative content of their intrinsic meaning. For instance, the construct freedom vs security demonstrates its usefulness, relevance and contribution to our happiness via its effectiveness at relating to and interpreting new experience replicatively, assimilatively, and not in any extent because of what it means ‘in itself’. The consequences of Merleau-Ponty’s derived starting point is that it masks a more fundamental, intricate and intimate notion of movement and relationality beneath a dynamic that is at the same time too fat with content, and too resistant to change, and on the other hand too polarizing in its transitions. The ‘overstuffed’ content inserted into the tripartite structure of temporality makes Merleau-Ponty’s gestalt model and related embodied approaches targets of Kelly’s critique of push and pull psychologies as being beholden to inner and outer demons.

“...to allow ourselves to become preoccupied with independent forces, socio-dynamics, psychodynamics, leprechaun theory, demonology, or stimulus-response mechanics, is to lose sight of the essential feature of the whole human enterprise.”(Kelly 1969e)”

Heidegger offers a particularly compelling complement to the approach I am imputing to Kelly. Heidegger preceded Kelly in doing away with categorical distinctions between affect, willing and cognition. Like Kelly, he begins not from bodily ensembles but a simple differential, what in *Being and Time* he calls variously and equi-primordially Temporality, the ontological difference and Care. What are traditionally divided up into sensation, perception, cognition, and affect and motivation are united for Heidegger as temporality. Understanding is the cognate aspect, and *Befindlichkeit*, which literally translates as 'self-findingness', but has frequently been defined as affective 'attunement, is the motivational-affective aspect of experiencing.

While Kelly emphasizes that we find ourselves always already in motion, already thrown into the midst of constantly changing contexts of experience, Heidegger makes clearer both the sense of active, willful decision and choice, and passivity indissociable in every moment, showing that in finding ourselves in action, we are 'thrown' into the world, we 'fall prey to' what we anticipatorily project ahead of ourselves as new experience. Choice, voluntary action and will are active in that we anticipate ahead, but are equally passive in that we fall prey to, are surprised by, thrown into, must adapt to the foreign aspect of what we anticipate ourselves into via *construing*. Kelly(1955) acknowledges this foreign aspect of all events when he points that, while a construct abstracts the aspect of likeness between a present event and a previous one, this also implies a way in which a new event differs from previous happenings.

"When we say that two things are 'alike' or 'identical', we obviously mean that they are alike in some particular way or ways, but, of course, never in every way... there has to be some distinguishing feature between them, else they would not be two separate events in the first place. ..likeness always implies a difference."

A paradoxical implication of a radical temporal grounding of experience is that it is at the same time more fully in motion and transition than embodied models, and maintains a more intimate and intricate thread of self-continuity and self-belonging. Heidegger understands that to be radically, irreducibly, primordially situated in a world is to be guaranteed, at every moment, a world that feelingly, creatively impinges on me anew as foreign in some aspect. And it is simultaneously, to feel a belonging familiarity) to what impinges on me in its foreignness due to the anticipative, projective futural aspect of temporality. Reminiscent of Kelly's replicative anticipatory process, Heidegger's being-in-the world is always characterized by a pragmatic self-belongingness that he articulates as a heedful circumspective relevance that events always have for *Dasein* in its world.

Heidegger(2010) writes:

"In its familiar being-in-relevance, understanding holds itself before that disclosure as that within which its reference moves. Understanding can itself be referred in and by these relations. We shall call the relational character of these referential relations signifying. In its familiarity with these relations, *Da-sein* "signifies" to itself. It primordially gives itself to understand its being and potentiality-of-being with regard to its being-in-the-world. The for-the-sake-of-which signifies an in-order-to, the in-order-to signifies a what-for, the what-for signifies a what-in of letting something be relevant, and the latter a what-with of relevance. These relations are interlocked among

themselves as a primordial totality. They are what they are as this signifying in which Da-sein gives itself to understand its being-in-the-world beforehand. We shall call this relational totality of signification significance. It is what constitutes the structure of the world, of that in which Da-sein as such always already is.”

Note: Although his work is beyond the scope of this paper, Derrida’s differance is allied with the referential-differential structure of Heidegger’s Dasein.

“...there is no experience consisting of pure presence but only of chains of differential marks.”
“The iterability of an element divides its own identity a priori, even without taking into account that this identity can only determine or delimit itself through differential relations to other elements and hence that it bears the mark of this difference. It is because this iterability is differential, within each individual "element" as well as between "elements", because it splits each element while constituting it, because it marks it with an articulatory break, that the remainder, although indispensable, is never that of a full or fulfilling presence; it is a differential structure escaping the logic of presence..(Derrida 198, p.53)”

Kelly on Role, the Social and Validation

An important implication of the difference between grounding experience in a gestalt field and situating it as a bipolar referential differential can be demonstrated by comparing Kelly’s idea of the social with Merleau-Ponty’s. I mentioned that for Merleau-Ponty, the person cannot be extracted from a social ensemble any more than the figure of a perceptual object can be understood apart from its ground. For Merleau-Ponty, when a gestalt configuration changes, even though it is true that all the elements comprising that configuration are altered, there is really only one change, that of the field as an irreducible totality. If the elements of that field are persons, then in intersubjective communication each participant’s alteration is an aspect of the total change in the social configuration. There is one change, that of the totality, and each person is only an element of that change. As Merleau-Ponty(1962) says:”as the parts of my body together comprise a system, so my body and the other’s are one whole, two sides of one and the same phenomenon, and the anonymous existence of which my body is the ever-renewed trace henceforth inhabits both bodies simultaneously.”(p.412)

Merleau-Ponty writes:

” My friend Paul and I point out to each other certain details of the landscape; and Paul’s finger, which is pointing out the church tower, is not a finger-for-me that I think of as orientated towards a church-tower-for-me, it is Paul’s finger which itself shows me the tower that Paul sees, just as, conversely, when I make a movement towards some point in the landscape that I can see, I do not imagine that I am producing in Paul, in virtue of some pre-established harmony, inner visions merely analogous to mine: I believe, on the contrary, that my gestures invade Paul’s world and guide his gaze. When I think of Paul, I do not think of a flow of private sensations indirectly related to mine through the medium of interposed signs, but of someone who has a living experience of the same world as mine, as well as the same history, and with whom I am in communication through that world and that history.”(Phenomenology of Perception, p.471)

“ In the experience of dialogue, there is constituted between the other person and myself a common ground; my thought and his are inter-woven into a single fabric, my words and those of my interlocutor are called forth by the state of the discussion, and they are inserted into a shared operation of which neither of us is the creator. We have here a dual being, where the other is for me no longer a mere bit of behavior in my transcendental field, nor I in his; we are collaborators for each other in consummate reciprocity. Our perspectives merge into each other, and we co-exist through a common world. In the present dialogue, I am freed from myself, for the other person’s thoughts are certainly his; they are not of my making, though I do grasp them the moment they come into being, or even anticipate them. And indeed, the objection which my interlocutor raises to what I say draws from me thoughts which I had no idea I possessed, so that at the same time that I lend him thoughts, he reciprocates by making me think too. It is only retrospectively, when I have withdrawn from the dialogue and am recalling it that I am able to reintegrate it into my life and make of it an episode in my private history”. (Phenomenology of Perception, p.413))

Butt (1998a) concurs with Merleau-Ponty that "sociality can be seen as more primitive for humankind than individuality, when our status as body-subjects is appreciated and dualist ideas are abandoned.”

By sociality, Butt means joint ownership of meaning, which he opposes to the cognitivist presumption of a computer-like subject controlling their own thoughts.

Chiari(2015) adds: “In other words, it is possible to conceive the relationship between two or more persons not in terms of "interacting" individuals, but of elements of an inseparable system in which the relationship precedes the individual psychologies.”

Along similar lines, but from a realist rather than postmodern perspective, Harry Procter has proposed the heuristic of a ‘family construct system’, wherein relationship dynamics among the individual members of a family function comparably to the elements of an individual’s personal construct system.

Shaun Gallagher(2017), a writer embracing hermeneutic as well as Merleau-Ponty themes, offers a co-conditioning model of sociality that accords with Butt’s depiction of construing as intersubjective:

On ‘socially distributed cognition’, he writes:

“To the extent that the instituted narrative, even if formed over time by many individuals, transcends those individuals and may persist beyond them, it may loop around to constrain or dominate the group members or the group as a whole.”

“Collective (institutional, corporate) narratives often take on a life (an autonomy) of their own and may come to oppose or undermine the intentions of the individual members. Narrative practices in both extended institutional and collective structures and practices can be positive in allowing us to see certain possibilities, but at the same time, they can carry our cognitive processes and social interactions in specific directions and blind us to other possibilities.”

The above treatments of the social space as centered configuration makes individual behavior in

social situations the product of narrative norms, reciprocities, shared practices and social constraints. The presupposition here is the belief that essentially the same social signs are available to all who interrelate within a particular community, that there are such things as non-person-specific meanings, originating in an impersonal expressive agency. I'm not suggesting that joint activity implies a complete fusion of horizons amenable to a third-person perspective, except perhaps in the case of Procter's group construct system. Rather, the first-personal stance becomes subordinated to a second-personal 'we', as "an inseparable system in which the relationship precedes the individual psychologies."

This is not to say that these accounts deny any role to individual psychological history in the reception of social signs, only that intersubjectivity is characterized by a reciprocal cobbling and co-ordination between personal history and cultural signs in which the 'joints' of such interactive bodily-mental and social practices are simultaneously within my own subjectivity and common to other participants in my community.

Merleau-Ponty(1962) writes "Although [the other's] consciousness and mine, working through our respective situations, may contrive to produce a common situation in which they can communicate, it is nevertheless from the subjectivity of each of us that each one projects this 'one and only' world."

Chiari (2015) believes that Kelly, too, understood intersubjectivity as an inseparable second-person system.

"If in Kelly an explicit consideration of role relationships from an intersubjective viewpoint is missing, the importance he attaches to intersubjectivity and inter-corporeality can be easily inferred from the value he gives to certain psychotherapeutic techniques having the structure of role playing – in particular, fixed-role therapy and enactment. The assumption for their utilization in psychotherapy beside the therapeutic conversation rests on the above consideration of the construction process as a social process, rather than as a mere individual and intellectual operation."

The following comment by Kelly would seem to provide evidence in favor of Chiari's interpretation of personal construct theory as a psychology of irreducible intersubjectivity.

"To suggest that each man contrives his own system and plots events within it is not to say that each of us is bottled up forever in his own private world. Different men can construe the same events, though each starts out by doing it in his own way. Two people, say a mother and a newborn child, may not have a full intellectual meeting of minds the first time they try to enter into a discourse with each other in the maternity ward. But by sharing their encounter with events-including the events produced by their own behavior-some mothers and daughters do develop a fair understanding, each of what the other is talking about. Each may rely upon her own system, but the constructs of one system can be devised to plot the approximate positions of those of the other. Children and men, therefore, cease to be altogether alone when they try to see events through the spectacles others use, even while reserving the privilege of using their own. "
(Kelly 1969c)

But I think Kelly's perspective on sociality departs in significant ways from Chiari's reading of it. The 'meeting of minds' Kelly is describing above, it seems to me, is of the order of a

superficial or incidental construing, similar to Kelly's depiction of drivers attempting to anticipate the behavior of fellow drivers in traffic. For Kelly, the extent to which meaning appears to be reciprocally shaped is in inverse proportion to the superordinacy of the kind of social meaning involved. In other words, the sorts of situations where persons seem to succeed at negotiating a shared basis of understanding are likely to involve superficial matters, such as traffic navigation, where only a superficial understanding of others' behavior is required. Such phenomena as joint attention, distributed cognition and collective intention only appear to involve shared meanings and feelings when we view them from the most general, abstractive perspective. That way, the appearance of a shared experience masks the interpersonal differences in interpretive meaning of the event.

