

EDITING KELLY'S PAPERS: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT

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Abstract: This paper reports on the authors' collection and editing of the papers of George Kelly for an anthology that will soon be published, Collected papers of the pioneer of constructivist psychology: George A. Kelly. The process of tracing the papers and preparing them for publication is described. The categories in which they fall are presented, namely: autobiography; theory and philosophy; research, measurement, and experimental psychology; interpersonal and international relations; clinical psychology and psychotherapy; education; professional issues; book reviews; and miscellaneous. Examples from each category are discussed. The paper highlights Kelly's status as a polymath, whose writings, many previously unpublished, extend far beyond the magnum opus that he published 70 years ago.

Keywords: George Kelly; Personal Construct Theory; Anthology; Editing.

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George Kelly is, of course, best known for his two-volume magnum opus, *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (Kelly, 1955), published 70 years ago, with its first three chapters being republished eight years later as *A Theory of Personality: The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (Kelly, 1963a). Although he worked on four other books, completing a full draft of one of these, as well as a novel, none of them were ever published. In addition to this work, Kelly wrote a large number of papers, conference presentations, lectures, and other documents, some of which appeared in journals and as book chapters. A number of these papers were eventually published in a book edited by Brendan Maher (1969), *Clinical Psychology and Personality: The Selected Papers of George Kelly*, which is now out of print, as are most of the other books in which there were chapters by Kelly. However, the majority have never been published.

The possibility of producing a more comprehensive book of Kelly's published and

unpublished papers was initially pursued by Fay Fransella, the Director of the Centre for Personal Construct Psychology in the U.K. Both she and David Winter discussed this idea with publishers, but at that time there was little interest in it. After Fay's death, Nick Reed became Director of the Centre for Personal Construct Psychology, and, since we had managed to survive other co-editing activities, including the *Handbook of Personal Construct Psychology* (Winter & Reed, 2016) and the selected papers of Miller Mair (Winter & Reed, 2015), we decided to revive the project of editing a new book of Kelly's papers. We therefore produced a proposal for Wiley, the publisher of the Handbook, and were delighted when they eventually gave us a contract, but also daunted by the task that we faced. In this paper we shall provide an indication of what this task involved and then give an overview of the topics that are covered by the papers.

1. THE EDITING TASK

1.1 Identifying the Papers

The identification of the papers was one of the easier tasks, since a detailed list of Kelly's writings had been published by Gabriele Chiari (2017), following a previous list produced by Fay Fransella. However, during the course of our process of excavation, we discovered a few gems that had not been previously listed, and we are grateful to Jonathan Raskin for alerting us to one or two of these.

1.2 Tracing the Papers

It was one thing to identify the papers, but yet another to track them all down. Our task was made easier by the fact that Fay Fransella had gathered together a large number of them, with the help of George Kelly's wife, Gladys, and included them in the Fransella Collection, which is now housed at the University of Hertfordshire together with the Miller Mair archive. A further collection is housed in the archives of the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, whose librarian, Mary-Ellen Ducey, was very helpful, as was the late Franz Epting.

However, some papers proved particularly elusive, for example one entitled *An epistle to the Western Hemisphere*, that Kelly (1929a) wrote when he was a Bachelor of Education student at the University of Edinburgh. It was published in the *Moray House Magazine*, which had at the time been a journal of the University's Department of Education, and although we were pleased to learn that back issues of this magazine were kept by the university, we then discovered that the issue in which Kelly's article appeared was missing from this archive. We suspect that some avid PCP scholar may not have been able to resist the temptation of adding the magazine to their collection of George Kelly memorabilia. If it was one of you, we shall offer you an amnesty and anonymity if you would like to achieve absolution of the guilt of being dislodged from your core role by returning it to us. We had virtually given up hope of obtaining this paper when, with the book nearing completion, a copy of it was

eventually discovered during excavation of the University of Nebraska archive.

We were not so fortunate with a small number of Kelly's other writings, which seem to be beyond trace. It is unlikely that any of them are of major importance, but a list of them follows in case any of you happen to know where they might be found.

Kelly, G. A. (1929). *Fuselage stress analysis and design specifications for Skylark Model 1*. Report to the U.S. Bureau of Aeronautics in support of an application for a manufacturing license for the Watkins Aircraft Co., Wichita, KS.

Kelly, G. A. (1930). *Prediction of teaching success*. Unpublished B. Ed. thesis, University of Edinburgh.

Kelly, G. A. (1937). *Report to the president of Fort Hays Kansas State College concerning psychological clinical services*. Fort Hays Kansas State College.

