

## Cross purposes and crossed wires: A reply to Burr and King

**ABSTRACT.** The article on which Burr and King comment represents my theoretical work in the field of history and philosophy of psychology. Their commentary conveys certain misunderstanding of its nature and contains some inaccuracies. This reply clarifies the original article's purposes and attributes the misunderstanding to differing agendas or motivations for comparing theories.

The publication of Burr and King's (2022) commentary endows my recent article (Jones, 2022) with the status of an utterance in Bakhtin's sense of a unit of communication demarcated by its function and boundaries in a dialogue: "its beginning is preceded by the utterances of others, and its end is followed by the responsive utterances of others" (1986, cited in Jones, 2017, p. 460). I welcome the dialogue and the opportunity to clarify the aims of the study in focus and my position in general.

Burr and King (2022) identify themselves as constructivists. I do not label my philosophical orientation since my works interrogate the truth-claims behind such labels. Nevertheless, some information about my background may help to put this study in context. Although my PhD thesis (early 1990s) was PCP-based, I soon turned to narrative and dialogical psychologies. Many of my publications to date have made 'Jung' an object of study by critiquing aspects of analytical psychology, sometimes in comparison with narrative and dialogical perspectives as well as social constructionism (e.g., Jones, 2007, 2019, 2020). Consequently, I became centrally active in the International Association for Jungian Studies and have participated in debates and collaborations within that community (but I am not Jungian). The comparison undertaken in Jones (2022) was spurred by an invitation to present a webinar to a constructivist audience (Jones, 2021a). My talk triangulated the ontological positions of Kelly, Jung, and Harré. The present study picks up two of these with attention to some issues omitted in that talk.

Turning to Burr and King's (2022) commentary, our 'crossed wires' arguably reflect differing expectations about the purpose of putting Jung and Kelly side by side. My study is a theoretical exposition of ideas—a critical discussion—not a review of current trends in PCP and analytical psychology. While I stated, "A fuller account (space permitting) would acknowledge advances in both psychologies beyond their founders' works" (Jones, 2022, p.

2), such acknowledgement would be in the spirit of background information. The focus is specifically on Jung's and Kelly's original models. Further to reiterate, "Creating a dialogic contact between the two psychologies does not mean seeking to reconcile their opposition. It means adopting a critical distance from which to evaluate their divergences as well as parallels" (p. 2). Burr and King either misjudge it as if it intended to reconcile the two psychologies or alternatively rebuke me for not seeking to reconcile. A motivation to 'synergise' ideas may make sense in the case of psychologists positioning themselves as constructivist or as Jungian and wishing to infuse their discipline with insights from elsewhere. My study does not serve constructivist or Jungian agendas. Instead, I'm inclined to locate it in the field of history and philosophy of psychology.

Put another way, my data are texts by Jung and Kelly, and the research question concerns conceptions of 'opposites' in their respective models. The data collection was akin to what historian of science Barseghyan (2022) calls 'selective presentism'—a practice whereby some issue of current relevance serves as a starting point in the selection of historical facts to investigate. Since selectivity is unavoidable, the imperative is to have clear criteria for deciding which facts are relevant to the project at hand. My primary criterion accords with what he describes as 'selection by problem' (in the sense of a scientific problem). To me, it was the problem of theorising opposites. A complementary criterion underlying Jones (2022) is 'selection by actor intentionality' (Barseghyan's phrase), that is, describing past actors' intentional activities and avoiding attributing to them intentions they did not have. For example, Jung did not 'do' phenomenology, though Burr and King (2022) suggest a synergy along this line. They cite Brooke (I cited him in Jones, 2007), who reformulated archetypes theory through philosophical phenomenology, and Brooke's statement that Jung lacked the tools of phenomenological research. It would be more accurate to say that Jung simply was not interested in it, as is evident upon opening the Collected Works volume cited by Burr and King. They are misled by its English title, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*. As a matter of fact, the word 'phenomenology' was inserted there by the editors of the English series and is absent in the original German publications. The title of the volume's counterpart in the German series translates as "Contributions to the Symbolism of the Self" and in another Swiss edition translates as "Researches into the History of Symbols" (Editorial Note, Jung 1951/1959, p. v). The volume contains a long essay exploring symbolisms of early Christianity and separate essays on symbolisms of the shadow, anima and animus, and ego. In sum, it is about archetypal phenomena of the collective unconscious.