“There are different levels at which we can construe what other people are thinking. In driving down the highway, for example, we stake our lives hundreds of times a day on our accuracy in predicting what the drivers of the oncoming cars will do. The orderly, extremely complex, and precise weaving of traffic is really an amazing example of people predicting each other's behavior through subsuming each other's perception of a situation. Yet actually each of us knows very little about the higher motives and the complex aspirations of the oncoming drivers, upon whose behavior our own lives depend. It is enough, for the purpose of avoiding collisions, that we understand or subsume only certain specific aspects of their construction systems.

If we are to understand them at higher levels, we must stop traffic and get out to talk with them. If we can predict accurately what others will do, we can adjust ourselves to their behavior. If others know how to tell what we will do, they can adjust themselves to our behavior and may give us the right of way. This mutual adjustment to each other's viewpoint takes place, in the terms of the theory of personal constructs, because, to some extent, our construction system subsumes the construction systems of others and theirs, in part, subsume ours. Understanding does not have to be a one-way proposition; it can be mutual. For the touch and go of traffic it is not necessary for the motorists to have an extensive mutual understanding of each other's ways of seeing things but, within a restricted range and at the concrete level of specific acts represented by traffic, the mutual understandings must be precise.

For the more complicated interplay of roles—for example, for the husband-and-wife interplay—the understanding must cover the range of domestic activities at least, and must reach at least a level of generality which will enable the participants to predict each other's behavior in situations not covered by mere household traffic rules.”

A key to explaining the resistance of a person's system to fusion within a social ensemble is understanding the role of validation in reacting to the behavior of others, Kelly says that in forming my social role, I use others' behavior as a source of validation evidence. I think this points to quite different implications than what is implied by being co-conditioned by one's interaction with others' behavior in Merleau-Ponty's sense.

Kelly(1961) writes:

“In some respects validation in personal construct theory takes the place of reinforcement, although it is a construct of quite a different order, Validation is the relationship one senses between anticipation and realization, whereas in conventional theory reinforcement is a value property attributed to an event.”

The relevance here for embodied intersubjective approaches following Merleau-Ponty is that, while these approaches reject stimulus-response reinforcement models, their construal of social relations in terms of semi-arbitrary reciprocal shapings requires that the value properties of mutually negotiated social events play as much of a role in affecting individuals as does the integrity of the relation (anticipatory dynamics) between that event and the subject. In order to understand the crucial distinction between using the social sphere as validation evidence and having one's behavior normatively shaped in joint action, we have to keep in mind that the meaning of validation is closely tied to the replicative anticipatory aim of the construct system. However directly I attempt to connect with a world of fellow persons, each with their own subjective systems, all I can ever experience of that otherness is what I anticipatively, replicatively construe as consonant with my own system. As participant in an intersubjective community my construals frame and orient my reciprocal interactions with others in such a way that my own subjective thread of continuity runs through and organizes it. That is to say, hidden within the naive exteriority of my social encounters is a peculiar sort of coherence or implicate self-consistency.

In Kelly's approach, even when someone lives in a culture which is tightly conformist, one neither passively absorbs, nor jointly negotiates the normative practices of that culture, but validates one's own construction of the world using the resources of that culture.

“Perhaps we can see that it is not so much that the culture has forced conformity upon him as it is that his validation material is cast in terms of the similarities and contrasts offered within and between segments of his culture. “ (Kelly 1955, p. 93).

“It may be difficult to follow this notion of culture as a validation system of events. And it may be even more difficult to reconcile with the idea of cultural control what we have said about man not being the victim of his biography. The cultural control we see is one which is within the client's own construct system and it is imposed upon him only in the sense that it limits the kinds of evidence at his disposal. How he handles this evidence is his own affair, and clients manage it in a tremendous variety of ways.”

One can see how the ‘tremendous variety of ways’ that participants are capable of interpreting the ‘same’ cultural milieu makes any attempt to apply a group-centered account of social understanding pointless.

Kelly(1955) says:

“You can say [a person] is what he is because of his cultural context. This is to say that the environment assigns him his role, makes him good or bad by contrast, appropriates him to itself, and, indeed, his whole existence makes sense only in terms of his relationship to the times and the culture. This is not personal construct theory...”

Kelly (1955) opposes personal construct theory to perspectives which see a person “helplessly suspended in his culture, and is swept along with the tides of social change”.

“...no psychologist, I think, is all that he might be until he has undertaken to join the child's most audacious venture beyond the frontiers of social conventions and to share its most unexpected outcomes.”

Kelly's Sociality Corollary (“to the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another, he may play a role in a social process involving the other person”) spells out the organizational implications of a being-with-others defined and validated by the intimate assimilative processes of replicative anticipation.

To construe another's construction processes is to subsume them as variants of one's own system. To the extent that one is successful, one will have embedded one functionally integral theme(the other person's outlook) within another(one's superordinate system.). If both parties are successful, is there then an overlap of horizons, as Barison (1990) writes?

“ In hermeneutic dialogue there are not a subject and an object, but there is the encounter of two horizons, which combine with each other in a new horizon, formed by a change of both of them in the moment of interpretation.” (Barison, F. (1990). *La psichiatria tra ermeneutica ed epistemologia* [Psychiatry between hermeneutics and epistemology]. *Comprendre*, 5, 27-33)

This meeting of minds is not a fusion or even overlapping of themes, the other's and my own. Rather, the two persons remain distinct but related worlds of thinking. Since there is no actual point of contact between construction systems, only each person's version of the other's world, there would be no overarching vantage point from which to glimpse anything like a unified group dynamic or Merleau-Ponty's 'same world'. My ability to enter into second person 'I-Thou' relations with another presupposes and is a derivative of my first personal stance. The relationship is not a single entity preceding my individual psychology, it is my version of the relationship alongside the other's version of the 'same' relationship, and this must be multiplied by the number of participants in a community.

It is true that each party's participation in interaction changes the other's way of being, but the question is whether there is not an underlying thematic consistency that is maintained in each person throughout all their interactions, a self-consistency that resists being usurped by a larger self-other 'system'. For Kelly a mutuality, fusion, jointness cannot be assumed simply because each party is in responsive communication with the other. One party can be affected by the interaction by succeeding in subsuming the other's perspective and as a result feeling an intimate and empathetic bond with the other. At the same time, in the same 'joint' encounter, the other party may become more and more alienated from the first, having failed to subsume the first party's system and finding the first party to be angering, upsetting and threatening.

In both situations of superficial mutual understanding and those where core role meanings are involved, those that pertain to issues deeply important to a person, a 'meeting of minds' is not a matter of shared understanding in the sense of a same or similar meaning becoming disseminated among the members of the group. Instead, effective social understanding requires the successful subsuming of each other's construct systems by each participant in the group. When I subsume another's outlook within my system, for instance as a therapist understanding a client, or a parent dealing with a young child, I am not converging on the same or similar way of

looking at the world as the other. My system may remain very different from theirs as I understand them from within my own vantage point.

“One person may understand another better than he is understood. He may understand more of the other’s ways of looking at things. A therapist-client relationship is one which exemplifies greater understanding on the part of one member than on the part of the other.” (Kelly 1955)

Kelly says:

“...for people to be able to understand each other it takes more than a similarity or commonality in their thinking. In order for people to get along harmoniously with each other, each must have some understanding of the other. This is different from saying that each must understand things in the same way as the other.”

“In order to play a constructive role in relation to another person one must not only, in some measure, see eye to eye with him but must, in some measure, have an acceptance of him and of his way of seeing things. We say it in another way: the person who is to play a constructive role in a social process with another person need not so much construe things as the other person does as he must effectively construe the other person’s outlook...social psychology must be a psychology of interpersonal understandings, not merely a psychology of common understandings.”

Acceptance for Kelly does not simply mean being genuinely open and receptive to engaging with another person. Openness does not by itself produce an intimate connection with them; to achieve this one must be able to follow their way of thinking, from their vantage, but interpreted via one’s own outlook. Gabriele Chiari describes Kellyian social interaction as “joint action” but this is misleading. The first party can construe the second party more effectively than the other way around, by more effectively subsuming the second party’s construction system. This asymmetry is revealed when one allows the social to begin from within each person’s system rather than BETWEEN them. Heidegger’s Being-with-others, like Kelly’s notion of sociality, when understood via the mode of authentic thinking, deconstructs Merleau-Ponty’s primary intersubjectivity. Gallagher(2010) acknowledges Heidegger’s departure from Merleau-Ponty’s account, without seeming to grasp how the inherent sociality of Dasein exposes Gallagher’s concept of primary intersubjectivity as a derived abstraction. “In Heidegger, and in thinkers who follow his line of thought, we find the idea that a relatively complete account of our embodied, expert, enactive, pragmatic engagements with the world can be given prior to or without reference to intersubjectivity.” Dasein’s ownmost possibilities of being would be leveled down and obscured if the relation to others were forced into the mode of thinking of joint action.

But let’s not misunderstand what I mean by making this distinction between a WITHIN-person and a BETWEEN-person dynamic. The within-person dynamic is already a between in that it is a thoroughgoing exposure to, and continuous self-transformation via an outside, an alterity, an otherness. For Kelly and Heidegger, the radically inseparable interaffecting between my history and new experience exposes me to the world, and modifies who I am, in an immediate, constant and thoroughgoing manner. I am not arguing that the meaning of social cues is simply person-specific rather than located intersubjectively as an impersonal expressive agency. Before there is a pre-reflective personal ‘I’ or interpersonal ‘we’, there is already within what would be

considered THE person a fully social site of simultaneously subjective and objective process overtaking attempts to understand human action based on either within-person constancies or between-person conditionings.

“... each of us represents a rather large chunk of his own environment”(Kelly 1969h).

So, rather than a retreat from a thoroughgoing notion of sociality, Personal construct theory would be a re-situating of the site of the social as a more originary and primordial grounding than that of the over-determined abstractions represented by discursive intersubjectivities. Those larger patterns of human belonging abstracted from local joint activity, which Merleau-Ponty's intercorporeal approach discerns in terms of cultural language practices, hide within themselves a more primary patterning. While our experience as individuals is characterized by stable relations of relative belonging or alienation with respect to other individuals and groups, the site of this interactivity, whether we find ourselves in greater or lesser agreement with a world within which we are enmeshed, has a character of peculiar within-person continuity. It also has a character of relentless creative activity that undermines and overflows attempts to understand human action based on between-person configurations or fields. We may identify to a greater or lesser extent with various larger paradigmatic communities, delicately united by intertwining values. But the contribution of each member of a community to the whole would not originate at the level of spoken or bodily language interchange among voices; such constructs repress as much as they reveal. Even in a community of five individuals in a room, I, as participant, can perceive a locus of integrity undergirding the participation of each of the others to the responsive conversation. To find common ground in a polarized political environment is not to find an intersect among combatants, a centrifugal ground of commonality, but to find as many intersects as there are participants. Each person perceives the basis of the commonality in the terms of their own construct system.

