CONSTRUCTS AND WORDS

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What is the main characteristic of constructive explanation? In other words, what is the nature of a construct and, consequently, what kind of relationship is there between constructs and behavior? Kelly stated that a "psychological response is initially and basically the outcome of a construing act."(1955, vol. 1, p. 171) Somewhere else, he asserts it in a more clear way: "Since they construe them differently, they will anticipate them differently and will behave differently as a consequence of their anticipations." (Kelly, 1963, p. 90)

The relationship between constructs and "psychological response" could be considered in terms of either 'causation' or 'implication'. In other words, the question is whether constructs cause behavior or imply it. If one takes Kelly's personal construct theory to suggest a teleological explanation, then one's answer to this question will be that constructs imply and make psychological responses sensible, rather than causing them. Hinkle (1965), who takes Kelly's theory to be an action theory, asserts that the word "explanation" must be confined to causal relationships, and that what is suitable to be used in personal construct theory is the concept of "justification."

Using a teleological language, Kelly (1970) states that the person arranges his or her construct system in a way so as to be able to keep his personality coherence intact:

> So it seems that each person *arranges* his constructions *so that* he can move from one to another in some orderly fashion, either by assigning priorities to those which are to take precedence when doubt or contra-dictions arise, or by arranging implicative relationships, as in Boolean algebra, so he may infer that one construction follows from another. Thus, one's commitments may take priority over his opportunities, his political affiliations may turn him from compassion to power, and his moral imperatives may render him insensitive to the brute that tugs at his sleeve. These are the typical prices men pay *to escape inner chaos.* (Italics added)

In other words, the person, due to having a motivation, arranges his con-structions in a way that he can achieve his desired goal. This motivation is what is characterized in personal construct theory as equal to both push and pull theo-

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ries of motivation, namely anticipating events or one's behavior, and wanting them to be predictable and controlled. Kelly says that the person arranges his constructs "to escape inner chaos". This arrangement, accordingly, provides the possibility for the person to avoid "doubts and contradiction". This makes a construct system work according to a rule-following model. The person shows his psychological responses in the "range of convenience" of the higher rules. Conversely, any behavior, which is not included under the rules, will be avoided. This clearly shows that the relationship between constructs and behavior is not of a causal sort, rather it is of the rule-following kind.

Elsewhere, even in a stronger way, Kelly (1955, vol. 1, p. 83) asserts that implicative relationship or subsumption of constructs under superordinate ones is involved in all kinds of psychological changes.

CONSTRUCTIVE EXPLANATION AND LANGUAGE

So far, it has been emphasized that an implicative, rather than causal, relationship is held in constructive explanation. However, as Husain (1983) has shown, there could not be a logical relationship between constructs as suggested by Kelly, and that, hence, there is a discontinuity between constructs in a construct system.

The fact is that, so far as the explanatory relationship between constructs and psychological response is concerned, there is an ambiguity in Kelly's assertions. On the one hand, he seems to hold a conceptual and sentential nature for constructs where he refers to constructs as "abstractions":

> A construct... is an abstraction. By that we mean it is a property attributed to several events, by means of which they can be differentiated into two homogeneous groups. The invention of such a property is the act of abstracting. To construe events is to use this convenient trick of abstracting them in order to make sense out of them. Each person goes at it in his own way, more or less, and this is where the title of this book, The Psychology of Personal Constructs, comes from. (1963, p. 120).

Of course, Kelly here is trying to differentiate construct from concept. However, could it be possible to talk of "mak[ing] sense out of" events by making abstractions without concepts being involved? In other words, could one talk of meanings without using language? The other thing which supports the sentential nature of constructs in Kelly's view is that he considers the construct system as ordered by a subsumptive relationship between subordinate and superordinate constructs. This indicates that a logical relationship is involved in construct systems. Subsumption is necessarily conceptual, and, hence, is not possible without conceptualization.

On the other hand, however, Kelly maintains that constructs are not necessarily constituted of "words." In this sense, a construct is simply a "discrimina-

tion" imposed upon events that might be due to conditioning, without any verbalization involved. He essentially distinguishes constructs and language.

> The personal construct... bears no essential relation to grammatical structure, syntax, words, language, or even communication. It is simply a construed unit for understanding human processes. (1969, p. 86)

Because of this view, Kelly (1963, p. 139) talks of preverbal constructions. Referring to what Hinkle (1965, p. 19) has called "implicative dilemma," Crochett (1982, p. 67) maintains that constructs should not be confused with words. "Implicative dilemma" refers to the fact that one word might be used to indicate two opposite meanings in different contexts. This shows that words are different from constructs because one word is used to refer to two different constructs.

