



# MAGNUM OPUS: CITRINITAS

Module 4: Anima and Animus Classic

## QUOTE

*“No man can converse with an animus for five minutes without becoming the victim of his own anima.”*

*Collected Works 7, Anima and Animus, Paragraph 29*

Anima and Animus Classic

Compiled by The Centre for Applied Jungian Studies

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## **Transcript**

Over the course of the next four weeks, we are going to be discussing a key Jungian idea the role of, the anima or animus, in Jungian psychology. This must be regarded as one of Jung's most significant contributions to the field of depth psychology.

As will become apparent as we work through these ideas, as valuable as they are – and they are immensely valuable, they are also challenging to work with in light of contemporary gender studies and shifting gender identity, particularly in post-modernity. In order to extract what we have come to believe is the most valuable dimension of the concept, whilst simultaneously acknowledging that there has been a significant shift in gender identity, and our relationship to our gender identities, since Jung completed his work on the anima-animus couple, we have developed a more contemporary model based on the work done in post-Jungian studies as well as our own interpretation of Jung's original work.

The first year this course ran anima and animus was a single module and in that module we offered this more contemporary model of anima-animus. With the feedback and the benefit of hindsight we have extended this topic over two modules. The first module will present the classical anima-animus model and the following module a more contemporary take on this psychological structure. So this month's lecture is part 1 of 2.

What will be presented this month is Jung's classical model of anima and animus, notwithstanding its arguably provocative stereotyping of gender identity. This is done in the belief that despite these issues there is enormous value in the classical model and to present a more contemporary take on it without first providing you with a classical context would be a disservice to you in your journey to acquaint yourself with and understand Jungian psychology.

So without further delay let us look at the ideas of the anima and animus.

In *A Critical Dictionary of Jungian Analysis*,<sup>3</sup> anima and animus are defined as follows.

Both are psychic images, the fundamental forms of which underline the feminine aspects of a man and the masculine aspects of a woman. They are seen as opposites, they are subliminal to consciousness and function from within the unconscious psyche. They operate in relation to the dominant psychic principle of a man or a woman and act as psychopomps or guides of the soul and can become necessary links in the creative possibilities and instruments of individuation. (pp. 23 – 24)

Jung holds the basic idea that the anima describes the feminine aspect of a man, and that the soul takes on the opposite gender to the biology and persona of the individual. So the masculine has a soul that is feminine, while a woman, or the feminine, has a soul that takes on the masculine form. In this way human beings have both genders present, at least psychologically.

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The anima and animus are archetypes, like the shadow. The shadow is more personal and subjective, the anima-animus more objective and archetypal in character. The anima and animus also have subjective and personal elements, but have a stronger influence from the archetypal, transpersonal, historical and cultural aspects of the psyche. The anima and animus have classical and archetypal gender characteristics that operate in the psyche, and exert significant influence on an individual's psychology.

They, anima-animus, characterise and condition one of the most important aspect of psychology, relatedness. How you relate to the world, to others in interpersonal encounters and to yourself, intra-psychically. The anima and animus are the bridge through which we relate in the world, inner and outer. Although not exclusively, the anima is typically associated with feeling life, and the animus with thinking; so when I say they characterize relatedness, what this means is that the way we feel and think about ourselves, the world and those around us is, in Jungian terminology, is the anima and animus respectively.

Based on empirical feedback from Jungian analyses, what we know about the anima-animus is that they are remarkably robust. By this I mean that their character is not easily or necessarily ever changed, the anima-animus is far less malleable than the shadow. In Jungian analysis, the road to individuation begins with the challenging journey into the shadow, which starts the process of taking ownership of certain aspects of one's character that have been

disavowed. The process of transformation from shadow work, as powerful as it is, is rarely if ever exhausted. As long as you walk this path the chances are you will be grappling with one or other aspect of your shadow. Life altering changes can occur many, many years after the initial encounter with the shadow. The process of working with the anima and animus is significantly more challenging than that of the shadow.

Wolfgang Giegerich, one of the world's leading Jungian intellectuals, talks of the work on the shadow as the apprentice piece and the work on the anima and animus as the masterpiece on the Jungian journey. This gives an idea of the role that the work with the anima and animus plays in one's individuation project.

In Jungian psychology it is often characterised by as your relationship with someone of the opposite gender where the anima of a man would be represented, for example, by their mother, wife or daughter and the animus of a woman would relate to her father, husband or son. Once again not exclusively these are only typical examples; beyond that any significant relationship with, or projection onto, a person of the opposite gender. This typical explanation is, however, simply a way of illustrating the idea. The truth is that it goes way beyond significant relationships with people of the opposite gender, governing all of one's relationships, be it with human beings and everything else to which one relates in life. Most important of all is the way you relate to yourself.

The development of this inner, unconscious, image and character of the contra gender soul, anima or animus is twofold. It is principally conditioned by an a priori (pre-existing), archetypal image of the feminine or masculine archetypes from the collective unconscious. This exists both in the psyche of the child prior to birth, in line with all genetic conditioning of character both psychological and physiological. And also in the historical, cultural zeitgeist of the time you are born into which so conditions gender identity. The other, not insignificant, influence is the developmental history of the person; their earliest relationships with significant persons of the gender in questions, usually mother and father of course.