In my dealings with other persons, I would be able to discern a thread of continuity organizing their participation in dialogue with me, dictating the manner and extent to which I can be said to influence their thinking and they mine. My thinking can not properly be seen as 'determined' by his response, and his ideas are not simply 'shaped' by my contribution to our correspondence. The extent to which I could be said to be embedded within a particular set of cultural practices would be a function of how closely other persons I encounter resonate with my own ongoing experiential process. I can only shape my action to fit socially legitimate goals or permitted institutionalized forms to the extent that those goals or forms are already implicated in my ongoing experiential movement. Even then, what is implicated for me is not 'the' social forms, but aspects hidden within these so-called forms which are unique to the organizational structure of my construct system; what I perceive as socially 'permitted' rhetorical argumentation is already stylistically distinctive in relation to what other participants perceive as permitted. Each individual who feels belonging to an extent in a larger ethico-political collectivity perceives that collectivity's functions in a unique, but peculiarly coherent way relative to their own history, even when they believe that in moving forward in life their behavior is guided by the constraints imposed by essentially the 'same' discursive conventions as the others in their community.

Autopoietic Systems: Temporality as Reciprocal Causality

In order to give a better sense of the important differences that separate the radically temporal perspectives of Kelly and Heidegger from Merleau-Ponty's brand of intersubjectivity, I want to turn my attention to writers who have adapted his ideas in a naturalistic direction. This group includes Radcliffe, Gallagher, Maturana and Varela. Chiari offers what he calls a hermeneutic constructivist narrative interpretation of Kelly, which he believes "shows striking similarities" with Maturana and Varela's autopoietic approach and with Heidegger. Their "ontology of the observer is in line with a constructivism of hermeneutic type, and which shows aspects of similarity with Heidegger's hermeneutics (Winograd & Flores, 1986). Recently, I tried to show the many aspects of similarity between the theory of autopoiesis and the very PCT" (Chiari, 2016).

I believe that, while autopoietic self-organizing systems approaches share with personal construct theory the conviction that meanings are the product of construction rather than objective representation (Chiari (2015) gives a helpful summary of their commonalities), they fall significantly short of it with regard to their understanding of the relation between affect and intention, and the structure of sociality. Specifically, I argue that they allow internal affective and external social influences to shape the person in polarizing ways that violate the intimate sense of Kelly's replicative construing. As was the case with Merleau-Ponty, the issue comes down to the internal structuration of temporality. Is the basis of change within a bodily organization, interpersonal interaction, and even the phenomenal experience of time itself, the function of a collision between a separately constituted subjective context and present objects, or is it instead an interweaving of a subject and object already changed by each other, radically interbled or interaffected, as referential differential? I contend that for Varela and Thompson it is the former, that they conceive the 'both-together' of the pairing of subject and object as a conjunction of separate, adjacent moments. I am not suggesting that these phases are considered as unrelated, only that they each are presumed to carve out their own temporary identities.

This thematic appears within Varela and Thompson's psychological approach as a linkage of self-affectation to an embodied neural organization of reciprocally causal relations among non-decoupleable parts or sub-processes. Varela's autopoietic system is a reciprocal system of contextually changing states distributed ecologically as psychologically embodied and socially embedded, in continuous inter-relational motion. It is founded on interactions among innumerable, dumb bits which may only exist for an instant of time. But this seemingly insignificant property of stasis built into these dumb bits of a dynamical, embodied and embedded ecological system expresses itself at a macro level as homunculi-like schemes, assemblies and narratives (sensory-motor, emotive, perceptual, conceptual and interpersonal) whose creative interplay and thematic consistency may be restricted by the presumption of a distinction between their existence and interaction. I contend that the temporality underlying Varela's naturalized inter-subjectivity conceives the 'both-together' of the pairing of past and present as a conjunction of separate, adjacent phases or aspects: the past which conditions the present entity or event, and the present object which supplements that past. I am not suggesting that these phases are considered as unrelated, only that they each are presumed to carve out their

own temporary identities.

While these components interact constantly (Varela(1999b) says “.in brain and behavior there is never a stopping or dwelling cognitive state, but only permanent change punctuated by transient [stabilities] underlying a momentary act”(p.291) , it doesn't seem as if one could go so far as to claim that the very SENSE of each participant in a neural organization is intrinsically and immediately dependent on the meanings of the others. I suggest it would be more accurate to claim that each affects and is affected by the others as a collision of temporary bodies.

Varela(1999a) offers "lots of simple agents having simple properties may be brought together, even in a haphazard way, to give rise to what appears to an observer as a purposeful and integrated whole"(p.52). The bare existence of each of these agents may be said to PRECEDE its interaction with other agents, in that each agent occupies and inheres in its own state, presenting its own instantaneous properties for a moment, apart from, even as it is considered conjoined to, the context which conditions it and the future which is conditioned by it.

Perhaps I am misreading Varela and other enactivist proponents . Am I saying that these contemporary accounts necessarily disagree with Merleau-Ponty's(1968) critique of the idea of the object-in-itself?

...the identity of the thing with itself, that sort of established position of its own, of rest in itself, that plenitude and that positivity that we have recognized in it already exceed the experience, are already a second interpretation of the experience...we arrive at the thing-object, at the In Itself, at the thing identical with itself, only by imposing upon experience an abstract dilemma which experience ignores(p.162).

On the contrary, as different as Merleau-Ponty's and various enactivist accounts may be in other respects, it seems me that they share a rejection of the idea of a constituted subjectivity encountering and representing an independent in-itself. In fact, the suggestion of such an orientation is precisely what concerns them about Kelly's terminology. In a very general sense, what is articulated by Varela, Gallagher and others as the reciprocal, non-decoupleable interconnections within a dynamical ecological system functions for Merleau-Ponty as the 'flesh' of the world; the site of reciprocal intertwining between an In Itself and a For Itself, subject and object, consciousness and the pre-noetic, activity and passivity, the sensible and the sentient, the touching and the touched. My point is that current accounts may also have in common with Merleau-Ponty the belief that subjective context and objective sense reciprocally determine each other as an oppositional relation or communication (Merleau-Ponty calls it an abyss, thickness or chiasm) between discrete, temporary and contingent contents. "...that difference without contradiction, that divergence between the within and without ... is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication (Merleau-Ponty 1968 ,p.135)."

By contrast, I am arguing that for Kelly the 'now' structure of a construed event is not an intertwining relation between contingent, non-decoupleable identities, states, phases, ensembles, but a radical differential intersecting implicating a different understanding of psychological movement; intentional object and background context are not adjacent regions(a within and a without) in space or time; they have already been contaminated by each other such that they are inseparably co-implicated as a single edge (Try to imagine separating the 'parts' of an edge.

Attempting to do so only conjures a new edge). The current context of an event is not a system of relations between entities, states, patterns, but a nearly content-free indivisible gesture of passage, what Kelly describes as a referential axis, or construct.

Affect and Intention in PCP and Embodied Constructivism

We may gain a better understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of the split between state and function, content and change instantiated in enactive accounts by investigating their treatment of the relation between affectivity and intention. One of the most striking features of Kelly's theory is his declaration that "the classical threefold division of psychology into cognition, affection, and conation has been completely abandoned in the psychology of personal constructs. "(Kelly 1955). It is not that affect, emotion , cognition and will vanish from personal construct theory , but rather that Kelly finds a way to integrate the aspects of behavior these terms point to within the structure of the unitary act of construing. Understanding how Kelly accomplishes this is essential for grasping the basis of the personal construct, and for recognizing how embodied approaches fall short in this regard. It is not as if embodied accounts follow first generation cognitivism in repeating 'Descartes' error' , to borrow Damasio's phrase, by considering thought and feeling to be functionally independent. On the contrary, enactivist writers take pains to present emotion and thought as an indissociable interaction. They have taken to heart Heidegger's(1995) encapsulation of the long-standing Western attitude toward affect.

"Psychology, after all, has always distinguished between thinking, willing, and feeling. It is not by chance that it will always name feeling in the third, subordinate position. Feelings are the third class of lived experience. For naturally man is in the first place the rational living being."

In opposition to this view, enactivists insist that cognitive and affective processes are closely interdependent, with affect, emotion and sensation functioning in multiple ways and at multiple levels to situate or attune the context of our conceptual dealings with the world , and that affective tonality is never absent from cognition. As Ratcliffe(2002) puts it, "moods are no longer a subjective window-dressing on privileged theoretical perspectives but a background that constitutes the sense of all intentionalities, whether theoretical or practical"(p.290).

Absorbing the pioneering work of constructivists like Piaget , Von Glasersfeld and Maturana, Varela, Ratcliffe and other embodied theorists reverse the traditional scheme of prioritization of thought over feelings, by making affective inputs the condition of possibility of relevance and meaning in thought. While this move restores affective phenomena 's importance to cognition, something denied it by centuries of Western thinking, they retain a partial split between affect and cognition. A comparison with Kelly's approach to subjectivity reveals that, unlike Kelly , their work can hardly be said to have dispensed with the divide between thought and feeling. In the embodied models of Varela and Ratcliffe, the general understanding of the relation between affective movement and the thinking which it affects seems to depend on the idea of emotion as provider of relevance and motivational direction.

The role of affective attunement is to produce "changes in the types of significant possibility to which one is receptive'. (Ratcliffe 2016) "...Emotions "tune us to the world, making it relevant to us

by opening up certain possibilities for explicit deliberation and closing off others. "(Ratcliffe 2002)

For instance, emotion can catalyze the change of a temporarily persisting stance (scheme, state, dispositional attitude). Conceptual narratives are assumed to have a self-perpetuating schematic tendency about them, requiring outside intervention from time to time to produce qualitative change. Varela(1999b) suggests that affective dynamics initiate gestalt shifts in thought and action. Unlike older views, for Varela intentionality is not assumed to rely on an outside mechanism in order to stir itself into motion. Like in Kelly's system, no special motivational mechanism is needed in order to explain how we are stirred to act. Varela(1996b) says "...in brain and behavior there is never a stopping or dwelling cognitive state, but only permanent change punctuated by transient [stabilities] underlying a momentary act"(p.291))

Nevertheless, cognition still relies on such intervention in order to significantly change its direction of movement. For Kelly, the direction of construct movement is always based on the elaborative choice, that is, on whatever stance enhances our anticipatory reach. In embodied accounts, by contrast, a person's psychological processes cannot be counted on to be intrinsically self-motivated in the way that Kelly's Choice corollary dictates, but must be channelized into changes in direction of action and conceptualization by extrinsic motivating sources.

Complementing Varela's model, Ratcliffe's notion of existential feeling founds affect and intention as distinguishable structural aspects of a reciprocally causal model . Ratcliffe says emotion and embodiment are "'incorporated as essential components in cognition", but emotion and cognition are clearly not identical; "...emotions and moods are not explicitly cognitive but neither are they independent of cognition"(Ratcliffe 2002, p.299). They originate as bodily sensations structuring cognition from outside of it. Emotion and cognition can 'conflict' and emotion can "override cognitive judgement"(p.299). Ratcliffe cites Ramachandran's clinical observations of individuals with anosognosia, who apparently distort environmental information which contradicts an internally generated narrative. Ramachandran and Ratcliffe attribute this behavior to damage to connections between emotion and cognitive centers. Ratcliffe concludes from this that, in typically functioning persons, emotion signals from the body are presumed to pack a contentful punch large enough to break through a psychological narrative's resistances where weaker percepts from the environment cannot.

