Hänsel, Grethel and the Breadcrumbs
Similarity and Analogy in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy

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Abstract

Psychotherapy reorganizes and reveals patients' stories. Some events take on different meanings from their initial ones, and unsuspected connections and recursions are discovered. The plot of the story changes as does the patient's role in it thus the psychotherapist's activity is extremely decisive during this process of reorganization. In fact, when listening to the patient's narrative, the psychotherapist dwells on seemingly marginal elements, grasps similarities, and identifies possible connections. Deduction and induction are less relevant whereas conjectural, abductive and analogical thinking prevail. In this way, the psychotherapist can then develop a form of reasoning where different logical processes, conscious and unconscious, both converge, enabling him to grasp similarities and develop important analogies.

The author, after a general overview of the concept of analogy and its distinction from similarity, then proposes a psychoanalytic reading of the analogy with the help of Matte Blanco's theory of the unconscious. In this perspective, the analogy can be considered the expression of a "bi-logical" mind in which both unconscious (symmetrical) and conscious (asymmetrical) logic converge. Finally, the author presents a clinical example to illustrate the use of analogy in psychotherapeutic practice.

Keywords: analogy, similarity, symmetrical logic, asymmetrical logic, unconscious, Matte Blanco

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Introduction

If we start from the observation that there are no automatic methods for decoding the patient's communication, it is obvious to conclude that the (possible) understanding of what is narrated in the course of an interview can only be the result of a process of meaning construction in which the role of the therapist as *narrator* (Smorti, 2023) is far from irrelevant. A role that tends to be even more important when the patient's narrative is markedly descriptive and didactic or ambiguous and fragmentary: in such cases, the psychotherapist may even be induced to enhance his or her own connotative function.

On the other hand, it is easy for the therapist to bite the poisonous apple of over-participation. Indeed, basing one's practice on the tacit assumption that one can always and everywhere resolve the ambiguity inherent in the patient's narrative carries with it this risk. Indeed, it is quite difficult "to admit to oneself that there may be no unifying theme, no simple solution to an increasingly complex material" (Spence, 1987, p. 99). The difficulty of living with the indefinite (Lampignano, 2006) can thus lead the therapist to focus on questionable similarities, to emphasize connections, and to formulate premature hypotheses in order to pose/impose the informational chaos in which he or she is immersed. Instead, it is necessary to maintain a balance that allows, on the one hand, for uncertainty and doubt to be maintained as necessary conditions for giving space to the strangeness of the other, and, on the other hand, for those theoretical coordinates, however minimal, that are necessary to make the strangeness itself intelligible.

In this delicate balance, *clinical reasoning* is developed, meaning the set of mental processes put in place in order to organize and make sense of what happens in psychotherapy. Although it is not easy to identify the factors underlying this way of reasoning, nor is it easy to outline the process underlying its acquisition (Wilcox et al., 2023), it is, however, intuitable that specialized knowledge, while necessary, is not the only factors at play.

Clinical reasoning must in fact integrate the therapist's theoretical knowledge, which is inevitably general in nature, together with the information given by the patient, which may also have been obtained with the aid of structured means (Guzmán-Valdivia-Gómez et al., 2022) as well as one's own experiences with the patient and the clinical situation.

Clinical reasoning refers, among other things, to the ability to process heterogeneous, if not contradictory, data, to grasp similarities and connections, to develop hypotheses and revise them *in itinere*, and to always place information in the context to which it relates. Thus, on the basis of his or her prior knowledge, skills and experience, and on the basis of what he or she learns during the interview, the therapist develops complex thinking in which deductive, inductive and abductive processes (Eco & Sebeok, 2012) are mixed, allowing him or her to draw conclusions and hypotheses regarding the patient's difficulties and the ongoing relationship.

