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The Psychology of Personal Constructs as a Response to the Ethical

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ABSTRACT

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   Although George Kelly's psychology of personal constructs was not originally designed to address and account for experiences of self-betrayal, as described by Warner (1986, 2001), Olson (2004, 2007), Olson and Israelson (2007), Williams (2005), and others (Arbinger, 2000), his theory (with minor modifications) may help illuminate the psychology behind the sudden gestaltic shifts and moral transformations experienced by individuals in Warner's (1986, 2001) stories, without undoing any of Warner's existing analysis of self-betrayal.

   The end vision of the thesis is a structured "theory of personality," so to speak, that borrows Kelly's insights and extends them to the phenomenon of self-betrayal. This approach allows us to (1) help others make their self-betraying constructs explicit, (2) measure and document them when we do, (3) communicate those constructs to others, (4) and do all of these things while conceptualizing human beings as moral agents responding to their moral sense, in addition to scientists seeking to predict and control their environment.

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Introduction

In this thesis, I present an expansion of George Kelly's psychology of personal constructs, one that envisions human beings as *moral agents* as well as scientists. Kelly's theory provided valuable insights into human behavior by employing the useful metaphor of "man-the-scientist" (Kelly, 1963, p. 4), and I think that his psychology of personal constructs can offer additional insights if we employ his ideas to accounting for experiences of self-betrayal, as described by Warner (1986, 2001), Olson (2004, 2007), Olson and Israelson (2007), Williams (2005), and others (Arbinger, 2000). Because self-betrayal is a phenomenon that was not originally considered in Kelly's analysis, applying Kelly's insights to the experience will require minor modifications to his theory. However, because Kelly acknowledged the possibility of other legitimate ways to construe an individual's primary motives and reasons for acting (Kelly, p. 47), he would not object to me expounding how his theory would look with additional assumptive presuppositions.

This thesis will explore the ways in which Kelly's insights can illuminate the phenomenon of self-betrayal, and in a way that does not detract from previous work done in the area—in fact, this analysis will adopt as one of its assumptions the theoretical perspective on self-betrayal already articulated by Warner and others. The structure of the thesis is as follows: First, I will I will describe the phenomenon of self-betrayal, as explained by Warner (1986, 2001), Olson (2004, 2007), Olson and Israelson (2007), Williams (2005), and others (Arbinger, 2000). Then, I will briefly summarize Kelly's approach to constructive alternativism, and then I will show how Kelly's psychology of personal constructs, complete with its fundamental postulate and corollaries (although

with slight modifications), provides a compelling language to describe and account for experiences of self-betrayal. Finally, I will present some interesting new research directions suggested by this approach.

Self-betrayal Theory

The Moral Sense

To start, I first wish to introduce some of the groundwork laid by Warner (1986, 2001), Olson (2004; 2007), Williams (2000, 2005; 2012), and others (Arbinger, 2000) regarding the experience of self-betrayal. I would like to borrow from them the assumption that human beings innately possess a moral sense of how they ought to treat others in their lives. This moral sense is often experienced as an invitation to treat others as persons with needs, hopes, cares, and fears just as real and relevant as one's own (Arbinger 2000). Warner (1986) shares an anecdote that illustrates this. According to Warner (1986), a man named Marty was sleeping next to his wife when he heard the baby crying in the next room. He described his experience this way:

> At that moment, I had a fleeting feeling, a feeling that if I got up quickly I might be able to see what was wrong before my wife would have to wake up. I don't think it was even a thought because it went too fast for me to say it out in my mind. It was a feeling that this was something I really ought to do. (Warner, 1986, p. 1)

This "fleeting feeling" that there "was something [he] really ought to do," Warner (1986) and others assert, is something that most—if not all—human beings experience on a regular basis. Olson (2004) explains, "The fundamental notion is that humans are relational in the sense that in the presence of the Other (any other person), we experience

a moral call and obligation to that Other. This includes honoring our felt sense of how to do right by that other person" (p. 4). This moral call, this sense that individuals have of how they ought to treat others is usually subtle, and it is this sense that Marty was experiencing in the anecdote described above. According to Williams (2005),

> The key element in the narrative … is that in that first fleeting moment, Marty sensed—or felt—the ethical. This is the aboriginal and most authentic "still small voice" of the ethical ... Marty knew what was right, and, what is more, he felt that he ought to do it—he felt an obligation. He felt the obligation to an other, to a (sleepy) face. (p. 13)

Warner (2001) asserts that Marty's experience is far from unique. He explains that we "are constantly receiving signals from others that reveal something of their needs and hopes and fears," and that in those moments "we are called upon by others' unspoken requests, expressed in their faces and gestures and voices, to treat them with consideration and respect" (Warner, 2001, p. 129) Further, he asserts, "To be a person in a family or community is to pick up from others such gently expressed imperatives as these" (Warner, 2001, p. 129).

Olson describes similar reports from others who claim to have experienced this moral call or felt obligation to others. Some examples include, "I sensed my neighbor needed help in moving his furniture," "I believed I ought to help my mom with the dishes," and "I sensed I was being harsh with my child" (Olson & Israelson, 2007) Another anecdote that Olson (2012) shares is from a sixteen year-old participant in a workshop:

> My mom was home late for work and asked me to drive to the store for avocados

and lettuce, and get back so we could still have an on-time dinner with dad. I

drove to the market and as I was entering the store, an elderly woman was

virtually hobbling out of the store with two bags of groceries which were

obviously too heavy. As I passed her, I had the feeling I ought to offer to help her

with her groceries. (p. 32)

Olson (2012) explains, "This example gives us qualitative evidence that it is

possible for humans to experience an ethical call, and thus sustains the fact that humans

have a moral sense—especially regarding how to treat others" (Olson, 2012, p. 32). As a

consequence, Olson (2004) continues, "The perspective also installs the assumption of

moral agency, meaning that any individual, in the present moment, has the capacity to

live true or false to their personally felt sense of what is right" (p. 4). This moral sense,

and our capacity to respond to or resist it, makes the individual a *moral agent*.

Williams and Gantt (2012) argue that this moral sense is part and parcel with our

very humanity. "To be human at all, then," they explain, "is to possess a moral sense—at

the very core of our being—of the obligation to account for ourselves, to answer for our

choices and actions (or inactions) in the face of another person's needs or suffering" (pp.

9-10). In short, whenever we experience the summons of our moral sense, we *also* sense

an obligation to account for how we discharge our felt responsibilities. The experiences

are not two separate obligations, but are really one and the same. *To the extent we*

experience a moral call, we cannot help but make it a moral requirement of ourselves.

Self-betrayal

Whenever an individual experiences a moral call and then neglects to respond to

that moral call, he engages in what Warner and Olson refer to as "self-betrayal" (Warner,

1986). Olson (2007) explains, "Self-betrayal is a free act of a morally responsible person. To be in self-betrayal is to go against our own sense of what is right to do" (p. 5). He uses that term because when an individual feels that there is something he ought to, he expects himself to do it, in the sense that it is impossible to sense that something is right without holding oneself to that standard. For that reason, Warner (1986) explains, "It's impossible to betray oneself without seeking to excuse or justify oneself" (p. 1). He continues:

> Whether childishly rationalizing his moral failures or self-righteously claiming to be morally superior, the self-betrayer is blaming others and excusing or justifying himself. He can consider himself in the clear only if he can successfully find fault in others for whatever he is thinking or doing. There's no way around this. There's no possibility of betraying oneself without living a lie—no possibility of sinning in a straightforward, guileless, and open manner (Warner, 1986, p. 2).

Whenever we attempt to rationalize, excuse, or justify our refusal to respond to our moral sense, we are *in that very act* demonstrating that we hold ourselves accountable to that moral sense. Warner (1986) explains, "We do it by carrying out the refusal in such a way that it seems to us that we are doing the very best we can under the circumstances. We make the moral requirement of ourselves by denying that we are doing what we're doing" (p. 2).

The rest of Marty's account provides a perfect example of this. When he felt that he ought to get up and tend the baby so his wife could sleep, he reports that he "didn't do it" (Warner, 1986, p. 1). He continues:

> I didn't go right back to sleep either. It bugged me that my wife wasn't waking up. I kept thinking it was her job. She has her work and I have mine. Mine starts early.

She can sleep in. Besides, I was exhausted. Besides that, I never really know how

to handle the baby. Maybe she was lying there waiting for me to get up. Why did

I have to feel guilty when I'm only trying to get some sleep so I can do well on

the job? She was the one who wanted to have this kid in the first place. (Warner,

1986, p. 1).

Marty describes how he immediately began to rationalize his refusal to respond to

his moral sense. By rationalizing, he acknowledges that he indeed felt that it was

something he ought to do. Otherwise, there would be no reason for him to rationalize his

choice. Warner (1986) explains, "Someone who is straightforwardly doing what seems to

him right will have no cause to excuse or justify himself" (p. 3). This illustrates what

Warner (1986) meant when he wote that we "make the moral requirement of ourselves,"

(p. 2) even in our refusal to comply with our moral sense, and this is why Warner refers

to the refusal to comply as "*self*-betrayal." For this reason, Warner (1986, 2001), Olson

(2004, 2012; 2007), Williams (2000, 2005; 2012) and others claim that rationalization

and justification is the inescapable consequence of self-betrayal. As Olson (Olson)

explains, "The price of self-betrayal … is to rationalize, blame others and in numerous

ways shift our own felt responsibility to something or someone else. To rationalize and

justify our wrongdoing takes a lot of energy, and, once we are betraying ourselves, we are

not at peace psychologically" (p. 5).

To illustrate this, Olson (2012) recounts the remainder of the teenager's

experience while buying groceries for his mother. After seeing the old lady struggling to

carry groceries, he felt he should help her carry them.

I had the feeling I ought to offer to help her . . . but instead I quickened my step

and headed for the produce section. Once I got there, I wasn't even thinking of avocados and lettuce. I was turning thoughts over in my mind about the lady with the groceries. I was irritated, and was silently asking myself questions such as: "Why doesn't that lady use a shopping cart? If those bags are too heavy, why doesn't she make two trips?" (Olson, 2012, p. 32)

This anecdote demonstrates what Olson means when he says that individuals who engage in self-betrayal are not at peace psychologically. Olson (2012) explains that as someone engages in self-betrayal, "their knowledge and skills are turned from being tools for the solution of problems, to being weapons in the conduct of contentious, problematic interaction" (p. 32). They begin to make sense of the world in ways that make their wrongdoing seem right, and they persist in construing the world this way, defensively, so long as they persist in ignoring their moral call. In both Marty's story and the teenager's story, they continually resisted the moral call, long after it was first apparent. Williams (2005) explains, "It must be kept in mind here, however, that the ethical call that Marty reports as being fleeting continued through the events related in the story—through the whole of the self-betrayal. If this were not, in fact, the case, there would have been nothing to sustain the self-betraying actions which followed the initial moral impulse" (p. 16). In other words, so long as the person feels the need to justify, rationalize, and excuse his actions, he is *continually* ignoring his moral sense.