The point that constructs and their related meaning-making tasks could be non- linguistic has been criticized. Solas (1992, p. 382), for instance, relying on de Saussure and post-Saussurian works on language, asserts that, contrary to Kelly's position, constructs are symbolic systems for which the ordinary language is the most important tool. According to him, meaning is a public affair and that, hence, it is due to "inter-individual intelligibility", rather than personal intentions, and by using differentiating concepts, instead of non-linguistic tools. In a further work, Solas (1995), referring to some (e.g. Solvern, 1990) who consider Kelly's approach to be hermeneutic, insofar as Kelly's approach is hermeneutic it shares the fundamental problematic of hermeneutics: that meaning is anterior language"(p. 70).

Consequences of these two approaches are different in that they lead to different types of explanation. If one considers the nature of constructs and construct systems as abstractive, sentential, and logical, one has to consider the relationship between constructs and behavior as an implicative one. Whereas, taking the nature of constructs and construct system to be non-sentential, one can talk of a causal relationship in explaining the relevance of behavior to constructs. It seems that a causal explanation is involved in what Kelly refers to as follows:

> Moreover, our view of constructs does not limit them to those which are symbolized by words, or those which can be communicated by means of pantomime... A large portion of human behavior follows nameless Whatsoever. Yet they are channels and they are included in the network of dichotomous dimensions with relation to which the person's world is structured. (1963, p. 130)

Kelly takes the explanation of "a large portion of human behavior" to be included in his preferred type of explanation, where he says "they are included in the network of dichotomous dimensions with relation to which the person's world is structured." And it is clear that his preferred kind of explanation is not of a mechanical type. However, where he says that a "large portion of human behavior

follows nameless channels", this needs to be understood in terms of causal and mechanical explanation. Constructs, here, are to be related to behavior in a causal manner on the ground that where the constructs are not symbolized in "any kinds of signposts whatsoever", the person can not handle his constructs to deal with them as tentative hypotheses. This is because symbolization is necessary for any kind of 'handling' of mental components, as is shown by Piaget (1967). And if no handling, then no "alternative" constructs are available for the person to "choose".

"Prototype activation" models suggest one possible explanation of a causal kind. According to these models, as developed by Churchland (1989, pp. 200-209), an organism's brain makes representations of environment stimuli. These representations are shaped as a network containing a general model (prototype) of the things or events represented by the network. When the creature confronts new stimuli in the environment, a "prototype activation" occurs in its neurological structure. From the available prototypes, one that is more similar to the stimulus concerned is activated. In effect, the creature answers to the situation in accordance with the prototype of the situation represented in the network.

It is interesting to note that some, as Husain (1983), have maintained that the relationship between constructs in a personal construct system is more associative than logical. While personal construct theory deals with associations, it, nevertheless, avoids being concerned with the neurophysiological processes involved in it. Instead, Kelly has tried to deal with it in a non-mechanical way.

CONSTRUCTS RESIST LINGUISTIC REDUCTION

As stated before, there have been two rival traditions in psychology concerning the relation between thought and language; one taking the primacy for thought and the other for language. Particularly, in what is termed as the second cognitive revolution or the 'discursive turn' in psychology (Harre, 1995), language has taken a central position. Narratology (Bruner, 1990), narrative psychology (Sarbin, 1986), and dialogical psychology (Shotter, 1995) are among the important constituents of this new turn. Some (Leman, 1970; Solas, 1995) have been convinced that personal construct psychology needs to resolve some of its problems by taking language into account more seriously in dealing with thought and the world outside thought.

Contrary to those who advocate a merely and necessarily linguistic account of constructs in Kelly's theory, it seems important to concur with Kelly that constructs are not necessarily conceptual and expressed in language. This is in fact one of the differences between personal construct psychology and different psychological trends apparent in the "linguistic turn". While the linguistic turn is, in a sense, a reflection against positivistic reductionism, an elegant type of reductionism is still associated with most of the new trends in the linguistic turn: reducing thought or psychological processes to language. It seems that personal construct psychology needs to keep the Kellian distinction between construct and concept

or word in order to save itself from being trapped in this type of reductionism.

To say that language is neither necessary nor sufficient for constructs is not to deny that language plays important roles in constituting construct systems. Language is not just for naming events or labeling discriminatory acts of the mind. Language, rather, has itself a particular discriminatory value and, hence, a vital role in creating a complicated construct system. The ability of language to classify events and provide abstract categories is exactly what is needed in constituting higher order constructs. There is no doubt that linguistic constructs have certain characteristics of their own. But what is doubtful is the reductive claim that all constructs have linguistic nature.

In summary, the fundamental position taken by Kelly to the effect that constructs are not necessarily sentential is a touchstone in personal construct psychology, which prevents this theory from being sunk in the long and multifaceted tradition of reductionism. Yet, this position does not necessarily lead PCP to part with non-mechanical tradition in explanation and embrace a causal manner instead. Teleological explanation as the preferred type of explanation in PCP could be appealed to in preverbal and nonverbal psychological processes. This is in fact an advantage point for this theory because it can provide an integration between different branches of psychology such as child and adult psychology or human and animal psychology.

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"The fairest thing we can experience is the mysteri-
ous. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at
the cradle of true art and true science."

Albert Einstein

"Chaos is the score upon which reality is written."

Henry Miller