SOCIALITY, INTERSUBJECTIVITY, AND SOCIAL PROCESSES:
THE SOCIALITY COROLLARY

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The Sociality Corollary: To the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another, he may play a role in a social process involving the other.

"All our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement . . . there are always some alternative constructions available to choose among in dealing with the world" (Kelly, 1955, p. 15). This statement on constructive alternativism reminds us that it is a necessary cornerstone of our constructivist perspective, that our behavior theory reflexively applies to our theory building activity, and that we are about to explore alternative approaches to explicating sociality.

In explicating the concept of role, Kelly (1955, p. 97) wrote as follows: "A role is a psychological process based upon the role player's construction of aspects of the construction system of those with whom he attempts to join in a social enterprise." A dichotomous construction is suggested. Where one observes failure to play a role — "to join in a social enterprise" — one may invoke the contrast pole to social relating, namely, nonsocial relating. The quotations given below show how Kelly elaborated the two poles of the dichotomy.

Non-social relating (not play a role)  Social relating (play a role)
Q1. merely construe his behavior  construe the construction processes of another person (1970a, p. 23).
Non-social relating (not play a role)

Q2. only look at answers in arithmetic task

Q3. if immediate accuracy is what I must preserve, stick to the automaton behaving organism only, level of construction

Q4. a psychopath is a stimulus response psychologist who takes it seriously... treat others as behaving mechanism or object... produce right stimulus in order to invoke accompanying behavior

Q5. the kind of experience that gets the commonwealth work done

Q6. adapt self to positions, play a part, deal with others as figures, construe relationships to other people as a matter of "social position"

Social relating (play a role)

look at methods by which the pupil obtained his answer (1955, p. 320) if I am to anticipate you, I must try to sense what you are up to (1970, p. 24)

creature with outlook... our interaction will be of a different order... have a construction of a creature who himself devises constructions (1969b, p. 220)

the sort that builds viable society (1970, p. 26)

adapt self to persons, construe relationships in terms of their unique identities and their personal viewpoints (1955, p. 877)

THE NORMATIVE ASPECT OF THE COROLLARY

A superordinate bad-good personal construct is easily detected in the above quotations. Social relating depicts "the good life," and non-social relating epitomizes those things that are transparently negative to Kelly as a person and as a theorist. It should be apparent, for example, that the second quotation, Q2 (a specification of Q1), opens a fundamental critique of psychometrically founded test interpretation — a critique that is in line with the tradition of Wertheimer (see Luchins and Luchins, 1977) and Rogers (1951, p. 219). Q5 may open a critique of capitalism. Q4 is Kelly's way of getting back at everything he found negative within mechanistic stimulus-response approaches. (The "psychopath" construction will be further discussed later in this chapter.)

The normative aspect is captured in the following simplified version of the corollary:

Version 1: To the extent that one person construes the construction process of another, he may join in a viable social enterprise.

However, the term to the extent diverts us from thinking of a strict dichotomy as in the above quotations.

Consider the core of the corollary: "construe (the construction processes of another)." The most succinct description of any one person's construction processes is, of course, found in the Fundamental Postulate. One may substitute the Fundamental Postulate in Version 1 to derive the following:

Version 2: To the extent that one person construes how another's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events, he may join in a viable social enterprise.

An Optimal Level of "the Extent" in the Sociality Corollary

Version 2 (or Version 1) suggests that the more extensive the construing of the other's construction processes are, the more viable the social process will be; but might there not instead be an optimal level, such that beyond that level social processes may in some sense be impeded? This possibility may call for revision of the corollary, yet the notion of an optimal level can (implicitly) be read from Kelly's (1955) first example of sociality. He uses driving on the highway to illustrate different levels at which we can construe what other people are thinking. "The orderly, extremely complex and precise weaving of traffic is really an amazing example of people predicting each other's behavior through subsuming each other's perception of a situation (p. 95). This, however, seems to be at an extremely "low level"; indeed it seems almost indistinguishable from "merely construe behavior," "immediate accuracy is what I must preserve" (see above Q1 and Q3). The point here, however, is not just to emphasize variability in "degree of sociality," but to consider the implication of "if we are to understand oncoming drivers at higher levels, we must stop traffic and get out to talk with them" (p. 96). This certainly would be highly dysfunctional from the point of view of having smooth-running traffic! Different types of social situations entail different optimum levels of construing the construction processes of another. We are, for instance, all of us familiar with the embarrassment stemming from intrusion of too much "familiarity" in more formal situations. Furthermore, the optimum level concept puts into perspective Weber's classical arguments in support of bureaucratization. Formal handling of complaints, and so on, may be a guarantee against nepotism, bribery, and various forms of "injustice." That many of us have had occasion to wish for more "personal treatment" at the public level does not obviate the principal nature of the present argument; a further discussion of bureaucratization to buttress the present point is found in Berger et al. (1974).

This reasoning suggests yet another rewriting of the corollary:

Version 3: There is an optimal level, depending upon the type of situation, of the extent to which a person should construe the construction process of another in order for maximally viable and efficient social enterprises to take place.

Foreword

In the two sections to follow, Kelly's approach will be understood as significant exemplar of an emerging, novel, person-explaining paradigm
whose range of convenience extends far beyond traditional personality psychology. The Sociality Corollary paves the road toward an integration of personality theory and a general social cognitive theory of human communication and may indeed be conceived prospectively as a cornerstone for a general, though so far poorly elaborated, conceptual framework. Kelly (1970a, p. 22) himself maintains, “The implications of this corollary are probably the most far reaching of any I have attempted to propound. It establishes grounds . . . for envisioning . . . a truly psychological basis of society.”

Much of the discussion in the next two sections is adapted from Rommetveit (1980, 1981; see also Rommetveit, in preparation). In thinking about the content in the section entitled “Constructive Alternativism,” the reader might wish to regard the nonsocial-relating pole of sociality as an extreme case that would have little relevance for describing actual communication. Nevertheless, the mechanistic point of view, which this pole expresses, seems yet to dominate much current work. We may say that there is not only a normative dichotomy (bad-good) embedded in constructions of sociality, there is also (in principle) a “descriptive” dichotomy (faulty-adequate). Mechanistic theories of communication may simply be faulty description. They may describe atypical (if any) communication. Such theories, however, may readily yield beautiful formal edifices. We contend that such formalism should (at this point in time) be forsaken for admittedly more messy constructivistic conceptions.

In the section entitled “Constructing Construction Processes . . .” we make an analysis of some facets of social process intersubjectivity and shared social reality. We hope that this will encourage further specification of the as yet unanalyzed concept of social process. Furthermore, we detail ways by which to elaborate the process of constructing construction processes to delineate the conditions for intersubjectivity. The preliminary nature of our endeavors will be further underscored when we try to analyze examples typical of the very best in current clinical psychology work in the section entitled “On Attaining Shared Social Reality.”

In “Honoring and Violating Intersubjectivity” we carry further, from different vantage points, an argument from the previous section, showing how deep-seated sociality is much of the time, how difficult it may be to be completely nonsocial. In the last section we sketch some types of mainly nonsocial processes. If elaborating the social relation pole points to the good life, elaborating the other pole might be a contribution to the psychology of evil.