In addition, it is not so much *whether* a person does what his moral sense dictates that constitutes an act of self-betrayal, but *how* a person does it. Marty *could* have gotten up to tend the baby, but he could have done so resentfully. In that moment, he would still be engaged in self-betrayal. According to Warner (2001), "Our insensitivity as self-

betrayers is best described not as attending to ourselves rather than to others, but rather as attending to others *for our sake* rather than *for their sake*" (pp. 135, emphasis in original). In essence, one can imagine that moral promptings such as Marty's carry with them the imperative to comply *for the sake of the other*, rather than for the sake of the self. Moral promptings carry with them the duty to comply for the right reasons (Arbinger 2000).

Summary

I use, as an assumptive presupposition of the following analysis, Warner (1986, 2001), Olson (2004; 2007), Williams (2000, 2005; 2012), and others' (Arbinger, 2000) account of self-betrayal and the consequences of violating our moral sense. I assume that individuals (1) possess a moral sense of how they ought to act towards others, (2) can freely choose to follow or betray that moral sense, and (3) invariably rationalize, justify, and excuse their choice so long as they betray it.

I believe that Kelly's psychology of personal constructs can help elaborate on what happens *psychologically* in moments of self-betrayal. While Warner carefully articulated the differences in an individual's "way of being" towards others when they are self-betrayed versus when they are not, his writings are not as clear as to what happens *psychologically* when an individual betrays his or her moral sense (Warner, 2001). The corollaries to Kelly's fundamental postulate provides an insightful look into how construct systems operate, and those insights may help illuminate more precisely than Warner has been able to how an individual's construct system changes as he or she moves from a responsive way of being towards others to a self-justifying lifestyle (Warner 2001). For the remainder of this thesis, I will detail Kelly's psychology of personal constructs, and then explore how each of his insights can help make sense of and

account for experiences of self-betrayal.

Looking at Self-betrayal through the Lens Personal Construct Theory

Constructive Alternativism

Kelly grounds his approach in what he called the perspective of constructive alternativism. Constructive alternativism is simply the assumption that there are always alternative ways to construe our environment and our experiences. In other words, the way we make sense of the world is always simply one amongst competing possibilities.

About Constructive Alternativism

There are at least two major implications of constructive alternativism that I would like to address. The first is embedded in the word "constructive." This word is associated with the words "construe" and "construct." To construe means to actively make sense of or interpret a person's experiences. According to Kelly (1963), "By construing we mean 'placing an interpretation': a person places an interpretation upon what is construed" (p. 50). Kelly (1963) further states that "man looks at his world through transparent patterns or templets which he <u>creates</u> and then attempts to fit over the realities of which the world is composed … Let us give the name *constructs* to these patterns which are tentatively tried on for size" (p. 9, emphasis added). The word "construct" is used here to refer to the particular interpretation a person has placed upon that which he *construes*.

A major implication of the term *construct* is that our interpretations of other people's actions or our own experiences are not simply handed to us by nature. In the above statement by Kelly, for example, constructs are things that a person *creates*. There is a sense in which they are *man-made* and are the product of human creativity.

According to Kelly (1963), when a person *construes*, he "erects a structure, within the framework of which the substance [that which is construed] takes shape or assumes meaning" (p. 50). The word "erect" implies the creative participation of the individual that construes. Kelly (1963) continues, "The substance which he construes does not produce the structure; the person does" (p. 50). So the first implication of constructive alternativism is that we are the creative agents of our worldview. The way we make sense of experiences is a product of human inventiveness.

The second implication of constructive alternativism is embedded in the term "alternativism." Simply put, "there are various ways in which the world is construed" (Kelly, 1963, p. 14). Since, according to Kelly (1963), the world of invention is limited only by human imagination, "All of our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement. … We take the stand that there are always some alternative constructions available to choose among in dealing with the world" (p. 15). In other words, because our ideas about the world are inventions, rather than discoveries, they can always be crafted more or less differently than they currently are. Thus, the second implication of constructive alternativism is that there is *possibility* in our way of interpreting reality. Together the two central implications of constructive alternativism are that our way of making sense of the world is the product of our creative capacity and is always simply one way of making sense of the world among alternatives.

Why Constructive Alternativism?

Constructive alternativism allows for possibility in our ideological, philosophical, and intellectual construals of reality. Since agency requires possibility (see, for example, Slife, 2002), constructive alternativism might allow human agency a role in an

individual's personal perspective on the world. In that sense, together with agency, constructive alternativism is a necessary assumption behind Warner's (1986) theory of self-betrayal and subsequent work on how self-betrayal affects a person's outlook on the world (Olson, 2004, 2007; Olson & Israelson, 2007; Warner, 2001; Williams, 2005).

Also, constructive alternativism implies that rational people may see things differently, and not simply out of ignorance or a refusal to believe the truth but because they have constructed different interpretations of their experiences. It allows for a heterogeneity of worldviews and the possibility of ideological and interpretive pluralism among reasonable people. When we see reason and rationality as a creative process, we can understand that rational people do not by necessity converge on the same worldview, but may often diverge in their views of the world by virtue of their rationality, rather than in spite of it. In short, constructive alternativism preserves possibility in the world of ideas—the possibility of perpetually competing (but also rational) paradigms of thought that do not ultimately converge into one. This is an advantage for theoretical psychologists who wish to emphasize that traditional, naturalistic approaches to psychology compete with radically different—albeit equally rational, legitimate, and coherent—alternative paradigms (Slife & Reber, 2009).

In essence, when we assume constructive alternativism, we understand reason as "a purely human, but creative power" and "a faculty for inventing interpretations of and responses to experience" (Letwin & Reynolds, 2005, p. 309). "In this picture," Letwin and Reynolds (2005) explain, "if a person's faculties are in good order, he exercises his rationality in whatever he is doing because he is always interpreting his experience and responding in the manner that he selects. This means that whenever a man is aware of

anything, he has made something of it" (p. 329). And, as Kelly (1963) says, "man creates his own ways of seeing the world in which he lives, the world does not create them for him" (p. 12). This perspective emphasizes reason as an individual's imaginative capacity to give meaning to his experiences. We can construe human beings as *meaning-makers*.

From this perspective, then, there is no single path that rationality *must* follow. A person may make sense of his or her experiences in any number of ways. For example, we may make sense of a trip to the fast food restaurant as a deserved reward after dieting for a lengthy time, or perhaps the trip is as an unfortunate indulgence after a long time of resisting temptation. Whichever way a person makes sense of his experience is his choice. As Letwin and Reynolds (2005) explain, "In short, to say that a man is a rational being is to say … that things appear to him as he chooses to see them" (p. 329). When we see rationality this way, we see that all of human action and perception involves choice. Constructive alternativism makes it possible to understand human beings as the agents of their worldviews and, therefore, in some ways accountable for them.

Constructive Alternativism and Self-betrayal

As I have studied self-betrayal theory, it has seemed to me that the theory depends on the assumption that human beings are the primary agents of their worldview, and that they can always construe the world differently than they currently do. An example from The Arbinger Institutes's book, *Leadership and Self-deception*, illustrates what I mean. A story is told about two different individuals, each sitting in an airplane next to an empty seat, each reading a newspaper and observing other passengers. One individual, however, sees approaching passengers as a threat, and discourages others from sitting next to him through his body language. The other sees approaching passengers as people, with needs,

hopes, cares, and fears just as real and as legitimate as her own, and offers the adjacent seat to whoever needs it (Arbinger, 2000, pp. 31-36).

One character in the story describes it this way: "Either I'm seeing others straightforwardly as they are—as people like me who have needs and desires as legitimate as my own—or I'm not. … One way, I experience myself as *a* person among people. The other way, I experience myself as *the* person among objects" (Arbinger, 2000, pp. 35-36). The character describes two different ways *construing* others in that context, and implies that individuals are accountable agents of the way they chose to construe the situation. In other words, there were competing available construct systems through which the individuals in the story could make sense of their experience, and individuals could choose which construct system to adopt.

Later, the character describes how the reason he saw other passengers as threats, nuisances, and objects was because doing so justified his refusal to follow his moral sense—his sense of how he ought to treat others (Arbinger, 2000). This is comparable to Marty's story, in which he construed his wife as inconsiderate, and her needs as less important than his, in order to justify *his* self-betrayal. Similarly, the teenager who refused to help the lady with her groceries began to construe her in ways that excused his mistreatment of her. Each of these stories presume that the individuals involved *could* have construed their experiences differently, and that they were responsible for their outlook. Each of these stories, within the context of self-betrayal theory, seem to require the assumption of constructive alternativism.

For this reason, I want to explore how constructive alternativism might look if it were coupled with the assumptions made by self-betrayal theory (listed at the beginning

of this section). In this thesis, I present a possible answer to the question, 'What would Kelly's psychology of personal constructs look like if *accounting for one's response to one's moral sense* were the primary reason for choosing between construct systems, rather than the anticipation of events?' I assume that an individual responds to her moral sense in one of two ways: she can follow it, or she can betray it. If she betrays her moral sense, the reason she chooses one construct system over another is based on which she feels will best rationalize, excuse, or justify her self-betrayal.

Fundamental Postulate

The fundamental postulate is the first part of Kelly's theory that needs to be modified slightly in order to apply his theory to phenomenon of self-betrayal. First, I will explore the nature and rationale of Kelly's original fundamental postulate. Then, I will show how the postulate differs when applying the analysis to self-betrayal.

Prediction and Control

In Kelly's original analysis, his fundamental postulate was as follows: *"A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which in he anticipates events"* (Kelly, 1963, p. 46). Kelly assumes from the outset that the reason an individual adopts one construct system over another is because it allows him to anticipate his experiences and control his environment. In Kelly's theory, prediction and control are the fundamental reasons for formulating, altering, and amending construct systems. For example, he says:

> Some [ways of construing the world] are undoubtedly better than others. They are
> better from our human point of view because they support more precise and more
> accurate predictions about more events. … The yardstick to use is the specific

predictive efficiency of each alternative construct and the over-all predictive efficiency of the system of which it would, if adopted, become a part. (Kelly, 1963, pp. 14-15; Letwin & Reynolds, 2005)

Constructs are tested against *experience*, and since time is always progressing and new events happening, constructs are inevitably tested against experience in the future from when they are first formulated. "In short," Kelly (1963) wrote, "a construct is tested in terms of its predictive efficiency" (p. 12).

Amongst competing interpretations and construals of human behavior, Kelly (1963) decided to spend his time exploring the perspective of "man-the-scientist" (p. 4). Kelly (1963) asked: "What is it that is supposed to characterize the motivation of a scientist? It is customary to say that the scientist's ultimate aim is to predict and control" (p. 5). He elaborated, "As a scientist, man seeks to predict, and thus control, the course of events. It follows, then, that the constructs which he formulates are intended to aid him in his predictive efforts" (Kelly, 1963, p. 12). In addition, he explained, "Like the prototype of the scientist that he is, man seeks prediction. His structured network of pathways leads toward the future so that he may anticipate it. This is the function it serves. Anticipation is both the push and pull of the psychology of personal constructs" (Kelly, 1963, p. 49).

For these reasons, the fundamental postulate of Kelly's theory is: "A person's processes are channelized by the way in which he anticipates events" (1963, p. 46). He clarifies that "anticipation is not merely carried on for its own sake; it is carried on so that future reality may be better represented. It is the future which tantalizes man, not the past" (1963, p. 49).

