GEORGE KELLY AND HIS PERSONAL CONSTRUCT THEORY. CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVISM AND THE NATURE OF PERSONAL CONSTRUCTS

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Abstract: This paper, based upon a precise analysis of cognitive theories, and especially on Kelly's Personal Construct Theory, explores meaningful aspects related to personality. His two-volume magnum entitled The Psychology of Personal Constructs appeared in 1955, and consists of a distinguished collection of tightly packed ideas about an innovative theory of personality and its usage in a clinical setting. The first volume, A Theory of Personality, comprises three major chapters. The first chapter is entitled Constructive Alternativism. The term is considered the central philosophical assumption which supports Personal Construct Theory. However, not only Kelly's theory, but all psychologists' theories represent just another interpretation of the universe. Chapter Three is entitled The Nature of Personal Constructs and it draws the readers' attention to a vivid elaboration of the theory, whose intention is to bring everything to life. George Alexander Kelly unquestionably belongs to the category of giants within the area of psychology, but, even so, he has not received the attention he deserves.

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Cognitive theories of personality emphasize the importance of thinking and, in most of the books addressed to personality, they are exemplified by the personal constructs of George Kelly, the social-cognitive theory of Albert Bandura, and the cognitive-behavioural theories of the famous Albert Ellis, Aaron Beck and Arnold Lazarus. First and foremost, cognitive theories intend in their major and significant proposals to place the emphasis on the idea that "behavior is determined not simply by the environment but primarily by an individual's attitudes, expectations and beliefs" (**Engler, 2014: 375**). Interpretation, prediction and evaluation of events represent the three key elements that shape behaviour. The most appropriate example of this statement can be found in Shakespeare's play, in which Hamlet explains that "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so" (**Shakespeare, qtd in 2003: 100**).

But, in order to comprehend the role of cognition in various theories of personality, it is absolutely essential to understand the meaning of the word. Therefore, "in ordinary language, cognition refers to the thoughts or ideas we have about the world around us. Thus, in the broadest sense, we are talking about symbols that occur inside us and that help us make sense of the world. Technically, theories of cognition are concerned with how we gather information about events, and how we process the information in order to act on the environment" (**Ryckman, 2008: 381**).

Or, in simpler terms, the concept cognition refers to the act or process of knowing. The usefulness of cognitive processes is acknowledged by most contemporary psychoanalysts. For instance, Maslow and Rogers are two well-known humanistic psychologists who were concerned with perception and the way in which people evaluate and mentally process their experiences. Allport also spoke about human reasoning while Adler is the one who suggested a creative self, that emerges from people's perception or interpretation of experience.

The main difference between all these approaches mentioned above and Kelly's cognitive theory of personality lies in the fact that Kelly made a real effort to explain all

aspects of personality. Moreover, his intention was not to leave out the emotional components, but on the contrary, they were carefully observed and analysed in terms of cognitive processes.

Although there are other well-known theorists who acknowledge the significance of cognition, they did not become prominent supporters of cognitive theories. For example, Freud was not so interested in the intellectual processes of the mind, but he showed his interest for the emotional processes of the heart. At the beginning, "the behavior and learning tradition initially was concerned with the analysis of environmental stimuli and the individual's final overt response to the environment rather than with the intermediate subjective processes that led to the behavior" (**Engler, 2014: 375**). However, as time passed, contemporary theories of personality draw attention to the ways in which the individuals' own world is constructed and gains meaning.

The Psychology of Personal Constructs appeared after much soul-searching, in 1955, when Kelly was in his fiftieth year. The predominant theories at the time were the psychodynamic and behavioural theories, but they were in sharp contrast to Kelly's ideas. His writings describe Personal Construct Theory as "a complete, innovative and elaborated abstraction of how people make sense of their world and themselves" (**Butler, 2009: 3**). Kelly uses the term 'personal construct system', so, the fundamental question for psychology is the following: 'How do people develop, use and contribute to their personal theories?' The first word, 'personal,' has a particular meaning. It underlines the idea that the individuals' own world is different only because the events experienced are interpreted differently.

