George Kelly on Hostility and Anger: **Beyond Philosophies and Psychologies of Blame**

Note: This is a section from my paper 'Personal Construct Theory as Radically Temporal Phenomenology: George Kelly's Challenge to Embodied Intersubjectivity'

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 intersubjective 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 validational 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 co-ordination "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 a person chooses for themself 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. Validational 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 they 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 themself 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 irrealism 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 themself 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)

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