We can use some mental imagery to help illustrate Kelly's vision. Imagine a blind

man stumbling through a large room full of furniture. Although he cannot visibly see his surroundings, he makes a mental map of his surroundings. As he explores more of the room (bumping and scraping his shins on the way), the mental map becomes more and more complete. Imagine that there are unseen mechanisms that change the positions of the furniture, so that he often has to change his mental map of the room. Slowly, through trial and error (and bumps and scrapes), he may eventually discern patterns in the changes, until he is eventually able to navigate the room unaided and without surprises. He might even generalize whatever patterns he observes and use them to make predictions about unexplored territory, and when those predictions are disappointed, he revises his expectations accordingly. Although the mental maps of his environment are inventions, creatively fabricated to make sense of his experiences, bruises on his shins help ground his cognitive inventiveness in the stubborn facts of reality.

From Kelly's perspective, this analogy is very much like the world in which we live. Bumping into furniture is similar to experiences of disappointment, as when our anticipations do not pan out the way we expected. The "mental maps" are like constructs, aiding us in our anticipation of events. The criteria by which Kelly believes we evaluate our construct systems is how well they help us anticipate events. He explains, "Whenever a person is confronted with the opportunity for making a choice, he will tend to make that choice in favor of the alternative which seems to provide the best basis for anticipating ensuing events" (Kelly, 1963, p. 64). Constructs are good only as long as they make adequate predictions of future experience. In other words, as Niklas Luhmann (1985) states, "One does not want to do without the expectation of a solid, well-trodden ground" (p. 25). Constructs that lead to uncertainty and ambiguity are typically abandoned in

favor of those that lead to reliable predictions. Kelly's "man-as-scientist" is someone who attempts to construe the world in such a way that he can navigate it with increasingly fewer surprises or disappointments.

Kelly (1963) includes in his discussion of his fundamental postulate an important caveat: "Let it be clearly understood that we are not proposing this postulate as an ultimate statement of truth. In modern scientific thought it is always customary to accept even one's postulates as tentative or ad interim statements of truth and then to see what follows" (p. 47). In short, for the purposes of Kelly's theory of personality, he wants to assume that the reasons and objectives behind an individual's construing are about prediction, and see what conclusions about human behavior follow from this unique assumption.

Self-justification

In this thesis, I present a possible answer to the question, 'What would Kelly's psychology of personal constructs look like if *accounting for one's response to one's moral sense* were also a reason for choosing between construct systems, rather than just the anticipation of events?' I assume that an individual responds to her moral sense in one of two ways: she can follow it, or she can betray it. If she betrays her moral sense, the reason she chooses one construct system over another is based on which she feels will best rationalize, excuse, or justify her self-betrayal. With Kelly (1963), I simply wish to suppose, "for the sake of the discussion which is to follow, that a person's processes are psychological channelized by the" way in which he responds to his moral sense (p. 47).

For this reason, the fundamental postulate of this analysis will be, "*A person's construing processes are psychologically channelized by the way in which he responds to*

his moral sense." Essentially, I grant the premise of constructive alternativism—that our way of making sense of the world is the product of our creative capacity and is always simply one way of making sense of the world among alternatives—and propose that amongst competing alternative ways of making sense of the world, the way an individual chooses look at things is informed by his response to his moral sense. In other words, a person may construe the world one way instead of another because of how well that construct system makes sense of and accounts for his response to the moral promptings he experiences. I believe that this fundamental postulate aptly captures one way to construe what it means to be a moral agent in the way we construe and make sense of the world.

However, Kelly's original analysis may certainly still shed light on how a person's psychological processes are channelized when he engages in self-betrayal. An individual who is attempting to justify his self-betrayal is nonetheless concerned about the future—and will attempt to anticipate any and all threats to his self-justifying construct system. He attempts to make sure that nothing will happen to invalidate his construct system, so he avoids evidence that his construct system is wrong (Warner, 2001). In doing this, he must be aware of the future and anticipate events. However, his motivations in doing so are *self-justificatory*, rather than an attempt to simply improve his constructs to better anticipate events. His efforts, unlike those of a scientist, are not an honest effort to seek the truth, but are often an effort to avoid it. Nonetheless, Kelly's original insights regarding anticipation as the "push and pull" of an individual's construct system are, in many ways, still applicable (Kelly, 1963, p. 49).

Kelly's Corollaries

Kelly (1963) first asserts his fundamental postulate—"a person's processes are channelized by the way in which he anticipates events" (p. 46)—and then presents eleven corollaries that accompany this postulate. He explains, "In building the system which we call *the psychology of personal constructs* we have chosen to rely upon one basic postulate and to amplify the system by stating certain propositions which, in part, follow from the postulate and, in part, elaborate it in greater detail" (Kelly, 1963, p. 50, italics in original).

By using the word "corollary," however, Kelly (1963) does not intend to imply that the corollaries are necessary logical implications of the fundamental postulate. Rather, he states that "these propositions are termed *corollaries*, although, logically, they involve somewhat more than what is minimally implied by the exact wording of the postulate" (Kelly, 1963, p. 50, italics in original). Thus, the word "corollary" in Kelly's theory has a different, broader connotation than it does in traditional philosophical discourse.

Construction Corollary

The substance of the construction corollary remains largely unchanged in this analysis of self-betrayal, however the wording might be reworded to accommodate the changes in the fundamental postulate.

Kelly's Construction Corollary. Kelly's (1963) original construction corollary reads: *"A person anticipates events by construing their replications"* (p. 50). The etymology of the words "construct" and "construe" provide an interesting context for this corollary. Both words originate in the Latin word "construere," which means to "to build

up, pile together" or to "heap up" (Harper, 2012). In other words, the Latin word "construere" implies a deliberate accumulation of smaller component parts into a structure of some kind. The construction corollary likewise implies that constructs are based upon an accumulation of experiences.

According to Kelly (1963), life "presents itself from the beginning as an unending and undifferentiated process" (p. 52). He continues, "Only when man attunes his ear to recurrent themes in the monotonous flow [of the processes of life] does his universe begin to make sense to him" (Kelly, 1963, p. 52). The only way to discern these recurrent themes, however, is to accumulate experience over time. Kelly (1963) further explains, "We have said that events are set apart from each other by the construing of their replications. That is to say, we look at the undifferentiated stream of circumstance flowing past us, and we try to find something about it that repeats itself" (p. 120).

This corollary is directly related to the fundamental postulate, says Kelly (1963), because through the act of identifying an event as a recurring pattern, we imply the possibility of it repeating itself yet again. He explains, "By the very process of identifying the event as something replicated, we imply that it may happen again. Or, rather, we imply that its replicated properties may all reappear in another event. Thus it is impossible not to imply prediction whenever one construes anything" (Kelly, 1963, p. 52).

Application to Self-betrayal. In this analysis of self-betrayal, the construction corollary is slightly modified to read, "*A person construes events by attending to recurring patterns in experience*." The main difference is that anticipation is not central to the corollary. As discussed later in Kelly's (1963) dichotomy corollary, "In construing, the person notes features in a series of elements which characterize some of the elements

and are particularly uncharacteristic of others. Thus he erects constructs of similarity and contrast" (p. 50). Thus, a person always abstracts from at least 3 elements—2 elements that are like each other, but different from a third in some relevant way. This is how recurring themes are pulled from the otherwise chaotic and monotonous flow of life—an individual notices how two experiences are like each other, while at the same time unlike another. This is heart of the construing process. Once the construct forms, other experiences within the construct's range of convenience are then sorted along the dimension of the construct.

However, a person always has many more than 3 elements from which he can begin his abstraction. Kelly (1963) explains that "the abstraction of A and B versus C is likely to change when D is taken into consideration" (p. 80). Likewise, when there are dozens, hundreds, or thousands of experiences to abstract from, an individual can easily construe the experiences very differently than he currently does—all he must do is attend to different elements from which to abstract. In an individual construes the world differently in moments of self-betrayal than he does when he follows his moral sense, it makes sense to suppose that he is attending to different recurring patterns in his experiences. Thus, the modified fundamental postulate assumes that *which* recurring experiences an individual abstracts from is dependent at least partly on whether the individual follows his moral sense or betrays it.

For example, Warner (2001) notes that individuals who betray themselves will often remember their experiences differently than individuals who are not engaged in self-betrayal. To illustrate this, he tells the story of a girl named Mandy:

Her father, a construction supervisor, had died of a stroke when she was fourteen.

What she was a little girl, he had always worked long hours, often on jobs far away. He took Mandy's older brother, Jeddy, with him on school holidays. Her mother encouraged it because "the boy needs his father's influence." When little Mandy asked to go, her father would say, "Not a good place for girls." In the summer he would get away overnight for hunting or fishing, sometimes with a friend and usually with her brother. But he'd say to Mandy, "You're too little," or "I need Jeddy to clean the fish." About the time Mandy turned ten her little sister, Nessie, was born, and her father was promoted and didn't have to leave the house so early or work so late. He would throw Nessie in the air and crawl around with her and kiss her goodnight; when Mandy tried to kiss him, he said, "You're too old for that." As she grew in years she would feel "down" for long periods, and at those times especially it would take very little to make her feel rejected. If someone didn't give her full attention, she would try to get out of the situation as quickly as she could. At those times, she said, her resentment over being rejected would glow in her like hot coals. She would often brood about what her father had done to her. (p. 9)

In this story, Mandy construes her father as indifferent to her and her needs. In terms of the construction corollary, her story might be expressed like this: 'This experience of rejection by my father (A) is similar to other experiences of rejection by my father (B), but different from the experience of acceptance by my father that my brother and sister experience (C).' Experiences A and B are similar to each other, but different from C. She would attend to those experiences of perceived rejection, which formed the basis of her construing her father as someone who didn't care for and love his

daughter.

Later on in her life, Mandy realized that she had frequently rejected her father, and had refused to accept his love and attention when he offered it. According to Warner (2001), she had ignored her moral sense of how she should treat her father. She realized that by construing her father as uncaring and indifferent towards her, she was simply rationalizing and justifying her continuing resentment towards him. When she came to this realization, she said, something interesting happened. She reports:

> A whole lot of memories came of Daddy and me together. He would have me help him with the lawn and the flowerbeds. On Saturday mornings he often came to my volleyball games. It shamed and thrilled me to remember these things. I must have held his hand quite a lot, because I could remember very clearly how rough and hard it was and how he smelled when he got home from work—I knew that because I'd stand next to him in the bathroom while he washed his hands and fingernails and arms and face and neck before we had dinner. He would let me dry his moustache. I would make the bristles go upward and he would pretend it hurt him and we would laugh. And then I could remember we'd dry dishes together after dinner and he would ask me all about school and my friends. Our vacations came back to me, too, when Daddy would relax and we would play games and go to the country store for a treat. How could I have forgotten all these good things? (p. 279)

Once Mandy was no longer in need of justification for her self-betrayal, she no longer attended to the ways in which her father ignored her while she grew up. She could attend to other memories as well, which suddenly seemed more salient than before in her

construal of her father. Instead of abstracting from A, B, and C (above), she began to use other experiences—experiences of love and acceptance—as the elements of her abstraction. This is an example of how construct systems can change depending on which elements the individual attends to while construing.