Kelly, G. A. (1938). *Outline for the study of a child*. Fort Hays Kansas State College.

Kelly, G. A. (1941). *Outline for a clinical case study*. Fort Hays Kansas State College.

Kelly, G. A. (1944). *Problems in the aviation training of British Royal Navy Cadets*. Report to U.S. Navy.

Kelly, G. A. et al. (1945). *Attrition in U.S. Naval Aviation*.

Kelly, G. A. et al. (1945). *War weariness in U.S. Naval Aviation*.

Kelly, G. A. & Moore, B. V. (1950). *Report of survey of psychology at the University of Louisville*.

Kelly, G. A. (1951). *The psychological construction of life*. Psychology Clinic Library, Ohio State University.

Kelly, G. A. (1953). *A plan for a comprehensive experimental study of the uses of television in teacher education*. Annual reports, 1953-1954, New Jersey State Teachers College at Montclair.

Kelly, G. A. (1955). *Television at the classroom door*.

Kelly, G. A. (1957). *Contemporary problems in clinical psychology*.

1.3 Comprehensiveness

In setting out on the project, amongst the first issues to consider was whether to publish Kelly's complete works or a collection of these. We were afraid that the publisher would balk at the likely size of an anthology of complete works, but we were helped by the fact that this was the favoured option of one of the reviewers of our proposal. The next question was what to regard as a work, since Kelly's writings spanned so many forms, including not just academic papers but, for example, reports to universities and other institutions, book reviews, poems, whimsical fantasies, and even addresses to the congregation of his local church. The content was also very varied, extending from psychology to philosophy, but also including such topics as the use of television in education, trigonometry, and the design of aircraft instrument panels.

Our decision was to be totally inclusive, since we believed this to be most in keeping with the credulous attitude of personal construct psychology, and that it would allow scholars to make their own selection of what might be of most interest to them. The content of particular pieces may initially not seem of great interest or relevance to personal construct psychology, but most, if not all, of them throw light on the development of Kelly's ideas and his views on more general issues than those indicated in the titles of the documents. They also demonstrate the sheer breadth of knowledge and skills of someone who truly earned the label of polymath, together with the very varied style of his writing, ranging from academic formality to whimsy and humour.

The only writings that we chose not to include were Kelly's (1929b) novel, *The Call to Arms*, since his family did not wish this to be published; his Masters and PhD theses; a document that was labelled 'privileged communication'; and one the

content of which was largely repeated in another of the documents included in the book.

Although, in view of the few missing papers, we cannot refer to the anthology as Kelly's complete works, it consists of 127 chapters and is probably as close as it is ever possible to get to this. Although we originally thought that, in view of its size, it would, not inappropriately, be published in two volumes, the final decision of the publisher was that it will be a single weighty tome, to be entitled *Collected Papers of the Pioneer of Constructivist Psychology: George A. Kelly* (Winter & Reed, 2025).

1.4 Permissions

One of the most tedious and time-consuming tasks that confronts the editor who wishes to republish another author's work is negotiating the maze of copyrights and permissions. Kelly's daughter, Jacqueline Aldridge, provided unwavering support to our project, including giving blanket permission for the publication of all her father's academic works for which she held the copyright. However, identifying who holds the copyright when a work has been previously published elsewhere, especially if this has been in more than one place, is no easy matter. In some cases, the work was so old that it is now in the public domain, but in others permission had to be sought from the publishers of books or journals in which the papers appeared or from institutions involved in their publication. Amongst the problems that were faced were publishers that were no longer in existence or that had been taken over, and some non-mainstream journals that did not respond to permission requests. For example, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, one of Kelly's papers (Kelly, 1964) was published in the *Pakistan Journal of Psychology*, from which we received no replies to correspondence.

As well as being laborious, obtaining permission for republication can be expensive. Fortunately, however, with two exceptions, all the publishers whom we contacted generously gave permission for the inclusion of papers in the anthology without charge, particularly given the support of

the daughter of the author of the papers. We shall not embarrass those concerned by revealing the identities of the publishers who did ask for payment for republication.

1.5 Deciphering the Papers

Kelly was, of course, writing before the age of the word processor. Although some of the unpublished documents had been retyped in digital format by the Centre for Personal Construct Psychology, others were in the original typewritten form, often with several corrections and handwritten additions to the text. Coupled with this were problems such as the type having faded or the document having suffered the ravages of mould. In some cases, a document contained various alternative versions of the text, and a decision had to be made as to which of these might have been the preferred one. Producing final versions of these papers was therefore not always a straightforward manner, particularly when they included Figures and diagrams, some of which had been hand-drawn by Kelly.