It seems, then, that for Ratcliffe and Varela , intention is a capacity for manipulating objects of thought, but emotion, as conditioning evaluative valence, provides the criteria for such processing. They are apparently not able to find the resources strictly within what they think of as intentional thought to de-center thinking processes, because they treat cognition as tending to form temporarily self-perpetuating narratives which can distort or keep out contradictory input from the world. So they rely on the body, in the form of emotion cues, to come to the rescue and bring the stalled cognitive apparatus back in touch with a dynamically changing world. The mechanism of emotion is assumed to intervene in order to infuse a stagnant narrative with a new direction and meaning. The distinction between somatic feeling and cognition common to embodied constructivist positions harks back to a long-standing Western tradition connecting affect, feeling and emotion with movement , action, dynamism, motivation and change. Affect is supposedly instantaneous, non-mediated experience. It has been said that 'raw' or primitive feeling is

bodily-physiological, pre-reflective and non-conceptual, contentless hedonic valuation, innate, qualitative, passive, a surge, glow, twinge, energy, spark, something we are overcome by. Opposed to such 'bodily', dynamical events are seemingly flat, static entities referred to by such terms as mentation, rationality, theorization, propositionality, objectivity, calculation, cognition, conceptualization and perception.

Affective attunement for embodied theorists is the contingent product of a complex configuration of bodily felt, perceptual and social elements, the achievement of a concatenating process. When we delve beneath such global schemes to locate the invariant and essential condition of possibility of these feeling-perceptual-social concatenations, we arrive at a reciprocally causal model of co-determinative interactive bits. But having arrived at this 'apriori', we are not yet in the vicinity of Kelly's notion of affectivity, which is not the product of an orienting device, adaptation or conditioning scheme, and not the ground of any reciprocally causal schematic structure, except as that structure be understood as a derived abstraction concealing its own basis in temporality. Kelly offers a model of recursivity uniting self-referential continuity and absolute alterity, the subjective and the objective, the affective and the intentional, in the same moment and same act. For Kelly, conceptual and bodily-affective phenomena do not belong to interacting states of being, even if deemed inseparable; they are instead the features of a unitary differential structure of transition. In the place of a three-part structure of subjective feeling, relational bond and intentional object, Kelly proposes a two-part structure manifested by the bi-polar construct.

In Kelly's model, every experienced event of any kind (bodily-sensory, perceptual, conceptual, practical-valuative) is affectively relevant. Cognition and perception are affective not simply in the sense that a background affective tonality, mood or attunement frames the activity as a whole, as "a kind of cradle within which cognition rests", but rather cognition defines its meaning as its affective relevance, the anticipatory efficacy of its effort to construe an event via dimensions of similarity and difference. Embodied models are incapable of manifesting relevance and salience in Kelly's radical sense. Not only is relevance not a given, but when it is achieved, it amounts to an externally imposed association between elements of bodily feeling and thought. "The extent to which a possibility is enticing is a matter of bodily feeling; it is through the feeling body that things show up as salient... (Ratcliffe 2008)... an alteration in how the body feels is at the same time a shift in how the world appears and in how one relates to it. "(Ratcliffe 2016)"

Enactivist theorists insist that affectivity and intentionality are inseparable, and yet, it is significant that writers like Ratcliffe and Slaby still find it coherent to imagine what a situation might be like in which affect was absent from our experience of the world.

"...affect binds us to things, making them relevant and 'lighting up' aspects of the world in such a way as to call forth actions and thoughts. Without the world-structuring orientation that they provide, we are disoriented, cut off from the world, which no longer solicits thoughts and actions and is consequently devoid of value. In effect, [William] James is saying that our very sense of reality is constituted by world-orienting feelings that bind us to things...The absence of emotion comprises a state of cognitive and behavioural paralysis rather than fully functional cognition, stripped of 'mere' affect. A phenomenology without affect is a phenomenology that guts the world of all its significance." (Ratcliffe 2005)

Slaby(2008) concurs:

“Nothing but “neutral states of intellectual perception” would remain, as William James famously put it, when we “try to abstract from consciousness [of an emotion] all the feelings of its characteristic bodily symptoms” (James 1884, 193).”

From this perspective, the experienced world without affect is an ‘extreme privation’, a world of paralysis, meaninglessness, disorientation. Even if Ratcliffe conjures the idea of affectless cognition only as a purely hypothetical thought experiment or limit case, the fact that he can associate any qualities at all with such a world indicates that he is operating from a concept of affect that does not treat it as a philosophical *a priori*. Imagine that instead of hypothesizing awareness without affect, we were to place time out of bounds. It is immediately clear that any attempt to describe the qualitative features of one’s experience of such a world (meaningless, paralyzed, disoriented, etc) would be pointless, since without time there could be no awareness and no world. Kelly asks us to re-construe affect in such a way that it becomes as irreducible to experience as time, since it is in its essence the experience of temporal movement by way of construing. Experienced time is relevance itself. In Kelly’s work, it is not the intertwining of bodily reinforcements with perceptual and intentional states that determine what I care about and how I care about it, how salient, enticing or relevant my social world appears to me. The senses of meaning that emerge from my interpersonal engagements do not pass through an intermediary mesh of bodily potentiators and constraints; Kelly replaces such reciprocally causal conditioning structures with a hierarchically organized, functionally unified construct system that manifests itself as my immediate way of being in the world with others as construing agent.

Since relevance is already presupposed by the referential-differential structure of the construct, Kelly does not need to draw upon affect as a motivational conditioning agent supplying events with, or depriving them of, salience, enticement and allure. “Within the realm of relevance his personal construct system defines for him, each man initiates what he says and does.”(Kelly 1969c). From Kelly’s perspective construing bodily feeling as an external organizer of cognition amounts to positing it as a motivational drive or reinforcer. Because emotions, moods and feelings are not causal entities, they can be neither adaptive nor maladaptive, neither facilitate salience nor degrade it. Affect doesn’t cause, it temporalizes. I feel my world directly. Feeling simply IS relevant intentional sense. Feeling, mood and emotion express the relative anticipatory integrity of my experiencing, how I construe fresh interpersonal situations along dimensions of difference and similarity, concordance and incompatibility with respect to past situations.

In sum, affective and intentional situatedness, understood by Ratcliffe and Varela as globally patterned inter-causal states, functions as a structure of entrenchment and self-conservation, inhering in itself and resisting its own transformation. A global change in bodily feeling is thus required to infuse supposedly stagnant affective-intentional narratives with a new direction and meaning, disrupt entrenched patterns, dissolve the conditioning glue holding them together, reveal their contingency and open up new possibilities. Interaffecting causation, the glue that holds together Ratcliffe and Varela’s accounts of psychological experience, is a secondary concept of organization, an abstraction derived from, but concealing the primary temporal structuration of construing. The lesson that a comparison of Kelly and embodied constructivist models teaches is

that when dispositions to act and acts themselves, being and becoming, feeling and intention, state and function, body and mind are treated as separately inhering states, then their relations are rendered secondary and arbitrary, requiring extrinsic causations to piece them together. What DeJaegher, critiquing Gallagher's primary intersubjectivity account, writes in that narrower context, could apply more generally to mautopoietic and enactivist positions: "first we carve nature up at artificial joints – we split mind and body apart – and then we need to fasten the two together again, a task for which the notion of embodiment is, according to Sheets-Johnstone's assessment, used as a kind of glue . But glueing the two back together does not bring back the original "integrity and nature of the whole"" (De Jaegher 2009, Sheets-Johnstone,in press).

Personal construct writers more sympathetic to discursive intersubjective than embodied constructivist perspectives might be inclined to believe that reconceiving affectivity as the continually changing product of joint processes of linguistic interaction, as social constructionists and poststructuralists like Ken Gergen and Michel Foucault do, avoids splitting apart affect and cognition. But even if discursive intersubjective approaches dissolve embodied constructivist distinctions between affective and cognitive aspects of experiencing, I suspect that Kelly's response to the idea of substituting a social discursive for an embodied constructivist account of affectivity is that it amounts to swapping out motivational gremlins impinging on the person from the body for motivational gremlins imposing themselves on constructive meaning via discursive forces. In both cases, the radically temporal anticipative basis of construing (the impetus of the elaborative choice) is weakened to the extent that the movement of constructive process is arbitrarily pushed and pulled by recalcitrant contents originating within persons (bodily feelings) or between persons (discursive forces).

Note: Some in the personal construct theory community consider Kelly's approach to be closely aligned with John Dewey's pragmatism, whose influence on personal construct theory Kelly acknowledges, but I think Dewey's treatment of the relation between affect and intention suffers from the same dualistic tendency as that of Ratcliffe and Varela.

The Unconscious vs Implicit Consciousness

In my investigation of Merleau-Ponty's thinking about inter-subjectivity, and embodied naturalized approaches to affectivity, I have endeavored to show that the nature of movement in a model of experience that places gestalt bodies, ensembles and fields as its irreducible basis is inherently polarizing in its temporal transitions and relations. Relations in such a system rely on the arbitrary valuative content of ensembles and fields to condition and reinforce bodily and social practice. Merleau-Ponty characterizes this polarization as the 'ambiguity' of being in the world, which articulates itself as a post-Freudian repressed unconscious. Rather than a Freudian 'vertical unconscious' of hidden drives and desires within a psychic system, this would be a 'horizontal unconscious' of a past, present and future which are not fully transparent to each other.

Fuchs, in 'Body Memory and the Unconscious', draws upon Merleau-Ponty's intercorporeal gestalt model to form his notion of the bodily unconscious:

“In body memory, the situations and actions experienced in the past are, as it were, all fused together without any of them standing out individually. Through the repetition and superimposition of experiences, a habit structure has been formed: well-practiced motion sequences, repeatedly perceived gestalten, forms of actions and interactions have become an implicit bodily knowledge and skill.” (Fuchs 2011)

“From the point of view of a phenomenology of the lived body, the unconscious is not an intrapsychic reality residing in the depths "below consciousness". Rather, it surrounds and permeates conscious life, just as in picture puzzles the figure hidden in the background surrounds the foreground, and just as the lived body conceals itself while functioning.”

“Unconscious fixations are like certain restrictions in a person's space of potentialities produced by an implicit but ever-present past which declines to take part in the continuing progress of life.”

I believe this is the recalcitrant normative past Butt(1998) references in his assertion that “...our natural inter-subjectivity leads to us feeling bound to our past, our relationships, and our social practices.”

Merleau-Ponty conveys the irreducible violence of sense-making in such a system:

“ In all uses of the word sens, we find the same fundamental notion of a being orientated or polarized in the direction of what he is not, and thus we are always brought back to a conception of the subject as ek-stase, and to a relationship of active transcendence between the subject and the world.

Action is, by definition, the violent transition from what I have to what I aim to have, from what I am to what I intend to be....This is the price for there being things and ‘other people’ for us, not as the result of some illusion, but as the result of a violent act which is perception itself.

“(Phenomenology of Perception, p.499).