The second and central term is the 'construct.' It represents the unit of Kelly's theory and its main feature is bipolarity. A construct can be defined as a "person's unique way of looking at life, an intellectual hypothesis devised to explain or interpret events" (**Schultz & Schultz, 2017: 297**). People have great expectations, and they will definitely behave in argument with the requirements that constructs anticipate and define the world's reality. In Kelly's view, personal constructs "are ways of construing the world. They are what enables man, and lower animals too, to chart a course of behavior, explicitly formulated or implicitly acted out, verbally expressed or utterly inarticulate, consistent with other courses of behavior or inconsistent with them, intellectually reasoned or vegetatively sensed" (**Kelly, 1955: 9**). Therefore, personal constructs shape the people's behaviour. Thirdly, Kelly entitled his last concept 'system' and explains that constructs are placed in a particular order, being linked and arranged.

The various sources of influences on Kelly's thinking are from Psychology, Philosophy, Physics and Mathematics. At the time, behaviourism and psychodynamic approaches were considered negative influences, as they did not allow people to make their own decisions and to assume such responsibility on their life. Many years ago, behaviourism did not make the person an active respondent to environmental events, but a passive one. Psychodynamic theorists saw the individual as an uninvolved respondent to internal unconscious forces. It is evident that Kelly's aim was to challenge the dominant psychologies of his time but, at the same time, he tried to express and maintain his honest commitment to developing a more humanistic alternative.

Influences from Philosophy can be easily observed in the pages of his book. John Dewey was a pragmatist and religious thinker who was frequently cited, alongside Bill Warren or Alfred Korzybski. Moreover, "Kelly acknowledged the influence of Hans Vaihinger's philosophy of 'as if' in his formulation of constructive alternativism" (**Fransella, 2003: 25**). The last category of influences involves Physics and Mathematics. It is said that Kelly's degree that comprised these two fields of study played a crucial role in the development of his theory.

The Psychology of Personal Constructs is considered Kelly's masterpiece and his final product of an extensive experience within the fields of personality and clinical psychology. Two heavy volumes containing 1218 pages represent the work of only one person, and the book landed on the desks of distinguished psychologists after its writing presumably took several years.

Kelly acknowledged more than once the contribution of colleagues and students who played an active role in demanding their shared desire not only to listen, but also to discuss every Thursday night his first-draft manuscript written during the week. The psychologist's daughter, Jacqueline, confessed that her mother and Kelly's wife, Gladys, was one of the most enthusiastic guests who enjoyed entertaining the so called Thursday-nighters. Among Kelly and Gladys, other participants like Donald Shoemaker, Hendy Samuels, James Bieri and Jean Burton attended those group meetings.

The first volume, *A Theory of Personality*, is divided into three chapters. Chapter One is entitled Constructive Alternativism and presents several philosophical assumptions, which are of great importance. Without them, the concept of personal constructs would represent nothing more than an additional outcropping of nineteenth-century phenomenology. Basic Theory is the name of the second chapter and it proposes a new theory of personality. In this chapter, Kelly introduces the Fundamental Postulate and then he elaborates the theory by means of eleven corollaries: Individuality corollary, Commonality corollary, Range corollary, Sociality corollary, Construction Corollary, Organization corollary, Dichotomy corollary, Choice corollary, Fragmentation corollary, Experience corollary, Modulation corollary. The author focuses on formal, abstract theoretical explanations. Chapter Three is entitled The Nature of Personal Constructs and it draws the readers' attention to a vivid elaboration of the theory, whose intention is to bring everything to life.

Reading Kelly is like walking into a new territory because many of the traditional concepts were avoided in personality theorizing. In the Introduction of the first volume, the author warns the reader that on the pages that follow, he will not find many of the famous landmarks of psychology theory. For instance, the terms learning, motivation, emotions, ego, unconscious, stimuli or cognition, are so honourably integrated into most psychological texts, but they scarcely appear in this book. The words specified above are not entirely omitted from Kelly's work, but they take the advantage of experiencing new meanings that become part of his philosophy of constructive alternativism.

Surprisingly or not, the bibliography is not composed of too many references. Although Kelly distanced himself from Sigmund Freud, he is the most quoted and his name appears in no more and no less than thirteen pages. Undoubtedly, Kelly's Personal Construct Theory is completely different from the theories that have already been discussed. Therefore, the following question comes into the reader's mind: 'How can people comprehend human personality without taking into consideration fundamental ideas, such as motivation or emotion?'

Kelly provided an adequate response to this question. He explained that each individual creates a set of cognitive constructs related to the environment. In other words, the interpretation and organisation of events can be achieved via a system or a pattern. The latter contributes to the development of predictions, which formulate people's responses and lead their actions. In Kelly's perspective, understanding personality is first and foremost, understanding specific patterns. He also emphasizes the idea that events themselves are not as important as their interpretation.