Burr and King may prioritise the criterion that Barseghyan (2022) calls ‘selection by later effect’, which takes into account that some actions of long-dead individuals could have important effects that were unintended by the actors. Yet, Jones (2022) is not about the later effects of Kelly or Jung. Ironically, their quibble about my understatement of nonclinical PCP research parallels my own quibble that “the potential for situating [PCP] in nonclinical contexts is underexplored” in Procter and Winter’s state-of-the-art book (Jones, 2021b, p. 977). In accordance with its aims, Jones (2022) cites recent nonclinical (and clinical) research towards illustrating specific theoretical points. Among other consequences, my selection criteria meant excluding works by Burr and King.

Whereas Burr and King seek synergies, I tend to parse philosophical differences. In her textbook, Burr (2003) reviews varieties of social constructionism and identifies her and Botella as among those seeking a synthesis between PCP and social constructionism generally. To me, the scope for integration “depends partly on which variant of social constructionism is discussed” (Jones, 2022, p. 13). Harré’s anti-mentalism is fundamental to his variant and was a reason for criticising Gergen’s narrative psychology: “Somehow they assume an ego whilst denying it” (van Langenhove and Harré, 1993, cited in Jones, 2007, p. 70). I cited it there to underline the incompatibility between Botella’s narrative reformulation of PCP, which implies an abstract mental state, and Harré’s insistence on eschewing such abstractions. Early on, I drew upon PCP to problematise Harré’s positioning theory (Jones, 1997). If I were to rewrite it today, I’d include sources that I didn’t know about (or didn’t exist yet) in the 1990s but will maintain my position that PCP and Harré’s social constructionism are profoundly incommensurable with each other. Certain omissions in Jones (2022) reflect not only decisions about relevance to the project at hand but also considerations of what is achievable in a single journal article. A triangulation of Jung, Kelly, and Harré could be relevant, but trying to include a third theorist would either require twice the length of what this journal permits or result in a shallow discussion.

The caveat about clarifying the variant of social constructionism applies also to the varieties of constructivist traditions. There are critical differences between Kelly, Piaget, and Vygotsky, for instance. Burr and King (2022) point to constructivist revisions of analytical psychology, e.g., Young-Eisendrath’s. An early draft of Jones (2022) included a citation of Young-Eisendrath in support of my claim that (to the best of my knowledge) Jungians do not engage with Kelly: “Young-Eisendrath and Hall’s (1991) constructivist reformulation of Jungian theory draws mainly upon Piaget, next to whom Kelly’s name appears once in brackets (p. 130) and without any information about his brand of constructivism”

(unpublished; I removed it purely to gain space for other things). Could Kelly's constructive alternativism or Jung's archetypes theory be jettisoned for the sake of integrating PCP and analytical psychology? This is not a rhetorical question, but answering it requires taking a stance on what constitutes the essential, irreducible premises of the psychologies in question—and this is a matter of interpretation.

Yet, there ought to be a distinction between matters of interpretation and matters of fact, such as the fact of what is or isn't in a given text. Burr and King may interpret Jones (2022) differently than I do as its author, but it seems unfair to attribute to me words I do not use and which reflect a position that contradicts mine. I fully agree that "PCP's focus is the subjective world as it appears to and is made meaningful by the individual," but am puzzled by their claim that "Jones appears to us to overstate the extent to which PCP is purely rationalistic" (Burr and King, 2022, p.--). Whatever Burr and King have in mind when they use the word 'rationalistic'—a word I didn't use in the article—I understand its meaning in accordance with the dictionary definition. Rationalistic is an attitude related to rationalism, which in turn denotes an appeal to reason, a theory or beliefs that "reason rather than sense experience is the foundation of certainty in knowledge" (OED, 2022). Any nuances of the dictionary meaning would be inapplicable to my characterisation of Kelly as focused on *reality-oriented* processes.

