

CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVISM AND THE ASSAULT ON TRUTH¹

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Abstract: Constructive alternativism, the philosophical position that the universe is always open to alternate interpretations, can be seen as consistent with current political rhetoric stating that conservative operatives are considering “alternative facts”. In this paper, I argue that such an interpretation of constructive alternativism is erroneous. I first explain the ways Kellian philosophy would argue that there is a real world that plays a role in our constructions of it. I then outline some criteria for evaluating whether constructions of the universe do justice to Kellian principles. I conclude with using these criteria to evaluate current political rhetoric in the United States.

Keywords: Constructive alternativism, Integral universe, Experiential Personal Construct Psychology.

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I would like to thank you for your kind invitation to speak with you today. I had thought my days of giving papers were long gone! While I have entitled this talk, “Constructive alternativism and the assault on truth”, Peter Cummins, a dear friend and constructivist colleague, said it could have been entitled: “Experiential Personal Construct Psychology escapes from the therapy room into the real world... and has a very practical framework to deal with some of the bizarreness of contemporary politics”. Perhaps his title is better than mine. Anyway, here goes!

While George W. Bush was President of the United States, an administration official said to the Washington press corps something like this: “You folks try to report on the facts. What you don’t realize is that, before you can report, we will have acted, and the facts will change” (Susskind, 2004). During the first Trump administration, one official reported that the administration was dealing with

alternate truths than those of the press. On the surface, such statements appear consistent with constructivist philosophical views on the nature of the relationship between the person and the world. If we cannot know the world except through our constructions of it, who is to say that all constructions are not equally viable?

For example, most scholars know that a fundamental premise of George Kelly’s *Psychology of Personal Constructs* (1955) was his philosophy of constructive alternativism. Kelly’s position holds that all our present interpretations of the universe are open to revision and replacement. We never know the universe directly; rather, we come to know it through our constructions of it. Constructive alternativism can be seen as implying that all constructions are equally valid, leading to certain powerful politicians to attempt to assail the notion that there is a truth that must be respected. I will argue that such a viewpoint is

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a fundamental misunderstanding of Kellian philosophy. After first discussing constructive alternativism, I will explore other aspects of Kelly's approach that need to be considered to truly appreciate his philosophical approach. I will conclude by offering some thoughts as to how a Kellian might critically evaluate alternative constructions as well as apply those criteria to current political rhetoric.

1. THE PHILOSOPHY OF CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVISM

Kelly is very clear with his philosophy of constructive alternativism: the universe owes no allegiance to any construction of it. All our constructions of it are subject to alternative constructions. In his magnum opus, Kelly emphasized that each word of his technical terms was chosen with great care. Let us focus on the word "all". Every interpretation of the universe is subject to an alternative. Further, every one of these alternatives also is open to alternatives. In other words, the word "all" is shorthand for the position that the universe is open to an infinite number of interpretations. Therefore, the philosophy of constructive alternativism leads us to have to consider the notion of infinity, one of the hardest concepts to grasp. Mathematicians still wrestle with the concept and its implications.

Infinity refers to something that is endless, without bounds or limits. Having said that, infinities can be different from one another. As an example, the infinity of even numbers and the infinity of odd numbers do not overlap at all. The number "7", for example, cannot be in the infinity of even numbers. So, even though there are an infinite number of even numbers, there also are numbers that are not a part of the even number infinity. As an aside, the infinity of whole numbers is comprised of the infinity of even numbers and the infinity of odd numbers. And therein lies a paradox of infinity: the infinity of whole numbers includes both the infinities of odd and even numbers (and therefore would seem to be larger than these latter two infinities) yet all three are

infinities (and therefore one cannot be larger than another).