George Kelly claims that human behaviour is based not only on reality, but also on people's perception of reality. The psychologist even rejects Skinner's idea that behaviour is shaped by the environment, a concept that corresponds to reality. Extreme phenomenology emphasizes the idea that the only reality is nothing but what people perceive. In Kelly's

perspective, the universe is real, but it is understood by distinct people in different ways. The key to anticipate people's behaviour is held by their personal constructs or by various means of construing and explaining events. Personal Construct Theory does not intend to make nature comprehensible, being regarded as a theory of people's construction of events.

Kelly came up not only with the hypothesis that the universe is real but also with the idea that it functions as an integral, single unit, and, more importantly, its imaginable parts interact precisely with each other. In addition, the universe exists by happening so, it is endlessly changing. Therefore, not only the universe is real, but also the people's thoughts. Reality is understood and explained in completely different ways, and the same individual has the ability to change the view of the world. Or, in other words, "people always have alternative ways of looking at things" (**Feist & Feist, 2008: 552**).

This article draws attention to Kelly's first and last chapters from the first volume, *A Theory of Personality*. Chapter One is entitled Constructive Alternativism and it underlines Kelly's theory of cognition, asstering that "all our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement" (**Kelly, 1955: 15**). The philosophy of constructive alternativism underlines the fact that gathering facts piece-by-piece does not lead to the truth but, on the contrary, it presents unusual facts, which can be seen from various perspectives. The philosophical position of constructive alternativism contributed to the development of Kelly's theory of personality. It represents "the assumption that any one event is open to a variety of interpretations" (**Engler, 2014: 380**). Constructive alternativism focuses on the idea that human beings are capable of modifying or replacing their present interpretation of events. In colloquial terms, they can always and easily change their minds, and their behaviour is never wholly determined.

At the beginning of the book, Kelly invited his readers to look at themselves and other people as scientists, and he proposed "that every man is, in his own particular way, a scientist" (**Kelly, 1955: 5**). A scientist's power is to predict and control the events. However, he constantly finds himself in the situation of evaluating and re-evaluating distinct experiences while making real efforts to capitalise on his interpretation, in order to comprehend and to have power over the world that surrounds him.

Kelly shared the same opinion as Adler in terms of events. They both agreed that events themselves are not as significant as someone's interpretation of events. However, Kelly believes that the only one that enjoys the privilege of holding the key to someone's future is the person, not the fact. Conclusions are not read aloud by facts and events, as their intention is to present meaning that can be easily revealed. The possibility of choice represents an outstanding advantage but, people should also be responsible for the way in which they decide to construe their world. New ideas are not always welcomed and, "like scientists in general and personality theorists in particular, we often find restructuring disturbing and thus hold on to ideas that are comfortable and theories that are well established" (**Feist & Feist, 2008: 552**).

Thus, every theory, including Personal Construct Theory, represents a different interpretation of the universe, which will finally bring into existence a more satisfactory alternative interpretation. According to Kelly, "a theory may be considered as a way of binding together a multitude of facts so that one may comprehend them all at once" (**Kelly, 1955: 18**). Holding together a great number of facts is not the only function that a good theory performs. It should also provide both an explicit and general framework, in which the theory is nothing more than a useful tool for those who try to discover, anticipate and explore the future. From a scientific point of view, the main criteria of a theory is the fertility in shaping contemporary ideas. This involves hypotheses, experiments and invention. The hypotheses should be formulated, the experiments motivated, and the invention inspired.

But, from a psychological point of view, "a good theory should suggest predictions concerning people's behavior in a wide range of circumstances. It should lead to extensive psychological research to determine whether of not those predictions can be substantiated. It should also encourage the invention of new approaches to the solution of the problems of man and his society" (**24**).

A good psychological theory needs to provide testable hypothesis, which should be palpably true. Moreover, it should be readily observable in terms of abstractions and it has to engage the attention of properties, rather than categories. Operationalism is another criterion emphasized by Kelly, in fact an important one, because it contributes to the progress of experiments, encouraging them to notice things rather than principles. The psychologist suggests the idea that the term mentioned above expresses that scientific constructs can be clearly characterized in relation to operations or regular sequence of events.