In summary, a person who is self-betrayed attunes to those recurring themes that abstract into constructs that justify and rationalize his self-betrayal. He may recall recurring patterns in another's behavior that seem to warrant mistreatment, while he may *not* consider those recurring patterns as relevant, or even recall those patterns at all, if he is not self-betrayed—just as Mandy's experiences of feeling rejected seemed less important to her once she was no longer self-betrayed. In short, which elements he chooses to base his abstraction on is related to whether or not he follows his moral sense.

Individuality Corollary

Kelly's Individuality Corollary. Kelly (1963) argued, *"Persons differ from each other in their construction of events"* (p. 55). Kelly (1963) asserts that the fundamental postulate "provides grounds for a psychology of individual differences" (p. 55). He explains, "People can be seen as differing from each other, not only because there may have been differences in the events which they have sought to anticipate, but also because there are different approaches to the anticipation of the same events" (Kelly, 1963, p. 55). In short, individuals differ from each other to the extent that they construe their experiences differently.

Application to Self-betrayal. To apply this corollary to this analysis of self-betrayal, I simply assume that there are different styles of betraying one's moral promptings. Warner (2001) tells the story of a woman named Jennifer who felt morally

prompted to visit her sick aunt, but who betrayed her moral sense (p. 47). He describes how she could have justified her self-betrayal through self-assertiveness, by saying, "It's just not right for me to have to spend one of my few nights off traveling across town on the bus to see a person who probably doesn't even want me to come" (Warner, 2001, p. 112). In this way, she construes herself as being assertive, whereas complying with the moral summons would be being a doormat. In contrast, she could have gone to visit her aunt, but in a self-righteous way. She could have "silently congratulated herself for rising to her duty, in spite of all the obstacles" (Warner, 2001, p. 113). In this case, she would have construed herself as a martyr, doing what right at the expense of personal convenience, in contrast to others who do not.

While this example is a hypothetical scenario in which the *same* person could engage in self-betrayal in two different ways, it also works to illustrate how two *different* individuals could betray their moral sense in two different ways. Individuality lies in how the individuals *construe* others while betraying their moral sense. Individual A betrays her moral sense by construing herself as assertive, as opposed to being a doormat. Perhaps she contrasts herself with someone else—or a previous version of herself—who she considers to be a doormat. Individual B betrays her moral sense by construing herself as a martyr, and construes moral summons as a burden that she must carry to prove her virtue. Perhaps she contrasts herself with someone else who she believes shirks her duties in times of difficulty. Each individual's construction system serves to excuse or rationalize her to respond to wholeheartedly to her moral summons.

Two individuals may rationalize their self-betrayal quite differently from each other, but be equally engaged in self-betrayal. For example, one person who refuses to

follow his moral sense may construe a panhandler on the street as being undeserving of assistance, while another person may construe himself as having too little time to stop and help. To the extent that all individuals betray their moral sense some times, and follow it at others, individual differences are found not so much in the fact that some people follow their moral sense while others betray it, but in the *style* in which they betray it—that is, in the differing self-justifying construct systems they erect in their moment of self-betrayal.

Organization Corollary

Kelly's Organization Corollary. Kelly (1963) asserted, *"Each person characteristically evolves, for his convenience in anticipating, a construction system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs"* (p. 56). According to Kelly (1963), "Not only do men differ in their constructions of events, but they also differ in the ways they organize their constructions of events" (p. 56). Constructs are arranged, according to Kelly, hierarchically, with some constructs subsuming others. He explains:

> Within a construction system there may be many levels of ordinal relationships, with some constructs subsuming others and those, in turn, subsuming still others. When one construct subsumes another its ordinal relationship may be termed *superordinal* and the ordinal relationship of the other becomes *subordinal*. (Kelly, 1963, pp. 57-58, italics in original)

One purpose for this is to resolve conflicts between competing construct systems. A person uses one construct system for anticipating events in one context, but a different one in another context; each construct system, however, might lead to different anticipations of event. Kelly explained, "One man may resolve the conflicts between his

anticipations by means of an ethical system. Another may resolve them in terms of self-preservation. The same man may resolve them in one way at one time and in another way at another. It all depends upon how he backs off to get perspective" (p. 56).

A visual metaphor that helps illustrate this is a simple hanging mobile, such as one a child might construct. When building a mobile, a thin pole is balanced on the string, and on each end, other poles are hung in such a way that provides balance. In a similar way, constructs exist as dipoles, and under each end of the dipole, other constructs may hang. In this way, says Kelly (1963), "man systematizes his constructs by concretely arranging them in hierarchies and by abstracting them further. … He builds a system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs for his personal convenience in anticipating events" (p. 58).

In addition, according to Kelly (1963), "constructs may be used as viewpoints for seeing other constructs, as in the hierarchical relationships within a system" (p. 136). This means that an individual can construe his own construct system, through the lens of superordinate construct system. For example, an individual may look at his way of viewing the world as "more advanced" than a colleague's way of looking at the world, or more advance than the way he *used* to look at the world. This superordinate construct helps the individual make sense of his own worldview, and the ways his worldview changes and evolves.

Application to Self-betrayal. To adapt the Organization Corollary to this analysis of self-betrayal, I simply assume that that all of Kelly's insights apply, with the additional insight that, in the context of self-betrayal, the reason an individual leans on a superordinate construct is not to make sense of conflicting anticipations of events, but to

better rationalize his self-betrayal. For this reason, while an individual may use a guiding superordinate construct (such as an ethical system) that is at most times relatively stable, he may find himself abandoning that superordinate construct system in a moment of self-betrayal, when it is no longer useful in justifying his actions (or perhaps even counterproductive in doing so). For example, an individual who normally relies on an ethical system may engage in self-betrayal, and in *that* context, decide that self-preservation is the higher priority as a means of justifying his actions. For this reason, "the same man may resolve [conflicts] in one way at one time and in another way at another" (Kelly, 1963, p. 56). The differences cannot be accounted for in terms of accumulated experience, but rather in the fact that each particular philosophy served better to excuse his failure to follow his moral sense within the context in which they were employed.

While superordinate constructs (such as ethical systems) are often useful in charting courses of action when one is attempting to follow his moral sense, those same superordinate constructs can *often* become the means by which one excuses wrong action. For example, superordinate constructs about "fairness," "law," or "duty" can easily rationalize many acts of self-betrayal. Holding rigidly to any of these systems at the expense of other people can be one way of cloaking one's self-betrayal in the veneer of conscientiously right action. Warner (1986) explains that a person who is self-betraying "concerns himself about justification and excuse rather than about doing what love and integrity dictate—though of course he would deny that statement. He's concerned with the 'moral' rules that define what is reasonable and unreasonable to expect ourselves in helping our neighbor" (p. 8).

Imagine, Warner argued, that Jennifer (the woman who felt that she should visit her sick aunt) wanted to convince herself and others that she was conscientious in helping others. "She would have immediately gone off to visit her hospitalized aunt," Warner (2001) explains, "but she would have found other ways to convince herself of her worth, like bringing homemade snacks, brightening the hospital room with decorations, and following up with a note on perfumed card" (p. 116). She might have made *more* demands on herself than her moral sense required. This is because she is not responding to her moral sense, but trying to demonstrate that she has worth *in spite* of her neglect of her moral sense in some way. This neglect is illustrated in the fact that her efforts to serve her aunt are more about *herself* than her aunt—and thus not a wholehearted response to her moral sense. The point of this example is that Jennifer, in this context, is likely to rationalize her actions in terms of superordinate constructs about duty and sacrifice for others.

Generalizing the contextual moral demands placed on us by our moral sense, and reifying that generalization into a rigid, legalistic construct system with a range of convenience that subsumes other contexts, can sometimes be a way of betraying the moral call we experience in those other contexts. As Olson (2007) explains, this is a particularly subtle form of self-betrayal, because:

> When we are betraying ourselves, the rationalizations and justifications we offer for not doing the right as we see it seem absolutely real and valid to us. … We actually believe the wrong we are doing is right—or at least justified. Our rationalizations seem to us like legitimate reasons to be doing what we are doing. (pp. 7-8)

In short, relying too heavily on legalistic systems can itself be a way of rationalizing self-betrayal. It is very easy to treat our rationalizations and justifications as rigid ethical systems, which can then become superordinate constructs that subsume other construction systems. In this way, individuals can build for themselves entire outlooks—that become guiding philosophies in their lives—based upon rationalizations of their self-betrayal.

Dichotomy Corollary

Kelly's Dichotomy Corollary. Kelly (1963) argued, *"A person's construction system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous constructs"* (p. 56). According to Kelly (1963), all constructs exist as contrasts, so to speak. He explains: "In construing, the person notes features in a series of elements which characterize some of the elements and are particularly uncharacteristic of others. Thus he erects constructs of similarity and contrast" (p. 51).

As discussed earlier, a person anticipates events by construing their replications, and the way in which a person construes an event's replications is by distinguishing a way in which that event is different from the background of other events and similar to its replications. Thus, the person differentiates out of an otherwise chaotic and undifferentiated flow of experience certain events that he will recognize as recurring themes, and he does so by creating a construct that implies both similarities (to the event's replications) and differences (from other events).

Kelly (1963) further proposes to "assume that all constructs follow this same dichotomous form" (p. 60). A couple of examples of dichotomous constructs are "black versus white" and "cruel versus kind." He continues, "The construct denotes an aspect of

the elements lying within its range of convenience, on the basis of which some of the elements are similar to others and some are in contrast. In its minimum context a construct is a way in which at least two elements are similar and contrast with a third" (p. 61). For this reason, Kelly (1963) explains, any construct implies at least three elements within its range of convenience. "We cannot express a construct, either explicitly or implicitly," Kelly (1963) wrote, "without involving at least two things which have a likeness and one which is, by the same token, different" (pp. 111-112).

Kelly (1963) notes that in making this assumption, he is "departing from the position of classical logic" (p. 61) because classical logic assumes that conceptual dichotomies are of the type "white versus not-white" and "black versus not-black", rather than "white/black." However, he continues, "we suspect that this comes nearer representing the way people actually think" (Kelly, 1963, p. 61). Even though people may sometimes claim that they don't see the world this way, Kelly assumes that they do. "Often people express their construct systems incompletely," he argues (Kelly, 1963, p. 111). Because "it is not possible for one to express the whole of his construction system," Kelly (p. 1963) maintains, "many of one's constructs have no symbols to be used as convenient word handles" (Kelly, 1963, p. 110). It is for this reason that individuals sometimes do not recognize the dichotomous nature of their own mentation.

Application to Self-betrayal. To adapt the Dichotomy Corollary to this analysis of self-betrayal, I simply assume that the analysis that Kelly provides is entirely applicable. In nearly every example reported in existing literature (see, e.g., Olson, 2004; Olson & Israelson, 2007; Warner, 1986, 2001) in which an individual betrays his moral sense, individuals report experiencing the world in terms of dichotomous constructs. For

example, when Marty described ignoring his feeling that he ought to help his wife by tending the baby (instead of letting her wake up to do it), he reported his subsequent perception of his needs as more important than hers, himself as hardworking and her as lazy, himself as a victim and her as a victimizer, and so on (Warner, 1986). His reported experience implies the existence of a dichotomous construction system containing the constructs important-needs versus not-important-needs, hardworking versus lazy, victim versus victimizer, with he and his wife as elements subsumed by those construct systems. In this example, the dichotomous constructs served to justify his inaction in the face of a moral call.

