



The Conscious Living Program

MODULE 11: PARADOX

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MODULE 11: PARADOX

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[Listen to the podcast.](#)



Quotes

Read the quotes below and reflect on what resonates for you or where it seems familiar. Capture your thoughts, ideas and associations in your journal.

The perfectly natural fact that when you say “high” you immediately postulate “low” is here twisted into a causal relationship and reduced to absurdity, since it is sufficiently obvious that darkness produces no light and light produces no darkness. The idea of good and evil, however, is the premise for any moral judgment. They are a logically equivalent pair of opposites and, as such, the sine qua non of all acts of cognition. From the empirical standpoint we cannot say more than this. And from this standpoint we would have to assert that good and evil, being coexistent halves of a moral judgment, do not derive from one another but are always there together. Evil, like good, belongs to the category of human values, and we are the authors of moral value judgments, but only to a limited degree are we authors of the facts submitted to our moral judgment. These facts are called by one person good and by another evil. Only in capital cases is there anything like a consensus generalis. If we hold with Basil that man is the author of evil, we are saying in the same breath that he is also the author of good. But man is first and foremost the author merely of judgments; in relation to the facts judged, his responsibility is not so easy to determine. In order to do this, we would have to give a clear definition of the extent of his free will. The psychiatrist knows what a desperately difficult task this is. (Carl Jung, Vol 9ii, par 84)



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Quotes

The progression of libido might therefore be said to consist in a continual satisfaction of the demands of environmental conditions. This is possible only by means of an attitude, which as such is necessarily directed and therefore characterized by a certain one-sidedness. Thus it may easily happen that an attitude can no longer satisfy the demands of adaptation because changes have occurred in the environmental conditions which require a different attitude. For example, a feeling-attitude that seeks to fulfil the demands of reality by means of empathy may easily encounter a situation that can only be solved through thinking. In this case the feeling- attitude breaks down and the progression of libido also ceases. The vital feeling that was present before disappears, and in its place the psychic value of certain conscious contents increases in an unpleasant way; subjective contents and reactions press to the fore and the situation becomes full of affect and ripe for explosions. These symptoms indicate a damming up of libido, and the stoppage is always marked by the breaking up of the pairs of opposites. During the progression of libido the pairs of opposites are united in the co-ordinated flow of psychic processes. Their working together makes possible the balanced regularity of these processes, which without this inner polarity would become one-sided and unreasonable. We are therefore justified in regarding all extravagant and exaggerated behaviour as a loss of balance, because the co-ordinating effect of the opposite impulse is obviously lacking. Hence it is essential for progression, which is the successful achievement of adaptation, that impulse and counter-impulse, positive and negative, should reach a state of regular interaction and mutual influence. This balancing and combining of pairs of opposites can be seen, for instance, in the process of reflection that precedes a difficult decision. But in

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Quotes



the stoppage of libido that occurs when progression has become impossible, positive and negative can no longer unite in co-ordinated action, because both have attained an equal value which keeps the scales balanced. The longer the stoppage lasts, the more the value of the opposed positions increases; they become enriched with more and more associations and attach to themselves an ever-widening range of psychic material. The tension leads to conflict, the conflict leads to attempts at mutual repression, and if one of the opposing forces is successfully repressed a dissociation ensues, a splitting of the personality, or disunion with oneself. The stage is then set for a neurosis. The acts that follow from such a condition are un-coordinated, sometimes pathological, having the appearance of symptomatic actions. Although in part normal, they are based partly on the repressed opposite which, instead of working as an equilibrating force, has an obstructive effect, thus hindering the possibility of further progress. (Carl Jung, Vol 8, par. 61)

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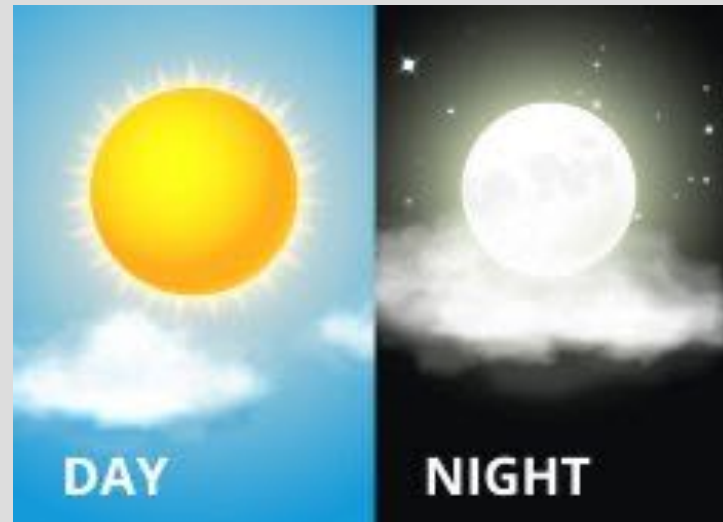
Concept

Last week we looked at the myth and fairy tales. This week we explore paradox and dilemma and how that lives within us.