'Modifiability' and 'expandability' are two other essential features of a good scientific theory. 'Experiment' and 'hypothesis' are closely linked to each other, as the former is characterized around the latter, which is supposed to be true, but only for a short time. Therefore, the scientist is free to abandon his hypothesis in case his predictions do not appear, or if in his vision there is no other angle. A scientific theory needs to be charged with a basis for making accurate predictions, which are developed in relation to hypotheses and, after that, they are exposed to a test. A good hypothesis can be proved to be valid, real, only if the experiment is correctly designed. But, in order to validate it, the scientist must pay a special attention to the design of the experiment.

In a situation in which two hypotheses have revealed an identical prediction, there is some doubt regarding the examination of each hypothesis. Therefore, the experiment is generally designed with the particular purpose of expressing the results as a final product of any of the two hypotheses entitled the experimental hypothesis and null hypothesis. The former originates from one's theoretical position, but is can also derive from other systematic sources. The latter one stands as an equivalent of one's prediction under purposeless or even chance conditions.

A testable hypothesis is emphasized in three ways: "(1) on may deduce it from explicit theory; (2) one may induce it from observation – for example, from clinical experience; (3) one may eschew logical procedures and go after it with a statistical dragnet" (**Kelly, 1955: 32**).

Each scientist has a theory about human behaviour and the theory verifies several hypotheses in an opposite direction to reality. His motivation can be characterized by simply saying that "the scientist's ultimate aim is to predict and control." This is a summary statement that psychologists frequently like to quote in characterizing their own aspirations. Yet, curiously enough, "psychologists rarely credit the human subjects in their experiments with having similar aspirations" (**5**). Personal constructs are arranged in everyone's mind for interpreting, predicting and controlling the environment and behaviour and the events are determined by the creative interpretation of reality.

In Chapter Three, *The Nature of Personal Constructs,* the author presents an elaborated description of the psychology of personal constructs. He defines the construct as "a way in which some things are construed as being alike and yet different from others" (**105**), and which also has a limited range of convenience. There is only a slight possibility that a person is capable of expressing everything related to his construction system. Besides this important aspect, people have the tendency to give voice to their constructs in an incomplete manner.

In order to demonstrate the incomplete expression of a construct, the psychologist puts the following example at the disposal of the reader: "Mary and Alice have gentle dispositions but neither of them is as attractive as Jane" (**Kelly, 1955: 111**). This sentence

involves two distinct constructs, respectively gentleness and attractiveness. In characterizing one or more people, an adjective is generally chosen and it includes a construct's inclusive and exclusive features occurring at the same time. If Mary is considered to be a gentle person, it means that there is at least another person in the world who is also gentle, or, on the contrary, a person who is not gentle, but there is also a third possibility in which at least two persons are not gentle. For a more logical and psychological understanding, expressing a construct requires not less than two similar things and only one which is different.

Proper names are considered expressions of constructs. A name is defined as "a way of seeing a likeness in one group of events which distinguishes it from another group of events" (**114**). In the example illustrated earlier, there are two groups entitled 'Mary's events' and 'un-Mary-like events.' The proper name 'Mary' and even other names are just a kind of construction of events. The common expression 'Everything is good' refers to a universal similarity, but if everyone is gentle, the construct of gentleness has an insignificant meaning. Kelly thought about a contrast to 'gentleness' and he chose the noun 'aggressiveness.' The author exemplified the two opposite words in given situations and relations, such as parent-child relation or psychotherapist-client relation. Due to the fact that constructs are basically personal, they often encounter particular problems of interpretation, as many of them are not shared with ease.

In this last chapter analysed, Kelly also turns his attention to the self-construct, which is "the personal construct that distinguishes those elements that relate to oneself from those that involve other people" (**Ewen, 2010: 328**). In other words, the concept makes reference to certain events possessing similar characteristics, and which are, simultaneously, different from others.

Personal constructs are people's own creation and the terms assigned require some personal implications as well. Consequently, the way in which other people are construed furnishes precious, important clues about their own self-concept: "One cannot call another person a bastard without making bastardy a dimension of his own life also" (**Kelly, 1955: 133**).

Among Kelly's formal aspects of constructs are context, pole, contrast, range and focus of convenience, elements, emergence, implicitness and likeliness end. A construct's range of convenience comprises the valuable, particular things to which the user considers its application as being useful. A construct's focus of convenience, on the other hand, includes several things, whose application is maximally helpful.

The 'poles' can be defined as the two opposites that characterize a personal construct, and which are located at each end of its dichotomy. Each pole is associated with elements, different from those at the other pole. 'Elements' are the things or even events that are abstracted by a construct. They represent "the things described by a personal construct; may be people, inanimate objects, events or even one or both poles of another construct" (**Ewen, 2010: 327**).