From their vantage , a sense making process that is grounded on radical self-belonging must be a subjectivity artificially split off from the world in an inner rationalist solipsism, purely transparent to itself. For instance, Fuchs says that for Husserl there can be no unconscious, and reads this as Cartesianism:

“...the unconscious had to be viewed as restricted to an implicit awareness that remained potentially accessible to consciousness or reflection, and, in any case, could not basically be foreign to the subject. In Husserl's words:

"What I do not 'know', what in my experience, my imagining, thinking, doing, is not present to me as perceived, remembered, thought, etc., will not 'influence' my mind. And what is not in my experience, be it ignored or implicitly-intentionally decided, does not motivate me even unconsciously (Ideas II, p.243)

Fuchs concludes:

“...psychoanalysis and phenomenology....have a common starting point: it is in the Cartesian view of consciousness as "clear and distinct perception", the assumption that consciousness is transparent to itself insofar as its own contents are concerned. “

Kelly's view of the unconscious echoes Husserl. Kelly understands the notion of the unconscious in terms of levels of awareness. : “We do not use the conscious-unconscious dichotomy, but we do recognize that some of the personal constructs a person seeks to subsume within his system prove to be fleeting or elusive. Sometimes this is because they are loose rather than tight, as in the first phase of the creative cycle. Sometimes it is because they are not bound by the symbolisms of words or other acts. But of this we are sure, if they are important in a person's life it is a mistake to say they are unconscious or that he is unaware of them. Every day he experiences them, often all too poignantly, except he cannot put his finger on them nor tell for sure whether they are at the spot the therapist has probed for them.”(Kelly 1969a)

Kelly(1955) explains that repression is not a useful construct in personal construct theory

“ Our theoretical position would not lead us to place so much emphasis upon what is presumably ‘repressed’. Our concern is more with the constructs which are being used by the client to structure his world. If certain elements have dropped out of his memory it may be simply that he has ceased to use the structures which imbued these elements with sense. We do not see these abandoned elements as covertly operating stimuli in the client's life.”

Butt(1998) responds to Kelly as Fuchs did to Husserl, with a charge of Cartesianism:

“Constructs are abstractions from the concrete world of events (1955, p. 110). Thus we gain the idea that constructs are in some way behind and responsible for behavior. Deliberation might reveal our intentions, which are ultimately available for our inspection and not subject to a process of repression.”“When constructivists accept the ambiguity of the lived world they can contribute significantly to the understanding of it, while at the same time forgoing the inevitably disappointing project of trying to mechanistically explain it. “

It is not that for Kelly the day to day changes in my thinking are necessarily inferentially tied to previous changes in a unitary temporal flow. His Fragmentation Corollary allows that “new constructs are not necessarily direct derivatives of, or special cases within, one's old constructs.” “A man may move from an act of love to an act of jealousy, and from there to an act of hate, even though hate is not something that would be inferred from love, even in his peculiar system.” “We can be sure only that the changes that take place from old to new constructs do so within a larger system.”

While fragmentation may characterize my transition between constructs, there is no such split within the bipolar terms of a single construct. A construct is a ‘referential differential’, whereas Merleau-Ponty's and Fuchs' bodily unconscious is a communication across a chiasm, manifested as the ambiguous relationship between figure and ground. From this important distinction follows the fact that even the inferentially incompatible changes in the construct system from day to day

that the fragmentation corollary references presuppose an underlying temporal integrity missing from other approaches. For Kelly, then, to claim that thinking is never unconscious to itself is not to render it rationalistically self-transparent. Rather, it is to say that its ongoing self-transformations maintain a thematic of pragmatic relevance.

Beyond Philosophies and Psychologies of Blame: Kellian Hostility and Guilt

In fact, the way that Kelly treats moving from an act of love to an act of hate, via his formulation of the construct of hostility, may indicate how far apart Kelly's model and embodied approaches stand concerning the issue of the fundamental integrity of experiencing. All feeling and emotion for Kelly expresses an awareness of the relative ongoing success or failure in relating new events to one's outlook. But his definition of hostility stands out from his account of guilt, anxiety, fear and threat in that it consists of a two-stage process.

Kelly defines hostility as "the continued effort to extort validational evidence in favor of a type of social prediction which has already proved itself a failure." Notice that this definition combines awareness of a validational event (invalidation) with a response to that event (extortion of evidence). Furthermore, as we will see, the way in which the first step is understood determines the sense of the second step, and vice versa. The crucial importance of interpretation in fathoming what Kelly meant by hostility can be demonstrated in the following questions:

How far-reaching did he mean his definition to be? Is hostility the same thing as anger, and if so, is there such a thing as healthy, adaptive, anger, or do all forms of anger extort evidence? And what about subtle forms of affective perturbation like irritation and annoyance? Are these also forms of hostility? One would have to look carefully through Kelly's writings in order to find him using what may be synonyms for hostility. Words like annoyed, angry, rage and furious appear in the context of some of his discussions of hostile behaviors. For instance,

"By this time John, frustrated in his efforts to be manly, is furious at himself, the girl, and about everything in sight, and he is in no mood to listen to advice. He turns his rage on the father, as if somehow here was the fiend behind this maddening woman. In a moment the old man, who I am sure only wanted to be helpful, is dead, the victim of John's nimble sword and wildly diffused hostility."
(Kelly 1969g)

Such passages don't go far in clearing up matters, though, because Kelly wasn't very helpful in clarifying how he intended his readers to link his idiosyncratic definition of hostility with more conventional uses of that term. Readers of Kelly are left to construct an understanding of hostility consistent with their own vantage on his work as a whole. Let us see, then, how embodied intersubjective positions are likely to treat Kellian hostility, given the way I have represented them in this paper. I want to contrast these perspectives with the radically temporal interpretation I have been advancing. I have thus far argued that for the embodied intersubjective crowd, values are contents with which we are co-infected, indoctrinated, jointly conditioned and shaped via our participation within cultural norms and practices. Another way of stating this is to say that as an actor in an always shifting social ensemble I am always vulnerable to caprice and temptation, to being swayed in one direction or another semi-arbitrarily in what I care about. As this ambiguous

being who is not fully conscious to myself, my potential for capriciously motivated behavior is what I would like to call my fundamental blamefulness.

Now let us say that I have been hurt and disappointed by someone I care deeply about, and as a result I become angry with them. They now approach me and say “ I know I let you down. I was wrong and I’m sorry“ (regardless of whether I prompted them or not). One could say that the other’s sense of their guilt and culpability is the mirror image of my anger. The essence of the anger-culpability binary here is the two parties coping, as victim and perpetrator, with their perception of an arbitrary lapse in values, a socially or bodily catalyzed drift in commitment to the relationship on the part of the one, and the recognition of this caprice by the other.

Let us then suppose that the hurt party believes that the always present possibility of the other’s straying, succumbing to, being overcome by alienating valuative motives, is an expression of human motivation in general as dependent on arbitrary bodily and intersocial determinants. This being the case, it would not be unreasonable for the hurt individual to formulate the hopeful notion that the blameful, that is, capricious, behavior of the other can be coaxed back to something close to its original alignment, so that the relationship’s intimacy can be restored. The hopeful quality of the anger, then, is driven by a belief in the random malleability of human motives. I am going to call this hopeful intervention ‘adaptive anger’.

How does this scenario fit in relation to Kelly’s hostility definition? Although it begins with an experience of invalidation (hurt and disappointment), we would not seem to be justified in considering the consequent hopeful intervention (adaptive anger) as an example of extortion of validation evidence. After all, the angered party isn’t denying that the dynamics of the relationship have changed. One can argue that they are merely making use of their perception of the substantial randomness in the shaping of human motives in order to attempt to reshape matters in a more favorable direction from their vantage, and this attempt may very well be successful in eliciting the other’s contrition and maybe even a plea for forgiveness of their deviation.

More precisely, the angered person’s belief that behavior is capricious will make it appear to them that their view of the wayward other as susceptible to outside influences has been vindicated regardless of whether their interventionist attempts succeed in getting the other to apologize, express remorse, mend their ways. The conflictual relationship scenario I sketched above was intended to capture what I believe to be a fundamental tenet of any philosophical or psychological approach that is founded on the belief in the irreducibility of blame. Since I claim that the embodied intersubjective perspectives mentioned in this paper fit that description, it seems to me that the idea of an ‘adaptive’ anger or related blameful response to invalidation is absolutely vital to such perspectives. Any theory asserting that motive can be hostage to, conditioned by, arbitrary deviations in interest and caring, especially the valuing of another person, would be unable to endorse the idea that all forms of anger, irritation, condemnation or contempt are forms of hostility representing extortion of evidence in favor of a failed outlook.

For instance, Gendlin, a phenomenological psychologist allied with Merleau-Ponty, considers anger to be potentially adaptive. He says that one must attempt to reassess, reinterpret, elaborate the angering experience via felt awareness not in order to eliminate the feeling of anger but so that

one's anger becomes "fresh, expansive, active, constructive, and varies with changes in the situation". "Anger may help handle the situation because it may make the other change or back away. Anger can also help the situation because it may break it entirely and thus give you new circumstances." " Anger is healthy, while resentment and hate are detrimental to the organism."

The social constructionist Ken Gergen writes that anger has a valid role to play in social coordination "There are certain times and places in which anger is the most effective move in the dance."

Merleau-Ponty scholar John Russon(2020) offers:

"Anger can be unjustified, to be sure, and in that case it enacts a fundamentally distorted portrayal of the other. But anger can also be justified, and in that case it can be the only frame of mind in which the vicious and hateful reality of the other is truly recognized." (The Place of Love).

Robert Solomon (1977), champion of the view that emotions are central to meaning and significance in human life, says that anger can be 'right'.

" Anger, for example, is not just a burst of venom, and it is not as such sinful, nor is it necessarily a "negative" emotion. It can be "righteous," and it can sometimes be right."

McCoy (1977) upheld Kelly's definition of hostility and anger as products of invalidated construing but found it necessary to exclude contempt from this description. She defined contempt as "awareness that the core role of another is comprehensively different from one's own and or does not meet the norms of social expectation" (P 97.).

Contempt, on her reading, represents validated construing, because "contempt predicts that it's object will experience guilt "(P 98). Thus, the threatened structure is relieved of the threat caused by the others social deviation by a reaffirmation of the present system.

Let's now see how the above accounts compare with my radically temporal reading of Kellian hostility. If, for any psychology, the arbitrariness of blame is irreducible in direct proportion to the belief that the in-itself valuative content of our experiencing contributes to a shaping of our motives and behavior in a way that we are not explicitly or implicitly aware of (Fuchs' horizontal unconscious), then this would seem to be incompatible with the spirit of Kelly's Choice corollary, which states that a person chooses for themselves that alternative in a dichotomized construct through which they anticipate the greater possibility for extension and definition of their system. The Choice Corollary exemplifies the central importance of process, and the near irrelevance of valuative content, in the organization of the construct system. The direction of motivation is driven by the anticipatory integrity of the relationships between near-meaningless-in-themselves contents, not by the supposed value-substance of the contents themselves, whether perceived as motivational entities like incentives, needs, drives or reinforcements . Kelly(1969a) says

"...it would have been too easy for us...to blame our difficulties on the motives of the client.

When we find a person who is concerned about motives, he usually turns out to be one who is threatened by his fellow men and wants to put them in their place.”

“As in all cases of hostility, the frustrated therapist starts to see the hazard as inherent in the elements which he has been unable to construe successfully rather than in his construction of them.” (Kelly 1955)

As I have written, to say that pleasure is what motivates us in our choices is as much as to say that advancement of anticipatory efficacy, what Kelly calls elaboration, motivates our behavior. In his process approach, all behavior is oriented toward making our world more intimately understandable. It is true that personal construct theory does not view pain and pleasure through a reinforcement lens, but this is because stimulus-response theory considers hedonic feeling to be the content of a physiological event. For Kelly, pleasure, pain and all other variants of affective valuation, are not properties of internal, external, nor socially shared value contents, but are a function of how intimately, and how multi-dimensionally, we relate events to each other. Validation evidence is just another way of describing the affectively felt assimilative coherence of the construed flow of events and therefore it is synonymous with feeling valence. If one avoids collapsing into emotional confusion as a result of an invalidating event, it is not because validation and feeling can be separated, but because the invalidation impacted a relatively subordinate portion of the construct system.

