

THE STORY OF DESDEMONA: PSYCHOTHERAPY CONDUCTED WITH A PCP APPROACH

Massimo Giliberto

Institute of Constructivist Psychology, School of Constructivist Psychotherapy, Padua, Italy

This presentation is an exploration of a client-therapist relationship and the story of their experiences in the context of psychotherapy. Through the case of a female victim of domestic violence – who repeatedly chose violent men as partners – it is an investigation into how, using Personal Construct Psychology, the therapist understands his client and how this understanding channels new experiments in the psychotherapy room and in the life of the client. It also explores how these new experiences contribute to changing the client's identity constructs, helping her to change from the role of 'victim' to taking her own life back.

Keywords: *sociality, role, psychotherapy, experience, domestic violence.*

INTRODUCTION

“Developing sociality” is not just the title of the XIV biennial conference of the European Personal Construct Association in Edinburgh. To understand other people's construing, their outlook, their understanding of themselves, of others and the world, it is – according to PCP – the main focus of psychology and, of course, of psychotherapy.¹ Kelly considers the effort to understand people's understanding “the basis for social interaction” (1991, *I*, p. 67). But, as Kelly outlines, “there are different levels at which we can construe what other people are thinking” (ib.) and, I add, are doing.

*A therapist-client relationship is one which exemplifies greater understanding on the part of one member than on the part of the other. As a therapist comes to subsume the client's construction system within his own, he becomes more and more facile in developing his own role in relation to the client. It then becomes possible for them to make progress jointly in a social enterprise. (1991, *I*, pp. 67-68)*

¹ This allows psychotherapist to play a role with his/her client, that is *being a therapist* and not simply reciting that role.

So, subsuming the client's construing effort, in therapy, as a consequence of the Fundamental Postulate, means to understand in which experiments he/she is involved, both in life and moment-to-moment, in the therapy room. Having established what is meaningful for the client at the centre of the therapeutic laboratory, the therapist will try to be an active participant in that experiment “in such a way that the client, through coming to understand it, may develop a basis for understanding other figures in his environment with whom he needs to acquire skill in playing interacting roles.” (1991, *I*, p. 68) I would just like to note that this is really different from imposing on the client both our vision and our experiments, i.e. what we might think he/she should do.

The following story of psychotherapy is exactly a story of a series of experiments which were meaningful for my client. Experiments that, like a matryoshka doll, are inserted in others' bigger experiments, shared social enterprises called “psychotherapy” and “life”.

Two brief points. Firstly, in order to protect the identity of my client, Desdemona is a fictitious name and I deliberately changed some non-essential elements in her story. Of course, the other names of this story have been changed too. She, in any case, has been informed about the paper I am presenting here, and she agreed. Sec-

only, even though this story is presented as far as possible in a discursive and narrative form, I use in certain points some Kellian notions, taking for granted that the reader is familiar with these technical and professional constructs.

SHORT BACKGROUND ON DESDEMONA

Desdemona is a woman who was 42 years when I met her some years ago in my office at the Institute of Constructivist Psychology in Padua. She was referred to me by her psychiatrist after being admitted for a period of one month to a psychiatric clinic for “severe depression” and a suicide attempt. The psychiatrist told me that Desdemona was “a bad case of borderline personality disorder”. Desdemona was described as being prone to sudden changes of mood, impulsivity, unstable behaviour and relationships, and had severe difficulties in the organization of thoughts.

Desdemona is a mother of two children: Antonio seven years old and Francesca, two years old, at that time. She was unemployed and married to Lorenzo, a career soldier who is just older than her. Blonde, of small stature, nice and gentle, she wore a tracksuit and gave me a sense of neglect and fragility.

During our first conversation she told me that the reason for her last hospitalization was her suicide attempt. She told me – with some difficulty and just some sessions after – that her will to kill herself followed an umpteenth physical abuse by her husband.² This last episode led her to the conclusion that she was “not able to face life”.