CONSTRUCTIVE ALTERNATIVISM: A PLURALISTIC APPROACH TO HUMAN COMMUNICATION

Human discourse takes place in and deals with a multifaceted, only fragmentarily known, and only partially shared social world. If one were to accept Version 2 of the Sociality Corollary one would be moved toward the conclusion that since another’s processes form a system, complete sharing is theoretically impossible. A full grasping of anyone’s construing of a situation would imply understanding the whole surrounding network of constructs, which in the limit involves the whole system — clearly an impossible task.

Vagueness, ambiguity, and incompleteness — and hence also negotiability, flexibility, and versatility — are, therefore, inherent and essential characteristics of the meanings of situations and the linguistic mediations of meanings.

Students of human communication who abandon basic monistic assumptions will accordingly have to redefine their trade in some important respects. A fully legitimate and important part of their task will be to try to explicate and be precise about rather than to evade life’s inherent ambiguities and versatility. Meaning potentials of states of affairs (events, acts, or situations) may thus be systematically explored in terms of sets of experiential possibilities or aspects. Wittgenstein (1968, p. 212) maintains: “What I see in the dwelling of an aspect is not a property of the object, but an internal relation between it and other objects.” This seems to fit well with Kelly’s (1955, p. 304) view: “Constructing is never a single-dimensional proposition. There is always the other respects which are used in the application of a construct, it makes sense only as it appears in a network.” A personal construct theorist might differ, however, from one who speaks of elaborations of meaning potentials. “Aspects” mainly refer to the event pole of the person-event-process, whereas “constructs” mainly refer to the person pole. There will be more about this difference.

The centrality of the playing-a-role pole of sociality explanation becomes evident when we consider the foregoing points relative to a crucial feature of verbal communication. The aspect(s) of an object that acquires saliency and is then put into words, in simple tasks of verbal labeling, is contingent upon the range of other objects from which the referent must be set apart. The psycholinguistic experiments reported by Olson (1970) and Deutsch (1976) demonstrate how differently such referential domains affect the linguistic encoding and decoding process. Olson points out that the answer to the question, “What is ‘object S’ surrounded by?” may be bluebird in the context of surrounding sparrows; bird in the context of surrounding mammals, and (perhaps) creature in the context of inanimate objects. Likewise the object S in Figure 13.1 will thus be unequivocally identified as the white one in Context I, the big one in Context III, the triangle in Context IV. Two persons — one with referential domain x, the other with domain y — will describe objects as white and small, respectively. But what about the single stimulus in Context I? This situation is discussed by Garner (1974, pp. 183-186). When people are asked informally to describe stimulus A in Figure 13.2 (where the rectangle is just a frame) they answer “a circle”; some say “a double circle.” But if, in complete parallel to Figure 13.1, stimulus A is presented in the context of two larger circles, the description will change.

We could of course continue the process. Nobody for example thinks of mentioning the thickness of lines . . . or even the fact that lines forming
the circles are solid rather than broken. The single stimulus has no meaning except in a context of alternatives. When somebody uses the term circle, they infer that it could have been some other form. Each descriptive term defines what the alternatives are, by defining what the stimulus is not. Thus the organism infers sets of stimulus alternatives, and without these inferred sets no one can describe the single stimulus (Garner, 1974, p. 186, italics added).

However, Garner only partially endorses a constructivist view: "We do not create the structure that makes the stimulus — we select it" (p. 186). This may be because his concern is rooted in the event pole, whereas Kelly is more rooted in the person pole. The main point here is that inferred sets of stimulus alternatives correspond to tacitly taken for granted referential domains or just personal constructs. So we may in some sense regard the description of a single stimulus, as discussed by Garner, to be the prototypical instance of how a situation is rendered meaningful. The difference between our perspective and Garner's would be that we are more interested in a privately provided range of possible alternatives, whereas Garner focuses on that which he believes the stimulus provides to persons for their selection.

As implied by our acceptance of constructive alternativism, we assume that every single person has the capacity to adopt a whole range of perspectives on objects, events, and states of affairs, and one is in that sense an inhabitant of many "possible worlds." Moreover, a person's perspective and "private" domain of experiential alternatives, at that moment, sets the probabilities that one or another potential aspect will be ascribed by that person to that state of affairs. A major source of individual differences with respect to referential domains is superordinate concerns that can be described as interests and purposes. These correspond (in part) to different positions from which different alternatives become visible. The meaning of closing down a factory will, for instance, be radically different for a worker facing unemployment and for the manager considering the total economy of a multiplant corporation. The same point may be made even in Garner's simple example. The bride-to-be might describe a wedding ring, which is quite different from the mathematician's double concentric circles.

To describe the variety of possible worlds a person may entertain regarding a specific situation, one may invoke a variety of Kellian constructs, such as, for instance, C-P-C cycle (circumpection-preemption-control), the permeability of superordinate constructs, and the Modulation and Fragmentation Corollaries.

The enigma of the "real world as it is now" is subjectively resolved. Its potential aspects acquire saliency and significance in a process of comparison (see Tversky [1977] for a brilliant formal exposition of this basic Kellian view). Also, disparate meanings of situations, engendered by persons interacting in those situations, may thus be explored in terms of different tacit, taken-for-granted referential domains.
Generally different past personal experiences make for different tacitly presupposed referential domains (see Chapter 9 on the Experience Corollary). A major point, which will be further elaborated in the last section of this chapter, is that in any communication situation a major part of the referential domain is the general (or specific) constructs with which one participant approaches the other. Our position is simply that any real state of affairs is enigmatic; it must be construed. This point has been variously expressed in the literature. Schutz (1951, p. 167) maintains:

If I, with respect to an element S of the world taken for granted, assert: "S is p," I do so because for my purpose at hand at this particular moment I am interested only in the p-being of S and I am disregarding as not relevant to such purpose that S is also q and r.

The assertion "S is p," in conjunction with the fact that aspects q and r are disregarded, implies, in the terminology of Mannheim (1952) and Hundeide (1980), that the state of affairs S (the situation) is experienced from some particular position — some particular referential perspective (Wertsch, 1980). In the terminology of Bateson, Goffman, and Minsky, S is enclosed within a certain frame. Its meaning, when experienced from that position at that particular moment, is thus generated from some particular premises for interpretation (Bateson, 1973, p. 60), a certain background understanding (Goffman, 1974, p. 22), a given collection of questions to be asked (Minsky, 1975, p. 245). Even the more narrowly defined linguistic study of presupposition is currently expanding so as to cope with dialogically and temporally constructed "possible worlds" of actual conversations (Karttunen, 1974; McCawley, 1978). Modal logic is thus today in part replacing classical propositional logic as an auxiliary in the formalization of linguistic theory.

These philosophical and social scientific trends converge in a serious concern with dynamic, social-interactional features of linguistic communication. Together with the symbolic interactionism of Mead (1934), the theoretical framework for empirical semantics developed by Naess (1953), and the psychology of language and thought of Vygotsky (1962, 1978) and Piaget (1958), these developments constitute significant contributions toward the foundation of an interdisciplinary social-cognitive approach.