Choice Corollary

Kelly's Choice Corollary. Kelly (1963) asserted, *"A person chooses for himself that alternative in a dichotomous construct through which he anticipates the greater possibility for extension and definition of his system"* (p. 64). Kelly (1963) explains, "Not only is a person's construction system composed of dichotomous constructs but, within the system of dichotomies, the person builds his life upon one or the other of the alternatives represented in each of the dichotomies" (p. 65). Kelly is asserting here is that when an individual is faced with a choice, he will choose that choice which appears to him to allow a further definition of his construct system. He continues, "Whenever a person is confronted with the opportunity for making a choice, he will tend to make that choice in favor of the alternative which seems to provide the best basis for anticipating ensuing events" (p. 64). In short, an individual's choices are not motivated by needs, drives, or some unrelenting pursuit of satisfaction. Rather, an individual's choices are motivated by a desire to better anticipate events, and the individual will choose amongst

various options the path that he presumes will allow him to better anticipate events. Kelly (1969) elaborates:

> We have left to the last question of what determines man's behavioral choices between his self-construed alternatives. Each choice that he makes has implications for his future. Each turn in the road he chooses to travel brings him to a fresh vantage point from which he can judge the validity of his past choices and elaborate his present pattern of alternatives for choices yet to be made. Always the future beckons to him and always he reaches out in tremulous anticipation to touch it. He lives in anticipation; we mean this literally; *he lives in anticipation!* (pp. 88, emphasis in original).

An additional insight that Kelly shares is that an individual's choices are always in important ways constrained by his construct system. Kelly (1963) explains, "Since the construct does not pretend to say which of its two ends shall be chosen, it leaves the person free to choose; since it does say what its two ends are, it controls the possibilities of choice" (p. 128). In addition, he asserts, "Any individual can prove or disprove only that which his construction system tells him are the possible alternatives. Again the construction system sets the limits beyond which it is impossible for him to perceive. His constructs are controls on his outlook" (Kelly, 1963, p. 129). An individual, for example, who simplistically construes and categorizes the others in his life using two basic dichotomous constructs (e.g., friendly versus shy and attractive versus unattractive) cannot easily discern and approach the most intelligent person in his circle of friends because none of his personal constructs help him make that kind of distinction among people.

In addition, Kelly asserts, "The most obvious freedom of movement that one can see is from one end to the other along the axes he has already personally construed for himself" (Kelly, 1963, p. 135). One consequence of this is that therapists who invite clients to change in significant ways, without also inviting clients to change their construct system, may observe their clients change in detrimental ways. Kelly (1963) explains,

> A study of so-called marked personality changes, such as the manic-depressive cycle, confirms the fact that most of the radical movements that we see appearing in people's behavior do not represent basic changes in their blueprints of life, but rather an attempt to shift within the rigid frameworks which provide their only cues to the understanding of human relationships. … A psychotherapist who seeks to force his client to move too rapidly runs into just this type of problem. He forces the client to move along the only axes the client has previously established for himself and the results may be catastrophic. (p. 134)

For example, someone who construes others in her life through the dichotomous construct of "conservative versus liberal" will have a difficult time choosing to be anything *but* what she considers "liberal" if she ever decides to be less "conservative." Until the basic construct system *itself* is changed, choosing a third option is not a choice that is genuinely conceptually available. The individual is, in a sense, "blind" to other possibilities, and will remain so until he reconstrues his world.

Application to Self-betrayal. To adapt the Choice Corollary to this analysis of self-betrayal, I simply assume that the phrase "greater possibility for extension and definition of his system" includes those ways of construing that better excuse or

rationalize self-betrayal. In short, if a person's construing processes are channelized by the way in which he responds to his moral sense, and "those ways [of construing] present themselves in dichotomous form, it follows that he must choose between the poles of his dichotomies in a manner which" (Kelly, 1963, p. 64) seems to him either to best respond to his moral sense, or best excuse his self-betrayal. There are two implications of this corollary in our understanding of self-betrayal.

First, competing construct systems are often subsumed by a superordinate construct system that sorts them along a dichotomous dimension (e.g., "mature ways of looking at the world" vs. "immature ways of looking at the world"). If an individual is engaged in self-betrayal, he will choose the construct system in that dichotomy that seems to best justify or rationalize his choice.

Second, if an individual construes his world through the lens of dichotomous constructs, and those dichotomies describe social roles or different courses of behavior, he will take upon himself whatever social role or course of behavior in that dichotomy that best serves his needs at the moment—and what he needs at each moment is dependent on whether he follows his moral sense and is therefore trying to respond to the others in his life, or betrays his moral sense and needs to rationalize or justify his actions. Also, constructs that describe social roles often subsume other constructs that describe the personality characteristics of individuals who play those roles.

For example, Marty (in the above story) began to construe his wife as a victimizer and himself as a victim. The construct victimizer versus victim describes two opposing social roles, and Marty took upon himself the role victim and assigned his wife the role of victimizer (Warner, 1986, pp. 1-2). In Kelly's terminology, Marty made himself and his

wife elements of the construct "victim versus victimizer," and in such a way that rationalized his self-betrayal. In Marty's case, he will likely begin to enact whatever personality constructs are subordinate to his construct of victim versus victimizer. For example, if he construes victims as passive, depressed, needy, etc., he may begin to enact those personality characteristics. If he construes victims as aggressive, resentful, and obstinate, he may begin to enact those personality characteristics instead.

Another example is illustrated by Mandy's anecdote. She formed a construct of "wanted versus rejected," and made herself, her brother, and her sister elements of the construct (Warner, 2001, p. 9). She assigned herself the social role of the one who was rejected, because this justified her ongoing resentment towards her father and her continued reservation in forming friendships with others. In this example, her dichotomous constructs described two opposing social roles, and she chose the one for herself that appeared to vindicate her self-betrayal.

In addition, as Kelly (1963) asserts, "the construction system sets the limits beyond which it is impossible for him to perceive. His constructs are controls on his outlook" (Kelly, 1963, p. 129). He continues, "The most obvious freedom of movement that one can see is from one end to the other along the axes he has already personally construed for himself" (Kelly, 1963, p. 135). What this means is that so long as an individual maintains his self-betraying construct system, any change in the individual will be a change along the dimensions of the existing constructs. Warner (2001) explains:

> Once we betray ourselves, accuse others, and box ourselves into the victim's role, we no longer see things the way they really are. In our minds, there can *only* be two options: one is that we are right in accusing them, which means that they are

guilty of all the trouble between us and we are their victims; the other is that

we're wrong and they aren't guilty after all, and this means that *we're* guilty of

the trouble and *they* are *our* victims. … If it were to turn out that they were right

and not monstrous after all, it would follow that we c*ould not* be right—we c*ould*

not be the admirable people we've been portraying ourselves to be. (pp. 71-72,

emphasis in original)

For example, in Marty's anecdote, if he were to cease to see his wife as a victimizer, but

still maintained the construct system of "victim versus victimizer," the poles of the

construct could flip, and rather than *justify* him as the victim, it will *condemn* him as the

victimizer. And if Marty maintains that construct, he may take upon himself the

behaviors he construes to be characteristic of victimizers, just as he did as the victim.

While such a construct does not necessarily *justify* Marty's subsequence behavior, it can

certainly *account* for his behavior in a way that excuses it. For example, Marty might

conclude, 'I'm just a horrible person. I guess it's just the way I am. I guess I can't help

myself.'

  As Kelly (1963) described, "A study of so-called marked personality changes,

such as the manic-depressive cycle, confirms the fact that most of the radical movements

that we see appearing in people's behavior do not represent basic changes in their

blueprints of life, but rather an attempt to shift *within* the rigid frameworks which provide

their only cues to the understanding of human relationships" (p. 134). In summary, an

individual will invariably take upon himself one of the two roles describes by a role

construct, and his choice will be informed by how well the chosen role justifies his self-

betrayal. In addition, the individual will construe the characteristics of the role in such a

way that excuse his wrong action—for example, he construes *himself* as the victimizer, he may construe victimizers as being helpless to change.

Experience Corollary

Kelly's Experience Corollary. Kelly's (1963) original Experience Corollary reads: *"A person's construction system varies as he successively construes the replication of events"* (p. 72). "Since," Kelly (1963) argues, "our Fundamental Postulate establishes the anticipation of events as the objective of psychological processes it follows that the successive revelation of events invites the person to place new constructions upon them whenever something unexpected happens" (p. 51). According to Kelly, then, forming constructs that help us anticipate events is analogous to a scientist forming a hypothesis. His narrative paints a picture of the individual as a sort of scientist, constantly making hypotheses (predictions) about the outside world and testing those hypotheses against empirical evidence (experience). "As one's anticipations or hypotheses are successively revised in the light of the unfolding sequence of events," Kelly (1963) explains, "the construction system undergoes a progressive evolution" (p. 72).

Furthermore, "Each day's experience calls for the consolidation of some aspects of our outlook, revision of some, and outright abandonment of others" (Kelly, 1963, p. 15). "Essentially this means that all of our interpretations of the universe," Kelly (1963) explained, "can gradually be scientifically evaluated if we are persistent and if we keep learning from our mistakes" (p. 15). This corollary is what grounds Kelly's theory to experiential reality. While there are always alternative constructs to choose among when construing our experiences, some constructs are simply better at helping us anticipate

events than others. We do not live entirely in the world of the abstract—we are constantly

brushing up against the stubborn facts of life, and revising our constructs accordingly.

      Application to Self-betrayal. Like the Construction Corollary, the substance of

the Experience Corollary remains largely unchanged in this analysis of self-betrayal,

however the wording might be reworded to accommodate the changes in the fundamental

postulate. Kelly's original Experience Corollary asserts that construct systems are revised

and changed through the accumulation of experience. The implication of this is that

change in construct systems is gradual and that revisions are catalyzed by observing the

replications of events. In contrast, the modified fundamental postulate implies that an

individual can dramatically transform his construction systems in moments of self-

betrayal. In addition, these qualitative shifts in the outlook are not grounded in the

accumulation of new experience, and are not always gradual, but often sudden and

discontinuous. The reworded Experience Corollary could read: *"A person's construction*

system varies as he successively follows and betrays his moral sense."

      For example, in stories of self-betrayal, the self-betrayer often reports that when

she ignores or violates her moral sense of how she should respond to others, the way she

construes others and her relationship with them dramatically shifts in an imperceptibly

short amount of time (Williams & Gantt, 2012, p. 10). Marty's experience with his wife

illustrates this. As he sensed that he should help his wife tend the baby, he was thinking

of her needs, and in that moment, he did *not* construe them as less important than his. It

was as he betrayed his moral sense that he began to construe his wife's needs as being

less important than his (Arbinger, 2000, p. 72). In that moment, there was a qualitative

shift in his construct system that was not the product of *new* experience, but rather simply

a re-construal of existing experience. From the Construction Corollary, we learned that what this means is that he began to attend to different recurring experiences that seemed to justify his self-betrayal—recurring experiences that were not salient to his wife's character or how he should respond to her before his moment of self-betrayal. This change was not a gradual revision through successive approximations based on accumulated experience, as Kelly imagined it, but a complete, near-instantaneous reconstrual of existence experience, with no new experience to speak of to account for the change (Arbinger, 2000, pp. 78-79).