Among the various logical processes the therapist resorts, albeit sometimes empirically, is the so-called *circumstantial paradigm* (Eco, 1985; Eco & Sebeok, 2012; Fabbrichesi, 2018; Ginzburg, 1986; Pic, 2018). This is a form of reasoning in which value is placed on marginal data and minimal traces – understood as *clues* – that allow different aspects to be linked together, thus arriving at the hypothesis of the existence of a "fact" that, although

not directly observed, is nevertheless considered probable precisely because of the presence of these particular clues. Unlike other forms of reasoning, such as deductive logic, the circumstantial paradigm is a conjectural and probabilistic cognitive strategy in which analogy plays an essential role (Capone, 2002).

This article aims to offer some reflections on analogy as a fundamental component of clinical reasoning in psychotherapy. After a general overview of the concept, an analogy will be considered taking into account Matte Blanco's (1981) "bi-logic" and a clinical example will be provided to highlight its value in psychotherapeutic practice.

Although analogy is in fact underlying many inferences developed by the therapist in the course of treatment, there is not always sufficient awareness of the importance of analogical reasoning in understanding clinical material, despite it has long been known that the ability to search for and establish connections between different content proposed by the patient is an important component of clinical competence (Spence, 1987; Semi, 1985, 2011).

Analogy: a framing of the concept

Despite its apparent immediacy, the concept of analogy is rather elusive, so much so that the term, although widely used in many disciplines (philosophy, psychology, mathematics, etc.), still lacks an unanimously agreed-upon definition. The very frequency with which the word is used in everyday language, where there is no need for semantic clarification, tends to increase confusion and hinder the search for a common ground on which to anchor the concept (Schroeder, 2019).

That said, one can still attempt to delineate its boundaries albeit limited to a psychological domain. In this perspective, a starting point may be to consult a dictionary or encyclopedia: one may find that the word *analogy* is defined as "An analogy is a comparison between two objects, or systems of objects, that highlights respects in which they are thought to be similar" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/reasoning-analogy/). That is, it is stated that analogy is a relationship of similarity between situations that allows one to infer a certain degree of overall similarity between those same situations.

While useful, this definition tends to superimpose analogy and similarity by erasing the existing differences between the two concepts. Although the search for similarities is indeed part of analogical reasoning, the latter does not end with the identification of qualities that can make different situations similar. That is, it is not a mental process whose result is the inclusion of this or that in the same class according to certain characteristics; rather, it is a form of reasoning whose purpose is to establish connections between different classes (Barbosa et al., 2007).

This becomes clear where one considers the history of the term whose origins refer back to Greek mathematics, particularly Euclid and Eudoxus of Knidos. In their reflections, analogy (ἀναλογία) is indeed understood as an equality of ratios well represented by the proportion "A : B = C : D". A concept taken up later by Aristotle who considers analogy as relation involving two pairs of terms with respect to which an equality is established, that is, a relation in which this stands to that as another stands to another. The focus of analogy therefore lies not in the qualities of the elements involved (A, B, C, D) but in the

relationship that binds the two pairs. Interestingly, for Aristotle analogy is the only reasoning capable of transcending distinctions between classes and embracing the totality of being (Gambi, 2021).

In line with what has already been mentioned, while observing connections between similarity and analogy, it becomes possible to distinguish them by considering the former as a perceptual process substantially anchored to the formal aspects of the objects being studied, while the latter as a complex form of reasoning whereby links may be established between relational structures of distinct entities even independently of their possible similarities (Gentner, 1983; Gentner & Tupin, 1986). Not surprisingly, analogical reasoning is considered a fundamental component of intelligence, since it contributes significantly to the development of the processes of abstraction and generalization.

In a general sense, it can therefore be said that analogical reasoning is based on the possibility of recognizing that two situations share a common structure of relations even if they appear to be different from each other from a phenomenal point of view. For example, Cornelius Castoriadis (cited in Trench & Minervino, 2015) established an analogy between the fairy tale of Hänsel and Grethel and capitalism's consumption of the planet's resources. Just as Hänsel and Grethel ate the bread, scone, and sugar walls of the witch's house without realizing that they were demolishing it, capitalist societies exploit natural resources without realizing that in doing so they destroy their habitat. Evident in Castoriadis' analogy is the emphasis on the reckless damage done to something of great value: the house on the one hand and the natural environment on the other.