Kelly wrote: “It is not merely the invalidation of a construct that produces anxiety. Anxiety appears only if the construct is abandoned—appears no longer relevant—and there is nothing to take its place.”

Believing that motivation is a function of semi-arbitrary shapings arising out of our sedimented participation in social interactions intertwined with bodily dynamics, the approaches I have been critiquing do not see hedonic valuation as necessarily synonymous with the pragmatic efficacy of construing. For instance, Butt(1998) splits off hedonic valence from the organizational integrity of experiencing. He believes that personal motivation is at the mercy of influences outside our control. Thus, we can be motivated to make choices that are self-defeating, not within our control, not in our best interest.

“... there is surely a danger that the constructivist assumes a good reason for every action, that every action represents an elaborative choice.” “Kelly does not seem to entertain the possibility that the person ever makes non-elaborative choices.”

In situations of personal distress, “the client might not be able to make any sense of the concept [of elaborative choice]. His or her experience is usually of being out of control, at the mercy of mysterious impulse. “

Such impulses do not originate from an internal construct system or other persons in a unidirectional manner, but are the product of joint action emerging from the social flow.

“Being respectful of their choices does not mean implying that they have a cognitive system operating silently in their best interests beneath their awareness. It means helping them realize how they are sedimented in their interactions with the world, particularly the social world. If they

opt for change, the system that will need to accommodate to it is social rather than cognitive.”

Butt’s grounding of motive in socially shared value content threatens to turn Kelly’s elaborative choice into a bouncing between the repressiveness of entrenched sedimented habit and the chaos of a leap in the dark. Butt fails to see that the construct system does not achieve its integrative continuity through any positive internal power. On the contrary, it simply lacks the formidability of value content implied by socially embedded sedimentation necessary to impose the arbitrariness of polarizing conditioning on the movement of experiential process. What drives choice in Kelly’s Choice corollary isn’t a rationalist ‘gyroscope’ but the opposite, the replacement of polarizing value content with constructive process. From Kelly’s perspective it is Butt’s sedimented, habitual social gestalt that fits the description of a dominating gyroscope. Beneath the apparent chaos and whim of blame (being ‘at the mercy of mysterious impulse’) lies a radically temporal order in psychological movement that proves why neither my own nor another’s processes are capable of the content-driven arbitrariness that could lead to the ‘thoughtlessness’ of anger-producing culpability.

Why can one’s own processes never be ‘thoughtless’ enough to produce culpability in oneself and justify anger on the part of another? Because Kelly’s elaborative choice reflects the fact that definition or extension of one’s system defines or extends dimensional senses with not enough substance, force, power within themselves to arbitrarily polarize, disrupt, condition and repress. Polarization, force, capriciousness, repression are required as irreducible in experiencing in order for the blamefulness of hostility and anger to be primordially justified. What makes Kelly’s definition of hostility so remarkable, then, is that it implies that ALL thinking that I interpret as apparent capriciousness NECESSARILY represents an invalid construal of the situation on my part, and that, even if I am unable to arrive at a crisp construction that instantly dispels the justification for my hostility, there is such an explanation OF NECESSITY. Blame is an impermeable construct, one that must be abandoned once it is understood that intention could never be arbitrary or capricious.

“Some day we may know who to blame for a child's troubles, or we may give up the construct of "blame" altogether.”(Kelly 1963)

Put differently, I am arguing that for Kelly hostility is not simply a generic inability to accept that one’s construction of another’s social behavior has been invalidated. Rather, it is inextricably tied to blame, the belief that the object of one’s hostility has no good or rational reason for their actions, that they failed to make the elaborative choice, and are at the mercy of mysterious impulses. For instance, let’s say I construe another person as acting in a certain way for good or sensible reasons given their axes of construction. That is to say, I believe they are making the most elaborative choice their construct system will allow them to make. Subsequently, I come to discover that I was mistaken in my initial assessment of their reasons. It turns out my construction was invalid. But if this failed interpretation is nestled within a superordinate construct that views persons as always making the elaborative choice, then my misapprehension of their intentions in this instance amounts to only a minor invalidation, rather than the sweeping incomprehension necessary for the development of hostility. I may have been wrong in my precise construal of their reasons for acting, but my faith in the appropriateness and necessity of whatever those reasons

may turn out to be (relative to the other's axes of construction) prevents me from needing to resort to blameful hostility. I recognize that there is an inexhaustible range of alternative perspectives potentially available to me from whose vantage I can continue to perceive the other as having behaved coherently and reasonably within the bounds of their system.

On the other hand, if I lack such a superordinate framework to compensate for my misreading of the other's intent, then I am deprived of any sensible explanation to account for their behavior other than my original, invalidated construal.

As Kelly(1955) explains:

"We see a person behaving in a peculiar manner. Why does he do such preposterous things? According to our Fundamental Postulate and its corollaries he must be evolving his psychological processes towards what he construes to be an optimal anticipation of events. Yet, at the moment, we cannot see how he can possibly be elaborating his field or evolving a more comprehensive construction system."

The inadequate alternative explanations open to me reveal the other person's intentions only as a peculiar, disordered chaos, which, measured against the relative coherence of my original assessment of their relation to me, makes them appear to me now as irrational, preposterous, stubborn, lazy, malevolent, at the mercy of mysterious impulses, failing to live up to my expectations of them. My hostility, then, is my attempt to salvage predictive value from the only ordered construction available to me to make sense of an aspect of the other person's thinking. Despite this construction having proved unreliable, attempting to get the wayward other to conform to my original expectations (knock some sense back into them) is the elaborative choice I must make when the alternative is dealing with a person whose behavior in a sphere of social life that is of vital concern to me I can no longer make sense of at all. As in the scenario I described of the hopeful interventionist impulse of 'adaptive' anger, I interpret the extortionist impulse of hostility as rooted in the hopeful desire to influence the other back where I think they should have been, even when there is no communication with another, either verbal, gestural or physical. The attempt at extorting evidence begins with the hopeful thought that my attempt at influencing the other may be effective. Even the most subtle variants of anger are inconceivable without my sense that the person who disappointed me can be coaxed by me, whether gently or not so gently, back to where we believe they should have been .

For this reason, I believe that Kelly intended his definition of hostility to apply to all feelings and expressions of blame aimed at another (or oneself in self-anger). These include: irritation, annoyance, disapproval, condemnation, feeling insulted, taking umbrage, resentment, exasperation, impatience, hatred, ire, outrage, contempt, righteous indignation, 'adaptive' anger, perceiving the other as deliberately thoughtless, lazy, culpable, perverse, inconsiderate, disrespectful, disgraceful, greedy, evil, sinful, criminal. Any of the above feelings represent a failure to understand what is in principle understandable without blame via a reorganization of one's construct system. At the heart of blameful feeling is an unanswered question. What is the rationale behind the perpetrator's unfathomable behavior? Unable to come up with any workable justifiable explanation of the other's seemingly perverse shift in motive, the offended person attempts to coerce the other into feeling self-blame, to 'knock some sense back into them'. But

since we don't know why they violated our expectation of them, why and how they failed to do what our blameful anger tells us they 'should have' according to our prior estimation of their relation to us, this guilt-inducing process is tentative, unsure.

Even if we succeed in getting the blameful other to atone and re-establish their previous intimacy with us, we understand them no better than we did prior to their hostility-generating action, and thus our hostility provides an inadequate solution to our puzzlement and anxiety. All we have learned from the episode is that the other is potentially untrustworthy, unpredictable. The ineffectiveness of this approach can be seen in the fact that even if contempt succeeds in getting the perpetrator to mend their ways, an adequate understanding of his or her puzzling motives has not been achieved. The very success of the contempt delays the pursuit of a permeable construction within which the other's apparently arbitrary disappointing deviation from what one expected of them can be seen as a necessary, adaptive elaboration of their way of construing their role in the relationship. When confronted with behavior of another that is comprehensively different from our own, a mystery to us, and especially when it disturbs us, we are challenged by Kelly to bridge the gap between ourselves and the other not by attributing the problem to the other's being at the mercy of capriciously wayward motives which we may hope to re-shape, but by striving to subsume the other's outlook within a revised version of our own system. What is left of the construct of hostility if blaming another can be adaptive rather than always an extortion of evidence? It becomes a toothless irrationality, a not being willing to accept that another has hurt me, let me down, disrespected me, fallen out of love with me. Hostility would be strictly an attempt to prove to oneself that the immediate insult never took place.

But even when one is convinced that the insult did indeed take place and can never be undone or denied, even when one pleads with, cajoles and threatens the other to reconsider their actions and apologize, even when one succeeds in eliciting the other's remorse, even when one forgives the other's transgression and prepares themselves to start afresh in the relationship, all these changes in construing amount to no more than a retrenchment of the original inadequate outlook. Contrary to McCoy's (1977) contention that contempt, which she defines as the expectation that the other will experience guilt, represents validated construing, such an expectation, as a hopeful wish, would express the very essence of hostility. The intensity of our feeling of contempt is in direct proportion to the unwillingness of the other to display guilt. Thus, the essential quality of contempt is the need to make the other feel guilty.

That Kelly (1955) was not a fan of the cycle of blame, apology and forgiveness is suggested in the following:

“Punishment may occasionally be used to make a person feel guilty and anxious in the honest hope that he will mend his ways. Sometimes we say that we ‘punish the crime and not the criminal’. This is silly; the ‘criminal’ gets punished nonetheless. We hope, however, that he will see that it is only a part of him that is condemned. The epigrammatic slogan may be a semantic device for leaving the door open for him to reestablish his role in our society rather than going out and establishing a core role which is outside our society.”

For Kelly, transcending anger by revising one's construction of the event means arriving at an explanation that does not require the other's contrition, which only serves to appease the hostile

person rather than enlighten him. For the same reason, Kelly eschewed forgiveness and turning the other cheek. Such gestures only make sense in the context of blame, which implies a belief in the potential arbitrariness and capriciousness of human motives. Seeking the other's atonement is not considered by Kelly to reflect an effective understanding of the original insult. Recounting a parable of Jesus and a woman "He didn't even forgive her; that sort of unction didn't seem to be called for." (Kelly 1961)

From Kelly's vantage, if, rather than getting angry or condemning another who wrongs me, I respond with loving forgiveness, my absolution of the other presupposes my hostility toward them. I can only forgive the other's trespass to the extent that I recognize a sign of contrition or confession on their part. Ideals of so-called unconditional forgiveness, of turning the other cheek, loving one's oppressor, could also be understood as conditional in various ways. In the absence of the other's willingness to atone, I may forgive evil when I believe that there are special or extenuating circumstances which will allow me to view the perpetrator as less culpable (the sinner knows not what he does). I can say the other was blinded or deluded, led astray. My offer of grace is then subtly hostile, both an embrace and a slap. I hold forth the carrot of my love as a lure, hoping thereby to uncloud the other's conscience so as to enable them to discover their culpability. In opening my arms, I hope the prodigal son will return chastised, suddenly aware of a need to be forgiven. Even when there is held little chance that the sinner will openly acknowledge his sin, I may hope that my outrage connects with a seed of regret and contrition buried deep within the other, as if my 'unconditional' forgiveness is an acknowledgment of God's or the subliminal conscience of the other's apologizing in the name of the sinner.