The construct has also a 'context,' which, in its turn, formed the elements, to which it is commonly applied. The context is more limited in comparison with the range of convenience as it focuses not on the situations in which someone utilizes a construct, but on the circumstances that offers the construct the opportunity to become known. However, the context is more comprehensive if it is compared to the focus of convenience, because of the construct's emergence in situations in which its utilization has not completely the most positive qualities.

The 'contrast' is another essential formal aspect which underlines the strong connection between the two poles of a construct. When someone has in mind to emphasize the basic elements at one pole of a construct, then the expression 'likeliness end' is chosen. It makes a clear reference to the pole at which these fundamental constituents are classified by

the construction. However, the author suggests that, in stark contrast to likeliness end, there is contrast end, an aspect which indicates the other pole. It consists of all the elements placed at the opposite pole of a construct.

In order to explain 'emergence,' Kelly follows Lyle's construct, according to which the emergent pole of a construct is the one that encompasses most of the immediately detected context. Once more in this chapter, the psychologist uses the sentence "Mary and Alice are gentle but Jane is aggressive" (**Kelly, 1955: 138**). Using this statement as an example, he attempts to explain that gentleness is emergent for the reason that it concerns two thirds of the context. The emergent pole has special importance, given the fact that it is repeatedly mentioned in an explicit manner, the same as in the example "Mary and Alice are gentle but Jane is not" (**138**).

The latter aspect is 'implicitness,' and for a better understanding, Kelly has taken advantage of Lyle's thinking once more. Frequently, a construct shall include an implicit pole, which is set in opposition to the emergent pole. This former pole is hardly ever made known by name, and at times, people have no significance for it, as it is symbolized exclusively by the emergent pole.

The 'symbol' is regarded as a key element in the construct's context, and it is a useful, extremely valuable tool. Its aim is not only to shape thought, but also to help make more efficient use of it. Over time, the usage of symbolism has gained several meanings, as it has enjoyed even a good trick. Numerous shapes and sounds are not introduced by natural means into the context of constructs as they were one of the elements. They develop into a symbol of the construct. For instance, the noun 'gentleness' is assigned to Mary and Alice, and in a new context, the idea sounds like this: 'Mary, Alice, and gentleness versus Jane.'

Symbolism can be better understood if Mary represents the symbol for gentleness and Jane the one for attractiveness. Kelly also emphasizes other personal constructs. Mother is the symbol for social belongingness, while father belongs to the symbol for maturity. Therefore, "if symbolism is a matter of letting one of the elements in the context of a construct appear as the representative of the construct itself, then communication is a matter or reproducing the symbolic element in hopes of eliciting a parallel construct in another person" (**140**). There is the possibility to use a word as a symbol, but if this does not work, then the word could not be integrated into the same kind of context, or that it could not be used as a symbol of identical construct.

The communication between a client and a therapist does not rely on simple verbal statements which involve particular personal nature of the client's constructs. To make the therapist comprehend, an extended list of contextual elements should be taken into consideration. Without the existence of contemporary elements that demonstrates and clarifies the context, and without a resistant personal construct, communication with a therapist becomes a challenging duty. Moreover, communication proves to be difficult if the therapist cannot comprehend the subordinate constructs from which a certain construct is shaped, or if the construct in its turn is a role-governing.

'Axis' or 'dimensions' are only two of many other concepts attributed to the notion of a construct. Kelly suggests the idea that constructs are fundamentally dichotomous, and that systems are built as dichotomous. However, the development of gradations along a dimensional line continues to be a possibility. Some of the most important scales presented in this chapter are Hierarchical, Additive, Abstracted, Approximation or Accumulation. In order to explain each scale individually, the psychologist exemplifies the construct 'integrity vs. disintegrity'.

Constructs can be evaluated more easily if several comprehensive dimensions are being used. The well-known 'abstract vs. concrete' dimension is one of the most common. Besides Kelly's interest in the construct dimensions, McGaughran's study also focuses on the

dimensions' functional usefulness. The writer has become aware of the fact that "the classical scheme of abstract vs. concrete was not describing the thinking of his subjects in a manner that would enable him to predict how they would operate from one situation to another" (**Kelly, 1955: 152**).