Mandy's story also illustrates this, but in the opposite direction. Once she relinquished her resentment towards her father, she had no more need to rationalize or justify that resentment (Warner, 2001, p. 279). Almost immediately, she began to reconstrue her father, and began to attend to different experiences as the basis of her construal. Her change in outlook was also near instantaneous, and since her father was deceased, it was not catalyzed by new, accumulated experience with him.

In conclusion, while constructs do certainly change and evolve due to accumulated experience, as Kelly asserts, they *also* change as a consequence of the individual's choices in regards to his moral sense. There is a gestaltic shift that occurs in moments of self-betrayal in an individual's construct system that is independent of new validating (or invalidating) experience. This is a dramatic departure from the steady, progressive revision of constructs based upon the accumulation of experience described by Kelly's original Experience Corollary.

Downstream from the choice to follow or betray the moral sense, construct systems change gradually due to accumulated experience. For example, an individual

who is engaging in self-betrayal may need to change his construct system when accumulated experience indicates that his present construct system no longer justifies or rationalizes his self-betrayal. However, once he response to his moral sense is revisited, the entire construct system may change in qualitatively substantive ways, and in the absence of new experience. In this way, the difference between Kelly's original corollary and the modified one can be entirely accounted for in terms of the modified fundamental postulate—that is, the new *reason* behind an individual's construing processes (accounting for one's response to the moral sense).

Range Corollary

Kelly's Range Corollary. Kelly (1963) believed that *"a construct is convenient for the anticipation of a finite range of events only"* (p. 68). The range corollary can be summarized succinctly as the claim that "there are few if any personal constructs which one can say are relevant to everything" (p. 68). As we learned in the dichotomy corollary, constructs are formed by abstracting contrasts from the flux of everyday experience. A person observes that some experiences are *like* each other, and different from others. However, the abstracted contrasts are employed to make sense of a certain range of events.

A person may observe, for example, that two skyscrapers are similar to each other but different from his home; he may use the construct *tall* vs. *short* to make sense of the observed difference. He may additionally notice that two of his friends are similar to each other but different from another, and he may use the same construct, *tall* vs. *short*, to mark distinctions amongst his friends as well. However, Kelly, explains, "one does not find it convenient to construe tall weather versus short weather, tall light versus short

light, or tall fear versus short fear" (69).

In short, every construct is employed to make sense of a unique, finite range of events and experiences. Every construct has *some* event or experience where it is simply considered inapplicable. Kelly explains, "Even such a construct as *good* vs. *bad* … is not likely to be considered by the user to be applicable throughout the range of his perceptual field. Of course, some persons use the construct more comprehensively than others; but, even so, they are inclined to erect boundaries of convenience beyond which elements are neither good nor bad" (68).

Application to Self-betrayal. Kelly's claim that all constructs have a limited range of convenience applies to this analysis of self-betrayal. There is an additional facet of this claim, however, that I think is important to note in the context of self-betrayal. In my earlier analysis of the Organization Corollary, I argued that an individual will often abandon superordinate constructs when they do not serve to justify his self-betrayal. There is, however, more to that story. In addition, in those moments, he may not completely *abandon* his superordinate construct; rather, he may just decide that the present situation is 'outside the range of convenience' of the construct system. He might conclude that in *this* situation, his ethical beliefs no longer apply—his current predicament is an exception, because the person he is wronging has just 'gone too far.' By making the current elements of experience an exception to an otherwise stable superordinate construct, the individual delineates the range of the convenience of the superordinate construct in such a way that allows him to rationalize his current actions, while still maintaining the superordinate construct system in other contexts.

Also, constructs that are formed in self-betrayal are useful only insofar as they

rationalize the self-betrayal. For example, Marty may construe his wife as lazy in order to justify not getting up to tend the baby for her. However, on a different day and in a different context, he may construe her as hardworking, and forget that he ever construed her as lazy. Or he might not even use the "hardworking versus lazy" construct at all. This is because in the new context, it is no longer useful to construe her as lazy—he is no longer trying to rationalize his own self-betrayal. Constructs created in moments of self-betrayal are convenient only in contexts where the self-betrayal is salient and needs to be justified. Another example of this may be an individual who ordinarily cares very little about fairness suddenly cares about fairness quite a bit when it can be used to justify his inaction in response to his moral sense.

Modulation Corollary

Kelly's Modulation Corollary. Kelly (1963) asserted that *"the variation in a person's construction system is limited by the permeability of the constructs within whose ranges of convenience the variant lie"* (p. 77). Kelly explains that "a construct, or an aspect of one's construction system, can be called permeable if it is so constituted that new experience and new events can be discriminatively added to those which it already embraces" (81). In short, the term "permeability" refers to flexibility in the range of convenience of the construct system. Kelly explains that a permeable construct is *not* necessarily loose, undefined, or overly comprehensive. He asserts that he does not "refer necessarily to a construct's intransigent rigidity in the face of its repeated systematic failures to anticipate events adequately. We refer rather, to those aspects of the system … which are less shaken by the impact of unexpected minor daily events" (p. 80). He

elaborates, "When we say that a construct is permeable we refer only to the particular kind of plasticity we have described—the capacity to embrace new elements" (p. 80).

Constructs that are permeable possess two key features: one, they are, indeed, more malleable than constructs that are impermeable. Permeability, however, does not refer to a construct's malleability *per se*. Rather, Kelly explains,

> It must be admitted that when new elements are added to the context of a construct there is a tendency for the construct itself to change somewhat. The abstraction of A and B versus C is likely to change when D is taken into consideration. For this reason permeable constructs may show a tendency to shift slightly from time to time. But the shift may be minimal, and shifting is not what we have in mind when we speak of permeability. (p. 80)

The second key feature of permeable constructs is that "because they possess resiliency under the impact of new experience, do tend to be stable" (p. 80). This is comparable to construction projects (e.g., bridges and tall buildings) that are designed to sway in an earthquake. Because they are built to bend a little, they are also less likely to crack and collapse completely. Similarly, Kelly says, "A construct which 'takes life in its stride' is a permeable one. It is under the regnancy of such constructs that the more subordinate aspects of one's construction system can be systematically varied without making his whole psychological house fall down on him" (p. 81).

In addition, Kelly claimed that any construct to change or shift, it must be subordinate to a construct that is permeable enough to allow the new construct within its range of convenience. He explains, "The essential feature, starting from the standpoint of the assumptive structure of this theory, is that any transition [in construct systems] needs

to be subsumed by some overriding construction which is permeable enough to admit the new construct to its context" (p. 82). For example, if someone begins to construe his friends as intelligent versus dumb, as opposed to a former construct system of attractive versus unattractive, *both* construct systems (the old and the new) must be subordinate to another construct system (such as mature-ways-of-seeing-others versus immature-ways-of-seeing-others), and the superordinate construct system must be permeable enough to admit the new construct within its range of convenience.

In short, all constructs have a finite range of convenience, but some constructs are more willing to expand that range of convenience than others. This readiness to admit new elements within a construct system's range of convenience is referred to as the *permeability* of the construct system.

Application to Self-betrayal. While Kelly made explicit that he was not referring to the *flexibility* of a construct system as much as he was specifically talking about the *permeability* of a construct's range of convenience, I would like to add a further insight that brings this corollary to bear in this analysis of self-betrayal. I wish to assert that the permeability of a construct system is conditioned on the *reason* for construing. If a construct seems necessary to justify an act of self-betrayal, then that construct will likely be more impermeable to new elements that might alter its core dichotomy; in addition, any construct superordinate to it will also be more impermeable to new elements that might replace the justifying construct. In short, like defensive mechanisms, constructs become more impermeable it is necessary to protect the individual from paradigm shifts that might reveal to the individual his own wrongdoing. In short, persistent stubbornness in construct systems that refuse to admit new, potentially altering elements within its

range of convenience is possibly symptom of self-betrayal.

This does not imply that *all* firmly held construct systems are symptoms of self-betrayal. It simply means that some impermeability in an individual's construct systems can be accounted for in terms of their value in self-justification. Relinquishing such construct systems would appear to that person to be tantamount to being exposed as the wrongdoer. This is in part because of what we learned in the choice corollary—individuals sense that questioning their construct systems might end up reversing them. The individual is afraid that the poles of the construct will flip, and rather than *justify* the individual, it will *condemn* the individual. The irony here is that if, indeed, the original dichotomous construct of *victim versus victimizer* is the product of self-betrayal, following one's moral promptings would make the dichotomous construct *itself* less necessary, rather than simply flip the dimensions of the construct. The self-betrayer may no longer need to include himself *or* the other person as elements in the *victim versus victimizer* construct. When this happens, the dichotomous construct is more permeable not just in its ability to admit new elements, but to allow elements to leave. Its range of convenience is, in that moment, alterable—which is, in a sense, the definition of "permeable."

It should be noted that the permeability versus impermeability dimension does *not* run parallel to the "following moral sense" versus "self-betraying" dimension. As I have argued earlier, an individual may shrink a construct's range of convenience when it is necessary to make a situation the "exception to the rule," but he may *also* shrink a construct's range of convenience when abandoning self-betrayal, such as Mandy did when she realized that neither she *nor* her father were proper elements of the "victim

versus victimizer" construct (Warner, 2001, pp. 279-280). Both experiences require that the range of convenience of the construct is permeable in some way. The only constant is that a change in construct systems—in either direction—requires permeability in whatever constructs are superordinate to both the old and new construct systems. In moments of self-betrayal, this requires a willingness to relinquish the need to be justified.

Fragmentation Corollary

Kelly's Fragmentation Corollary. Kelly (1963) argued, *"A person may successively employ a variety of construction systems which are inferentially incompatible with each other"* (p. 83). According to Kelly, constructs that change due to experience do not necessarily change in a logically derivative way. Even though a person's construct systems may fluctuate "within a superordinate system, his successive formulations may not be derivable from each other" (p. 83). He continues, "The old and the new constructs may, in themselves, be inferentially incompatible with each other" (p. 83). In addition, subsystems of constructs may coexist and also be inferentially incompatible with each other.

However, according to Kelly, these incompatible iterations of construct systems *are* consistent and compatible with whatever superordinate construct system is permeable enough to subsume each of them. For example, a person may at one point rely on *unattractive* versus *attractive* as a construct system for evaluating his dating prospects, and later one abandon that construct system in favor of *intelligent* versus *unintelligent*. These two constructs may be inferentially incompatible with each other, in that they may lead to very different anticipations about the quality of dating partner a person might be; however, they are both subsumed by and consistent with a broader, more permeable

construct, such as *immature-dating* versus *mature-dating*. In short, inferentially incompatible successive iterations of construct are subsumed by superordinate, more permeable constructs.