Duality

As soon as we are born, we are thrown into a world of duality. Where in the womb we experience the Self (no conflict or opposition – all our needs are met), once we are born, we have to deal with color, sound, sensation, hunger, etc. All of a sudden, we are confronted by the not-self, aspects imposed on us that do not meet our needs, and in many cases confront us with experiences which threaten our sense of self. Since our survival is dependent on caregivers,

biologically we are wired to attach, and we will accept and comply with any behavior in order to survive. At this early point, we are forced into a situation that is comprised of duality. Good and bad, acceptable or not acceptable, right and wrong, yes and no. Not



only our behavior and emotions are conditioned by our environment, but we are also confronted with a world that consists of night and day, hot and cold, summer and winter, etc. This is the world we are born into, but our psychology does not like duality. It battles to hold opposites and favors one-sidedness.

Complexes

The complex specifically does not like paradox. Complexes are uniquely one-sided in their views, beliefs and opinions. When you are in the grips of a complex, nothing can persuade you that you are wrong. This is not necessarily wrong in all instances e.g., if

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Concept

Galileo did not believe he was right, and set out to prove it, we would not know today that the earth revolves around the sun. But in relatedness, complexes are not helpful and are often destructive.

The conscious perspective

We all have ideas, opinions and beliefs of who we are, what the world is about, what is right and what is wrong. But what we don't realize is that those conscious perspectives are often opposite positions to those held by us in our unconscious e.g., someone with a superiority complex is actually responding to an unconscious inferiority complex. There is most times a paradox living within you that

you are only half aware of. The other half of your paradox is unconscious. This tension created between conscious and unconscious creates a lot of psychic energy that moves us forward or if neurotic, runs around and around – the dynamic perpetuating from this tension created between two polar positions. What is really interesting is that your opposite to a position and my opposite to that position will be unique and different e.g., if we both have a trust issue that stems from one of our parents abandoning us, our experience in relationships with trust and our opposite position to betrayal will be different.



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Concept

What is a dilemma?

A dilemma is a situation where you have to make a choice between two different options. This is usually easy if one choice weighs heavier than the other one, but if both choices weigh the same, the dilemma becomes extremely difficult. Reflecting on choices you made in the past, you may be reminded of some that posed this problem. Sometimes working out the pros and cons just does not offer any solution. This is the type of dilemma that I call a free will choice. It is the most uncomfortable place to be. You will ask your parents, partner, friends and even pray to God to not have to make this decision. This

type of dilemma can also be choices that challenge you ethically e.g., you desperately need a job, but the only one you can find is with a company that is morally corrupt. Do you take the job or let your family starve? It can also be a conflicting belief e.g., you want to be in a relationship, but you don't want to lose your freedom. Dilemmas offer great insight into what you hold dear, what your beliefs and expectations are.

What is a psychological paradox?

A psychological paradox is when your conscious attitude is a compensation for what lives in your unconscious. When someone becomes one-sided in their persona, the

opposite will lie in the unconscious. For example, comedians are often very sad and depressed individuals; and sweet natured individuals have a savage side to them. Projection is a good way to identify what lives in the unconscious that you are not aware of. Often our partners also carry our unknown aspects for us. The un-lived parts of us live through us but we are not aware of them. We justify those behaviors to allow them to live. Just think of someone you know who may come across moral or ethical but often displays very unethical behaviour.

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Concept

The transcendent function

Jung found in his practice that most people would come to him with issues that were simply unresolvable. A dilemma or paradox that could not be resolved on its own terms. He noticed that these individuals in therapy would make their issue conscious through reflection, exploration of projections and symbols. By holding this tension of opposites, a third solution would naturally arise. Something that did not seem like a solution to the problem at all, but that created psychic energy and a change in attitude or perspective which guided the patient to a new way of relating to the problem and

consequently, moving through and beyond the problem.

Working with paradox

It is crucial to understand that psychological and depth work requires understanding this concept of paradox. We are living in an Animus possessed era. Everyone is required to be focused, goal orientated, driven, assertive and there is an underlying tone of narcissism. At the same time, we are confronted by positive psychology and the idea that you should be happy, beautiful, positive and kind. These attitudes are exclusive, self-annihilating and breed self-flagellation.

Jungian Psychology is about being whole, not perfect. Finding these rejected qualities within yourself are healing and promote kindness, compassion and understanding. How can you love others if you can't love yourself? Understanding that you are a unique, complicated, multi-layered person, living in a state of paradox and constant flux is essential to psychological health.