1.6 Copy Editing

Copy editing is also a particularly time-consuming task when it involves, as in this case, a very large number of documents, each prepared in its own individual style or that of the journal or book in which it was originally published. We have as far as possible maintained a consistent style throughout the book, including use of American English, citations and references in APA style, and a standard hierarchy of headings.

Another consideration was whether to make any corrections or other adjustments to the papers. Although our grammatical constructions did not always agree with Kelly's, we only corrected the text when there were very clear errors or misspellings. We also decided not to adjust Kelly's language to make it more compatible with currently acceptable forms of expression. This includes retention of his use of the male pronoun and of remarks which might, for example, be construed as sexist in today's world. Our decision was based on the previously mentioned

credulous attitude and our belief that his writing should be evaluated from the perspective of the time and social context in which he lived.

1.7 Organisation of the Material

The easiest way of presenting the material might have been to do so chronologically. Instead, we decided to organise it in terms of themes, although with chapters generally appearing chronologically within each theme. This was partly to assist the reader in finding chapters of more direct relevance to their particular concerns, and partly to enable us to prepare syntheses of the material in each section. However, the classification into themes was somewhat artificial as most chapters spanned more than one theme. We shall now give an indication of the content of each of the thematic sections of the anthology.

2. THE THEMES

2.1 Autobiography

The book begins with two autobiographical sketches covering the period from Kelly's birth on his parents' farm to his 20 years of employment at Ohio State University. We have also included in this section the 'epistle to the Western hemisphere' that he wrote when studying in Edinburgh since, although it is an imaginary letter to a girl friend, it is probably at least a semi-autobiographical account of his experiences, in which he recounts that 'It is a problem to know which is the more startling: the fact that the people here are so much like those at home or the fact that they are so different' (Kelly, 1929a, p. 9).

In *The autobiography of a theory*, Kelly (1969a) relates various events in his life as a psychology student and during his early career to the development of personal construct theory, while in *Confusion and the clock* (Kelly, 1978), which was intended to be a chapter in a book entitled *The Human Feeling* which he was writing because of his concerns about personal construct theory

being labelled as cognitive, he reflects on his feelings following a heart attack.

2.2 Theory and Philosophy

The earliest paper in this section, *Essay on the doctrine of mental energy*, is again one that Kelly (1930) wrote during his time in Edinburgh at the age of 25. Heralding the philosophy of the theory that he would later develop, he uses it to argue that the criterion of a good hypothesis is its utility, rather than its truth. The remaining papers in this section, some written before and some after *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* was published, nearly all present aspects of his theory. Interestingly, in one of them, *A brief introduction to personal construct theory* (Kelly, 1970), which was to be a chapter in another book that he never completed, this time on personal construct research, he admits that in *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* the wording of the Commonality Corollary was incorrect.

The section also includes a poem, *Onta*, in which Kelly reflects on ontology.

2.3 Research, Measurement and Experimental Psychology

The earliest chapters in this section mostly relate to Kelly's research on reading and speech disabilities, which were the subjects of his PhD thesis.

He also considers various approaches to psychological assessment, and in *The theory and technique of psychological assessment* (Kelly, 1958a) he reviews 300 papers. Although this might seem of tangential relevance to personal construct theory, the review is written from the stance of Kelly's 'first principle' that 'If you don't know what is going on in a person's mind, ask him; he may tell you' (p. 330). There are also many examples of Kelly's characteristic humour, such as: 'When the subject is asked to guess what the examiner is thinking, we call it an objective test; when the examiner tries to guess what the subject is thinking we call it a projective device. Most intelligence tests belong to the former group, which probably accounts for the fact that intelligence testing has made very little

contribution to our understanding of the psychological processes of anyone except psychologists' (p. 332).

Various chapters present Kelly's own approaches to psychological assessment, particularly repertory grid technique. There is also an argument for a strategy for psychological research based on questions rather than answers and, in *Humanistic methodology in psychological research* (Kelly, 1969b), a warning against the abandonment of technology because 'humanistic psychology needs a technology through which to express its humane intentions' (p. 135).

2.4 Interpersonal and International Relations

Personal construct theory is sometimes, in our view unjustly, criticised for giving insufficient attention to social construing, but this section demonstrates that social issues were central to Kelly's concerns from an early age. In *The sincere motive*, which won him first prize in the Peace Oratorical Contest at Friends' University, Kansas when he was 19, Kelly (1924) made a plea for peace to be borne from 'our own hearts' (p. 80). A year later, in *Forgotten issues* (Kelly, 1925), he argued that the ingredients of 'ultimate civilization' are democracy, self-determination, universal law, mutual confidence, organization, and greatest loyalty to the largest group.