Desdemona narrated to me a revelatory story. She’s the oldest of three children, and her parents split up immediately after her birth. Desdemona’s mother had many partners and had the last two children with different fathers. Desdemona reported that often these men were physically and verbally violent with her mother and herself; meanwhile she tried to protect – not always successfully – her younger brother and sister. Her mother alternated between behaviours of protection and behaviours of refusal. Desde-

mona told me that when “things went well” her mother treated her like a prostitute. She said me: “Maybe she was jealous and often called me dumb shit and a fucking bitch”. When “things went bad with her partners”, sometimes Desdemona was attacked as if she was the guilty party; other times – inexplicably to Desdemona – she was required to be, as she said: “the mother of my mother, since my mother was too depressed”. Sometimes she tried to rebel against her mother and the situation, looking elsewhere for “some relief” and someone who would love her. But this led her to “finding only violent men who wanted stuff from me” and “cruel people”. Therefore, every time she went away from her house, she felt forced to return. Besides, she had a period of substance and alcohol abuse, until she met her husband, Lorenzo. Desdemona married Lorenzo six years before our meeting, when their first son was one year old. But very soon, also “Lorenzo showed his real self” and violence started. “Maybe”, she supposed, “because I took care of our child, he felt ignored and neglected by me”.

WHAT KIND OF APPROACH?

The way I presented this story might be used to show Desdemona’s problems from many perspectives. Here I would like to concisely illustrate the way in which psychotherapy could be conducted following the PCP perspective. To do this, firstly it may be useful to underline some characteristics that differentiate this approach from others.

a) Firstly, I was completely uninterested in a “correct diagnosis”. In effect, Kellian diagnosis is very different from DSM diagnosis: it is a way not to encapsulate the person simply in a constellation of symptoms, but to formally understand the processes of construction of the world of the person. So, as a clinician, I was interested in the particular world of Desdemona, instead of what she might have in common with other people or to her symptoms.

b) Secondly, one of the core notions in PCP is the notion of *construct*. It is important to be reminded that a construct is an *action*, and

² A violence that she concealed from the authorities in order not to damage his career.

not a *thought* or a *cognition*. This implies that a construct refers to itself and it is not explanatorily connected to other elements such as ‘emotions’ or ‘neuronal paths’. A really important consequence of this is that psychotherapy is neither focused on the relationship between her presumed subsystems, nor merely on *rational consciousness*, but on the client’s *whole experience* (Giliberto, 2017). And the first laboratory for experience is the therapy room, the relationship with the therapist. In other words, by understanding her construction processes, I wanted to do something *with* Desdemona and not *upon* her (Bannister and Fransella, 1980).

Therefore, I will outline this case – because we don’t have time to go too much into details – showing both some hypotheses that a therapist can make about Desdemona’s constructions of the world, herself and others, and what shared experiments can be conducted during a Kellian psychotherapy. In particular, some professional notions will be considered: threat, loosening – tightening, constriction – dilation, impulsivity, guilt and aggression. Moreover, the Narrative Theme (Bregant, Orlando, Sandri & Giliberto, 2011) will be used as an instrument, in order to understand Desdemona’s processes of construction and their changes.

KELLIAN DIAGNOSIS

Narrative theme

First of all, I tried to understand the ‘colour’ of the life, the background in which Desdemona – from her point of view – got from her life. It was suddenly clear that the world for Desdemona was a dangerous and hostile place. She recursively experienced violence and personal discredit. Her relationship with her mother is illustrative of this. Being called a “fucking bitch”, and being accused of being the cause of the existential failure of her mother’s love affairs, had suggested to Desdemona that she was a “bad person” and, consequently, worthy of abandonment and sufferance. Her attempts to rebel against this situation led to a more dangerous abandonment and refusal. Each attempt to aggressively explore the world, on the one hand,

had Desdemona facing the threat of yet another (maybe definitive) failure and, on the other hand, she was exposed to a risk of losing the relationship with her mother, the person on whom she was dependent. Besides, this structure of relationship, this experience was, more or less, the same with her partners and, especially, with her husband Lorenzo.

