Where/Who Am I? The Self-Construing of an Expatriate Academic Acting across Global Boundaries of Function, Role, and Places (0240)
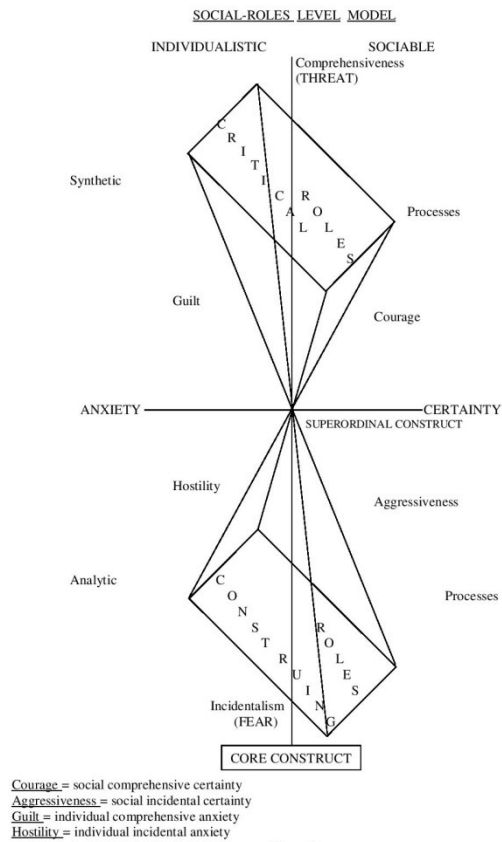
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Extended Abstract:

The author is a transplanted, oft-wandering academic, who has crossed many borders (academic, geographical and cultural) over his thirty-plus years of teaching, research, and service. In this presentation/paper, he will outline the challenges of mediating these personal functions and social roles via a Kellian psychological model of "dimensions of transition." As detailed by Iyer (2013, 17 July) and Reiche (2014, August 21), the stressful process of displacement of exile indicate that Kelly's insights can be very helpful for this writer coming to a better understanding of himself as a social actor in a fast-transitioning global environment (itself vexed between choices of increasing globalization and, at the same time, increasing division) These 'dimensions of transition,' (or what Gilder calls "vectors of change"), "are, according to Kelly, the most interesting elements of study in a self-characterization protocol precisely because they represent an individual ethos struggling to grow and become socially validated as a person. . . . This being, however, is not static: it grows and changes over time" (in Gilder, 2003, p. 64).

As outlined by Gilder (2003), the model employed for the presentation/paper can be visualized thusly:

SOCIAL-ROLES LEVEL MODEL

INDIVIDUALISTIC   SOCIABLE

Comprehensiveness
(THREAT)

C
R
I
T
I   C   R
        A   O
        L   L
        E
        S

Synthetic

Processes

Guilt

Courage

ANXIETY ——————————— CERTAINTY
SUPERORDINAL CONSTRUCT

Hostility

Aggressiveness

Analytic

C
O
N
S
T
    R   R
    U   O
    I   L
    N   E
    G   S

Processes

Incidentalism
(FEAR)

CORE CONSTRUCT

Courage = social comprehensive certainty
Aggressiveness = social incidental certainty
Guilt = individual comprehensive anxiety
Hostility = individual incidental anxiety

Figure 2

(From Gilder, 2003, p. 70)

Drawing from the initial personal-functional model,[1] the social role diagram is grounded within analytical versus synthetic thought patterns and individualistic and social rationales for action. The core voluntary, motivating quadrant of the human-action model employed here is found in crossing of the logos-based superordinate construct of "anxiety" versus "certainty" with the pathos-bed core construct of comprehensive feelings of (largely unknown) "threats" and incidental feelings of (largely known) "fears." While "superordinal" constructs are the result of "thinking through" (or learning

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1 This model is predicated upon a personal-functional model (labeled as figure 1), as noted in Gilder (2003, p. 63). It is built upon the triad of persuasion as articulated by Aristotle, i.e., logos (logical appeals), pathos (emotional appeals) and how a person acting in the world (an ethos) mediates between them in both construing (judging) "texts" -- of whatever form -- in the environment and responding to them as an individual person.

about via often formal education) events, "core" constructs are more elemental to the identity of a person:

> Referring to such emotionally-charged states as "core" constructs, Kelly states that they are constructs "which govern a person's maintenance processes—that is, those by which he maintains his identity and existence" (Gilder, 2003, p. 65).