It may be illuminating in the present context to point out a contrast to constructive alternativism. When one consistently maintains a pluralistic perspective one is deprived of the opportunity to seek refuge in an unequivocal present tense reality that is uncontaminated by the repertory of possible human perspectives and the strategies of attribution and categorization that are inherent in ordinary language. The use of such a refuge is observed in the belief in literal meaning as a cornerstone in the study of communication, the attempts to dissociate ordinary language from actual use and to explicate its syntactic and semantic rules under stipulated ideal conditions.

A principal exponent of such an ideal/monistic view is Searle (1974) who, with his principle of expressibility, basically stipulates one-to-one correspondence between what is said and what is meant. Rommetveit (1979) argues in detail against this view and points out that what is said is an incomplete expression of what is meant. A similar concern for the distinction between what is said and what is meant is expressed by Kelly (1955, p. 200):

If we utilize what our friend has meant as well as what he said as an element, that is, if we make his presumed personal construct as well as his behavior an element in our construing — then our personal construct can be considered a version of his personal construct. Thus communication at some more or less effective level has taken place . . . the sharing of personal experience is a matter of construing the other person's experience and not merely a matter of having him hand it to us across the desk.

The search for context-free meaning — literal meaning — of what is said is, we believe, doomed to failure. This approach must set aside as basically irrelevant the incompleteness, inherent ambiguity, and flexibility of language. What thus must appear chaotic to the believer in literal meaning may, however, be accounted for as orderly variance when we adopt a consistently pluralistic perspective (Rommetveit, in preparation).

The belief in literal meaning seems to correspond to Kelly's (1969b, p. 125) contrast to constructive alternativism; that is, "accumulative fragmentation . . . that we discover nature a fragment at a time . . . like a piece in a jigsaw puzzle . . . capture an essence."

CONSTRUING CONSTRUCTION PROCESSES AND CONDITIONS FOR INTERSUBJECTIVITY

Traditional linguistics and psycholinguistics lean heavily upon Chomsky's aim at an analysis of language as a formal abstract system rather than as a social form of life. Thus Lyons (1977, p. 243) maintains:

The synchronic language system is a theoretical construct of the linguist, and it rests upon the more or less deliberate, and to some extent arbitrary, discounting of variations in the language-behavior of those who are held, pretheoretically, to speak the same language. If pressed, we have to admit that there is a somewhat different language system (a different idiolect) underlying the language behavior of every individual and that this too changes through time.

The notion of individual language systems, however, is absurd. Linguistic codes, by definition, are embedded in interaction rather than in individual cognition.
Persons differ from each other in their construction of events; but ordinary language is clearly one of the most potent means for establishing states of intersubjectivity between different "private worlds." Engaging in a dialogue implies a commitment to a shared reality. In fact, Habermas' (1979) analysis of speech suggests that the very construct reality emerges from linguistic acts. Truth — a claim that there is fact — and truthfulness — a claim that the speaker will not deceive — are prerequisite to language use; and the youngest speaker, accepting these claims, is egocentrically induced to accept reality as a given. The psychologist, however, is advised to eschew this view of reality and to adopt an outlook from which to see ordinary language as an open system, with inbuilt negotiability and reciprocal commitments. This outlook seems to be required to elaborate Kelly's Sociality Corollary as "a truly psychological basis for society" (1970a, p. 22).

Wittgenstein (1968), as a philosopher, has explored some of the underlying assumptions and focal issues of a dynamic, consistently pluralistic, and social-cognitive approach to verbal communication. He conceives of the incompleteness and inherent ambiguities of ordinary language as a necessary consequence of the fact that its semantic system borders on our fragmentary and imperfect knowledge of the world. Thus, any scheme of interpretation will have a bottom level and "there is no such thing as an interpretation of that" (Wittgenstein, 1962, p. 739). Utterances have meaning only in streams of life. Linguistic communication must hence be examined as embedded in more inclusive patterns of human interaction, as moves within language games. Ordinary language is a form of life. Allwood (1976) makes the related point that vagueness of ordinary language actually is a precondition for communication. An utterance may be seen as a "gestalt" where the context determines the parts and makes the utterance — more or less — precise.

Imagine now a situation in which two persons who engage in conversation about some state of affairs, S, differ with respect to what they believe S to be. The person, p₁, takes it for granted that S is A₁ whereas his conversation partner sees S as A₂. How can we as linguists or psycho- or sociologists in such a situation transcend the private worlds of p₁ and p₂ and pass verdict with respect to the real nature of the state of affairs S? Granted that we from some carefully elaborated epistemological-ontological position venture to claim that S is neither A₁ nor A₂, but Aₖ, how can such a presumably superior knowledge of the real world help us grasp what is being meant, understood, or misunderstood by p₁ and p₂ in that particular situation? The only alternative seems to be to take for granted the multiplicity of possible human perspectives on states of affairs.

A radical reformulation of assumptions and focal issues of research on human intersubjectivity and verbal communication follows from replacing a monistic outlook with a consistently pluralistic paradigm. The problem of what is being meant by what is said could no longer be pursued in terms of stipulated unequivocal literal meanings of expressions. The basic riddle within a pluralistic approach is, instead: How are states of intersubjectivity and shared social reality attained in encounters between different private worlds. Orderly negotiability and variance in what is meant by that which is said is clearly contingent upon some semantic invariance embedded in ordinary language. Some basic shared knowledge of the world appears indeed to be embedded as meaning potentials of ordinary words and expressions. Such potentials reflect at a very abstract level some minimal commonality with respect to experientially founded perspectives on and categorization of our pluralistic social world and may hence be conceptualized as a common code of potentially shared cognitive-emotive perspectives on talked-about states of affairs. What traditionally have been labeled "semantic rules," moreover, must, within our social-cognitive paradigm, be conceptualized as linguistically mediated drafts of contracts concerning categorization and attribution of meaning to states of affairs.

Consideration Regarding Intersubjectivity

The attainment of states of intersubjectivity in verbal communication is contingent upon contextually appropriate specification and elaboration of such abstract drafts of contracts. Such a state may be tentatively defined as follows:

A state of intersubjectivity with respect to some state of affairs S is attained, at a given stage of dyadic interaction, if and only if some aspect A₁ of S at that stage is brought into focus by one participant and jointly attended to by both of them.

A dyadic state of (perfectly) shared social reality, moreover, may be described in the following way:

Some aspect A₁ of a given state of affairs S constitutes at a given stage of dyadic interaction a (perfectly) shared social reality if and only if both participants at that stage take it for granted that S is A₁ and each of them assumes the other to hold that belief.

Shared social reality is a stronger condition than intersubjectivity. The latter may be one-directional, but bidirectional intersubjectivity implies shared social reality. Role taking, construing the construction process of the other, will be seen to be an essential feature of human communication. Yet role taking does not constitute a state of intersubjectivity, unless constrained by reciprocal commitment and dyadic communication control.