Role

Desdemona was moving through this background. She had to find a position that would guarantee her an acceptable survival between others. The constructs “weak”, “submissive” and “victim” seem to be the roles that allowed Desdemona to manage her relationships, maintaining a sufficient anticipation of events. In other words, these roles allowed her to maintain relationships and ensure her protection. In this direction, e.g. her way of introducing herself, is to transmit fragility and neglect. However, as we will see later, Desdemona constructed herself in a loose way, continuously moving between being “submissive” and a “rebel”, “victim” and a “bad person” and therefore she was often confused about the nature of herself.

Red thread

At this point, we could pose the following question: in which fundamental experiment was Desdemona involved in her life? Kelly calls this enterprise “life role” construction (1991, 2, p. 170). Listening to the story that Desdemona was telling me, it emerged that her fundamental effort, the focus of her life, over many years, was *to comply in order to be accepted and protected*. Unfortunately, this main experiment always did have a price; until it became intolerable, which was when I met her.

Choices

As therapist I was interested in understanding Desdemona’s choices and, first and foremost the repeated choice of men who were *also* violent. That was an apparently unreasonable choice. But, as Kelly suggests: “A person chooses for

himself that alternative in a dichotomized construct through which he anticipates the greater possibility for extension and definition of his system" (1991, *I*, p. 45). So, I had to search for the deep meaning of this and other choices.

As I mentioned before, Desdemona had had, prior to her husband, relationships with other violent partners. She described herself as tirelessly devoted to those men, so devoted that she nullified herself. It was a *constriction process* in which Desdemona narrowed many parts of herself in order to maintain the relationship and to be protected. The alternative was, in Desdemona's understanding, to be abandoned and be lost in the world: an option that she evidently could not accept. But, sometimes this continuous effort to satisfy partners simply failed. At other times, when she tried to dilate to her other needs and emotions – like anger – she became, in her own perception, a "bad person". In both cases, the partner's reaction was often verbally or physically violent.

It was a sort of vicious circle, in which Desdemona, as a weak and a submissive person and as victim, chose men described as strong, protecting but, unfortunately, violent. When she failed in her efforts to comply, they, as she said: "treated me like my mother or my mother's partners". The same occurred when she did not feel protected and loved; she showed her needs, her anger and she rebelled. Often, the consequence was a conflict that was, in Desdemona's eyes, the confirmation that she was a bad person who, in order to merit love and not to be abandoned, she again became "submissive".

As we re-constructed at the end of our therapeutic path, Desdemona chose dominant and strong partners, who chose her because they saw her submission as a confirmation of their personal system, particularly of their core role of "real man"; but, when she – for many reasons – became less than submissive, and not so obedient, they felt threatened and protected their core constructions with a hostility that, sometimes, took the form of physical violence. Desdemona – she thought – did not deserve anything else: she was a weak victim and – even if in a loose way – a bad person. In her constricted world, on a case-by-case basis, no other man would want and protect her. As a result, she felt "it was better to settle for what you've already got". Moreover – as she told me – when Desdemona had

chosen to be a rebel, starting to explore the world, using drugs and alcohol, and going away from her family, she experienced "disastrous results": the world outside was absolutely more hostile and dangerous than her constricted, suffering but predictable world. This too was predictable and, after all, in the scheme of things.

So, the circle was closed: a circle that can also be described as an "implicative dilemma" (Hinkle, 1965; Ryle, 1979; Feixas, Saul, and Sanchez, 2000). Of course, even if this vision of the world was more or less sustainable, there were signs of suffering. Desdemona had to continuously face the *threat* of being abandoned and her sense of indignity, of being effectively a bad person. In order to face this threat, Desdemona operated constriction and loosening her constructions. Signals of constrictions were her attempts – not always effective – to exclude many emotions from her perceptive field, above all the anger and limiting her life space to family and children. Furthermore, she was threatened by her aggressiveness, because this could put her in a bad situation, both threatening her relationships and exposing her to additional invalidations. Besides, she loosened her construction to be a bad person, or an incapable person, in order to avoid being crushed by her awareness of being a complete failure. In effect, as a "complete failure" no one could expect anything. Nevertheless, this system, this vision of the world maintained a precarious stability and Desdemona had continued to choose, in spite of her suffering, strong, protective but violent partners as long as something in the world of Desdemona changed.