The dimensions of 'permeability' and 'communicability' were also introduced, according to which individual behaviour may be predicted. A permeable construct is one "that readily admits new elements to its range of convenience, and is therefore easily revised in the light of experience" (**Ewen, 2010: 327**). In other words, it is permeable if it admits the existence of recently detected elements to its context, while a construct is impermeable when it refuses to accept elements on the basis of their innovation.

A preemptive construct can be defined as "one which preempts its elements for membership in its own realm exclusively" (**Kelly, 1955: 156**). On the other hand, the constellatory construct is almost as rigid as the previous one, because it restricts the ways in which different constructs can be used. It follows a stereotyped or typological thinking, as it improves the realm membership of its elements. The last construct discussed in this chapter is the 'propositional' one, a construct that does not carry any implications concerning the other realm memberships of its own elements.

For a better understanding of the constructs exemplified, George Kelly (**1955: 156-157**) offers a suitable example for each one:

a. An impermeable construct: "If ball comprises certain things, then no other things can be balls" or "These and these only are balls";

b. A permeable construct: "If ball comprises certain things then there must be still other things which are balls";

c. A preemptive construct: "Anything which is a ball can be nothing but a ball" or "This is nothing but a ball";

d. A constellatory construct: "Anything which is a ball has got to be…" or "Since this is a ball, it must be round, resilient and small enough to hold in the hand".

Kelly continues his range of ideas admitting that "a person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events" (**Kelly, 1955: 157**). Any human being is interested in anticipating events. If the event occurs, the prediction is validated, but otherwise, it is invalidated. In the author's opinion, "validation represents the compatibility (subjectively construed) between one's prediction and the outcome he observes. Invalidation represents incompatibility (subjectively construed) between one's prediction and the outcome he observes" (**158**).

'Validation' and 'reinforcement' are two distinct concepts. On one side, reinforcement focuses mainly on the fulfilment of people's needs, and on the other side, validation concerns only a pleasant or unpleasant verification of a prediction. If new constructs do not maintain favourable conditions, their formation will automatically be delayed. This is the moment when certain unfriendly conditions make their appearance in the formation of new constructs. 'Threat' is the first and most important condition. It is "a characteristic of a construct's relation to the superordinate constructs in a system. A construct is threatening when it is itself an element in a next-higher-order constructs upon which the person is dependent for his living" (**166**). Kelly offers the construct of danger as an example. It represents a threat when it develops into a key element in the context of injury or even death.

Another unfavourable condition is the preoccupation with old material. On some occasions, old constructs are nor permeable and, practically, they are of no use in dealing with certain future events. The lack of laboratory is the last unfriendly condition to the formation of new constructs. A laboratory depicts "a situation in which there is present, for the person to re-sort, a sufficient amount of the stuff out of which new constructs can be

formed" (**169**). Secondly, it "provides a convenient insulation from other variables, the complexities of which might swamp the person who is trying to form new constructs in a necessarily limited sphere" (**169**). Finally, the laboratory offers someone the opportunity to explore in a limited sphere.

In the last part of this chapter, the author of the book asks three questions:

'How can a person deal with experience?'

'What is the person if not a product of experience?' and

'What else can a person do except reacting to experience?'.

'Experience' is generally used to express a set of personally construed events. It represents only a fraction of what people know so far, and it is not required to be valid. There is no guarantee in terms of validity of personal constructs, or regarding the duration of experience.

The word experience is defined as "that portion of the universe which is happening to us – that is, which is successively construed by us – and the increase of experience is a function, not of the hodgepodge of events which we have construed, or of the time spent being aware of them, but of the successive revision of our construct system in the general direction of increased validity" (**Kelly, 1955: 172**).

Finally, Kelly reminds the reader that his psychology of personal constructs is under no circumstances a theory about a man, but instead, a theory of man. The psychologist's principal activity is to make the man aware of what means to be human. The main theme of the book is represented by the personal adventure of the man, including his attempts and ontology and is focused on that incessantly journey, until the man has seized it in his own hands. Therefore, the psychology of personal construct is seen as "a disciplined psychology of the inner outlook, a psychology that is, on the one hand, an unabashed alternative to the scientific psychologies of the outer look, and, on the other, a calculated step beyond the experiential psychologies of the inner feelings" (**183**).

The purpose of this article was to analyse and interpret the first and the last chapters from Kelly's volume, *A Theory of personality*. To conclude, George Alexander Kelly remains one of the greatest and most significant psychologists and personality theorists of the middle of the 20th century.

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