Vygotsky (1978, p. 29) maintains: "Signs and words serve children first and foremost as means of social contact with other people." A primitive but possibly primary form of intersubjectivity is, according to Treharne and Hubley (1978, p. 184), attained at a very early stage in the sense that infants "share themselves with others." According to their observations, there emerges, at about the age of nine months, a secondary intersubjectivity in terms of a "deliberate, self-conscious
and reciprocal sharing of focus with another” (p. 220). Newson (1978, pp. 36-37) describes the prerequisites for such a development:

... someone who is trying to communicate with the infant ... is bound to respond selectively to precisely those actions, on the part of the baby, to which one would normally respond given the assumption that the baby is like any other communicating person.

... it is ... only because mothers impute meaning to “behaviors” elicited from the infants that these eventually do come to constitute meaningful actions so far as the child is concerned.

A state of primary or secondary intersubjectivity in early mother-child interaction - whatever else such a state may entail - is thus conceivable without naive, reciprocal faith in a shared experiential world. This is true, however, of any state of human intersubjectivity and indeed is a defining characteristic of ordinary language as a form of life. Only when one examines a breakdown of the process does one appreciate how unreflectively taken-for-granted and essential are such mutual confidences in normal verbal communication. Considerations about failure in the process will be taken up in the section entitled “Honoring and Violating Intersubjectivity” (see also the discussion of certain pathological conditions in Rommetveit, 1974, pp. 53-56). One may assert that intersubjectivity must, in some sense, be taken for granted in order to be attained. This semiparadox may indeed be conceived of as a basic pragmatic postulate of human discourse. It captures in a condensed form not only the insights achieved by observers of early mother-child interaction and students of serious communication disorders, but also convergent conclusions from ethnographic enquiries into the routine grounds of everyday adult conversation (Garfinkel, 1972) and the recent linguistic reflections on axiomatic features of normal speech. The linguist Uhlenbeck (1978), for example, refers to the basic “makes sense” principle of ordinary speech. He describes it as follows:

It says that the hearer always takes the view that what the speaker is saying somehow makes sense. It is this certitude which makes him try to infer - on the basis of lingual and extra-lingual evidence available to him - what the speaker actually is conveying to him. This formulation implies that on occasion the hearer may be unable to do so or that he may make the wrong inferences. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this very general attitude. Awareness of its always being operative may keep us from entering into linguistically irrelevant discussions on the truth-values of sentences, or from participating in sterile debates about establishing a distinction between deviant and normal sentences (p. 190).

The significance of this “makes sense” principle can clearly be appreciated in conjunction with Piaget’s theory of decentration and in the basic tenet of symbolic interactionism: An adult person’s repertoire of possible perspectives entails, as experiential possibilities, aspects that are immediately visible only from the position of her or his conversation partner; and an essential component of communicative competence in a pluralistic social world is the capacity to adopt the attitude of “different others.” A mutual commitment to the same talked-about reality is, in ordinary discourse, endowed with naive confidence in “an intersubjective world, common to all of us” (Schutz, 1945, p. 534) on the part of communication partners. Reciprocal commitment, moreover, implies reciprocal role taking. A significant dynamic feature of ordinary language as a social form of life is thus a peculiar circularity. The speaker monitors what she is saying in accordance with what she assumes to be the listener’s outlook and background information, whereas the latter makes sense of what he is hearing by adopting what he believes to be the speaker’s perspective. But what is actually being meant, and which of the potential aspects of the talked-about state of affairs are in shared attention at any particular stage of a dialogue?

The mutual commitment and peculiar circularity inherent in acts of speech imply by no means, of course, that both participants in a dialogue assume equal or joint responsibility for what is being referred to and/or meant by what is said. The speaker - or, more generally, the participant who has introduced the focal events at any given stage of the dialogue - has the privilege of determining which aspect(s) is to be jointly attended at that moment. This is the case even if she fails to make herself understood. Only she - not the listener - is in a position to pass final verdict with respect to what she herself intends to make known by what she is saying. Understanding (and misunderstanding) is in ordinary verbal communication by definition a dyadic and directional affair, and vicious circularity is prohibited by reciprocal and intuitive endorsement of dyadic patterns of communication control.

The speaker, by taking the role of the other, enjoys the privilege of assuming that the listener temporarily is a “guest” in her (the speaker’s) world. The speaker may thereupon legitimately act on the basis of assumed similarity; and her construct is (at least temporarily) socially validated to the extent the other person adopts her perspective and attends to the aspect of the event that she attempts to bring into joint focus of attention.

The listener’s obligation to adopt the other’s (the speaker’s) perspective directs him to take the role of the other. He is committed to act on assumed differences. A computer simulation of the speaker’s role taking would hence involve activation of memory of self in similar situations. The listener’s role taking would involve memories of the other in similar situations. States of intersubjectivity are thus contingent upon the fundamental dyadic constellation of speaker’s privilege and listener’s commitment: The speaker has the privilege of determining the referent and the meaning of the event, whereupon the listener is committed to make sense of what is said by temporarily adopting the speaker’s perspective. This view of the circularity inherent in acts of speech implies that both participants, to communicate, must in some sense engage the
social process role described by the Sociality Corollary. In considering speech acts, one must rule out nonreciprocity, which Kelly (1970a, p. 25) otherwise clearly states as a possibility.

Symmetric and Asymmetric Patterns of Communication

Thus far we have outlined a basis for exploring the mastery of dialogue roles in normal and symmetric dyadic interaction. Symmetry/asymmetry with respect to dyadic communication control may now be defined as follows:

An entire dialogue or a given stretch of discourse is characterized by a symmetric pattern of communication control if and only if unlimited interchangeability of dialogue roles constitutes part of the externally provided sustained conditions of interaction. An entire dialogue or a given stretch of discourse is characterized by an asymmetric pattern of communication control if and only if the interaction takes place under sustained constraints which are contrary to the basic or “prototypical” dyadic regulation of privileges and commitments.

Under such constraints one would expect to observe behaviors that are in violation of the implicitly understood rules of role taking. The speaker would be in breach of the normal role-defining rules if he were to watch the face of the listener to collect additional information about what the speaker means.

In the constrained infant-adult discourse, the situation changes. The interaction is directed by an overall pattern of dependency. The overriding constraints upon early adult-child communication, moreover, reside in the factual and reciprocally taken-for-granted adult superiority with respect to linguistic competence and knowledge of the world. It is hence not at all absurd for a one-year-old boy to watch his mother’s face while uttering something in order to explore what is being meant by his utterance. It may indeed be essential to observe her response if he is going to make himself better understood on subsequent similar occasions. Some of the most well-established and significant findings in recent research on preverbal mother-child interaction and early language acquisition (Bates, 1976; Bruner, 1978; Lock, 1978) seem thus to converge into an apparently paradoxical conclusion: Adult-perfect interchangeability of the dialogue roles can develop only out of adult-child interaction with an initial consistently asymmetric pattern of communication control.

“Reality Control” and the Mastery of the Speaker Role

Berger and Luckmann (1967, p. 38) maintain: “It can . . . be said that language makes ‘more real’ my subjectivity not only to my conversation partner but also to myself.” Bateson (1973, p. 167) defines ego weakness as “trouble in identifying and interpreting those signals which should tell the individual what sort of a message a message is . . . .” The issues of shared meanings of social situations, moreover, may in human interaction become an issue of whose private world is endorsed by others as well, accepted as the basis for joint or collective action, and hence in some very important sense made publicly valid.