The problem: why Desdemona came to therapy?

Constriction and loosening had maintained a sort of equilibrium in Desdemona's system until she became a mother. This area of her life was – and is – an aggressive area³. When Desdemona

³ 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." Some psychologists might describe these areas as "interest areas." Within such areas the person appears to be neither shy nor lazy. He moves through them with initiative and relative

talked about her children she changed her position on the chair, her eyes became more brilliant and the tone of her voice became vivacious. But, one year after the birth of the first child, her husband started to be violent with her and, after the birth of the second child he became physically violent with the children too. Complying was not sufficient to protect her children, far from it! So, this implied that if she remained weak and stayed in the role of a victim, she risked becoming a bad mother, a “mother unable to protect her children”. This was a sort of anticipated exile from her core role of mother, an anticipated guilt.

At the same time, Desdemona could not be completely a rebel because she risked becoming a bitch and losing the protection of the husband for her and the children. There was a big, bad world out there. A world she thought herself unable to face. Once again, she would have been a bad mother, a bad person, a lose-lose situation, apparently. The precarious equilibrium of the system crashed. During the last few years, signals of constriction, loosening and impulsivity were increasing. This prompted her to ask for help from a certain number of psychiatrists, but without a solution. In addition, she risked being considered as crazy and losing her children. Therefore, she impulsively tried to commit suicide with pills. In other words, she extremely narrowed her “perceptual field in order to minimize apparent incompatibilities” (Kelly, 1991, 2, p. 6). But even this solution – as she said “in a moment of lucidity” – seemed not acceptable as a mother, and at the last minute Desdemona sought help.

Transference

The questions I asked myself were: Who would have been there for her? In her history, seemingly, there were not many supportive people. Her siblings, who Desdemona protected from the abuse, were far away, completely uninterested in her. Would I have been considered a violent male, as the other males of her life? Would I

freedom (Kelly, 1991, 1, p. 374).

have been uninterested in her, as many people she met in her history? Would I have considered her a crazy person? I knew that the first step was to gain her trust.

THE THERAPEUTIC PROCESS AS A SEQUENCE OF EXPERIMENTS

I will illustrate what happened in this therapy in terms of a sequence of experiments conducted by Desdemona and I during our sessions. Since we have little time, I choose only those that could be explanatory of the therapeutic process, skipping over many passages and steps. The main question I followed was: “what is Desdemona doing with me now”?

First step – the trust

How would Desdemona test my reliability?

I was aware that Desdemona was threatened by everyone, but above all by males and doctors. Even if she thought I was there in order to help her, she understandably had every reason to be distrustful. Moreover, I could force her to admit her insanity, her definitive life failure. She expected to be treated like a mental health patient, therefore a woman unable to be a mother. This prompted me to avoid underlining symptoms in our conversations. I was really interested in her story, in her whole story. Besides, Desdemona could not *tighten* her role constructions: it was too dangerous. Indeed, she often shifted between the two poles of her constructions, becoming sometimes “submissive” and soon after a “rebel”, “victim” or “a bad person”. The construct “mother” stayed, like a fragile crystal, in the background. And I was aware that I should not invite her to make a premature tightening.

In any case, my attitude surprised Desdemona: I was neither a persecutor nor a protector; I neither tried to destroy her, nor to impose on her my expectations – like for example, the other doctors’ suggestion to leave her husband Lorenzo. I was simply interested in her. Desdemona changed her voice, lifted her face and started to look me in the eyes. She was slowly beginning to trust in me.

| Behaviour | Meaning | Experiment | Verification |
|---|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Desdemona speaks slowly, with a monotone voice. She narrates terrible experiences as if they are mundane things. No emotions. It seems she's talking about a movie and not about herself. | Exposing myself is dangerous. | How would you treat me? Like a crazy woman? Could I trust in you? | I was interested in her story, never forcing her to change issues. I did not show particular interest in symptoms. But, at the same time, when something was not clear, I asked for explanations. |

What would Desdemona do now? Would she ask herself whether not only me, but also other people would be interested in her? Would she allow us to tighten her constructions, in order to search for alternatives?