According to Dedre Gentner's (1983) model, analogical reasoning starts with the *recovery* of a familiar situation (source analogue) that one believes is sufficiently known as well as useful as a baseline for understanding a second situation (target analogue) that has arisen more recently and about which one has little knowledge. This is followed by *mapping* and *alignment*: the former identifies the components of the two analogues; the latter identifies their possible correspondences. Mapping and alignment allow one to transfer the knowledge one has with respect to the source analogue to the target analogue. At this point, an *evaluation* of the inferences made is implemented (Gentner & Smith, 2012).

Although it may seem like a complicated process, people actually routinely resort to analogical reasoning, both in everyday life and in scientific research (Hofstadter & Sander, 2013). In fact, analogy is a rather effective tool for managing or reducing complexity and lack of information when dealing with new situations: undoubtedly, it is easier to resort to analogies than to elaborate inferences.

Returning to the question of similarity, it has been said that analogical reasoning does not end in the similarities existing between analogues – there is in fact no formal similarity between a house of bread and focaccia and the natural habitat – but on the relationship that binds them. However, this is not to deny that similarities can facilitate analogical reasoning (Keane, 1987). Beyond the retrieval phase, similarity can in fact also be useful in the mapping and alignment phase in which one is called upon to connect the different aspects being examined.

Resuming now Castoriadis' analogy, one could reformulate it in the following

terms: "(A) Hänsel/Grethel : (B) bread-house/hunting house = (C) capitalist societies : (D) natural environment".

As noted above, the two situations are made analogues on the basis of the same relationship existing between A and B, on the one hand, and C and D, on the other. The mapping of the two analogues makes it possible to establish certain alignments: "Hänsel/Grethel↔capitalist societies"; "eating↔utilizing"; "walls of bread/food↔natural resources". With a simple analogical inference, it is then possible to translate the needs of Hänsel/Grethel to capitalist societies: just as the former have a need to eat in order to survive, despite the fact that this may lead to their destruction (it will be recalled that in the Grimm Brothers' fairy tale Hänsel and Grethel are in danger of being killed by the witch), capitalist societies have a similar need to use natural resources even if this destroys their habitat thus leading to their destruction. This allows for further inferences about the analogous goal: for example, one can assume that capitalist societies, like children, are self-centered (self-referential) and focused on immediate gratification (quick profit).

The description of analogical reasoning given so far makes it clear that it is a thinking process that is both *structural* and *systematic*. The former makes it possible to preserve the structure of the relationships present in the two analogues; the latter, on the other hand, offers the possibility, through mapping and alignment, to focus on the interconnections existing between the two analogues.

However, it is also necessary to recognize another characteristic of analogy: *fluidity*. Being less interested in the characteristics of the individual elements mapped and more in the relationships that bind them, analogy in fact shifts the emphasis to the functions performed, which facilitates the transit of these functions from one analogue to another. To return to Castoriadis's analogy, once we put aside the fact that we're talking about walls made of bread on the one hand and natural resources on the other, it's easy to see that they serve the same function: they both feed someone's appetite, albeit in different ways.

Analogy: a psychoanalytic reading

There are numerous studies (Schunn & Dunbar, 1996; Green et al., 2006; Reber et al., 2014) showing that retrieval of the source analogue often occurs suddenly and unexpectedly and that the mapping and alignment phase can also take place outside of awareness. Evidence that supports the existence of unconscious mental processes in analogical reasoning. It is therefore easy to think of analogy as an *emergent phenomenon*, the result of the cooperation of different modes of thought. In this sense, it seems interesting to us to refer to the work of Freud (1900, 1915) and Matte Blanco (1981, 1995) on the logic of the unconscious.

However, let us proceed step by step.