When Kelly (1955, p. 7) states "the universe is continually changing," he reintroduces the position of infinite constructions of it. If the universe is "continually changing", any construction of it becomes obsolete almost as soon as it is created. In essence, then, life consists of continually evolving constructions of a continually evolving universe. Kelly (1955, p. 8) essentially says this when he states that "life involves the construction of reality". Kelly's sentence implies that our world consists of two aspects: reality and our constructions of it. However, in contrast, Kelly also is very clear that our constructions of the universe *are* a part of the universe. Kelly clearly states that our constructions are "real", a part of a real universe. As we continually construe and reconstrue as we go through life, we are a part of the continually changing universe.

The philosophy of constructive alternativism exists as a *part of* Kelly's philosophical approach. However, other aspects of his philosophy must be considered also.

2. THE UNIVERSE ITSELF

Besides the previously mentioned assumption that the universe is changing over time, there are other things we need to discuss. First, Kelly is clear that the universe is *real*. Second, he assumes that it is *integral* (Kelly, 1955, pp. 6-7, among others). Finally, for my purposes today, Kelly is clear that the universe exists on a time continuum.

Real universe. The assumption that the universe is real (and can be experienced by us) is central to Kelly's position. We are not construing shadows in our heads, but a real world. This world plays a role in determining the validity of our constructions of it. As a part of our construing of the world, we test our interpretations against the real world. The world either confirms or disconfirms our constructions. We choose, however, the criteria on which we base our

confirmations and disconfirmations. When we experience this validation feedback, we either gain more confidence in our constructions, revise our constructions, or hostilely cling to our constructions. The world then affirms or disconfirms our newer constructions. In other words, we do not create our constructions willy-nilly, but rather through a dynamic interaction with the world. The notion of “inner” constructions and “outer” world can be seen as meaningless. Our worlds are co-created in the dynamic “between” the person and the universe.

Going back to my infinity discussion, then, the real world may say that my construction does not fit the real world, just like the number “7” does not fit into the infinity of even numbers. While I may have infinite ways of construing the world, this particular way does not work. In order to better grasp the real world, I need to modify my constructions. However, these newer constructions also will be validated or invalidated by the real world.

As an aside, constructivist therapists have long dealt with this extremely important point. When a client shares particularly traumatic aspects of their life history, the therapist’s role is complex. First, by being with them as they share, therapists provide a real-world experience where their trauma is heard and felt. In addition, therapists must help the person develop newer constructions around the trauma. The client’s newer ways of understanding of the world must both *honor the horrors of the original trauma and open ways for future growth*. If we do the first without the second, we are as trapped in the horrors as the client. If we do the second without the first, we are trying to force the client to deny the real-world horrors that have been experienced. One of my purposes today is to extend this therapeutic principle to a larger context.

Integral universe. In addition to assuming that we are coming to know a real world, Kelly states quite clearly that the universe is *integral*. By integral, Kelly is stating that all parts of the

universe are connected to and affecting all other parts. His most famous quote around the interconnected universe was around his typing and the price of yak milk in Tibet: “...all of these events – the motion of my fingers, the action of the keys, and the price of yak milk – are interlocked” (Kelly, 1955, p. 6). In other words, all aspects of the universe are interacting with all other aspects continuously.

Further, Kelly is very clear that our constructions of the universe are a part of the universe. Because our constructions do not merely reside in us and are in continuous interaction with the wider world, Kelly’s position makes it clear that the universe changes in response to our constructions *and* our constructions evolve as a response to the universe changing. All of these reciprocal interactions lead to a conception of the universe as constantly changing.

Let me put this more evocatively: Our constructions of all that is are a part of all that is. All that is continually changes as each aspect of all that is interacts with every other aspect. In so doing, the notion of an “inner” and an “outer” fades away. (Or, to be precisely Kellian about it, “inner” and “outer” is a construct that has a limited range of convenience. It may be a useful construct for certain aspects of the universe, but, in the most profound sense, it is a construction that the larger universe continues to invalidate.) All important activity takes place in what the Buberians call the “between”.