At this point, I made an error: I asked her to tell me something regarding her husband's point of view in her story. Desdemona interpreted this

invitation as a way to legitimate Lorenzo's point of view. If I had legitimated the husband's vision, Desdemona would be finally a bad and unable person. Again, she had to test my trust. Did I want to control her? Did I want to force her to take a position against herself? She was angry. And I was ready to do another experiment. But, which one? The following session...

| Behaviour | Meaning | Experiment | Verification |
|------------------------|---|---|---|
| Silence (five minutes) | Anger in order to face a possible invalidation. | Will you try to force me? Will you try to control me? | After the "hello" a respectful silence. |

Five minutes of silence are a hard challenge for a therapist if he does not understand the meaning and the experiment that is going on. Desdemona expected from me a reaction of anger or an attempt to trick her. My reaction was, instead,

once again, not exactly what she expected. She was, on the one hand, reassured and, on the other hand, pushed to re-construct my unexpected behaviour into her system. What she told me just after the silence was revelatory.

Desdemona – You made me angry. You wanted me to agree with him.
Therapist – This was not my intention.
(Silence)
Desdemona – And so, what was it?
Therapist – I was interested in your opinion about the point of view of your husband.
(Silence)
Desdemona – I don't know if this is really interesting for me, at this point.
Therapist – What is interesting for you, then?
Desdemona – My children. Just them.

After this first part of the conversation, Desdemona relaxed and got talking about her children. This area remained a field of conversation for some time. This still was an area in which Desdemona could explore and develop her role,

although under threat, in a relatively easier way. In this area her constructs seemed sufficiently tight and useful for a social exploration. Desdemona defined herself in relationship with her children as "a good player" and she was able to

construe the children’s point of view. She told me that playing was “the most fun but also the most serious and significant activity for children”. I was asking myself: could we use some of these constructions – e.g. “good player” – in other fields of Desdemona’s life?

She was experimenting with her *agency* not only with children but also with an adult – moreover a man – for the first time. And I was becoming not only a threatening person as a *male* or *doctor*, but also a possible “ally” not against someone or something, but “for something”; although this “something” was still vague also because I was very careful not to express anything that Desdemona could interpret as my

expectation. What would she do now? Would she dilate our experiment outside the therapy room?

Second step – dilation and aggressiveness

In this period, in fact, many things happened. Desdemona persuaded Lorenzo that she needed to get a job because of financial difficulties in the family. So, she found a job as a waitress for a few hours a day in a bar, during the morning, when the children were, respectively, at nursery and at school. Desdemona was effectively transferring the laboratory outside the therapy room.

| Behaviour | Meaning | Experiment | Verification |
|-----------|--|---|------------------------------------|
| A new job | Dilation of ‘agency’ outside the therapy room. | Could other people, apart from my psychotherapist, consider me? | Other people are interested in me. |

I was aware of the danger of this experiment. If Desdemona faced it with the old constructions, she risked falling into the “bad and unable person” role. At the same time, how could she face a possible “good standing” by people? Experiments in the therapy room were relatively less dangerous than what might happen outside. Once again, was she ready to *tighten* her constructions, in order to search for alternatives? The fact that her symptoms were reducing, her different way of dressing – more polished and feminine now – and her different attitude to-

wards me, I hypothesized, were signs both that Desdemona was less threatened and she was experimenting with another superordinate construction of herself. I could try some cautious tightening.

In her job, with colleagues, Desdemona was having social success. The boss was appreciating her and colleagues found her nice. At this point, we reconsidered the theme of being “a good player”.