First of all, it is useful to recapitulate the characteristics identified by Freud as constituting the unconscious, understood as the *primary operative mode* of thought (Riolo, 2016). Drawing on his own reflections on the dream process, Freud (1915) identifies five characteristics: *absence of mutual contradiction*, that is, the impossibility of thinking negation, contradiction, or different degrees of certainty (i.e., the unconscious does not contain elements of incompatibility). *Displacement*, which allows objects to be experienced as related to other similar objects, thus bring-

ing them all back into the same class (displacement underlies many unconscious processes, including *transference*). *Condensation*, through which the unconscious places elements of different origins in the same spatio-temporal realm (consequences include the elimination of all separateness and spatio-temporal articulation). The *absence of time*, which renders the unconscious incapable of developing any sequence, so that the before and after are reversed or annulled in a simultaneity devoid of progression. The *substitution of external reality for psychic reality*, that is, the possibility of considering the internal as interchangeable with the external, a result that is, moreover, a foregone conclusion given the inability of the unconscious to organize the concept of space.

On closer inspection, all the features described by Freud share the "tendency to merge and unite, precisely where human reason would tend to work by discriminating" (Lombardi, 2007, p. 34). Indeed, classical or bivalent logic, on which consciousness hinges, is permeated by the *principle of identity* (A is identical to A); the *principle of non-contradiction* (two contradictory assertions cannot both be true); the *principle of incompatibility* (A cannot simultaneously be different and equal to B) by the *operation of subtraction* (if a part is subtracted from a given entity it can only be smaller than the entity itself) (Rayner & Tuckett, 1995), the purpose of which is to make distinctions and differentiations within the realm of reality. In contrast, in the unconscious, the co-presence of contradictors, the relation of similarity and the conjunction of alternatives prevails. Beyond its apparent illogicality, however, there is a common thread in the way of the unconscious. Indeed, it is a thought hinged on two principles that, although antithetical and antinomian to those on which consciousness is based, are nevertheless intimately consistent with each other. This logic, defined by Matte Blanco (1981, 1995) as *symmetrical* to differentiate it from the bivalent or *asymmetrical* logic of consciousness, is in fact sustained on the principle of generalization and the principle of symmetry.

The first refers to the fact that the unconscious "treats an individual thing (person, object, concept) *as if* it were a member or element of a whole or class that contains other members, treats this class as a subclass of a more general class and this more general class as a subclass of an even more general class, and so on" (Matte Blanco, 1981, p. 43). In this way, unconscious logic is able to generate a progressive and tendentially infinite expansion of concepts, establishing similarities and connections that would be inappropriate, if not unthinkable, for the bivalent logic of consciousness. The second, called the symmetry principle, refers instead to the unconscious's tendency to treat "the inverse of any relation as if it were identical with the relation. In other words, it treats asymmetrical relations as if they were symmetrical" (Matte Blanco, 1981, p. 44).

Although the two logics are different, they do not call into question the discriminating and classifying function of the mind, they simply implement it according to different principles: consciousness through a logic that seeks to differentiate and divide the real by organizing it into increasingly circumscribed and distinct classes; the unconscious through a logic that seeks to include the real in increasingly generalized and homogenized classes, in which any difference tends to be lost in an indistinct *unicum*.

Albeit in attenuated forms, however, generalization and symmetry are not alien to

asymmetrical logic. Generalization is traceable, for example, in abstraction processes and in scientific taxonomies in which it is possible to include in the same class objects that are very distant from each other – think of a cow and a mosquito – on the basis of a single characteristic: both are living beings. Symmetry is also not unknown to asymmetrical logic. Indeed, in some situations, it allows us to grasp an aspect of reality in which two objects placed in relation have the same qualities, roles or functions: think of the statement "Joseph is Mario's brother", its symmetrical – "Mario is Joseph's brother" – is fully conceivable by bivalent logic.