We can see the disconfirmation of our construction of the universe as non-integral all around us. For example, many politically powerful people refuse to consider the fact that our burning of fossil fuels will impact the greater world in which we live. To oversimplify, excess carbon is in the atmosphere from these fuels. This carbon causes oceans to warm excessively, leading to more destructive hurricanes, global sea level rising, and the distinct possibility that Europe will enter a new Ice Age, among many other probabilities. All these interconnected events continue to interact with one another, leading to

a vicious circle. Our constructions play a role in these politicians getting power. Their constructions lead to more fossil fuel burning. And so on.

There is another implication of the integral universe that we need to discuss. If I (and my constructions) am a part of an integral universe, anything that damages the universe damages me. A toxic chemical spill does not just damage a part of a coastline, it damages the entire planet and all of us. People being bombed out of their homes through the violence of war are not only being damaged; all of humanity is damaged. People dying of preventable diseases because they are deprived of life-saving vaccines or medications are not the only ones dying; each of us dies a little bit also.

Time. Kelly also is very clear that, in his philosophy, the universe itself exists on a dimension of time. Kelly's notion of time has quite a lot packed into it, and a paper could be written just unpacking it. For my purposes today, the notion of time means we must be aware of our past and our future. Or, to put it a bit more precisely, that the universe has a past, and a future, and we must attend to that aspect of reality.

If we minimize the past, we create a situation where we have no understanding of how we got ourselves into our current difficulties. Using an example from U.S. history, if we minimize the role of racism in America, we cannot grasp how our current racial difficulties come about. If we minimize the future, there are many crises we will not see until it is too late. To continue with the racism example, we need to be aware of the current potential aspects of our racial situation and work to make a future more sustainable for all of us. If we ignore the past, we risk applying constructions on the current dilemmas of African Americans that are demeaning to them (e.g., they are lazy or they would be as well off economically as European Americans). If we minimize the future, we fail to see the ways that racism,

obviously affecting African Americans, also damages us all.

3. SUMMING UP KELLIAN PHILOSOPHY

If we sum across these various points, we can see a picture of the relationship between the person and the world. This relationship puts the person *and their constructions* as a part of the world. Our constructions affect the world, and the world affects our constructions. While the constantly changing universe means that it is open to infinite constructions, not all of these will be validated by the world.

As a matter of fact, we can say that the world will judge some of these constructions to be *wrong*. Just like the number 7 can never be a valid part of the infinity even numbers, some constructions can never be viable interpretations of the universe. Kelly (1955, p. 15) makes this clear when he says that, while there are always alternate constructions, "some of them are *definitely* poor implements" (emphasis added). So, Kelly, famous for his careful use of language, is saying that some constructions are definitely poor.

One implication of Kelly's philosophy is that we are responsible for the impact of our constructions on the world. Elsewhere, I have defined responsibility as the willingness to examine one's construct system in terms of its implications for others (Leitner, Faidley, & Celentana, 2000; Leitner & Pfenninger 1994). Given that there are an infinite number of constructions of the world, the ones we use we have co-created in interaction with the universe. The term "co-create" carries a significant load here. On the one hand, we play a role in coming up with our constructions of the world. We cannot attribute them to genetics, biochemistry, evolution, society, and so on. On the other hand, taking all the responsibility for our ways of being in the world denies others in the world of their agency.

These implications lead, in my view, to an awesome responsibility. We need to establish the 1950s, used the person as scientist predictive ability as his criterion. I am not sure, though, that this criterion satisfies the totality of Kelly's philosophical position. Specifically, it seems to fail to satisfy the position that our constructs are a part of the universe and therefore affect the universe.