Knowing all too well how his life has been challenged across borders of time, space and self, Gilder then seeks to apply the model to the study at hand (pp. 68-69):

- *Analytic construer*: From within this social role, a self oscillates "between the emotional 'fear' of either not finding useful antidotes to logical anxiety within" when environmental changes occur, "or, inappropriately embracing false certainties" out of the situation he or she faces.

- *Analytic critic*: From within this social role, a self "demonstrates idiosyncratic responses" to specific environmental occurrences, with no plan (or perhaps ability) "to generating a larger theoretical framework." A self can thus respond either by individualistic "hostile" responses, or this self can choose to respond in a socially creative fashion by embracing an intellectual "aggressiveness."

- *Synthetic construer*: From within this social role, a self "demonstrates the operation of his [her] own social hierarchical critical construing system while he [she] is simultaneously seeking a system of superordinate constructs with which to better understand the generalizable principles" of universal social communication. A person in this mode "is not simply mediating fearfully between the logical personal anxiety and certainty of finding the 'right' interpretation" of events around, but, more importantly, "is dealing with the individually threatening possibility that [s]he cannot construe an appropriate critical hierarchy of constructs" with which to face change in the way expected by others.

- *Synthetic critic*: From within this social role (especially of importance to intellectuals and/or academics) one hopes "to promulgate a coherent system" of thought that can be used with profit to better understand, predict or control

future phenomena. If not, one might "experience 'guilt,'" which might hinder one's ability to function or write with appropriate "courage" in the public sphere.

Of importance is to note here is the special way Kelly distinguishes between "hostility" and aggressiveness." As Kelly states, under the terminology of his *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*, "aggressive" people (cited in Gilder, 2003, p. 66):

> are distinguished by their greater tendency to set up choice points in their lives and then to make their elaborative choices. They are always precipitating themselves and others into situations which require decision and action....
>
> Within the realm of the individual there are those areas in which he is likely to be more aggressive than in others. These are the areas in which the person "does things." ... Within such areas the person appears to be neither shy nor lazy. He moves through them with initiative and relative freedom. (508-09)

As Gilder (2003, pp. 66-67) has stated, citing Kelly in *The Psychology of Personal Contracts, Vol. 1*:

> Whereas a properly "aggressive" person, when faced with a situation in which his or her construing system repeatedly fails, will admit either that he or she has misconstrued the elements of the situation, or that his or her construct system needs repair, a "hostile" person will, Kelly notes, do what Procrustes did, "always stretching his guests or cutting them down to a size to fit his bed," rather than providing a more appropriate bed (511). Herein, the hostile person makes others the victims of his or her anxieties or threats in a vain attempt "to alter events ... to make them conform to his [inadequate] original expectations" (511). In sum, we can conclude that appropriately aggressive behavior is that behavior which is socially validated via the commonality or sociality corollaries to be a valid response to life's perceptual tensions, whereas "hostile" behavior is that socially-invalidated behavior in which the too-individualistic person insists upon performing regardless of the consequences.[2]

In the development and application of this construing models to the author's own personal experiencing and social functioning as a transversal (both in the physical and disciplinary senses) academic, the presentation/paper will draw from works of Kelly (1955), Bannister and Mair (1968), Feixas (n.d.), Feixas, and colleagues (2009), Gilder

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2 We see this distinction Kelly describes in full force these days, with the "hostile" responses within the political system being seen in the campaigns of Donald Trump in the USA and "Brexit" in the UK, rather than in the more productive and curative "aggressive" intellectual leadership (seeming lacking a critical mass of conviction).

(2003), among others. As Kelly put it succinctly, "people, too, are events" (*PPC*, p. 175). This author would therefore seek to better understand by this study the interplay of non-Cartesian subjects knowing their common, yet always changing, world of being that exists both in and around them.

Initial References:

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