In fact, these two different logics (symmetrical and asymmetrical) do not remain sharply distinct; rather, they tend to combine in reasoning processes that do not conform exclusively to the rules of one or the other but combine them in different balances developing what Matte Blanco (1981) called *bi-logic*. Therefore, although it is possible to think of a hypothetical dichotomy in which mathematics can be placed as a refined expression of asymmetrical logic (Wilkie & Bodenhausen, 2012; Vavilov, 2019), on the one hand, and the confused and disorganized psychotic delirium as a manifestation of homogenizing symmetrical logic, on the other, the mind is actually a continuum in which the two ways of organizing and classifying reality are mixed. In essence, the mind tends to simultaneously treat the same reality "on the one hand as if it were divisible or heterogeneous, formed of parts, and on the other hand as if it were one and indivisible" (Matte Blanco, 1995, p. 89).

The point, which is fundamental to the analogy, is that the progressive magnification carried out by the principle of generalization, if unrestrained, obliterates every other feature of the objects under consideration: for example, it dissolves the fact that the cow is a mammal and the mosquito is not, thus flattening both into the one feature under consideration. Similarly, the moment the principle of symmetry is used in a generalized way, it produces a "nullification of succession, a failure to distinguish between a part and the whole, or a failure to distinguish between the various members belonging to the same class" (Lombardi, 2007, p. 37).

Returning to the analogy, it has been said that the identification of the source analog often takes place outside of consciousness and may also be semantically distant from the target analog (think again of Castoriadis' analogy). It is easy to think that this is possible because of the process of abstraction, which makes it possible to recognize common properties even in very different objects, and the process of generalization, which makes it possible to include heterogeneous objects in the same class instead. Both processes are indispensable to the development of thought, and are an expression of the balance between a logic that fragments, distinguishes, differentiates, and a logic that unifies, unites, and superimposes. The identification of the fairy tale of Hänsel and Gretel as an analogous source was thus possible because it captured the existence of a common characteristic between the two children and capitalist societies: the uncontrollable need to consume. This characteristic made two objects that were completely dissimilar by asymmetric logic, completely assimilable by symmetric logic. In essence, the ability to grasp similarities and equivalences is made possible by the mind's activity of symmetrization, which enables it to treat an object *as if* it were something else.

This reminds us of Freud's (1900) reflections on similarity. Indeed, in his

Traumdeutung, he noted how relevant were, in dream production, connections based on similarity: the only one, among logical relations, to profit from unconscious processes. Indeed, in the dream, the propensity of the unconscious to use one object to refer to another or to bring different objects or qualities into the same representation is evident.

An excellent example of the processes of displacement and condensation comes to us from a dream by Freud (1900). In it he depicts himself as urinating on "piles of excrement of all sizes ... a long stream of urine that cleans everything" by dropping them into a "big toilet hole" (1900, p. 429). Without dwelling on the dream, which arose from the frustration of not feeling one's worth duly appreciated, it suffices for us to recall here that Freud's associations lead to Hercules cleaning Augias' stables, Gulliver putting out a great fire in the land of the Lilliputians with his own urine, and Rabelais' giant Gargantua. That single action of urinating thus seems to condense both Freud's need to experience himself as a "giant" (Hercules, Gulliver or Gargantua) in relation to his interlocutors, and his own anger at their opinions being reduced to excrement to be rejected.

It should be noted – and this is particularly useful for our discussion of analogy – that the associative chain that Freud uses to interpret the dream not only highlights the action of the processes of displacement and condensation but also offers:

> an eloquent example of the creation by the unconscious of a *propositional function*, of an assertion, that is, one that defines the category of the different characters under consideration, and whose variable x (who is being talked about) acquires an affirmative meaning only when it is somehow defined. (Ginzburg, 2020, p. 7)

In essence, Hercules, Gulliver and Gargantua – and by extension Freud himself – can fall into the same class established on the basis of an utterance that can be summarized in the following words: "one who is able by his own abilities to defeat his opponents by demonstrating their inherent weakness" (Ginzburg, 2020, p. 7).