Kelly's formulation of hostility as an extortionistic irrationalism may have left the door open for personal construct theory writers to interpret it narrowly as an outright denial of a reality staring a person in the face. Indeed, his use of those terms implies that the hostile person is aware at some level that their attempts at attaining evidence to confirm their original hypothesis is misguided, that they are pretending to themselves that their original assessment of the situation is still valid when a part of themselves already knows better. This seems to have encouraged a tendency among some personal construct theory writers (see, for example, Kev Harding(2015)) to turn hostility into what sounds to me more like a psychoanalytic-style defense mechanism than an elaborative choice. By this I mean I don't think hostility's extortionist impulse should be read as self-deceptive denial that one was significantly surprised and disappointed by another's actions, so much as a settling for an inadequate explanation for the reasons behind the other's unpredictability. That is to say, when in anger I seek to extort evidence, what I am attempting to validate is my impermeable construal of the other's intent as ambiguous, obstinate and perverse. My anger is motivated by, and looks for further confirmation of, my pre-existing belief that the people I care about are susceptible to behaving in recalcitrant, dangerous ways.

"The hostile person insists that it is the elements which must be recalcitrant rather than his own thinking. Since many of his elements are people, he sees them as recalcitrant....he feels that the hazard lies in the people with whom he allowed himself to get mixed up. He thinks it is the people who are dangerous, not his construction of them. Thus he sees his difficulty as arising out of his ill-considered experimentation with inherently dangerous elements." (Kelly 1955)

In one sense, this is a valid assessment, given the starting premise of the unfathomability of

human motives. But because that starting premise is an ineffective guide for subsuming others' behavior, it leaves the person who relies on it vulnerable to all manner of future traumatic surprises. In this sense it is a failure as an anticipatory device, and the extorting of the other's contrition and apology only reaffirms this failure. For instance, Trevor Butt's belief that the experience of a person in distress "is usually of being out of control, at the mercy of mysterious impulse" implies that an intervention that he might recommend in response to a client's seemingly unpredictable 'self-defeating' behavior would be based on blaming 'mysterious impulses' for the client's actions. Although such a response would fit Kelly's definition of hostility, it seems a bit excessive to treat Butt's construal as self-deceptive. Rather, the blameful intervention would be driven by a valid but somewhat impermeable construal of the client's outlook. We might say, then, that to be hostile is to accuse the other of not making the elaborative choice.

Kelly on Guilt, Sin and Ethics

Just as the person who understands personal construct theory can no longer believe in the blamefulness of anger, they can also no longer believe in the self-blame of guilt. This doesn't mean they don't experience the pain of knowing their loss of role was responsible for another's potential or actual suffering, or their own. Kelly defines guilt as the perception of one's apparent dislodgment from one's core role structure. Whatever one does in the light of their understanding of others' outlooks may be regarded as their role. In guilt, our falling away from another we care for could be spoken of as an alienation of oneself from oneself. When we feel we have failed another, we mourn our mysterious dislocation from a competence or value which we associated ourselves with. One feels as if "having fallen below the standards [one has] erected for himself"(Kelly 1961).

It follows from this that any thinking of guilt as a 'should have, could have' blamefulness deals in a notion of dislocation and distance, of a mysterious discrepancy within intended meaning, separating who we were from who we are in its teasing gnawing abyss. But to have assimilated the lessons of personal construct theory is to perceive one's guilt as a paired-down suffering because it is a responsibility without self-blame.

What's the difference between a blameful and a non-blameful awareness that one's construction of one's role with respect to another has lost a former intimacy and coherence? It is the flip side of blameful hostility at the other's changed construction of their role in relation to me. In both cases, the philosophies of blame attribute an aspect of value to the intrinsic content of an element of meaning, so one can be conditioned by an outside influence to arbitrarily lose or lessen one's ability to care about another. My anger then tries to recondition that feeling of caring back into the other person (knock some sense back into them). But for Kelly, value and caring is never an attribute or property of a content of meaning, but is instead a function of the assimilative intricacy and permeability of the movement from one moment of experience to the next. The good therapist "does not become annoyed with his data! " "...he seeks to bring about changes which are based on understanding rather than on blame."

The Choice corollary guarantees that the behavior that one later feels guilty about was the best one could do at the time to elaborate one's system. Kelly's elaborative choice determines the direction

of this temporal flow as always either toward increased understanding, or at least preservation of one's current level of understanding. When Kelly talked about sin and guilt in terms of mistakes, he invariably added a caveat that what appears as a mistake from some external perspective can just as well be seen as a deviation from the conventional or the basis of a new outlook. Speaking of his feelings of guilt after his heart attack:

“ Besides, I still could not put my finger on where all my mistakes had been - mostly I knew only where I had deviated from convention - or whether all of them had actually been mistakes; nor did I know what could readily be done even if they had been mistakes. Naturally, I had some clues, here and there, but, in the main these were questions it would take years to work out, and, if I did well with them, they would be followed by further, more perspicacious questions.” (Kelly 1960)

Kelly's analysis of the relationship between blame and PCP's constructs of hostility and guilt provides the basis of an approach to ethics departing significantly from conventional moral thinking. Kelly's most detailed discussion of ethics took place in his paper, Sin and Psychotherapy (Kelly, 1969d). The paper is organized around the question: how can we clarify the difference between good and evil? While Kelly mentions four ethical strategies devised by humans to address this question, (law, authority, conscience, and purpose) what is remarkable about Kelly's Sin and Psychotherapy paper is that his attempt to clarify the distinction between good and evil in the terms of PCP specifically avoids offering a constructivist approach to ethical culpability. The central message of Sin and Psychotherapy is not that it is futile to attempt to prove once and for all the correctness of one's ethical position. Rather, Kelly tries to steer us away from treating the issue of good and evil in terms of conventional ethical principles. What I mean by conventional ethics is a system of values that includes ways of determining moral culpability and the assignment of blame, and that also implies a form of punishment, or at least encouragement of the perpetrator's recognition of their guilt, apology and atonement. The aim of the paper is instead to define good and evil in the specialized terms of PCP as validated vs invalidated role construing. As such, sin is rendered as the psychological experience of guilt, understood entirely from the vantage of the person who suffers guilt.

“Here we have what I believe are sufficient grounds for reaching a psychological understanding of sin. They may not be sufficient for an ethical understanding; as a matter of fact, I am sure they are not, but that is another matter...I am obviously talking about the personal experience of guilt, not about moral culpability.”(Kelly 1969d).

“Personal-construct psychology leaves the matter of moral turpitude per se to systems other than psychological.”(Kelly 1955)

If Kelly was intent on leaving aside all issues of moral rectitude, why assume that his refusal to address the issue of sin in terms of moral culpability and ethical blame signifies anything more than his wish to restrict his analysis to the range of convenience of PCP? Perhaps this is what he meant when he stated that PCP “leaves the matter of moral turpitude per se to systems other than psychological.” In the second volume of PCP, Kelly in fact articulates specific ethical principles and requirements in the context of standards of practice for the clinician. But to what extent, if any, are these ethical principles grounded in constructs like blame, culpability and reprehensibility? Raskin(1995) is among those within the PCP community who believes it is possible to extract a conventional ethics of culpability from Kelly:

“From a constructivist perspective, dogmatism of any sort can be categorized as unethical because it closes down alternatives...Using dogmatism and righteousness as indicators, it becomes easier to identify particular positions as immoral. For example, the ethical views of a Neo-Nazi are distasteful and unethical to a constructivist thinker not only because of their hateful and venomous content, but also because they allow for no further experimentation or elaboration....The Neo-Nazi has so much faith in his or her ethical constructions that dogmatic righteousness results, wherein anything that advances the cause is seen as ethically justifiable...It seems reasonable to maintain that when people stop actively questioning and reevaluating their ethical constructions and assume their positions to be the only correct ones available, they begin to behave in an unethical fashion.”

We can see the central role that both social culpability and self-blame play in Raskin's interpretation of dogmatic constructions once we inquire beyond the issue of whether a certain organization of constructs closes down alternatives, and focus on the question of why it does so. We must ask ourselves what we are assuming concerning the motivation behind the emergence of dogmatism, and how we can square our assumption with Kelly's Choice corollary, which states that a person chooses for themselves that alternative in a dichotomized construct through which they anticipate the greater possibility for extension and definition of their system. The implication of Raskin's ethical position is that the content of a dogmatic belief is in some sense self-reinforcing. This implies that the recalcitrant pull of this arbitrary dogmatism is to blame for the person's failure to act more flexibly. The Choice corollary, by contrast, invites us to explain dogmatic, constricted, rigid, impermeable, preemptive or hostile construing not as the manifestation of arbitrary self-reinforcing drives or passions, but as representing the most promising avenues of constructive movement available to us given the circumstances.

A prescriptive ethics (we SHOULD avoid dogmatism) only makes sense in a psychology which requires a separate motivational mechanism pushing or pulling us in arbitrary, potentially self-reinforcing directions that, as Trevor Butt claimed, may work against our own best interests. But we don't need to be admonished to choose in favor of sense-making strategies that are optimally anticipatory, since this is already built into the implications of the Choice corollary. When people stop actively questioning and evaluating their ethical constructs, and fall back on rigid verities, this should not be seen as a sign that the person has simply fallen in love with their doctrine, and thereby found themselves at the mercy of a vicious cycle of self-reinforcing rigidity. Instead, it is likely to signal a crisis in that person's ability to make their world intelligible. The question of why and to what extent a person embraces dogmatism should be seen as a matter of how much uncertainty that person's system is capable of tolerating without crumbling, rather than a self-reinforcing desire for absolutist thinking. Sartrean bad faith is not possible when one always has no 'choice' other than the elaborative choice.

Kelly(1955) writes:

“The direction of his movement, hence his motivation, is towards better understanding of what will happen...The person moves out towards making more and more of the world predictable and not ordinarily does he withdraw more and more into a predictable world. In the latter case he becomes neurotic or psychotic, lest he lose that capacity for prediction which he has already acquired. In either case, the principle of the elaborative choice describes his motivating decision. Moreover, as we have indicated before, he lays his wagers on predictability, not merely on the certainty of the immediate venture, but in terms of what he sees as the best parlay... If he is willing to tolerate some day-by-day

uncertainties, he may broaden his field of vision and thus hope to extend the predictive range of the system. Whichever his choice may be—for constricted certainty or for broadened understanding—his decision is essentially elaborative.”

If it is the case that Kelly has no use for constructs like blame and forgiveness, what is left of the notion of ethics for Kelly? Whether it is the person striving to realign their role with respect to a social milieu that they have become estranged from (sin), or members of a community concerned about the effects of a particular person’s behavior on those around them, Kelly’s view of ethics, informed by the Choice corollary, provides a pathway around hostility and blameful finger-pointing. We can strive for an ethics of responsibility without succumbing to a moralism of culpability. To the extent that we can talk about an ethical progress in the understanding of good and evil from the vantage of Kelly’s system, this is not a matter of the arrival at a set of principles assigning culpability, but, from the point of view of the ‘sinner’, of the gradual creation of a robust and permeable structure of social anticipations that increasingly effectively resists the invalidation of guilt. Kelly’s ‘ethical strategy’ to deal with one’s own sin, then, is social experimentation in order to achieve a validated social role.