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Applications

This week we explore some of the paradoxes and dilemmas that we live with.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPRESSIONS OF PARADOX

We are constantly compromising and doing things we don't really want to do, but that are demanded of us from our culture, society, peers, parents, job, partner, etc. These aspects of ourselves are repressed and suppressed, but still live and suffer. Some examples of these types of paradoxes are:

- I want that but I have this
- I want that and I want this
- I want this but believe that
- I believe this and believe that

Over and above that, we also have to deal with other people, and this creates a lot of inner conflict. As people carry our projections, what we experience with others is our own internal conflict. Some examples of this expression of opposites are:

- I believe x and you believe y
- I want this and you want that
- I feel this and you feel that

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Applications

Complete the following (write as many as you want for each option)

I want _____ but I have _____

I want _____ and I want _____

I want _____ but I believe that _____

I believe _____ and I believe _____

Reflect on your relationships with your partner, friends, family and colleagues and complete the following (write as many as you want for each option).

I believe _____ and you believe _____

I want _____ and you want _____

I feel _____ and you feel _____

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Applications

One way of working with dilemma is to apply the Four Steps of Transformation to the issue. You will recognise this process from the Dream Work Module. Here is a guideline to the process. Select one or as many of the dilemmas that you identified in the previous application.

1. CATHARSIS / CONFESSION

Before you can change anything, you need to know what it is that is not working for you. Identifying a destructive complex or pattern, or an area of relatedness that does not work for you, takes courage and one often needs to get to a point of severe frustration before one can admit that there is a problem. The process of confession/catharsis is a cleansing process. Ideally it should be with another human being, preferably a counsellor who is trained in the art of listening and creating a safe space in which to talk. But for the purposes of this course, I suggest you pen your confession in a journal that is private or on a computer where you can password protect your file. Unburdening one's self breaks through personal defences and neurotic isolation and creates the possibility of change. To express your frustration, feelings, fears, emotions and disappointments allows you to reflect on the problem. This reflection is of major importance if you are trying to change something. Whilst it is unconscious, the neurosis will overwhelm you and make you feel helpless, but the reflection allows you to objectify and quantify the experience and impact of the neurosis. This is of utmost importance in the process of transformation.

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Applications

2. ELUCIDATION

During this step, a process of analysis is applied to the neurosis. Memories and ruminations, fantasies and emotions are identified, explored. There is a process of investigation, using active imagination, free associations and other means to connect with unconscious content. In this process the tools from Jungian and depth psychology are utilised to explore parental and formative relationships, dreams, beliefs and paradigms related to the issue. Ties to unconscious processes are revealed and an awareness of this brings about a marked change in attitude towards the neurosis with a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the process.

3. EDUCATION:

During this phase of transformation, the process involves imaginative play with the problem and coming up with many solutions and options of dealing with the neurosis. Creative play allows you to imagine a new way of being and the energy that has been stuck and repeating itself in the neurotic dynamic is now allowed to move forward, gaining momentum and freedom.



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Applications

4. TRANSFORMATION:

Although this is the last step in the process, huge transformation has already occurred at this point in the process. You have by now brought into consciousness an enormous amount of information regarding this neurotic dynamic. Your understanding and attitude towards this problem has shifted. You are starting to believe that there is a possibility of a different way of being and you see the problem with much greater clarity than before. You have changed your relationship to the problem as well as your perspective on the issue. The final step in the process is the actual physical expression of your changing dynamic. This final step requires action in the world. The work that you have done in the first three steps could already have had a real impact on your reality, or it may take much longer to manifest. Transformation is a process that takes place on an unconscious level and the change required for a change in reality sometimes takes a while.



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Mindfulness Activity

During the week, become aware of frustrations and obstacles. Reflect on what the dilemma or paradox represent to you.



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Links to Resources

Suggested reading:

[Nietzsche and Jung: The whole Self in the union of opposites by Lucy Huskinson](#)

[Four Eternal Women: Toni Wolff revisited – A study in opposites](#)

[The Routledge International Handbook of Jungian Film Studies edited by Luke Hockley \(chapter by Stephen Farah\)](#)

[Transcendent function: Jung's model of Psychological growth by Jeffrey C. Miller](#)

[The Transcendent function: Integration of the Bi-cameral mind by Richard Bibbee](#)

Articles:

<http://appliedjung.com/root/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Free-Guide-to-the-Four-Steps-of-Transformation.pdf>

<https://frithluton.com/articles/opposites/>

<https://scottjeffrey.com/individuation-process/>

<https://appliedjung.com/problems-and-individuation/>

<https://frithluton.com/articles/transcendent-function/>

<http://jungiancenter.org/wp/jung-on-the-transcendent-function/>

<https://www.sunypress.edu/pdf/60876.pdf>
(introduction from Jeffrey C. Miller's book)

YouTube videos:

<https://youtu.be/KhDOI1kpWFO>

https://youtu.be/KBFr_-7g9Zo

<https://youtu.be/bpk60CdAQ2A> (reading of Jung's chapter on the Transcendent function)

<https://youtu.be/xpZc4f-uE64>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGucHh3ZcEc>

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