Therapist – Do you think there is a way to be a sufficiently good player in life?
Desdemona – What do you mean?
Therapist – Nothing more than that you told me about your playing with children. Do you think it would be possible elsewhere?
Desdemona – People are not children; they are for the most part bad and cruel.
Therapist – Yet I have had the impression that you, in some way, were playing with your colleagues. Maybe I’m wrong.
(Silence)
Desdemona – Yes... But not everyone is available to play, and to play with me.

Desdemona was considering the idea that people are different. The preemptive construct ‘others’ – which was a sort of monolith – was fragmenting, opening new possibilities in the social field. Moreover, she was seriously investigating this new construct: *good player vs. passive player* (different from being a *loser*). This superordinate construct would allow her a more propositional construction of the *self*, since some of the elements that were under constructions such as “submissive vs. rebel” and “victim vs. bad person”, were shifting under this new, comprehensive construction, and losing for the most part their negative connotations. A “good player” can

lose a game, yet still be a good player. This construct allowed her to work on her difficulties without collapsing or being forced to define herself as unable or bad.

Desdemona, in any case, was facing a difficult situation. She had to face the danger of accepting other people's good consideration while risking the loss of her main dependency relationships at the same time. Desdemona had discovered that some people liked and respected her, how could she explain the behaviour of people who were bad and cruel and violent with her?

| Behaviour | Meaning | Experiment | Verification |
|--|--|--|--|
| Tell a story from different ‘internal’ points of view. | I would like to risk analysing my story. | There is a story that is truer than another? | A story is not a sequence of facts, but it changes if the point of view changes. |

At this point, I started to try to deal with her story. If she was able to see her story as a narration, which could change from different points of view, instead of a series of incontrovertible facts, we could have reconsidered – under a relatively reduced threat – the position of each actor. Promoting the permeability of the role of each one would have allowed us to reconsider the role of each one, Desdemona included, in this story.⁴

We used some role playing techniques doing this work together. The plurality of selves was a very important experiment for telling me her story; she discovered she played many roles, described as voices, different points of view, but anyway all part of her. So, I invited her to get all these roles to talk about her story, taking place, on a case-by-case basis, on a different seat. Telling this story from different points of view, from different perspectives, gave the possibility both to explore the others’ point of view without perceiving it as an absolute judgement and to per-

ceive herself as “a person who did and is doing the best she can”. She started to rely on her experience instead of depending on the others’ judgement.

Third step – the revolution

This new dimension of construction permitted her to face the imponderability (anxiety) and the relationships in her life in a new light. She was able to face her husband, informing him about her decision to divorce, as she said: “I would like to take my life into my hands”. She was scared about Lorenzo’s possible reaction, but determined. Lorenzo, in any case, was not physically violent: He just showed contempt and “he looked also as if he was relieved”. She told me that, maybe, Lorenzo felt her not as a rebel and challenging, as in the past, but simply as a person who made a decision or, perhaps, he preferred to think that this was his choice. Desdemona also had to face her mother, who accused her of being “a bitch” because of the divorce; she was “a person not able to keep her man”. Facing these accusations was still too painful, but she was, once again, determined in her purpose and considered facing her mother later.

⁴ A construct is permeable if it will admit to its range of convenience new elements, which are not yet construed within its framework. (Kelly, 1991, 1, p.56)

Even her mother and Lorenzo did what they could; they were playing in the best way they could.

In brief, Desdemona was able to divorce, maintaining her job and taking her children with her.

Fourth step – the conclusion

During our shared path, involving many experiments both within the relationship with me and

outside the therapy room, in her life, Desdemona had changed many things about herself. She had changed a lot. It was clear that the end of the therapy was approaching. We spoke about it and, even if she was a little sad about this, she agreed. We had to close the transference cycle. The following fragment of conversation could be considered indicative of this process in which she aggressively, and ironically challenged my role.

Desdemona – Are you a good player?

Therapist – What do you think?

Desdemona – I've often wondered if you were pulling my leg?

Therapist – Thanks for telling me.

Desdemona (Laughing) – You're welcome!