“The client will have to re-construe his role, experiment with it, and keep it open to continuing revision....One must find a way to put these man-made hypotheses into a comprehensive framework that will transcend the little strategems of everyday social manipulation.”(Kelly 1969d)

Ontological Acceleration: Kelly’s Realism as Discursive Conversation

I have suggested that Kelly’s notion of hostility and guilt as the failure to understand what is in principle understandable without recourse to blame justifies itself on the basis of a fundamental organizational principle of personal construct theory: construction processes are inherently too integral (because devoid of polarizing inhering content) to be capable of the arbitrariness and capriciousness implied by blame, regardless of the status of their permeability. Whatever Kelly envisioned the ‘end’ of history to look like, I take his definitions of hostility and guilt, his choice corollary and articulation of anticipation as replicatively oriented, to constitute an unwavering statement about the fundamental order driving psychological functioning. If assimilating the lessons of personal construct theory means I need never be hostile, it is not because I can guarantee I will always be able to flawlessly reconstrue another’s action such that I no longer see them as culpable. Rather, personal construct theory tells me that, in principle, the organization of psychological processes is too integral to justify the abyss of blame. As long as I am able to take this as a matter of faith, that is, as an ongoing hypothesis, and as long as I don’t find this supposition invalidated, then it is irrelevant whether or not in any specific instance I am able to come up with precise reasons why another person was not culpable for my disappointment.

Let’s see if we can tie this organizational a priori to Kelly’s statements about the nature of the universe. Perhaps we might also clarify Kelly’s seemingly contradictory statements about the nature of reality within a radically temporal perspective. In the introduction to his 1955 text, Kelly says:

“The universe that we presume exists has another important characteristic: it is integral. By that we mean it functions as a single unit with all its imaginable parts having an exact relationship to each other. This may, at first, seem a little implausible, since ordinarily it would appear that there is a closer relationship between the motion of my fingers and the action of the typewriter keys than there is, say, between either of them and the price of yak milk in Tibet. But we believe that, in the long run, all of these events—the motion of my fingers, the action of the keys, and the price of yak milk—are interlocked. It is only within a limited section of the universe, that part we call earth and that span of time we recognize as our present eon, that two of these necessarily seem more closely related to each other than either of them is to the third. A simple way of saying this is to state that *time provides the ultimate bond in all relationships.*”

Kelly says all events in the universe are interlocked via temporal succession. What does he mean by interlocked? He says “all its imaginable parts have an exact relationship to each other”, but by ‘exact’ he doesn’t appear to mean an objectively causal exactitude, even though he describes it as all working “together like clockwork”. The order of material causality is dictated by the empirical content, which is inherently arbitrary. A car engine’s parts have an exact causal relationship with each other, but not an inferential one. If one part were removed, the others would retain their identity, even if the engine no longer worked. By contrast, in Kelly’s form of interlocking, any two events are just as closely related to each other as either of them is to the third. In other words, all events are inferentially, relevantly, motivationally, replicatively related to each other like an optimally enlightened construct system, which is quite different than saying they are externally, causally connected via the representational relation between subjective knower and objective world.

Referring to Kelly’s construct system as a living whole, Shotter(2007) explains:

“...whereas mechanisms are assembled piece by piece from different parts, each with its own already fixed properties, that are all externally related to each other, living wholes are made up of internally related ‘participant parts’. That is, instead of being structured into wholes by being all joined together by third entities (such as glue, nails, etc.) into unified structures, the ‘parts’ of a living whole do not already have a fixed character, nor are they fixed in place by ‘glue’ or ‘nails...”

This suggests to me that for Kelly, scientific, and all other forms of knowing (“the brilliant scientist and the brilliant writer are pretty likely to end up saying the same thing,(Kelly 1969i)), far from being the epistemological representing of a reality independent of the knower, is the evolving construction of a niche. We are worldmakers rather than world-mirrorers, whose constructions are performances that pragmatically intervene in the world that we co-invent, changing it in ways that then talk back to us in a language responsive to how we have formulated our questions. This discursive account accords with the postmodern philosophy of science that Rouse(2015) espouses:

“...the "objects" to which our performances must be held accountable are not something outside discursive practice itself. Discursive practice cannot be understood as an intralinguistic structure or activity that then somehow "reaches out" to incorporate or accord to objects. The relevant "objects" are the ends at issue and at stake within the practice itself. "The practice itself," however, already incorporates the material circumstances in and through which it is enacted. Practices are forms of discursive and practical niche construction in which organism and environment are formed and

reformed together through an ongoing, mutually intra-active reconfiguration.”

To Chiari(2017) Kelly’s talk of a convergence between the psychological system and reality suggests an epistemological constructivism, a speculation on the specific content or form of reality external to the construing person.

“I believe that Kelly indeed spread his wings from a realistic view of knowledge towards a view that nowadays can be considered constructivist, yet remaining suspended in mid-air, that is, without transcending once and for all the opposition between realism and idealism, and this for two reasons. The first is his personal rooting in a rationalistic view of science, of which his early formation in engineering and mathematics is evidence. The second is his limited knowledge of phenomenology, he regarded as a form of idealism portraying “environment as a figment of [...] imagination” (Kelly, 1969/1965, p. 219).

Certainly Kelly never gave up a realist-sounding language that spoke of a universe seemingly ‘out there’ and which we are mirroring more and more accurately through successive approximations, but is this a symptom of a theoretical limitation or a weakness of articulation, the product of looseness in Kelly’s verbalization of what he believed? If one follows the implications of PCP theory, rather than being distracted by Kelly’s realist-sounding terminology, it seems to me what one ends up with is certainly not a correspondence theory of truth, but neither is it an epistemological form of constructivism in which one asymptotically approaches, through a Popperian falsificationism, the truths of an independent reality. I think it is crucial to keep in mind that the criteria of successful construing for Kelly is the inverse of the direct realist slogan that the ‘facts don’t care about our feelings’. The arbiter of validation for Kelly is not the raw, independently existing facts of the world, but affectivity, in the sense that empirical truth and falsity for him is a function of whether and to what extent events are construed as consistent with our anticipations, which defines our purposes and values, and our knowing of this relative success or failure is synonymous with feelings such as anxiety, confusion and satisfaction. Validation evidence is just another way of describing the affectively felt assimilative coherence of the construed flow of events and therefore it is synonymous with feeling valence. Validated construing is neither a matter of forcing events into pre-determined cognitive slots, nor a matter of shaping our models of the world in conformity with the presumed independent facts of that world via the method of falsification. Rather, it is a matter of making and remaking a world; building, inhabiting, and being changed by our interactive relations with our constructed environment.

Those vast, remote truths of the universe Kelly asked us to imagine are the product of a ceaseless conversation between personal and interpersonal construction, and events. Not a conversation between subjects and a recalcitrant, independent reality, but a reciprocation in which the subjective and the objective poles are inextricably responsive to, and mutually dependent on each other. I think that’s what Kelly(1955) was aiming at with the following awkward rendering:

“The truths the theories attempt to fix are successive approximations to the larger scheme of things which slowly they help to unfold.”

Notice that Kelly does not say our approximations UNCOVER what was presumed to be already there in an independently existing world. Rather, our approximations help to UNFOLD that

reality. I interpret this to mean that our approximations co-create the ‘larger scheme of things’. The asymptotic convergence of ‘outer reality’ and human formulations, then, far from being a progressively more exact epistemological mirroring of an outer causal reality, subordinates what would be ‘external’ in reality to relational activity between subject and world.

What makes Kelly’s approach to truth remarkable even with respect to the hermeneutic, Heideggerian and postmodern positions that I believe he has much in common with is his strongly anticipative orientation. As I have discussed in this paper, Kelly’s emphasis on replicative construing, which instills in us the hope of anticipating the most unusual future in terms of a replicated aspect of the familiar past, is key to understanding the constructs of hostility and guilt. In combination with this, as I have argued, the role of the elaborative choice in shaping the constructs of hostility and guilt reflects not just the hope of construing a replicative order in the universe but presupposes an already radically ordered basis of experience. As I have claimed, the Choice Corollary exemplifies the central importance of process, and the near irrelevance of evaluative content, in the organization of the construct system. Kelly’s elaborative choice reflects the fact that definition or extension of one’s system defines or extends dimensional senses with not enough substance, force, power within themselves to arbitrarily polarize, disrupt, condition and repress via embodied or enculturated sources.

Put differently, the irreducible structural basis of the movement of experiencing is from the start already constituted as a radical intimacy even in experiences of chaos, hostility, and other forms of emotional suffering and trauma. In an infinitely far off future where, Kelly told us time and time again, science and reality may “converge”, the content of this reality doesn’t seem to play a significant role either on the side of the subject (drives, motives, reinforcers, passions) or the world (sensory data, objective facts, social-discursive influences). I think the real content of the vast remote truths Kelly hoped we were progressing toward was utterly secondary to the intricately intercorrelated temporal organization of events, just as the specific content of his clients’ constructs play only a minor role in their mental health. Kelly’s emphasis on temporal process (anticipating the most unusual future in terms of a replicated aspect of then familiar past) over inhering content (the pushes and pulls of recalcitrant elements) implies that all the while he mused over the arrival of a distant day when we successfully construe all events as closely interlocked, with regard to the understanding of human behavior that day had already arrived for him with the advent of PCT.

Conclusion

A psychology in which the in-itself content of events plays second fiddle to the relationship between events and the psychological system is not much of a realism. By the same token, a construct system guided by no ‘internal gyroscope’ other than the abstracting of events along dimensions of similarity and difference doesn’t seem to accord with the kind of inner content-based rationalism that his critics attribute to him. As much as Kelly’s theory traffics in a vocabulary evocative of engineering mechanics, any attempt to pigeonhole personal construct theory as rationalist or realist is faced with a quandary. Idealism and empirical realism belong together as opposite poles of a Cartesian subject-object split. As Merleau-Ponty(1962) explained:

“...its intellectualist [idealist] antithesis is on the same level as empiricism itself. Both take the objective world as the object of their analysis, when this comes first neither in time nor in virtue of its meaning; and both are incapable of expressing the peculiar way in which perceptual consciousness constitutes its object.”

As such, the divide between inside and outside they instantiate results in an articulation of experience in terms of polarizing internal or worldly contents arbitrarily forcing themselves on the experiencing person, what Kelly called ‘pushes’ and pulls’. Beck’s cognitive therapy and Ellis’ rational emotive therapy exemplify the oppositional relationship between a rationalist interpretive template and an assumed independently existing reality that commandeers that schematics. But any search for evidence of such forces in the organization of the personal construct system will come up empty-handed. Pushes and pulls are conspicuously lacking from Kelly’s depiction of the relationship between the construing subject and their world. The Sociality corollary rejects the social constructionist idea of a reciprocally conditioned impetus of enculturation, while the Choice corollary and Hostility definition eschew the notion of blameful, capricious embodied motivating demons.

In fact, in comparison with the organizational dynamics of personal construct theory, it is the embodied intersubjective perspectives I have cited in this paper which deliver the person over to semi-arbitrary shapings from both the social sphere and the person’s own body, encapsulated in sedimented bodily and interpersonally formed norms and practices. It is worth repeating my earlier claim: The construct system does not achieve its integrative continuity through any rationalist internal power. On the contrary, it simply lacks the formidability of value content implied by socially embedded and physically embodied sedimentation necessary to impose the arbitrariness of polarizing conditioning on the movement of experiential process. It is up to the reader to determine whether this radically temporal approach amounts to omitting a vital feature of the experienced world, or if it instead captures the nature of reality in a more profound and intimate fashion.

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