Let me illustrate. I could have a construct system that accurately predicts that the continued use of fossil fuels will lead to irreversible climate destruction. Human civilization could be destroyed. My predictions could continue to be affirmed as monster hurricanes batter the U.S. coasts, the Gulf Stream becomes closer to shutting down (plunging Europe into a new Ice Age), droughts plague farming areas, and sea levels continue to displace people from their homes. However, I continue to use fossil fuels unabatedly. While I am accurately predicting what is happening, I am also ignoring my role in the planet's destruction. I might even have constructions something like, "Once I am gone, it's not my problem". Such constructions minimize our responsibility to the greater world of which we are a part. I believe, therefore, that we are challenged to come up with some criteria for judging the validity of various construct systems. Below, I will present some interrelated criteria for consideration; recognizing, even as I do, that others may use other criteria that could be equally (or more) valid as long as they do justice to Kelly's total philosophy.

Before attempting to develop such criteria, I want to emphasize that this challenge is not new. Constructivist psychotherapists always are judging the validity of their clients' construct systems. They do this through an awareness that the therapeutic relationship is an encounter between two humans, each of whom has values that will affect the evolving relationship. Therapists do this through a combination of monitoring their own meaning making process and recognizing that their clients' meaning making will, of course, be different from theirs. What is

some criteria for determining the validity of the constructs we apply to the world. Kelly, writing in different is that I am suggesting that we need to come up with criteria for evaluating construct systems on a more global level. I also am suggesting that all of us need to monitor our constructions in terms of their impact on the all that is.

On the surface, developing such criteria seems an act of hubris. We are, in essence, judging others' constructions through our own construct system. That reveals one of the fundamental paradoxes of life. We must both respect the infinite number of constructions others can use for the world *and* judge constructions as to their viability for the universe. If we do not respect the infinite variety of constructions, we are essentially playing God with our fellow persons. On the other hand, if we do not render some judgments as to their viability, we minimize our responsibility to nurture the universe. Further, because all that is includes us, we are not nurturing ourselves when we neglect our responsibility to judge constructions.

Relatedly, all of these criteria contain a trap that we must be careful to avoid. It will be easy to see how someone's constructions of the all that is that minimizes a criterion is problematic. However, we should not ignore the possibility that having too much of any of these criteria also can be problematic. Let me illustrate with humility, the first criterion I will discuss. A person's system that does not recognize the infinite ways of approaching the universe will obviously fail to be valid. On the other hand, we can be too humble in our approach to evaluating others' constructions of the all that is. In so doing, we may not help the other become aware of the ways they are damaging the all that is. Balancing these criteria becomes essential.

Because of this balancing of criteria, we must have self-awareness and self-reflection. I would argue that anyone who lacks the ability to reflect on their own constructions of the world is in grave danger of creating constructions which can be

judged as invalid. With a universe constantly in motion, our constructions need to be constantly in motion. If not, as soon as we apply our constructions to the world, the world has changed and left us behind.

One last point before I begin: As I discuss these criteria, I will be guilty of making a deliberate error. I may describe criteria in black or white, all or none, terms. Most people's constructions live in a "shades of gray" between such extremes. I will try to minimize this error by using terms like "to the extent" frequently. Even then, I may make the error.

4. THE EVALUATION OF CONSTRUCTIONS

Humility. First and foremost, the universe, comprising all that is, is a huge place. Because there are an infinite number of constructions of it, we need to be humble in our evaluation of these constructions. There is no way any one person's constructions can begin to account for the infinite variety of possibilities. As I mentioned before, therein lies the paradox, we simultaneously need to evaluate (and judge) the validity of constructions while being aware we cannot be ultimate arbiters of their validity. I need to carry both of these contradictions with me. If I minimize my role in evaluating the constructions of others, I risk becoming so relativistic that I cannot take a stand for the greater good. If I minimize my awareness that I cannot be an ultimate determiner of validity, I risk becoming a dictator.

However, humility also applies to the construction systems we are evaluating. If the person's system lacks the humility to acknowledge the infinite variety of ways the universe can be interpreted, it fails as a good system. In other words, to the extent I believe that I have found the ultimate way of making sense of the universe, my way of understanding the universe is a failure.