Returning to analogical reasoning, the comparison of analogues is thus made possible not only by the process of abstraction that enables one to grasp and emphasize the characteristics shared by different elements (the so-called mapping and alignment phase), but also and especially by the possibility of defining a *propositional function* that enables one to include them in the same class. Castoriadis's analogy thus rests on the possibility of capturing similarities – think of eating/consuming vs. flatbread/environment – and on the recognition of a class defined by a propositional function – "x has an intrinsic and irrepressible need to consume" – that allows both Hänsel and Grethel and capitalist societies to be included in it. Similarly, the bread house and environmental resources can also fall into a broader category in which everything that "can be consumed" could be placed.

Analogy is therefore possible because of the ability of symmetrical logic to go beyond the characteristics of the individual object by grasping similarities and connections that would instead be unthinkable to the dividing and differentiating logic of consciousness alone. If one thus allows oneself to be guided by the inclusive and homogenizing logic of the unconscious one is able to unfold connections and classes of belonging making, for example, Hänsel, Grethel and capitalist societies all but incongruous.

However, it is necessary to emphasize that analogy is the expression of a bi-logical mind in which it is essential that the two different modes of thinking do not override each other. If symmetric logic were to dominate, all the elements included in the same class would be treated as identical, which would make impossible the *as if* (i.e., being similar without being the same thing) on which analogy is instead based. On the other hand, if asymmetric logic prevailed, no similarity could be captured because the objects would be considered absolutely different and distant. That is, analogy can only emerge where the co-presence of similarities and differences is possible (Pennella, 2022). In such cases, capitalist societies may act as if they were starving children even though they *are not* starving children, and the patient may experience the therapist as if he were his father even though he understands that he *is not* his father (if he lost that *as if* and the therapist became the father, he would experience a fully symmetrized psychotic type of thinking).

Regarding the possible balances between symmetrical and asymmetrical logic, Matte Blanco (1995) spoke of a *layered bi-logical structure* in which different *layers* can be identified depending on the impact of symmetrical logic. Starting from an initial layer characterized by a defined and totally asymmetrical thinking, the mind acquires, thanks to a progressive access to symmetry, the ability to grasp similarities and equivalences, to establish connections and relations, and to aggregate objects into larger and larger classes. In the second stratum, a more evident level of symmetry is indeed observed, though still well bounded by conscious logic. In this layer

> one becomes aware of or explores the relations between the concrete object under consideration and other objects: their similarities and their differences, that is, the classes of equivalence to which it belongs and those to which it does not belong. (Matte Blanco, 1995, p. 61)

It is therefore possible to think that analogical reasoning, in its conscious expression, is located in this layer of the bi-logical structure of the mind described by Matte Blanco. However, as noted above, this is only the *emergent part* of a mental process that sinks into deeper layers of the mind, so much so that one is often unaware of the reasons for choosing a particular source analog.

Clinical example

The clinical material proposed in this article is taken from the record of preliminary interviews of a psychoanalytic psychotherapy. The treatment was conducted in an individual setting with weekly interviews. All data were altered in order to make the patient unrecognizable.

Giulia, a young woman in her thirties, visits a psychotherapist at the suggestion of a friend, motivated by a crisis in her relationship with Sergio, a man not much older than herself with whom she has lived for several years. According to Giulia, the crisis erupted as a result of her infatuation with another man, Thomas, a musician she met at a concert she attended with her partner. Giulia is unable to understand her own infatuation and is convinced that Thomas is a very different person from her – “I wonder what he has to do with me, a man abandoned by his parents who has also been in jail” – nevertheless she started a very intense relationship with him. “I have the feeling that he is a good person, like the kind of people you talk to and you realise that they know how to listen to you.” Giulia emphasizes

this aspect because Sergio, who is intelligent, nice and outgoing has "a big ego, someone who always likes to be in the spotlight" and is therefore disinclined to listen to her. He is a video game designer, works at home just like Giulia and is often involved in work groups that take place in their small flat, forcing her to lock herself in the bedroom: "It really weighs on me this invasion of domestic space, for me home is something intimate ... sometimes I feel like being alone and I can't ... it's not friends coming home to have a beer ... I have a feeling of unease, of discomfort, I need my own space ... sometimes I felt like being sulky but I couldn't, I always had to smile because it was work. Regarding her own parents, Julia describes a "complicated" relationship, especially with her father. Considered the "crazy daughter", she always questioned the norms and roles of Southern culture proposed by her parents and asserted her own freedom, sometimes even transgressively. She briefly recalls that on the occasion of the G8 in 2001 she ran away from home to go to Genoa and participate in the protests. In recent years, since his mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, relations with them seem to have been pacified.