Application to Self-betrayal. Individuals form superordinate constructs that which subsume as their elements both moments of self-betrayal and moments when the individual follows his moral sense. An individual attempts to account for the differences between the old perspective and the new one. However, because "it is not possible for one to express the whole of his construction system … [many] of one's constructs have no symbols to be used as convenient word handles" (Kelly, 1963, p. 110). Oftentimes, these superordinate constructs are entirely implicit and incommunicable.

These constructs become explicit most often when an individual is confronted with evidence that he has changed his view of others. In those moments, he may attempt to justify his change in perspective in terms of a superordinate construct, which forces him to give words to his implicit constructs. For example, an individual may claim that his prior construct system was naïve ('Do people really deserve this help? I was so naïve.'), and that his new one is more realistic ('I see now more clearly that *they* are the wrongdoers here')—thus indicating a "naïve versus realistic" superordinate construct to account for the change. Other times, the superordinate construct might be simpler and less sophisticated, such as "good mood versus bad mood," or "good day versus bad day," etc. For example, the individual might account for his change in perspective by saying, "I'm just having a bad day today." However, without his shift in viewpoint being called into question, he may not necessarily articulate a clear construct to account for the change, and thus the construct would remain implicit and un-scrutinized. For this reason, many

people do not consciously recognize a change in their outlook in moments of self-betrayal.

Part of the power of Warner's work is that it provides just the kind of superordinate constructs—"self-betrayal versus living truthfully," "following one's moral sense versus betraying it," "humane versus inhumane," "responsive versus resistant," "heart at peace versus heart at war"—that help people make sense of their change in viewpoint in a way that *doesn't* justify it or rationalize it. They can contextualize their shifting, changing, and inferentially incompatible construct systems in terms of a superordinate construct that gives them meaning in terms of their response to their moral sense. This allows them to then, per the choice corollary, make a *choice* between two different ways of being when they experience moral promptings in the future. Self-reflecting on moments of self-betrayal and the way one views others *does* require a superordinate construct to make sense of the experience.

Commonality Corollary

Kelly's Commonality Corollary. Kelly (1963) suggested, *"To the extent that one person employs a construction of experience which is similar to that employed by another, his psychological process are similar to those of the other person"* (p. 90). Kelly emphasizes that he rejects the assumption that two persons with the exact same experience will behave identically. He explains, "It is possible for two people to be involved in the same real events but, because they construe them differently, to experience them differently" (p. 90). He continues, "Since they construe them differently, they will anticipate them differently and will behave differently as a consequence of their

anticipations" (p. 90). In short, a person's behavior is based on how they anticipate events, which in turn is based in how they construe their previous experiences.

One implication of this corollary is that it would not "take identical events in the lives of two people to make them act alike" (p. 91). This is because it is "not the similarity of experience which provides the basis for similarity of action, but similarity of their present construction of that experience" (.p 92). To the extent that a person's present construct system is similar to that of another person's construct system, the two individuals will respond similarly to experience.

Application to Self-betrayal. Kelly's analysis of this corollary is completely applicable to self-betrayal. Two individuals with similar construction systems will find themselves rationalizing their self-betrayal similarly. However, this does not mean that they will be just as likely to follow or betray their moral sense. It simply means that *when* they betray their moral sense, they will rationalize and account for it using a similar construction system.

Sociality Corollary

Kelly's Sociality Corollary. Kelly (1963) believed that *"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"* (p. 95). Kelly (1963) clarifies that the *self* can be an element in an individual's construct system—it can "be used as a thing, a datum, or an item in the context of a superordinate construct. The self can become one of the three or more things—or persons—at least two of which are alike and are different from at least one of the others" (p. 131). When this happens, says Kelly (1963), "exciting things begin to happen" (p. 131). The individual "finds that the constructs he forms operate as rigorous

controls upon his behavior. … Perhaps it would be better to say that his behavior *in comparison* with other people is particularly affected. It is, of course, the comparison *he* sees or construes which affects his behavior" (Kelly, 1963, p. 131). In short, when an individual begins to compare himself and others via dichotomous constructs, he *chooses* for himself a role in the comparison. "Thus," Kelly (1963) explains, "much of his social life is controlled by the comparisons he has come to see between himself and others" (p. 131). These comparisons between himself and others constitute a *role* that he plays in his social world. Kelly (1963) calls these constructs "role constructs" (p. 219).

When Kelly uses the term "role," he refers to "course of activity which is played out in the light of one's understanding of the behavior of one or more other people" (p. 100). Kelly argues that social interaction requires that persons *construe* the construct systems of others. He uses the example of drivers on the road—although a driver doesn't need to know another driver's comprehensive outlook on life, but he *does* need to accurately construe what the other driver expects of him on the road. In short, "for people to get along harmoniously with each other, each must have some understanding of the other" (p. 99).

When a person construes the construction systems of another, his subsequent behavior is often charted *in light of* what he thinks the other person expects of him. In that way, he begins to play a role; not necessarily a role assigned to him by the other person, but a role taken up in light of what he believes the other person expects, whether or not it actually meets the other person's expectations. Kelly (1969) elaborates, "Let me add further that our psychological construction of another person's example, while it does provide the basis for our having a role relationship with him, does not mean necessarily

that we must conform to his expectations. Indeed, we may continually upset his expectations and may do so all the more effectively because we understand the outlook on which they are based" (p. 221). For example, Kelly (1963) explains,

> Let us consider the case of the person who is construed by his neighbors in such a way that he is always expected to do certain things. Whenever he fails to perform according to their expectations he finds them acting as if he had threatened them. He has. Now he may start to fancy himself as an unpredictable person—unpredictable, that is, for other people. … In order to maintain his pose he may have to construe himself as a "shocking" person. Thus, even though he rejects the expectancies of his neighbors as being invalid, he has had to construe himself in relation to those expectancies and he has had to bring his behavior under the reign of constructs which are carefully validated in reverse of his neighbors' expectancies. (p. 177)

In this example, the individual began to construe himself in light of how he believed *others* construed him, and began to play a role within his construal of his neighbors' construct system. This corollary is important—two individuals play social roles in their relationships with each other not when their construction of events are similar, but when they construe each other's construction of events, and behave in response to what they believe is the other person's way of seeing the world.

Application to Self-betrayal. In the Arbinger Institute's book, *Leadership and Self-Deception*, there is a story told about a woman named Kate who has a son named Bryan (Arbinger, pp. 93-100). Kate construed Bryan as irresponsible, disrespectful, and a troublemaker in order to justify not following to her moral sense that she ought to treat

him with gentleness. She was engaged in self-betrayal. But further, she had an idea of how her son Bryan construed her. She suspected—probably because he told her outright—that he construed her as a dictatorial, unloving, and nosy. At that point, she not only took on a role in her *own* construal of herself, but she also took on a role in how her construct of how *he* viewed *her*. For example, if she construes Bryan as perceiving her as 'dictatorial' on a construct of 'dictatorial versus reasonable,' she then, as per the Choice Corollary, chooses for herself one of the roles on that same construct. She will begin to construe herself as either dictatorial or reasonable, and take upon herself the attitude and behaviors that she construes as characteristic of her chosen role.

In other words, her perceptions of *Bryan's* constructs provide pathways of choice in the same way that her constructs of herself do. In short, she begins to see the world through what she construes as Bryan's construct system, and makes choices accordingly. This is an example of how, as Kelly (1963) explained, when an individual construes the construction systems of another, her subsequent behavior is often charted *in light of* what she thinks the other person expects of her. However, the main contrast between Kelly's original approach and this application to self-betrayal is that Kate construed Bryan in a way that justified her self-betrayal, and the *way* she did that was by construing Bryan as construing her as dictatorial. That reinforced her perception of him as a rebel, which seems to excuse her treatment of him. Then, she chose for herself the role that that construct system that seemed to vindicate her.

In stories of self-betrayal, we find examples of individuals who build construct systems about how others construe them—in fact, that is how Mandy's construct of "wanted versus rejected" was formed, as well as Marty's construct of "victim versus

victimizer." Each entails a construct regarding how they are viewed by others. In Mandy's case, she construes her father as someone who construes her as a nuisance, a bother, or a burden, and who construes her brother as valuable, useful, and wanted. Her construct of her father's construct is what delineated the *role* she took upon herself in her relationship with her father. In short, we often end up choosing a position for ourselves in the geometric space outlined by the axes of what we believe are another person's construct system. Once we believe we know how they see the world, we try to figure out where we are in that world. As a friend once quipped, "I learned to judge others, and spent the rest of my life feeling judged." Once again, how this entire process plays out is dependent upon whether the individual has followed or violated his moral sense. It is this process that leads to what Warner (1986) refers to as "collusion"—which, however, is a phenomenon beyond the scope of this thesis, albeit very relevant to the analysis.

Kelly's Emphasis on Intellectual Consistency

George Kelly acknowledges that there are many ways psychologists can creatively construe, interpret, and account for human behavior. For example, Kelly (1963) points out, some psychologists construe psychology as the study of "man-the-biological-organism" (p. 4), while others construe psychology as the study of "mankind in its appetitive aspects" (p. 4). In other words, psychologists can and often do construe human beings as something *other* than construing beings—as beings entirely driven by appetite, instinct, or genes. For a number of reasons, Kelly decided instead to construe human beings as being able to creatively construe.

Chief among these reasons, according to Kelly (1963), is that when a psychologist construes "all mankind in its biological aspects or all mankind in its appetitive aspects,"

he leaves the activities of *psychologists* outside of the range of convenience of his own construct system (p. 4). Psychologists, as scientists, experience themselves to be motivated by something *more* than merely appetite or biology. Kelly (1963) provides the following example to illustrate his point:

> It is as though the psychologist were saying to himself, 'I, being a *psychologist,* and therefore a *scientist,* am performing this experiment in order to improve the prediction and control of certain human phenomena; but my subject, being merely a human organism, is obviously propelled by inexorable drives welling up within him, or else he is in gluttonous pursuit of sustenance and shelter.' (p. 5, italics in original)

By construing human action as being fundamentally propelled by inexorable drives or the pursuit of sustenance, the psychologist doesn't account for his own activities as a psychologist. Kelly (1969) describes how most psychology textbooks recount the basics of the scientific method, which is the "inside story of how the scientist behaves" (p. 62). The scientist or psychologist "pinpoints the issues," Kelly (1969) continued, "He observes … he forms hypotheses inductively and deductively, he makes test runs, he relates his data to predictions … he generalizes cautiously, and he revises his thinking in light of experimental outcomes" (p. 62). Then, Kelly (1969) says,

> the author of the textbook … abandons this perceptive theory of personality and starts to tell us how ordinary human beings, which he usually prefers to call 'organisms' rather than 'scientists,' function. … Man, the organism, he says, responds to stimuli, learns what he is taught, is propelled by his motives, is helplessly suspended in his culture, and is swept along with the tides of social

change. (p. 62)

In short, the author of the textbook has two personality theories: one he uses to explain psychologists and one he uses to explain "ordinary mortals" (Kelly, 1969, p. 62). Baffled by this, Kelly (1969) asks, "Is [the psychologist] a scientist—a creature apart—whose own behavior is explained by his undertakings [as a scientist], while the behavior of other men is to be explained only in terms of stimuli, motives, physiology, and the momentum of their biographies?" (p. 15). The only two options, explains Kelly, are to either apply to psychologists the theory used to explain ordinary people, or to apply to ordinary people the theory used to explain psychologists (Kelly, 1969). For the same of intellectual consistency, Kelly chose to do the latter, because he believed that a psychologist who construes human beings as something *other* than construing beings automatically excludes himself from the very construct system he is actively construing.