Ego strength may under certain conditions of human interaction be seen as a question of which aspect (or whose personal meaning) of a given state of affairs is accepted as a temporarily shared social reality in an encounter between different private worlds. Let us not despair if we occasionally experience states of genuine uncertainty with respect to what is meant by what is said. Such states may signal transcendence of preestablished perspectives and the dawning of novel aspects of life, see pp. 246-248.

Social validation serves to confirm and sustain the basic assumption that “the world is . . . an intersubjective world common to all of us . . . .” (Schutz, 1945, p. 53). Its subjective quality and contingency upon personal referential alternatives are brought to the foreground only under very exceptional conditions such as, for instance, when one of Kelly’s clients attempts to account for some important aspect of people she knows well in terms of “Mary-ness” (Kelly, 1955, pp. 114, 125, 139). What is meant by that word is entirely bound to her subjective experience of one particular friend of hers, Mary. The bipolar nature of language as a bridge between different private worlds is reflected in its composition: The component “Mary” is intelligible only in terms of one particular referential alternative whereas the component “ness” is comprehensible to everybody, yet nearly devoid of experiential content. It is precisely in the interplay of such residuals of subjective experience and a common linguistic code that one’s subjectivity can be made more real.

ON ATTAINING SHARED SOCIAL REALITY:
A CLINICAL EXAMPLE

Some of the points made in the preceding two sections will now be illustrated by way of a clinical example taken from the influential recent work of Grinder and Bandler (1976). We wish to illustrate the thesis that failure to arrive at intersubjectivity and shared social reality is at the heart of clinical problems. In addition, we hope to demonstrate, the therapist plays her role by bringing to the situation her construing (explicit or implicit) of the complex constrainings of the participants (T = therapist, S = Son, F = Father).

(1) T: Well, George (a ten-year-old boy), I’ve heard from all of the family members except you — tell me, what do you want.

(2) S: I want respect.

(3) F: (smiling broadly) Yes, that I believe.

(4) S: (explosively) SEE! That’s just what I am talking about. I don’t get any respect from anyone in this family.
(5) T: Wait, George, you sound real angry to me. Can you tell me what just happened with you?
(6) G: I . . . I . . . oh, never mind, you wouldn't understand anyway.
(7) T: Perhaps not, but try me — did the way you just responded have something to do with something your father did?
(8) G: Yes, I ask for respect and he (pointing at his father Matt) just laughs right out loud, making fun of me.
(9) T: George, tell me something: How specifically would you know that your father was respecting you?
(10) S: He wouldn't laugh at me — he would watch me when I say things and be serious about it.
(11) T: George, I want to tell you something I noticed and can see right now. Look at your father's face.
(12) S: Yeah, so what?
(13) T: Well does he look serious to you — like he, maybe respects you for what you are doing right now.
(14) S: Yeah, you know, he does look like he is.
(15) T: Ask him, George.
(16) S: What . . . ask him . . . Dad, do you respect me? Are you taking me seriously?
(17) F: Yes, son . . . (softly) . . . I'm taking you seriously right now. I respect what you are doing.
(18) S: (crying softly) I really believe that you do Dad.
(19) T: I have a hunch right now that Matt has more to say George, will you take him (indicating Matt) seriously and listen to him?
(20) S: Sure.
(21) F: You only saw the smile and did not hear what I said (crying softly) and then, when you became angry, I suddenly remembered how I never believed my father respected me and I'm grateful (turning to the therapist) that you helped me straighten this out with George.
(22) T: That's right — a message that is not received the way you intended it is no message at all. Matt, if there is some other way that you can show George that you care for him and respect him (pp. 138-139)

The example illustrates the complexity of actual messages. We here take the state of affairs to be the son's wish for respect and the intensity of the wish (its close relation to core constructs).

Consider now (3) — in light of the ensuing dialogue, see especially (21). At most this illustrates a quite limited intersubjectivity (see p. 245); the father understands the wish for respect, but not its intensity. It is as if (3) is addressed to two different worlds: On the one hand there is the smile, turned inwards, perhaps in memory of his own childhood where he may conceive of faded memories and resignation. On the other hand there are the words; probably honest, he has listened to the son and "understood" him. We might say that (3) communicates on different levels, the smile reflecting preverbal constructs. In, for instance, transactional analysis one could describe the smile as reflecting the wanton child; the words, the adult. Only in a very limited way does the father obey the constraints of sociality, that is, to speak on the son's premises, to adopt his emotional-cognitive perspective. He does not reflect on the fact that the smile refers to a unique background, which the son cannot possibly share. We may say that he is (partly) caught in his egocentricity.

In (4) we clearly see that even though there is a limited intersubjectivity for the father, there is no intersubjectivity for the son and thus no shared social reality. In the previous paragraph we attributed "the fault" to the father, but the son's anticipation was probably geared toward the disrespect pole, a pole for him probably had been amply validated [see (6)]. So, might we not just as well have emphasized that the son did not listen on the father's premises? Is it possible to make general statements as to the fault when mutual intersubjectivity fails?

The therapist, however, wisely avoids any "attribution of fault." She asks for elaboration of the "unreceived message" (9), and helps the son to be more receptive to the relevant pole (11) to (13), while at the same time helping the father to focus better on his message (17) — see also (19). The therapist accomplishes "interchangeability of dialogue roles." Notice that bringing "respect" into focus for the son theoretically can be approached either in terms of permeability or complimentarily — how salient the message is made. Though this excerpt is meant to be a suitable illustration of attainment of shared social reality, it also underscores the improbability of achieving perfect sharing (see p. 238). We can pinpoint lack of intersubjectivity, but a positive diagnosis of intersubjectivity is difficult. The intensity of the wish for respect can probably not be approached by the conventional tools of cognitive psychology (see, for instance, the previously cited work of Garner [1974] and Olson [1970]) but must be approached by considering the speaker's complete construction system.

A primary therapeutic task is to provide data that unequivocally may serve to invalidate crippling beliefs, beliefs that are generalized beyond any reasonable range — see (4). This is a difficult task since we are too prone to disregard evidence contrary to our strongly held convictions (see Nisbett and Ross [1980] for extensive discussion of this point). It may be the case that bewilderment and uncertainty is a necessary step in a transition to new construction. Mancuso (1977; see also Chapter 2, on the Fundamental Postulate) discusses arousal and the behaviors instigated by failure to anticipate, concluding that persons seek optimum levels of discrepancy. In his terminology we may see the successful therapist as a "successful novelty moderator," just as he regards the successful parent (Mancuso and Handin, 1980).