Discussion

Given the focus of this paper, the clinical vignette will be a mere pretext to highlight the use of similarities and analogies in clinical reasoning and not a reflection on the proposed case. In this sense, possible elements with which to deploy an analogy could include the triggering event of the crisis in the couple's relationship (Giulia's infatuation with Thomas) and the patient's escape from her parents' home on the occasion of the G8 in Genoa.

Let us begin with the latter.

Even in the absence of detailed arguments, we think we can agree on the hypothesis that Giulia's participation in the anti-G8 demonstrations in 2001 can be interpreted (also) as an occasion to conflate with her parents, especially with her father. In other words, it is possible to think that Giulia's protest was not only addressed to an establishment – understood as the set of power-holders – political and financial (G8) "deaf" to the demands of the poorest, but also to a family "establishment" (her parents) "deaf" to her demands. Both subjects (G8 and parents) would thus be expressions of a "culture" from which Julia feels disavowed and oppressed.

The nexus established between those who "govern" nation-states (G8) and those who "govern" the family (parents) is made possible by the processes of abstraction and generalization that allow us to grasp a similarity – being at the head of a social organization – between rather distant objects that would have remained so if exclusive use of asymmetrical logic had been made. Moreover, the similarity established between heads of government and heads of households refers back to the inclusion of both within the same class defined on the basis of their governing function. In essence, it is easy to hypothesize that for Giulia, the G8 participants are somewhat like her parents, which leads us to the following analogy: "(A) anti-G8 demonstrations : (B) political-financial establishment = (C) running away from home : (D) parents".

Returning to the class attended by both the heads of government and Giulia's parents, it is easy to include Sergio in it as the holder of the power to manage "access" to the apartment shared with the companion. On the other hand, Giulia's infatuation with Thomas caused her to question her relationship with

her partner and thus gave her the opportunity to "run away from home", thus strikingly expressing her dissatisfaction with a cohabitation that she experienced as constraining and constricting. It is therefore possible to develop another analogy: "(A) anti-G8 demonstrations : (B) parents = (C) Thomas : (D) Sergio". In essence, to put it another way, the protests at the G8 in Genoa could be associated with Thomas and Giulia's parents with Sergio, which would assign A and C (also) the role of tools Giulia resorted to in order to express her anger at the establishment (parents↔Sergio) for being insensitive to her needs.

On the other hand, the alignment of "parents↔Sergio" or, in a psychoanalytic perspective, the inclusion of the two objects in the same class, also allows for an inference regarding the patient's relational pattern. If Sergio is experienced by Giulia as a parent and Thomas was a means of questioning his power in the couple – just as in the past the anti-G8 demonstrations in Genoa were a means of rebelling against parental power – the role Giulia attributes to herself is certainly not that of a partner endowed with equal dignity but that of a daughter. The actions enacted by Giulia thus fluctuate between an acceptance of her partner's demands, which are moreover considered legitimate, and a hostile rebellion aimed at attacking Sergio and his way of relating to her. The frustrated need is thus that of recognition. In essence, the analogy seems to signal the presence of a dynamic of dependence and counter-dependence as well as narcissistic concerns.

The point we want to emphasize here, without getting into the merits of the correctness or otherwise of the hypothesis, is that analogy not only helps to reorganize the patient's narrative by correlating elements (people, events, etc.) that are even quite distant from each other – think of G8 and Thomas – but also performs an important heuristic function. That is, analogical reasoning allows the therapist to grasp the redundancies that characterize the patient's experiences and behaviors at the moment he or she enters into relationship with the object. Redundancies are also essential for developing hypotheses about the patient's relational pattern (Luborsky, 1984; Luborsky & Luborsky, 2006). In Giulia's case, for example, one could hypothesize that her *desire* is to be heard and welcomed (considered, loved, etc.), that the *object's response* tends to marginalize and devalue her, and that her *subjective response* oscillates between passive and frustrated acceptance and disruptive and angry rebellion.