Thus, Kelly expressed a desire to build a construct system for interpreting human activity that also accounts for the construing activities of the psychologist. "What we are proposing," he writes, "is neither a conventional philosophy nor a conventional psychology. … As a psychology it is concerned with the philosophical outlooks of individual man" (Kelly, 1963, p. 16). In other words, Kelly proposes that scientists (psychologists) make sense of and construe individuals as people who make sense of and construe their experiences as if they were scientists. In short, Kelly (1969) explained, "As I see it, being a psychologist is doing what man does, though perhaps more systematically than most men" (p. 15).

Intellectual Consistency Preserved

When applying Kelly's insights to self-betrayal, one can envision people as moral

agents, self-betrayers, and self-justifiers. It is possible to maintain the consistency that Kelly sought between the assumed motives of the psychologists and the assumed motives of the subjects, albeit it requires us to reconceptualize the scientist's motivations to some degree. We can assume that psychologists are also moral agents, who also possess a moral sense of how they ought to treat the subjects they study. If, in this way, we construe scientists and psychologist as *also* acting for moral reasons, any potential inconsistency disappears.

For example, I suspect that many (if not most) students in psychology are studying psychology with a desire to help others resolve their problems and difficulties. However, even if the stated motivations of a psychologist are not framed as a response to the suffering of others, the clients who visit the practitioners who ostensibly apply the theories formulated by psychologists are, indeed, people who suffer and are looking for someone to respond to their suffering. "To illuminate [their] claim that human behavior is best understood as essentially moral," Williams and Gantt (2002) propose:

> that people seek therapy hoping for help with what are essentially moral problems. … They are having difficulty establishing and maintaining satisfactory relationships, they are failing in the work of the world, in fulfilling their cultural obligations, or in finding an identity—which is a meaning—within the culture they inhabit, physically, historically and meaningfully. … At their most basic level, psychological problems are moral problems. (p. 14)

In like manner, it seems unlikely that a psychologist can study people without engaging in a relationship with them as a moral agent. And from that point forward, all of the psychologist's constructs about human behavior are necessarily informed by their

response to whatever moral promptings they experience in relationship to others. In short, from this perspective, the construct of man-the-moral-agent could subsume the construct of man-the-scientist, if one assumes that scientists are first and foremost moral agents in their work.

In fact, this narrative is *itself* proposed as a construct, one that has been articulated in an attempt to respond to what I believe is basic to the humanness of human beings: their moral agency, enacted in the context of a moral sense. I construe myself as articulating a construct system that has been built in response to felt moral obligations towards those around me. Therefore, like Kelly's original narrative, this new application of Kelly's insights has the advantage of accounting for the actions and motivations of both psychologists *and* the people they study in one consistent theory, and thus maintains the intellectual consistency and parsimony that Kelly wished to preserve in his original theory.

Kelly's Repertory Grid Test

According to Kelly, many (if not most) of the constructs that guide our outlook on the world have not been assigned linguistic labels that allow us to identify, communicate, and reflect on them. He explains, "A large portion of human behavior follows nameless channels which have no language symbols, nor any kinds of signposts 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" (Kelly, 1963, p. 1). In short, there are many dichotomous constructs that guide an individual's outlook, choices, and behavior that are not conscious or communicable because the individual has not assigned labels to the dichotomous ends of the construct.

In order to understand an individual's behavior and difficulties, a therapist must first understand the individual's construct system. Kelly (1963) explains, "Since role constructs are of particular importance in psychological practice, it seems appropriate that we should make a direct approach to the elicitation of such constructs in the subjects whose personal-social behavior we wish to understand" (p. 219). Kelly proposes to do this by asking the individual to list the names of people who play certain roles in his life. For example, the therapist asks the individual to list the name of a teacher he liked, a teacher he disliked, his wife, an employer he got along with, an employer he didn't get along with, his brother, his sister, etc. In one version of the test, the individual would write down 24 separate names, which ostensibly represent the people in his life that are relevant to the individual's role constructs (Kelly, 1963, p. 221).

Then, the therapist would elicit comparisons between persons on the list. For example, he might ask, "Now I would like you to tell me something about these three people. [The therapist presents 3 of the names on the list.] In what *important way* are two of them alike but different from the third?" (Kelly, 1963, pp. 222, emphasis in original). As we learn from the construction corollary, all constructs require *at least* three elements. This is because, explains Kelly (1963), "to say that two things are *alike* is also to imply that they are *different* from certain other things. Their *alikeness* makes no sense unless it also serves to *distinguish* them from certain other things. Thus likeness always implies a difference" (pp. 303, emphasis in original). In a similar way, "the way in which two things are different must, if it is to make any sense at all, be the way in which at least one of them is *like* a third thing" (Kelly, 1963, pp. 303, emphasis in original).

By repeating this process multiple times with many different combinations of

persons on the list, the therapist is able to elicit a number of constructs that the individual

uses to classify and differentiate people in his social world. As we learn from the sociality

corollary, this also implies that these constructs are the constructs on which the individual

plots *himself*. As Kelly explains, "When, in an intake interview, a client describes the

other people who populate his intimate world, he is essentially stating the coordinate axes

with reference to which he must plot his own behavior. He is stating his personal

construct system" (Kelly, 1963, p. 132). In short, "As one construes other people, he

formulates the construction system which governs his own behavior. The constructs

which have other people as their contexts bind oneself too" (Kelly, 1963, p. 133). In other

words, a number of the elicited constructs are likely reveal the role the individual sees

himself as playing in his social world.

Kelly's repertory grid test is an effective tool to help make an individual's

construct systems explicit, and it allows us to measure and document them as we do. As

Kelly (1963) said, this test helps make "personal constructs and construction systems

more communicable" (p. 9). Because of Kelly's work, I agree with his assessment that

"our public construction systems for understanding other people's personal constructs are

becoming more precise and more comprehensive" (Kelly, 1963, p. 9).

Self-betrayal and the Repertory Grid Test

Warner (1986) acknowledges that his approach may alienate some people because

"it doesn't sound 'scientific'" (p. 17). Indeed, one critic argued that "[w]hile [Warner's]

stories are inspiring and enlivening, they fail to provide scientific proof of efficacy"

(cited in Judd, Bingham, & Williams, 1988). So far, relatively little work has been done

to rigorously test Warner's approach, because it has, so far, only been amenable to

qualitative methods (see, e.g., Warner, 2001). Judd, Bingham, and Williams (1988) affirm that "although Warner has offered philosophical and anecdotal support for the effectiveness of [self-betrayal theory], as yet no systematic studies have been reported which indicate the value of the perspective" (p. 3). Qualitative work has discovered that anecdotes that verify Warner's descriptions of self-betrayal, and the ensuing changes in outlook, can be found almost everywhere (see, e.g., Olson & Israelson, 2007; Warner, 1986, 2001), but little work has been done to persuade those who rely on and value quantitative methods in their research (the only quantitative study I have found is the one performed by Judd, et al., 1988). Judd, Bingham, and Williams (1988) argue that in order for more research to be done,

> Instrumentation needs to be developed which would access experiences of guilt,
> blame, anger victimization, styles of self-betrayal (self-righteousness, childishness,
> perfectionism, martyrism), collusion, liberation, and the sense of social
> responsibility—all of which are central to the understanding of mental health as
> well as mental illness. (p. 52)

I believe that the narrative explored in this thesis might eventually open up new avenues of research, such as the possibility of using Kelly's repertory grid test to identify recurring patterns in the constructs that people frequently adopt in their moments of self-betrayal.

Although I believe that our obligations to the others in our lives, and our response to those obligations, are in some ways fundamentally unreachable by strict numerical or material analysis, this project could potentially reveal a more quantitative and systematic approach to studying the ways in which we rationalize our self-betrayal. I picture the

possibility of administering a modified version of the Kelly Repertory Grid test to an individual who is engaged in self-betrayal (something that will likely need to be determined subjectively), and list as elements in the test individuals in the individual's life towards whom he is self-betrayed. In doing this, the administrator of the test can elicit the role constructs that the individual has adopted, and piece together a fragment of the individual's construct system. The administrator can repeat the test multiple times with multiple individuals who are also engaged in self-betrayal, see if there are recurring patterns in the construct system. While such a study would produce nothing like a foolproof diagnostic tool, it *might* help researchers investigate which construct systems are likely to be used to rationalize self-betrayal, and which are not as useful in doing so. In short, the narrative presented in this thesis may provide the conceptual tools to create just the kind of instrumentation that Judd, Bingham, and Williams (1988) wrote about.

One potential problem with this approach might be that the administration of such a test may invite the individual reflectively evaluate their construct systems, abandon their self-betrayal, and reconstrue the persons towards whom they were previously self-betrayed. This may spoil the data—but it may *also* provide insight into how the construct systems change in those moments. The only way to know for sure would be to design the study, perform it, and observe the results. The possibility of being able to catalogue the kinds of constructs that individuals frequently use to rationalize their self-betrayal is an exciting prospect, and may help people to reflect upon their own construct systems and enact change in their lives. In any case, this new application of Kelly's ideas, and the research questions and methods that sprout from it, may be a step towards making "personal constructs and construction systems [involved in self-betrayal] more

communicable," (Kelly, 1963, p. 9) and not just communicable, but communicable in terms of how they are a response to an individual's moral sense.

Conclusion

I believe that this intellectual experiment may provide a conceptual structure and language through which we can account for and communicate experiences of self-deception. While it may not be the *only* way to talk about self-deception, I believe that it may be a step towards making "personal constructs and construction systems [involved in self-deception] more communicable" (Warner, 2001). That is, Kelly's psychology of personal constructs may go a long way towards illuminating the magic behind the sudden gestaltic shifts and moral transformations experienced by individuals in Warner's (1986, 2001) stories, without undoing any of Warner's existing analysis of self-betrayal.

Also, while the modified fundamental postulate certainly requires some minor modifications to a couple of Kelly's original corollaries, the basic picture they paint about (1) how constructs are structured, (2) how constructs evolve as we respond to experience, and (3) how constructs shape our social relationships might look very similar to Kelly's original vision. The primary difference, if there is one, the motivating reason that underlies our construction systems. Thus, whereas in Kelly's approach, we construe for the sake of anticipating events, when applied to self-betrayal, we construe in order to account for our response to our moral sense.

The end vision of the thesis is a structured "theory of personality," so to speak, that borrows Kelly's insights and extends them to the phenomenon of self-betrayal. This approach allows us to (1) help others make their self-betraying constructs explicit, (2) measure and document them when we do, (3) communicate those constructs to others, (4)

and do all of these things while conceptualizing human beings as moral agents responding to their moral sense, in addition to scientists seeking to predict and control their environment.

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