Openness. Humility implies that a person should be open to alternate constructions of the world. If there are infinite ways to construe the all that is, there is only the most infinitesimal of chances that my way of understanding the world is the most viable way. Not only do I need to be open to these alternate ways, I need to be willing to change my constructions if these alternate ways work better.

Openness, of course, must be balanced against other criteria in judging the validity of constructions. For example, I may be quite open to another's construction of the universe, recognizing it as a valid way to approach the world. However, if that person's constructions do not take into account the interconnected nature of the universe, my openness to their constructions leaves the all that is damaged. If all that is is damaged, that means, by the definition of the interconnected universe, that the person doing the damage has damaged self and other.

The experience of threat is the most common reason why people are not open to alternate constructions. We perceive these constructions as invalidating our very core. Rather than risk the threat of openness, we clamp down and insist our constructions are "right." In so doing, we damage ourselves and others.

Responsibility. As I mentioned above, our construct systems are a part of the real universe and therefore affect (and are affected by) all that is. We therefore have a responsibility to examine our meaning making process to determine the ways it injures or nurtures our world. Interpersonally, this position implies that, to the extent my meaning making negatively affects others, it is a failure. If our constructions of reality deny people food, shelter, security, and so on, we have a responsibility to replace them with more humane alternatives.

This responsibility also goes to the greater universe. To the extent I damage the planet, I damage myself and every creature in it. I therefore have a responsibility to create

meanings that mitigate environmental damage. If my meaning system ignores or minimizes climate change, pollution, and so on, it lacks validity.

The Jewish Rabbinic tradition of midrash has a principle. Jewish mystics may interpret and reinterpret Biblical passages by moving vowels around, etc. *However, any interpretation that does harm to another person is invalid.* I am proposing a similar principle here.

Commitment. Leitner & Pfenninger (1994) defined commitment in terms of the willingness to validate others over time (p. 129). As Kelly proposed, the universe exists on a time dimension. One of the ways this dimension reveals itself is that we need to consider the impacts of our meaning-making for more than just the present; the future also is critical. Thus, to the extent that my constructions do not affirm the dignity of others into the future, they fail as a valid system.

Likewise, to the extent that my meanings do not nurture the rest of the universe in the future, they are invalid. We must evaluate what we do (which is based upon how we construe) in terms of the future impact on the planet. If, for example, carbon dioxide levels continue to rise, many people and other creatures will die needlessly. A valid construct system must take such future possibilities into account.

Courage. Courage can be defined as the willingness to risk relational engagement knowing that we may potentially be devastated (Leitner & Pfenninger, 1994). As any Kellian knows, some of our constructions are so vital to us that they basically affirm our aliveness itself. These core constructs govern our “maintenance processes”, and we act in relation to our core as if our very lives depend on them. These constructs are at risk for invalidation as we engage the world.

I have written extensively about the ways we risk our core constructs in our deeper personal relationships. Today, though, I want to talk about a specific aspect of courage. This is the aspect of

having the courage to confront meaning systems that are harmful to the world. Others may have a great deal of power (the ability to affect our construing of the world). To bring up the ways that their meaning making is invalid could risk our very lives. It takes courage to protect the universe (and risk everything to protect what makes life worth living) from people who are so psychologically damaged they are willing and able to injure others, my definition of “evil” (Leitner, 2013, p. 125).

Reverence. Reverence means being aware that we are affirming the meaning-making processes of others (Leitner & Pfenninger, 1994, p. 133). Our construct system must be able to allow us to see the fragile strength and beauty of the mysteries of life we engage. To the extent that we cannot see the other as beautiful, our construction of the universe is invalid.

Similarly, our meaning-making must enable us to experience the wonders of the greater world. To paraphrase Viktor Frankl, if we cannot appreciate the beauty of a flower, we have failed in our constructions of the world. One of the implications of this transpersonal reverence is an appreciation of the fact that, if we destroy it, we are destroying some of the mysterious beauty of the universe. And, given that we are connected to it, we are destroying a part of us.