We were, finally, elaborating the transference. I pointed out to her both how many roles she had given me in our conversations and how many selves she played with me. We were a lot of things, a lot of people. The therapy room was the laboratory in which we experimented with many situations, the mirror of the world. Now, we were ready to end our trip.

After three years of therapy, Desdemona has started a new life. She was more or less able to maintain a collaborative relationship with Lorenzo, because they are both parents. In any case, even if different, their relationship was not interrupted. Also the relationship with her mother improved. She changed her job, becoming secretary in the office of a fiscal consultant and began a new relationship with a divorced man with a child, but they decided to live separately. Now, moreover, she's a good tango dancer.

What I have narrated is, of course, a synthesis of a long journey in which many other things happened. I made, of course, some minor errors too. Not every attempt was a success and, for a certain time, Desdemona swung between old and new constructions. Here, I have been able simply to illustrate some passages of this long experiment full of experiments, in order to show how psychotherapy can be conducted following a Kellian perspective. In any case, in psychothera-

py – like in every human relationship – not everything could be seen and clearly described; something could be just softly suggested by the relationship's poetry, between the lines of our shared narration, seen in eyes of the other or simply breathed during a meeting. Nevertheless – even if they are not verbal matters – they are actions, constructs, ways of telling and saying that story. Psychotherapy is, from my point of view, a magical mix between logic and poetry, explanation and comprehension in which – as Miller Mair (1989, p.2) reminds us – *We are, at all times, in the midst of telling and listening, asserting and asking, confirming and disconfirming.*

Probably, the best way to conclude this presentation is to use Desdemona's words:

“Now I'm a different person, but it is not easy for me to say in what way... Maybe I've simply accepted that I'm imperfect without feeling wrong. And, probably, I feel others in the same way. In any case, now, my life is more complicated than before – thanks doctor! – but I'm breathing!

REFERENCES

- Bannister, D., Fransella, F. (1980). *Inquiring Man: the theory of personal constructs*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. (Original work published 1971).
- Bregant, I., Orlando, P., Sandri, G., Giliberto, M. (2011). *The "Narrative Theme" Method: Between Telling Observer and Observing Teller*. Paper from the XIX International Congress on Personal Construct Psychology, Boston (US)
- Feixas, G., Saul, L.A., and Sanchez, V. (2000). Detection and analysis of implicative dilemmas: implications for the therapeutic process. In J.W. Scheer (ed.), *The Person in Society: Challenges to a Constructivist Theory*. (pp. 392-399)Giessen: Psychosozial-Verlag.
- Giliberto, M. (2017). Theoretical identity is not just belonging. *Personal Construct Theory & Practice*, 14, 87-98.
- Hinkle, D. (2010). The change of personal constructs from the viewpoint of a theory of construct implications. *Personal Construct Theory & Practice*, 7, Suppl. N° 1, 1-61. (PhD dissertation Ohio State University, 1965).
- Kelly, G. (1991). *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (Vols 1 & 2). London and New York: Routledge. (Original work published 1955).
- Mair, M. (1989). Kelly, Bannister and a Story Telling Psychology. *International Journal of Personal Construct Psychology*, 2, 1-14.

REFERENCE

- Giliberto, M. (2019). The story of Desdemona: Psychotherapy with a PCP approach. *Personal Construct Theory & Practice*, 16, 72-81

Received: 3 October 2018 – Accepted: 21 June 2019 – Published: 10 November

- Ryle, A. (1979). The focus in brief interpretative psychotherapy: Dilemmas, traps and snags as target problems. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 134, 46-54.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Massimo Giliberto is Director of the Graduate School of Constructivist Psychotherapy of the Institute of Constructivist Psychology (ICP) in Padua (Italy). He is a practicing psychotherapist and acts as consultant and coach for private companies and organizations. The focus of interest in his work concerns psychotherapy, epistemology, ethics, didactic method and cross-cultural psychology.

He is a co-founder of the European Constructivist Training Network, member of the editorial boards of the *Journal of Personal Construct Theory and Practice* and of the *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* and editor of the *Rivista Italiana di Costruttivismo*.

Contact: max.giliberto@gmail.com