Later papers include a presentation of his view of dependency, and writings derived from his and his wife's world tour, which was planned to explore the 'decision matrices', or constructs, used by people in different parts of Europe. While the account entitled *Europe's matrix of decision* (Kelly, 1962a) will be familiar to most personal construct theorists, this will not be the case for *Nicholas Square* (Kelly, n.d.a), which consists of poetic notes for a book chapter based on Kelly's experiences in the Soviet Union. Also rather intriguing is a document entitled *Man, crises, and commitments: A stated purpose and a plan for an Institute for Advanced Psychological Studies* (Kelly, n.d.b). It considers intrapersonal, interpersonal, and international crises, but never

gets round to presenting the plan for the Institute that is mentioned in its title.

2.5 Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy

The largest section of the anthology, consisting of 38 chapters, concerns what has been regarded as the focus of convenience of Kelly's theory. It includes the *Handbook of Clinic Practice* (Kelly, Jackson, Zelhart, & Markley, 1985), which he wrote in the 1930s for his students at Fort Hays Kansas State College, which went through five editions, and that he later said was the precursor of *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*. Amongst its interesting features was a set of 34 rules for students working in the college's psychological clinic. Many of the other early writings in this section concern aspects of the work of the clinic and, ahead of their time, there are critiques of psychiatric diagnostic systems and an emphasis on the importance of helping clients make their own formulations of their difficulties.

Another series of chapters includes insights into the clinical psychology programme that Kelly went on to develop at Ohio State University. Of particular interest in relation to the development of his ideas are seminar notes dated six years before *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* was published in which there are early statements of aspects of the theory and a classification of psychiatric diagnoses in terms of psychopathological adjustments to threat. In the chapters concerning the Ohio State University programme, together with another setting out a proposal for City University of New York, one can find Kelly's vision of an ideal clinical psychology training programme. Also apparent is his dismissal of the view that clinical psychology is an applied science, since he saw this as imposing an external framework upon the client, in contrast to the collaborative use of scientific method by the psychologist and client.

Other chapters in this section include general discussions of psychotherapy, including its goals when conducted from a personal construct perspective, and the therapeutic relationship, including transcripts of Kelly's sessions with a

client. There are also more specific chapters, for example on suicide, fixed-role therapy, and the consideration in psychotherapy of the nature of good and evil.

The section also includes perhaps the most significant of Kelly's previously unpublished writings, a set of three lectures on *The function of interpretation in psychotherapy* (Kelly, 1959) in which he presents a view of the person as 'an incorrigible interpreter' and goes on to make important points about reconstruction and the therapeutic facilitation of reinterpretation.

2.6 Education

The first chapter in this section is *A plan for socializing Friends University with respect to student participation in school control*, written when Kelly (1927) was in his early twenties and presenting a radical vision of education in which this shifts from a narrow 'classroom' to a broad 'total activity' conception. It envisions a situation in which 'school participation groups will be able to invade the classroom to the extent that the very discussions will be maintained by the students and the teacher will be requested to take a side seat and speak only when asked to do so' (p. 61).

There is also an early paper, written while he was in Edinburgh, in which school achievement and the curriculum are considered in relation to the nature versus nurture debate; and another on factors influencing, and the facilitation of, intellectual development.

Three chapters report some of the earliest research on remote learning, in this case by the use of television in the classroom. They include further insights into Kelly's view of the role of the teacher, such as that 'Local teachers may not greatly influence WHAT pupils believe, but they do have a lot to do with pupils' FREEDOM TO EXPRESS their beliefs' (Kelly & Conrad, 1954, capitals in original). The teacher's role in helping the student establish new kinds of relationship with knowledge, authority, truth, and colleagues is further explicated in *Teacher-student relations at the university level*, in which Kelly (1958b) provides examples from the Thursday evening sessions in which students were invited to his home to listen

to, and comment on, drafts of *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*. He described this as a process of 'taking people who come as students, and changing them into colleagues'.

The contrast pole of what a teacher should be like is spelt out in a poem that ends the Education section of the book and is entitled *Nursery rhymes for older tots (To all you kettles, from all us pots)* (Kelly, 1963b).