It is Jung who could be called rationalistic since his theorising about dreams, myths, patients' delusions, etc. rests on reasoning their implications. To my knowledge, Kelly did not theorise about the psychological functions of phenomena such as dreams or artwork (let alone mythologies). He theorised about how people orient themselves to reality as they see it. To someone believing that governments use mandatory COVID-19 vaccination to plant microchips in citizens, for instance, this is not a fantasy but a view of reality that channels certain anticipations and therefore shapes behaviour in definite ways. Jungians may seek archetypal elements of given motifs appearing in conspiracy theories (see Kline, 2017). Another example: someone who has a spider phobia once told me that even the leaves on top of tomatoes give her a fright. She told it to show how irrational her fear was. Both her visceral reaction to things that look like spiders and her verbal appraisal of that reaction are reality oriented, respectively exemplifying "acted out... utterly inarticulate" constructs and "verbally expressed ... intellectually reasoned" constructs (Kelly, 1955, quoted in Jones, 2022, p. 6). Jungians may ask about the symbolic meaning of fear of spiders. Jung (1958/1970) suggested that spiders "function in dreams as symbols of a profoundly alien psychic world" (§671) and interpreted this motif as representations of the archetypal shadow.

To conclude, it is seldom acknowledged or realised that analytical psychology approaches the reflexivity of the self from a different angle than do other traditions. On the one side, constructivism “presupposes a self-aware subject who *makes* meaning, however tacit the construction process might be”; on the other, “Jung’s analytical psychology describes how meaning *happens* to people. Our dreams, fantasies, projections and affective reactions give expression to lived experiences, and in this way make *us*, our constitution as self-aware subjects” (Jones, 2019, p. 10, italics in the original). Both dimensions of meaning are fundamental, irreducible to each other and yet profoundly interdependent like the duality of day and night.

## References

- Barseghyan, H. (2022) Selection, presentism, and pluralist history. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 92(1), 60-70. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shpsa.2022.01.003>
- Burr, V. (2003). *Social Constructionism* (second edition). Routledge
- Bur, V. & King, N. (2022) Contrasts and synergies: A commentary on “Thinking in Opposites: The Psychologies of Carl Gustav Jung and George Kelly”. *Theory & psychology*
- OED (2022) “rationalism, n.” *Oxford English Dictionary*. Retrieved from [www.oed.com/view/Entry/158504](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/158504) on 22 April 2022.
- Jones, R.A. (1997). The Presence of Self in the Person: Reflexive Positioning and Personal Constructs Psychology. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 27(4), 453-471. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5914.00051>
- Jones, R.A. (2007). *Jung, Psychology, Postmodernity*. Routledge
- Jones, R.A. (2017). Towards dialogic epistemology: the problem of the text. *Qualitative Research*, 17(4), 457–472. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794116671986>
- Jones, R.A. (2019). Dialogues with a talking skull that refuses to speak: Jungian and narrative psychologies. In: Jones R.A. & Gardner, L. (eds.) *Narratives of Individuations*. Routledge (pp. 8-31)
- Jones R.A. (2020). Dialogicality and culture of psychology in a study of individuation. *Culture & psychology* 26, 894-906. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X19871208>
- Jones, R.A. (2021a). Triangulating ontological positions. Webinar presented to the *Constructivist Meet-Up series*, 18 February 2021. [add url]

- Jones, R.A. (2021b). “There is nothing as practical as a good theory”: Theorising relationality in clinical practice. *Theory & Psychology*, 31(6) 976–978.  
<http://doi.org/10.1177/09593543211041080>
- Jones, R.A. (2022). Thinking in opposites: The psychologies of Carl Gustav Jung and George Kelly. *Theory & Psychology* (online) 1-17  
<https://doi.org/10.117709593543221090489>
- Jung, C. G. (1959). Aion. In: G. Adler, M. Fordham, & H. Read (Eds.), *The collected works of C. G. Jung* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans., Vol. 9ii). Routledge & Kegan Paul. (Original work published 1951)
- Jung, C.G. (1970) Flying saucers: A modern myth of things seen in the skies. In: In G. Adler, M. Fordham, & H. Read (Eds.), *The collected works of C. G. Jung* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans., Vol. 10, pp. 307-433). Routledge and Kegan Paul (original work published 1958)
- Kline, J. (2017) C. G. Jung and Norman Cohn Explain Pizzagate: The Archetypal Dimension of a Conspiracy Theory. *Psychological Perspectives*, 60(2), 186-195.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00332925.2017.1314699>
- Young-Eisendrath, P. & Hall, J. (1991). *Jung’s Self Psychology*. Guilford Publications.