Guilt. Finally, when evaluating the validity of a construct system, we must consider the use of guilt in the system. Specifically, there is no way anyone can consider all of the possible impacts of their meaning-making on the all that is. There always will be ways in which we damage others, the universe, and therefore ourselves. When we become aware of these ways, we inevitably experience guilt, which Kelly defined as the awareness that we are acting against core constructs.

The experience of guilt therefore must be a part of a valid construct system. If guilt is absent, we have no awareness of the ways that our need to nurture all that is inevitably fails. We think we

have the ultimate truth and anyone who disagrees with us is wrong. In so doing, we fail to see the role all of us play in the all that is.

On the other hand, if we feel too much guilt, we can be paralyzed into inaction and not play a more active role in the evolution of the universe. We cannot just sit idly by, paralyzed by guilt, and allow people who are using invalid constructions to rule the planet. We must be aware of the guilt but act anyway.

5. THE CURRENT U.S. POLITICAL RHETORIC

Now that I have outlined some criteria for judging the validity of constructions of the universe, I will conclude the paper by using these criteria to judge some of the rhetoric coming from the current administration in the U.S.

Deportation constructions. The current administration is doing more than merely deporting undocumented people in the United States. They use constructions that deny these people their humanity. They are “rapists,” “criminals,” “violent gang members,” and so on (versus “decent citizens”). These people are part of the all that is. As such, we have a responsibility to treat them with decency and respect. When we do not, we damage the universe. Thus, this rhetoric fails the criterion of responsibility.

Likewise, it fails when we apply the criterion of commitment. There is no consideration of the future impact on the lives of these people when they are unceremoniously deported either to a country from which they fled or to Guantanamo or El Salvador. There is nothing in the rhetoric (based upon their constructions) about the future impact on these humans.

The deportation constructions also obviously fail when the criterion of reverence is applied to them. They are not people suffering in their home countries; they are rapists. They are not people seeking a better life in the U. S. (like others before them); they are criminals. They are not

humans who are trying to work to feed themselves and their families; they are violent drug dealers. And so on.

Drill, baby, drill. The Trump constructions around climate change can be summed up with the rhetoric of “Drill, baby, drill” (vs. leftists “make America weak”). Again, these constructions fail to help the administration take some responsibility around damaging the environment. This lack of responsibility can be seen also in the administration’s deleting of published research into the effects of climate change as well as ways to reduce its impact. According to the administration, this damage does not matter; the only thing that counts is increasing carbon output now. (Thus, failing on the criterion of commitment.)

The failure with commitment also can be seen by the opposition to green energy. The administration is not just saying, “Let the free market determine what sorts of energy we develop.” (Even this would be disingenuous given how much subsidy non-green energy receives from the government.) Rather, they are actively denying permits for wind farms and hydroelectric developments.

The climate change constructions also fail on the criterion of reverence. Massive tracts of pristine land are being opened to drilling, exposing the land to potential irreversible damage. Rivers around petroleum processing plants are polluted, sickening and killing our most vulnerable citizens. Entire mountainsides are dynamited to get to veins of coal. Not only is this a scar on the natural environment, but it also leads to flash floods, drowning out houses. And all of this is done without any awareness of the potential for their constructions to be damaging, thus failing on humility and guilt.

Woke. Let me be the first to admit that I do not know what “woke” means. So, I will accept the current conservative definition for the term: the belief that there are systemic injustices in our society and the need to address them

(Washington Post, December 5, 2022). Currently, it is used by administration officials as a way of criticizing those with more progressive views. Rather than discussing an approach to the universe, the term “woke” (versus “real Americans”) is used to derisively reject it.

The use of “woke” fails the criterion of humility. It implies that one’s constructions of social situations are correct and anyone with alternate constructions is wrong. Similarly, in its dismissing of constructions that disagree with it on social issues, it fails on the criterion of openness.