It would, however, be much too optimistic to assume — even given therapeutic wizardry — that shared social reality is always a possible goal. Consider
the following example from Perry (1977, p. 182): “the youthful, athletic father construes skateboarding with his adolescent son and his peers as ‘sharing, demonstrating camaraderie,’ whereas the son construes this as ‘not only intrusive, but also embarrassing.’” Perry takes this to illustrate “misconstrual of constructual implications... persons can provisionally share a construct, yet envision vitally different implications.” One may, however, well imagine that the son can perfectly well construe the construction process of his father, but that this does not in any way change his construction of the state of affairs “father and son skateboard.” Kelly (1970a, p. 25) was quite aware of this: “My construction of your outlook does not make me a compliant companion, nor does it keep us working at cross purposes... but there is... still a good chance of a social process emerging out of our conflict, and we will both end up a good way from where we started.” In this quotation Kelly seems to imply something more by “social process” than just “construing construction system,” perhaps what we have called “shared social reality” is implied. What can now be said about the ideal amount of movement in such types of conflicts? Generally we would suggest that both should seek for a joint goal that does imply shared social reality and that in some sense the amount of movement should be as small as possible for both participants — they should seek for some kind of “least common multipum.” This, of course, may not relieve the father from a rather painful awakening to a quite substantial generation gap. Indeed, the son may wish so little in the way of intimacy that perhaps the father would be better off nourishing some illusions. We have sympathy for Kurth’s (1971) arguments on “the benefits of poor communication.”

HONORING AND VIOLATING INTERSUBJECTIVITY

In the section on “Construing Construction Processes...” we discussed how deep-seated is our belief in a common intersubjective world. Reciprocal role taking provides the basic context in which one confirms and extends such an intersubjective world (see p. 247). In this section we illustrate, from quite different vantage points, our “inbuilt sociality,” that is, the extent to which we are committed to sociality. First an analysis of the query, “What are you doing?” suggests how readily we are inclined to honor sociality. The amazing consequences of Milton Erickson’s inimitable ways of violating intersubjectivity further illustrate the importance of taking intersubjectivity as a basic premise of our social actions. (We note in passing that Erickson was the chief inspirator of Grinder and Bandler’s previously cited work.)

“What Are You Doing?”

The meaning of the query, “What are you doing?” obviously varies very much with context. In the context of a boss to a secretary it might signify a request to put other work aside in order to serve the boss’ immediate wish. If the target of the question had been behaving in a nonstandard way, it might be taken as a demand for an explanation of the curious behavior, and so forth. Let us here suppose that there is no “obvious” contextual justification for the question and that the participants have a (roughly) symmetric relation. Further more, the questioner is genuinely interested in the answer. The main point to be observed is that the response will very probably vary according to the relationship between the speaker and the listener. One obvious type of variation is level of generality/preciseness — what we may call a vertical dimension. Generally speaking, the closer the relationship between the questioner and the answerer, the more detailed is the account given by the respondent. If the questioner was someone whom the respondent has not seen since school days, 25 years previously, the response surely will be, “I am working as a university teacher.” The questioner is a colleague who is encountered several times each week, the answer might be, “I am struggling with some examples for the chapter I am writing with Ragnor.”

We wish to suggest that for each specific relation between the questioner there is an optimal level of preciseness. This implies that there are two different types of nonoptimal responses, each of which, though in different ways, will impede a smooth-flowing dialogue. One may answer on a too-generic level: If one were to answer the colleague, “I am working as a university teacher it would serve as a rebuff, irony, or refusal to engage in conversation. One might answer on a too-specific level: To speak of a very precise writing endeavor might be embarrassing to the questioner if she had been a former schoolmate; it would be at a loss about how to proceed with the conversation.

Generally we suggest that persons are very sensitive to whether the conversation is at an optimal level or whether it deviates. At signs of embarrassment or the move up to a more general level where the other can comfortably follow one’s exposition. Conversely one will move down to a more precise level if one has underestimated the level of knowledge of the other. Monitoring the conversation to stay at an optimal level may well be a basic conversational skill; it is so well learned that pronounced (and repeated) departures from the optimal level, as already suggested, are taken to imply a different kind of message (i.e., irony of being too general). This notion of optimal level of preciseness can be seen to have a general scope (see Version 3 of the Sociality Corollary. Consider Naess’ (1953) notion of “depth of intention.” The optimal depth intention clearly varies with the context and the relation between the speakers. It is, for instance, hardly appropriate for the professor of political science to press the naive but enthusiastic local May 17th speaker (the Norwegian “Fou of July”) for a precise specification of what she or he implies by “democracy and freedom.”

In a series of experimental reports on categorizing behavior, Rosch (19') has attempted to explicate a notion of “basic level objects” independent of social contexts of language. Tversky (1977, p. 348), in his more formal exposi
of this notion, says, “Chair for example is a basic category, furniture is too general and kitchen chair is too specific. Similarly car is a basic category, vehicle is too general and sedan is too specific.” Rosch suggests there is a general principle of “cognitive economy” that accounts for formation of basic-level categories. These conceptualizations offer useful clarification of our idea of optimal level in precision of messages. The category level that one uses in a particular context should depend on other features of the context, as is suggested by Olson’s (1970) previously cited work. We note that while Rosch’s important work can be helpful in explicating the idea of optimal level, it does not completely serve as a basis for understanding conversations, since in our analysis the optimal level cannot be specified independently of the relation between the speakers.

Our point would be better made had we a systematic investigation of how people respond to the question, “What are you doing?” We would venture the hypothesis that the answer will generally be framed to give the questioner maximal information with the minimum of effort. In Kellian terms the answer will give a reply that optimizes the questioner’s possibilities for anticipating the answerer. The process seems to conform to the following sociality inspired rewriting (in italics) of the Choice Corollary:

A person chooses for himself that statement (that alternative in a dichotomized construct system) through which he anticipates the greater possibility for the elaboration of the other’s construction of himself (his system).

This formulation should underscore how completely a person, in this analysis the person responding to the question, accepts the obligation to build a message on the other’s premises; and it should be clear that this is a very effective mechanism for enlarging a shared social world. Furthermore, our sensitivity to departures from an optimal level inform us of the extent to which intersubjectivity is taken for granted.

This type of process, of course, follows from the necessary precondition that the answerer trusts that the questioner is genuinely interested in his doings. Only in this case will he effortlessly give an answer that provides the questioner with maximal opportunities for further getting to know him. If, however, the answerer suspects some manipulative intent, this “inbuilt sociality” will be replaced by a conscious review of one’s doings, and the production of a guarded answer destined to minimize manipulation. (“Does the questioner try to find out if my current work is not important, so that I can be asked to serve on some [time consuming] committee?”)

The Violation of Intersubjectivity

Generally we expect others to share our premises, and the strength of this expectation is best illustrated by considering the effects of seriously violating intersubjectivity. What happens when our naive faith in a shared experiential world (see above p. 246) is violated? Consider the following example, which is of special interest, since it inspired Erickson (1967) to develop one of his most powerful hypnotic techniques, the confusion technique.

Example (1)
The incident, one of spontaneous humor on my part, that led to its adaptation as a possible hypnotic technique was as follows. One windy day as I was on my way to attend the first formal seminar on hypnosis conducted in the U.S. by Clark L. Hull at the University of Wisconsin in 1923, where I reported on my experimental work and graduate psychology students discussed my findings, a man came rushing around the corner of a building and bumped hard against me as I stood bracing myself against the wind. Before he could recover his poise to speak to me, I glanced elaborately at my watch and courteously, as if he had inquired the time of the day, I stated, “It’s exactly 10 minutes of two,” though it was actually closer to 4:00 p.m. and I walked on. About half a block away, I turned and saw him still looking at me, undoubtedly still puzzled and bewildered by my remark (p. 131).