An important aspect of the anima and animus that needs to be emphasised is that it is a bridge to the inner world. So it is not only the lens or bridge through which one relates to objects and others in the world and oneself, but it is also the bridge through which connection is made specifically to the collective -- more than the personal -- unconscious. When the anima or animus is located and functioning as it should be, it becomes the muse, the voice of the collective unconscious, the medium through which one is able to connect with the source of creativity, inspiration, and intuition. In other words, ideas, imagination, inspiration and intuition are awakened and communicated by the anima or animus.

However, when the anima or animus is not functioning ideally, or when dysfunctional, the opposite effect is experienced. Instead of having a rich medium by which one can connect to others, the world and the collective unconscious, it can create contraction and isolate you, closing you off from

meaningful relatedness. An archetypal dream image that speaks of this idea, is where one is contained inside a glass chamber, or separated from the action by glass windows. A specific example is that where the dreamer dreams of being outside a restaurant where her friends were celebrating. The windows constituted a barrier through which the dreamer could see her friends but was unable to connect with them. This is an archetypal image that illustrates what occurs when the animus and anima are not functioning ideally. They constitute a barrier to meaningful relationships. The experience is that of witnessing but being unable to meaningfully engage. This type of animus figure is perfectly portrayed in fable by Blue Beard who holds his young bride captive in a glass mountain or isolated castle, cut off from the world.

The line in the *Critical Dictionary of Jungian Analysis*,<sup>7</sup> that describes what the anima and animus does when functioning to aid individuation, is “...and act as *psycho pompi* or guides of the soul and can become necessary links in the creative possibilities and instruments of individuation.”

The following is a list of some aspects of the archetypal masculine and the archetypal feminine characteristics captured by the figures of anima and animus:

The **anima** or feminine principle, governs relatedness- feeling, emotion, empathy, fosters human relationships, artistic, creative, has ability of aesthetic appreciation and qualitative assessment. Capacities of the anima are as

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nurturer, creator, enduring energy, irrational capacity, private life and social discourse.

The **animus** or masculine principle governs will to power, rational thought, logic, mathematics, science, technology, quantitative assessment. Capacities of the animus are as hunter, warrior, bursts of energy, focused, and active, rational, public and political discourse.

These lists convey what we understand to be archetypal masculine and feminine qualities. When Jung developed this model in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe, gender relationships were very different from what they are today. A man of his time, he fell into the error of sexist assumption and though he recognized that the capacities for both feminine and masculine are present, he was locked into the model that a man and woman are essentially linked to certain prescribed behaviors. Today we recognize that while we carry biological gender qualities into the world, psychologically our gender definition is more fluid and ambiguous. In some sense, ironically for Jung's detractors on this point, Jung was a pioneer of a more androgynous gender identity by recognizing the presence of both impulses in the human being. Where he arguably fell short was the construction of essential distinct models for men and woman. We can abstract the anima-animus away from gender identification and refer to thinking and feeling and thinking capacities instead of the feminine and masculine, as will be tackled next month, the rational and irrational capacities.

When the anima is functional, some of its aspects can be described as loving, warm, nurturing, caring, creative, social, kind, empathetic, imaginative and having a rich feeling life. When it is dysfunctional it can lead to acidity, melancholy, nagging, poor body relationship, jealousy, being manipulative, consuming, greedy and dysfunctional or at least challenging sexuality. The anima ridden or possessed man is typically passive and trapped in the material world (most especially body), unable to connect with the spiritual or transcendent dimension.

The functional animus is the doer – it is the spirit in each of us that helps us to take action and gets us out of bed in the morning. Passivity is an incredibly powerful impulse that lives in us, and wanting to take action, a specific quality that seems to be related to the function of the animus, takes us out of a potentially catatonic state. Other qualities of the functional animus are those of the leader (although this is controversial as it is not necessarily a masculine quality), bridge builder, rationality, logic, self-assurance and non-attachment. Qualities of the displaced animus are narcissism, being puritanical, judgmental, and the dreadful quality of being warlike. The animus ridden or possessed woman is disconnected from Eros (relatedness) and is typically driven by the will to power.

A personality that is highly identified with its gender role and appears invested in the gender, for instance behaves and dresses in an ultra-feminine way has a specific relationship to the masculine. Such a persona and ego identity has as its central co-ordinates a specific idea of what it means to be a woman. The basic Jungian idea is that the unconscious is, in itself, a complementary,

contrasting presence. So the ultra-feminine woman has a deeply masculine soul, and she may attract into her life the archetypal masculine, whatever that image may be for you. The psychological idea is that her soul is masculine, and the way she acts this out in the world is through her very masculine husband. If one were to get to know this woman you would find that, behind her façade, she is as tough as steel. The opposite of this is true as well, and the highly masculine or macho man may have a sentimental, soft, and vulnerable side. There is something to Jung's model which assumes that these publicly one-sided gender personalities would, to a degree, be necessarily compensated by their partner. An interesting contrast to this notion is that of homosexual men who express themselves as effeminate, vivacious, cross-dressing divas. Behind their flamboyance many are tough characters and it would be a mistake to take their behaviour as a weakness. They can be tough as nails.