One’s responsibility to create a future that is more life affirming for all people (as well as the rest of the planet) is similarly minimized when “woke” is used to dismiss other constructions of the world. One does not know if one’s constructions work better in the world than others unless one openly considers alternate constructions. Thus, the use of “woke” fails on responsibility and commitment. Similarly, dismissing someone’s plight without looking at the societal precursors of their dilemma stops us from seeing them as human like the rest of us. If no social system is perfect, every social system will injure people. Ignoring those injuries is a failure of reverence.

The “woke” rhetoric also fails on the criterion of guilt. As a matter of fact, I personally believe the rhetoric was developed to minimize the experience of guilt. If, for example, America’s long history of racial oppression has had the consequence of causing African Americans to be more impoverished economically, we can (and, I would argue, should) feel guilty that someone born with black skin does not have the same chances in life as someone born with white skin. (This in no way means it is a current white person’s “fault”, but our awareness leads to the realization that, when we have acted on our advantages, we have acted against core principles we hold like everyone deserves an equal shot at life. Acting against core values is Kelly’s definition of guilt.) By dismissing the historical experience of

African Americans, then, I can avoid the feeling of guilt.

Fascists, communists, socialists, bad. The current administration labels those who disagree with it as Fascists, communists (quite an accomplishment to be both Fascist and Communist), and socialists (versus patriotic Americans). These terms are not used to point out any differences in constructions of the world. Rather, they are used for the purpose of telling Americans that the people who disagree with the administration are bad people. (Trust me. I lean socialistic and I feel bad when they use the term the way they do!)

Again, this rhetoric fails multiple criteria for being valid. There is 100% certainty that your way of understanding the world is right or the best and other ways are wrong or bad, failing humility and openness. Similarly, there is no responsibility for connecting with and understanding alternate constructions. And, given there is no consideration of the ways such alternate constructions might make the world and our society more life affirming for all, it fails the criterion of commitment.

After Trump describes them as “really bad people”, he often goes on to say they are “evil”. In so doing, he fails the criterion of reverence. The other is not a human with strengths and struggles in their own right. They are evil. Similarly, if a person is evil, there are all sorts of inhumane actions one can do against the person without feeling guilty. Another criterion minimized.

6. FINAL THOUGHTS

From a Kellian perspective, then, there are certain assumed truths about the universe: it is real, it is integral, it exists in time, our constructions are a part of it. The unpacking of these truths leads us to certain positions with respect to the universe (and others in it). Constructions that do not respect these truths and their implications for us fail as valid constructions. A shorthand way of saying this is that they are wrong. They are like

the number “7” trying to be placed into the infinity of even numbers.

People with power who continue to insist on the validity of these invalid constructions can be seen as assaulting truth. They are continuing to employ constructions that damage their fellow persons as well as the greater universe. They therefore are ignoring the truths Kelly expounded and continue to damage the all that is. Because all of us are born relationship seeking, their inability to care about broader relationships in the all that is shows that they entered adulthood damaged psychologically. That damage damages all of us, including them. To repeat myself, they continue to engage in evil constructions and acts. The most evil act is the insistence that only their constructions are legitimate.

Returning to where I began, the Bush administration official was both correct and incorrect. He was correct in that their actions would change reality. Every action, no matter how miniscule, changes reality. However, they were incorrect in that they did not acknowledge the responsibility they (and we all) have in carefully monitoring their constructions in terms of their validity in the universe. Similarly, the Trump official can consider “alternate facts.” However, these facts must be evaluated in terms of whether they affirm or disconfirm the all that is. I would argue that they are massively disconfirming. In other words, the Trump official was incorrect.

Thank you again for allowing me to speak to you without leaving the United States. As another colleague said after reading this paper: If I had gone to Europe to present it, who knows whether U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement would have allowed me back into the country!

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