This illustrates what may happen when the speaker, here called the “agent,” does not monitor what he does in accordance with what he assumes to be the premises of the other and, instead, acts from a position completely incompatible with that of the listener, here called the “victim.” Erickson bars “a man” from acting from his position (bumping into a stranger) by acting from the incompatible position—a request for time. Erickson deliberately makes his own private world (thoughts about Hull, ever present intention to exercise his sense of humor) inaccessible to the victim. The importance of inbuilt circularity and reciprocal role taking is very clearly revealed when Erickson deliberately violates this and imposes an alien definition on the situation so that the victim is left gaping in confusion. Whereas ordinary communication can profitably be described as “drafts of contracts” and “potentially shared strategies of categorization” (Rommetveit, 1974, in preparation). Erickson in a sense offers a contract that cannot be accepted.

We may describe violations of intersubjectivity as varying in strength when some of the (overlapping) factors related to strength are: The ease with which the situation is construed in one specific way, and the implausibility of alternative constructions. In Kellian terms: How preemptive is the dominant construction? How strongly does the situation tend to elicit ready-made responses such as, for instance, “I’m sorry,” “Look where you are going,” and so forth. Put otherwise, how enmeshed, or engulfed, is the victim in the situation? Looking at the situation from the other point of view: How forceful is the alternative (“violating”) construction presented by the agent? Immediate exuded certainty, and definiteness are here important factors. There is a pronounced difference between the way a lay person might say, “It’s exactly 1
minutes of two,” and the way a highly accomplished hypnotist, like Erickson, would say it.

With weak violations of intersubjectivity one would scarcely expect more than a raised eyebrow or a puzzled glance. With very strong violations one would not be surprised to see open-mouthed befuddlement that would be comparable to a hypnotic trance. We do not have information about the state in which Erickson left the victim in Example (1). Consider, however, Example (2), which leads immediately to acceptance of the hypnotic role.

Example (2)

There was a physician who repeatedly manifested hostile aggressive behavior . . . when introduced to the author he shook hands with a bone-crushing grip . . . and aggressively declared that he would like to “see any damn fool try to hypnotize me.” . . As the man stepped up on the platform, the author slowly arose from his chair as if to greet him with a handshake. As the volunteer stretched forth his hand, prepared to give the author another bone-crushing handshake, the author bent over and tied his shoe strings slowly, elaborately and left the man standing helplessly with the hand outstretched. Bewildered, confused, completely taken aback at the author’s nonentiment behavior, at a total loss for something to do, the man was completely vulnerable to the first comprehensible communication fitting to the situation that was offered to him. As the second shoe string was being tied, the author said, “just take a deep breath, sit down in the chair, close your eyes, and go deeply into a trance” (Erickson, 1967, p. 153).

This the subject did, and it will be seen that “tying shoe strings” served a similar function as “it’s exactly 10 minutes of two” in Example (1). In Example (2) tying shoeaces is incompatible with the physician’s ritual/competitive greeting just as request for time is incompatible with bumping into a stranger in Example (1). Put otherwise, Erickson ignores the usual social conventions in these situations and provides a radically different answer to the basic question, “What is going on?” (Goffman, 1974).

“These examples would suggest another (minor) revision of the Sociality Corollary. Notice first that in terms of mutuality one could hardly call the interactions in the examples social processes, (see p. 252). We emphasize in the corollary: “to the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another, he may play a role in a social process involving the other.” Notice now that may seems to be ambiguous. Is it tied to the extent; or is it a dichotomous choice, independent of the conditional to the extent? Our reading of Kelly suggests the first possibility; that is, the greater the extent, the more the conducingness to role playing. However, our analysis of Examples (1) and (2) invites the second possibility. Even though “the extent” may be maximal, an agent may still choose to violate instead of honor intersubjectivity. The agent may just choose to bar a social process. This reasoning suggests the following (in italics) addendum in the corollary:

Version 4: To the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another, he may, if he so chooses, play a role in a social process involving the other.

Varying levels of violations of intersubjectivity may be related to the previously mentioned optimal discrepancy hypothesis discussed by Mancuso (1977). Consider again the Fundamental Postulate: “A person’s processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events.” Strong violations undermine intentionality by blocking off anticipations and may thus be expected to have profound effects on a person’s processes. We trust that readers of this volume are fully aware that processes are not just information processing or some cognitive aspect, but involve the person in his or her tota existence. Before considering this further we will take one more look at moderate violation. Humor may be regarded as an example of transforming a moderate violation to a definition that restores intersubjectivity. We are amused by the behavior of Sid Krassman, in Southern’s (1970) novel Blue Movie, who:

Example (3)

stepping into a crowded elevator might intone with tremendous authority: “I suppose you’re all wondering why I called you together.”

The victims will be likely to apply the construction, a random assemblage, to the situation: Krassman deliberately violates this construction by acting from the contrasting position, a purposeful meeting. Since one rarely is deeply enmeshed in elevator riding, it is not difficult to enjoy temporarily the construction “purposeful meeting”; it may provide a vastly more interesting trip. Modest violations may alternatively be described as “being at the moving edge of assimilation” to repeat the fine phrase used by Ekbcald (1981) in her Kelly-congeni account of “motivation for problem solving.” Conversely, strong violations may be seen to exceed Mancuso’s moderate discrepancy. There are then no superordinate constructions that readily can be invoked. (For a more complete analysis we would have to consider also the Modulation, Fragmentation, and, of course, the Organization Corollaries.)

Schematically we may ascribe two aspects to the social process of inductive hypnosis, illustrating from Erickson’s work with cancer patients. (See Tschu [1979] for a further discussion of how Erickson uses his confusion technique to alleviate cancer pains.) The patient is uprooted by violations of intersubjectivity and then redirected. The paradoxical injunctions make it impossible for the patient to uphold the ordinary state, and thus attention is diverted away from the pain: “an arrest of the patient’s attention, rigid fixation of his eyes, ti development of physical immobility, even catalepsy and an intense desire: understand what the author so gravely and so earnestly is saying to them.”
special induced state paves the way for redirection: "There develops unwittingly in the patient a different state of inner orientation, highly conducive to hypnosis and receptive to any suggestion that meets his needs" (Erickson, 1967, p. 153).