2.7 Professional Issues

Kelly was very much involved in the development of the profession of clinical psychology, and most of the chapters in this section concern issues relating to this profession, although with broader implications for interprofessional relationships. Some of them again consider the training of clinical psychologists, but with a focus on the type of professional that the training programme is trying to produce. Others consider the unique role of the psychologist in the multidisciplinary team, essentially as a scientist-practitioner, and the relationships between members of the team. Some chapters emphasise the 'chasm' between psychology and medicine in their understanding of the person presenting with problems, and champion a psychology profession that is independent of medicine. However, they also stress the importance of attempting to understand, rather than dismissing, the constructions of other members of the team, or, as Kelly puts it, 'learning to think in other people's terms' (Kelly, 1951, p. 317). In one of the chapters, *Problems of clinical psychology in an industrial setting* (Kelly, 1958c), there is a cautionary note about opportunistic applications of psychology without considering their long-term implications.

2.8 Book Reviews

Kelly wrote several book reviews, primarily for *Contemporary Psychology*, which was then the book review journal of the American Psychological Association. In these reviews, he was often less charitable to the authors of the books concerned than one might expect. For example, although it might be thought that he would share the view espoused in Thomas

Szasz's most famous book that mental illness is a myth, Kelly (1962b) criticised Szasz as being a dualist who did not question the construct of illness. Perhaps his most enthusiastic review (Kelly, 1963c) was of Eric Berne's *Transactional analysis in psychotherapy*.

2.8 Miscellaneous

The anthology ends with a few chapters that cannot be easily fitted within the other sections. The first of these, *How I spent my seventieth birthday* (Kelly, 1918), demonstrates Kelly's capacity as a young adolescent to transport himself into an imagined future in a very different world.

This section also contains *Understandable Psychology* (Kelly, 1932), an unpublished psychology textbook that is illustrated with cartoons drawn by Kelly. There are few indications within it of the particular psychology that he would eventually develop, but he does remark that 'The problem of how things come to have meaning to us is one of the most interesting in the whole galaxy of psychology's half-answered questions'. A more witty explanation of psychological terms is provided in *Aggravating aphorisms: How to read a psychological dictionary between the lines* (Kelly, 1936), in which the redefinitions of these terms include 'stimulus' defined as 'Something invented to account for a response' and 'response' defined as 'Something invented so a stimulus could be made accountable for something'.

Another of Kelly's unpublished textbooks, written with a colleague, was on trigonometry (Kelly & Warnock, 1935). Although its trigonometric content may only be of interest to the most fanatical George Kelly aficionado, the book does provide insight into Kelly's views about study skills. Finally, there are reports written when Kelly worked for the U.S. Navy, including one on the design of aircraft instrument panels, in which he has again drawn cartoons and other illustrations (Kelly, 1945).

3. AFTERWORD

Although often frustrating, the task of producing the anthology of Kelly's writings has been something of a labour of love. Kelly's work has had a profound influence on psychology, and more personally on the lives of very many individuals, including ourselves. For each of us, when we first dipped into his magnum opus, we discovered a view of the world which resonated with our own, barely elaborated, perspective and provided a refreshing contrast to the dominant approaches to which we had previously been exposed. Over the years, we have continued to be indebted to the extremely wide range of convenience of Kelly's theory, which we have been able to apply in areas as diverse as the shackling of in-patients in an African psychiatric hospital (Winter, Brown, Goins, & Mason, 2016), the making of environmentally-conscious decisions (Reed & Page, 2016), and the outlooks of serial killers and perpetrators of genocide (Reed et al., 2014; Winter, 2007; Winter et al., 2007). Our work on the present project has only served to validate this construction of the very high level of permeability of Kelly's ideas, and indeed we have sometimes been surprised by the sheer breadth of the territory into which he himself ventured. We have also been struck by possible preoccupations indicated by themes to which he repeatedly returned in his writing. Some of these, such as his aversion to the notion of mental energy, are not unfamiliar, but more interesting is that, for example, he often made remarks about warfare, which we know that he passionately spoke out against as a 19-year old but his constructions about which must have been influenced by his later experiences, not least as a Lieutenant Commander in the Second World War. Although it was never the subject of a paper, or even a section of one of these, in its own right, war nevertheless found its way, often as an illustration of some point, into various papers, even when it might seem far removed from the paper's topic, as in his consideration of the statistical implications of the assumption of an

originally homogeneous universe (Kelly, 1938)! As for any invalidations of our constructions of Kelly as the epitome of constructive alternativism, we have probably dealt with these by hostility: e.g., viewing some of his remarks about women from the perspective of the time in which he was living, and his sometimes less than generous descriptions of the work of theorists of other persuasions as devices by which his own ideas could be clearly presented by contrast.

There were different ways in which we could have approached our task, but we hope that the anthology will be a fitting tribute to the extraordinarily diverse output of the pioneer of constructivist psychology.

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