As human beings we have access to both of these capacities. Depth psychology and Jung in particular, holds the idea that the unconscious compensates for conscious one-sidedness. As a particular conscious position is assumed and identified with, the unconscious sets up the contrasting opposite which one encounters in dreams, one's fantasy life, and in other people. So the very masculine man who meets his wife who is flamboyant, expressive and has a rich feeling life, then has access to all of these faculties that are in him but have not been allowed to be expressed. He experiences them vicariously through her. Another example is that of the daughter who becomes daddy's darling. The father is living part of his soul life through his daughter. Where he is

unable to be spontaneous, responsible and playful, she takes on the role and he experiences it through her.

Developing an idea or understanding through an image of one's soul, anima or animus, can be useful. You can learn much from it about the way you relate to others, where there are challenges and where there is room for improvement. Most importantly it can show how you relate to yourself and the world. This understanding of the function of anima and animus can liberate you from excessive gender identification, which naturally is inherently one sided and perpetuates a degree of unconsciousness. It allows you to recognise how much of what you see in your partner and that in the world which you are relating to is characterized by your anima and animus. This of course can be hugely helpful in understanding interpersonal dynamics.

As an inner, intra-psychic dynamic the anima or animus is the characterization of the attitude, thoughts and feelings you have toward yourself. Understanding this and being able to create some room between "yourself" or your ego and the frequently destructive and violent emotions and thoughts of the anima or animus can help you heal and re-imagine a personal identity and relationship not wholly dictated by these psychopomps.

Most people go through life without ever having access to this knowledge. It is a reasonable question to ask how exactly they manage. As soon as we introduce the concept "most people" we are condemned to the roughest of generalizations. That noted I still wish to address the question. Firstly of course many people do not manage and are desperately unhappy in themselves and

frequently are unable to sustain relationships. These types of symptoms are indicative of dysfunctional anima-animus.

The more interesting question, perhaps, is those that seem to get on very well without ever knowing about the anima-animus. Here the point is that one can be unconsciously related to the anima or animus through the projection of this function onto initially the opposite gender parent, but in adult life typically the opposite gender partner. Your partner can and often does carry this function for you and wholeness is realised through your relatedness to them. Without them you are only half a person, so to speak, and with them you are whole. And not infrequently this is a sustainable, if challenging at times, co-dependency. An implicit unconscious pact: you play the role of woman and I will play the role of man. The path to true psychological maturity though dictates the withdrawal of these projections and the reclaiming of these qualities within yourself.

## **Applications**

One of the lessons we learn from Jung is of the power of imagination and image to recruit and represent the unconscious mind. In order to fully enter into the possibility of unconscious communication provided by these images, they need to be approached and apprehend uncritically. The rational, critical, faculty must, of necessity, be suspended, at least initially. It is much like recording a dream; one cannot simultaneously interrogate the logical veracity of the dream and faithfully record it. What one finds is that many situations in dreams are not logically tenable e.g. “I was with my brother and then later I was my brother”; or, “I was working in my tool shed and turned around to notice that I was standing on the moon!”

When you do the following applications start by faithfully recording the images that are present to you, that arise spontaneously as you enter the various reflective exercises (this receptivity to inner images is a faculty of the anima). Do not try and understand them prematurely. Once you have recorded all of the images, then an attempt can be made to understand what has been produced and what it says about your anima and animus (this, understanding, is a faculty of the animus).

1. Recall in as much detail as possible your earliest image (memory) of your mother and of your father. What you are looking for, to be clear, is two separate images, one for mother and one for father. With each image go through the following reflective process, whilst being present to the image:

- a. What can you see, hear and smell?
  - b. What memories does it evoke?
  - c. What do you feel?
  - d. Does that feeling still live in you today? And if so, where and how?
2. Using your imagination (rather than memory as in the previous application) access an image that best represents for you the ideal feminine and another for the ideal masculine. To be clear these needn't be literal images of women and men respectively, they can be, but equally they could be of something else that represents for you the feminine and masculine. After articulating the images as clearly as you can, consider the following:
- a. What is the primary quality of each image, e.g. sexy, wisdom, beauty, melancholy, depth, fierce, pensive, antique and so on? Ideally choose only one, but if you cannot select, keep the qualities limited. Too many will dilute the value of the application.
  - b. Where and when, in your life today, do you encounter these qualities in yourself or others?
  - c. How do you relate to these qualities, in yourself, the world, or others?
3. Imaginatively (in Jungian terminology the following application is referred to as an "active imagination") access an image of your contra gender soul, anima or animus. Try and see the soul image in as much

detail as possible, describe it, what it looks like and what it is like  
i.e. its personality. Once you have this image ask it three questions:

- a. What it wants?
- b. What it does not want?
- c. What it needs to be happy?