We return now to previous allusions to the assumption that bewilderment and uncertainty may be necessary transitional steps to new constructions. Consider, in a Sullivanian mood, psychotherapeutic problems as failures of intersubjectivity. This suggests that in order to achieve a deeper intersubjectivity, previous intersubjectivity must first be renounced; uprooting must precede redirection. This may be seen as a paradoxical counterpart to our previous assertion that intersubjectivity must be taken for granted in order to be achieved. At present we can but touch on complex dialectic relations. Perhaps attainment of shared social reality should be regarded as a major accomplishment, something to be deeply cherished. All of us may have experienced situations in which the hold may seem to slip — the fragility of our existence. Violation of intersubjectivity may uproot us. Conversely, affirmations serve to root us. Bateson (1951, p. 213) expounds a view of everyday conversations that fits well with this point of view:

> When A communicates with B, the mere act of communicating can carry the implicit statement "we are communicating." In fact this may be the most important message that is sent and received. The wise-cracks of American adolescents and the smoother but no less stylized conversation of adults are only occasionally concerned with the giving and receiving of objective information, mostly the conversations of leisure hours exist because people need to know that they are in touch with each other. They may ask questions which superficially seem to be about matters of impersonal fact — "Will it rain," "What is in today's war news," but the speaker's interest is focused on the fact of communicating with another human being.

This brings to mind Malinowski's (1923) emphasis on "phatic" communication. Analysis of human communication must consider the importance of providing mutual reassurance that we hold on to reality.

**TYPES OF SOCIAL INTERCHANGES**

In the outline below we attempt a preliminary classification of social interchanges. This is followed by some comments on types of interchange not previously discussed in this chapter. Our aim is to show how degree of construing of construction systems and honor-violate may serve as useful constructs. The incompleteness of our venture will be evident, but we assume, at least, to add some elaboration to Kelly's very basic proposition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Degree of Construing Construction Systems</th>
<th>Honor-Violate</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. love, dialogue, I-thou</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>highly</td>
<td>honor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. bureaucracy, usual meeting of strangers</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>honor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. humor (pranks)</td>
<td>medium, at best</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>honor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. cognitive imperialism</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>honor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. sexism</td>
<td>medium/low</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>honor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. successful manipulation (seducer, &quot;con man&quot;)</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>violate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. deindividuation, sadism, I-it</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>violate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A beginning analysis of type 1, love, has been offered by Bannister and Franselli (1971, p. 38), who regard it as "elaborating core role structure." This phenomenon is readily seen to be high on all our dimensions. An intriguing analysis of love, one that is congenial to a Kellian, is found in Buber (1958) in his celebrated analysis of "I-thou" (contrasted with I-it). Types 2 and 3 have already been discussed (see p. 237, and p. 257), here we reiterate the point that devi- ations from the high degree of construing and honor poles need not be aligned with the bad pole of the evaluation construct. We now turn to our preliminary analysis of the psychology of evil, types 4 to 7, which is our attempt to go beyond Kelly's evaluations (see especially Q4 at the beginning of this chapter). Cognitive imperialism is a term borrowed from Berger (1976). He uses the concept in a highly critical discussion of experts who want to raise the con- scientiousness of the poor and downtrodden. Cognitive imperialism is seen to occur when "inhabitants" of one world impose their particular modes of perception evaluation, and action on those who previously had organized their relationships to reality differently" (p. 128). Cognitive imperialism is contrasted with cognitive respect, which "is based on the understanding that every human being is in possession of a world of his own, and that nobody can interpret this world better (or more 'expertly') than he can himself" (p. 60). "Cognitive respect then, means that one takes with utmost seriousness the way in which other define reality" (p. 134). The argument for cognitive respect is based on "a postulate of the equality of all empirically based worlds of consciousness" (p. 127).

Consideration of the Kellian emphasis on reflexivity, as implied by the Fundamental Postulate, should join one to see the world of the other is having the same epistemological status as one's own. We may see cognitive respect/imperialism as a highly superordinate or metaconstruct. To understa
cognitive imperialism may well lead one to understand cultural imperialism. Why is it that so many seemingly well-intentioned attempts to help in the developing countries turn sour? Galtung (1978) has suggested that all such projects should be really bilateral, we should also be the recipients of help, not just beneficent senders. Perhaps this may turn out to be a necessary safeguard against the possibility of wrecking cultures through cognitive imperialism.

Sexism, type 5, may be seen as similar to cognitive imperialism in that it is another way whereby some humans see others as something less than themselves. Following Simone de Beauvoir's (1952) classical treatise, Johnsen (1979) sees the essence of sexism, exploitation, as denying transcendence for women. Women are then mainly regarded as immanent (as objects) and are not provided with the same opportunities for creative growth that are provided to men (see also Q6 at the beginning of the chapter). The tragedy of sexism is not only that it cripples women; sexism promotes a low level of construing and thereby bars the development of type 1, loving relationships. Kelly construes the psychopath as someone who "treats others as an object," see Q4 above. However, just placing such an unsavory actor at the nonsocial pole prompts us to overlook the insidious skill of the manipulator who understands our constructions all too well, but who does not honor our subjectivity. The successful manipulator does not grant us cognitive respect, but regards us exclusively as a tool for his or her own ends. A manipulator need not necessarily be concerned with mere immediate accuracy, but may well be out to "anticipate . . . sense what we are up to" (see Q3 above).

Returning now to the Erickson examples cited in the previous section, we highlight the insufficiency of the present analysis. While Examples (1) and (2) can be regarded as type 3—humor—what about using hypnotism to alleviate pain? Should that be classified as type 6—manipulation? It is necessary to emphasize that violation depends upon our level of construction. On some level such use of hypnotism could be regarded as high violation, but ultimately the behavior was completed under the aegis of deep concern. Uprooting at one level presupposes empathy with the hope of re-rooting at another level. This is contrary to the act of the successful manipulator, which reflects a choice not to honor the interests of the other (see version 4).

Turning now to type 7, note first that the distinction between type 6 and type 7 seems to be missed by Kelly. To analyze type 7, we once again turn to Berger (1977), whose commentary parallels our thinking about sociality. Analyzing two well-known killers, Charles Manson (the Sharon Tate murders) and Lt. Calley (the My Lai massacre), Berger goes beyond the stultifying left/right distinction (Manson being the archvillain for the right, Lt. Calley for the left), and points out a deep-seated similarity between the two killers. For Lt. Calley the victims were (as for most Americans fighting in Vietnam) deprived of individuality: "I was ordered to go in there and destroy the enemy. That was my job on that day. I did not sit down and think in terms of men, women and children. They were all classified the same, and that was the classification we dealt with, just as enemy soldiers" (quoted from Berger, 1977, p. 119). Similarly Manson and his crowd were out to "get the pigs." Berger's formula for terrorism is "the victims must be dehumanized and the killers deprived of individuality" (p. 122). "Dehumanizing" is elaborated by Becker in his analysis of sadomasochism: "the sadomasochist is someone who has trouble believing in the validity and sanctity of people's insides— their spirit, personality and self" (Becker, 1968, p. 182).

We end by again referring to value implications. It behooves us to be utterly serious as we evaluate about consistently low levels of construing construction processes. Disregard of others' constructions may be associated with unmediated terror. Notice, as well, the other facet in Berger's formula—not only are the victims dehumanized, but the killers are also deprived of individuality. This raises the general question about the relation between construction of self and construction of others. If one reduces others, does this necessarily lead to a reduced conception of self? In Hegelian terms, is the master reduced when he subjugates the slave?
Paper presented at conference on Theory of Activity, Moscow.
V. V. Vereshchagin, 1976.