As noted above, however, analogical reasoning is only one of the logical processes used by the psychotherapist. Returning to Giulia's story, the attention given to her participation at the Genoa events expresses in fact the psychotherapist's interest to apparently marginal information, which is often provided *nonchalantly* by patients. Instead, the hypothesis of a dynamic dependence and counter-dependence as well as the possible referral to narcissistic issues instead refers back to inductive logic. The therapist, in fact, extracts some elements from the multiplicity of information provided by Julia which he believes may be rather significant to the patient's personality, thus bringing the latter back to more general category.

Conclusion

In this article we focused on analogy and its use in psychotherapy. Although it is widely used in clinical practice, it does not in fact seem to get adequate attention from psychotherapists. Indeed, little thought tends to

be given to the ability to develop analogies and its role in understanding and reorganizing patients' narratives. In essence, it underestimates the fact that analogy underlies our concepts and is the very engine of our thinking (Hofstadter & Sander, 2013).

On the other hand, analogy is an elusive concept. When one tries to define it, one runs the risk of confusing it, for example, with the connections in "parallel" or in "series" (Semi, 1985) by which one connects the arguments narrated by the patient or, even more, with similarity, that is, with the ability to grasp common elements in objects that are also very dissimilar to each other. Analogy is actually a complex form of reasoning that focuses on the relationships that link objects and not on their formal qualities (Gentner, 1983; Gentner & Tupin, 1986). Not surprisingly, the concept of analogy harks back to Greek mathematics and the proportion "A: B = C: D" in which the characteristics of the factors being examined (A, B, C, D) are not relevant but what is relevant is the *relationship* that unites them.

That said, similarity and analogy do however have something in common, they are forms of thought that express the collaboration between the conscious and unconscious states. The relation of similarity, already acknowledged by Freud (1900) to be the logical form favored by the unconscious in dream formation, is in fact used by consciousness. Purified from the excesses of an unconscious logic that confuses similarity and identity, conscious logic in fact uses similarities – whether superficial or significant – to distinguish and organize reality (think of scientific taxonomies).

However, Matte Blanco's (1981) theory helps us to better understand the analogy. Indeed, the Freudian idea (Freud, 1915) of constant communication between the conscious and unconscious systems is taken up and studied in depth by Matte Blanco. His theoretical model describes a consciousness governed by bivalent or asymmetrical logic (principle of identity, principle of non-contradiction, etc.) and an unconscious governed by symmetrical logic (absence of contradiction, condensation, displacement, etc.). The two logics constantly interact. This implies that asymmetrical logic and symmetrical logic coexist, albeit with different balances, in all thought processes, thus giving rise to a bi-logical mind. Matte Blanco (1981, 1995) hypothesizes a mental structure divided into "layers" each with a different combination of symmetrical and asymmetrical logic.

From this perspective, analogical thinking can be seen as the expression of an intermediate "layer" in which symmetrical logic, which is essential for grasping similarities, and asymmetrical logic, which is necessary for making comparisons and evaluations, tend to cooperate, albeit with a certain prevalence of the latter.

Greater attention to the use of analogy in clinical practice offers the therapist some indisputable advantages. First of all, analogy reinforces the therapist's heuristic function, that is, his ability to develop reasoning and hypotheses with respect to the patient's narrative. On the other hand, the use of analogy in clinical dialogue allows the therapist to show the patient unforseen relationships between seemingly very different and distant elements. Moreover, the use of analogy prompts the patient to access the logic of the unconscious and helps him to simultaneously observe a piece of his story from the perspective of both symmetrical and asymmetrical reasoning. In conclusion, the ability to develop – but also to

propose – analogies can be considered an important clinical skill of the therapist, an expression of an inherently bi-logical mind.

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