

THE SACRED MARRIAGE

Module 2

THE DYSFUNCTIONAL ANIMA AND ANIMUS

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OVERVIEW

In this module we explore the dysfunctional Anima and Animus as Marie-Louise von Franz identified them through her investigation and analysis of the archetypal Anima and Animus in Myth and Fairy Tales.

CONCEPT

In the classic version of Jungian psychology, the Anima is the man's internal other, and the Animus is the woman's internal other. If you identify as a man in the world, you will have an inner Anima, a feminine image which guides and shapes the way you relate to women and the world at large. And naturally the inverse if you identify as a woman, i.e., you will have an inner Animus.

Whilst post-Jungian theory is in line with post modernity and more ambivalent and plastic about gender, the classical model, as described by Marie-Louise von Franz in this module, is still incredibly useful and very interesting. The information and knowledge that Marie-Louise von Franz extracts from her analysis of Fairy Tales is fascinating.

ANIMA POSSESSION

First, we will explore Anima Possession, which is the dysfunctional Anima in a man. It is important to understand that this feminine image is unconscious and has her roots in the relationship the subject had with his mother. A man's experience of his own mother puts the flesh on the inborn archetype of the Anima, and both defines his attitude towards women and the functioning of his inner feminine principal.

Symptoms

When a man's Anima is not integrated, it wreaks havoc in his life. The Anima-possessed man is a spineless wimp who does not know when or how to take action in the world. He is moody and sulky and throws tantrums like a toddler. Although typically passive, he overreacts to slights and confrontations. He is not appropriate in his actions—either he is paralyzed and can't find the energy to do what needs to be done—or he jumps into action when he should be thinking about it first. He is often to be found in a relationship with an Animus hound who knows it all and makes all the decisions in their relationship.

The Anima-possessed man is stuck in a fate that his repetitive patterns have chosen for him. The Anima spins a cocoon of fantasies and illusions. He repeats the same dynamics, dates the

same type of women and experiences the same resistance in the world again and again.

Any meaningful or potentially meaningful experiences he has, she quickly attacks, and he is left with a feeling that his experience was “nothing but.” She is a master at creating doubt, and he finds himself always doubting his options and choices. He gets lost in contemplation and this is what prevents him from taking action. At night he dreams about his Anima. She appears in his dreams as a monster, attacking him, threatening him, and dismissing him.

Where most men are thinking types, typically, his feelings will be poorly developed, and here the Anima takes control. She plays his emotions like a fiddle. He is moody, sulky, throws tantrums and gets really upset. When he has the rare moments of happiness and elation and has a fabulous time, she quickly casts doubt and destroys the experience for him. And naturally, as a consequence, his evaluative ability tends to be poor.

Generally, this man whose inferior function (feeling) trips him up all the time, experiences his emotions and mystical numinous experiences as a handicap. He finds himself disillusioned with his feelings and often tries to escape into the thinking realm, but this does not help his cause at all. He is afraid to trust his feelings and consequently makes a complete mess of his life and is unable to reach full adulthood, always remaining, in a sense, the little boy needing his mother’s love and approbation.

Integrating the Anima

The Anima represents the divine aspect of the human being. She is a goddess who imbues life with numinosity, mystery, beauty and joy.

The Anima often functions as a looking glass, reflecting unconscious or only vaguely conscious thoughts, prejudices, emotions and desires. It is often projected onto an actual person, especially the partner. Unless it is brought fully into the light of consciousness, it is often merely a self-mirroring that flatters the individual's vanity or is experienced as sentimental self-pity.

The Anima has fallen into the unconscious, according to von Franz, particularly in Protestant cultures who do not have the idealized feminine of the Catholic cultures, where it is projected onto the Virgin Mary. In the Protestant cultures, where the entire anima is lacking, the dark aspect is projected out onto women who fascinate and capture the passions of a man, who then grants her the status of being a witch, because he feels as if he has been bewitched.

Human beings try to bring the divine into the realm of reality and thereby reduce the mystery to the banal. This attempt to rob the Anima of her divinity is evident in the Western culture where the feminine is reduced to base and crude sexuality.

Some guidelines for dealing with the dysfunctional Anima

One of the main problems with the Anima is that she lies outside time. This results in men who act inappropriately for their age. They are either childish old men or wise young boys. This time-related issue affects the man's judgment in relation to action. He either totally overreacts to small matters or does not act when he needs to in big matters. These behaviors must be opposed in the following ways described below:

The Quick-to-react Anima

When the man is riled up, emotional, and has an urgency to react, then and there, he must wait and put off his response to the given situation. Sleeping on it does wonders, and a new perspective will emerge. This man has gotten himself into many undesirable situations because of this need to react immediately, and some perspective on the situation will allow him to not fall into the trap of repeating his neurotic dynamics unconsciously.

The Anima creates a pressing urgency to send the email, confront the person, phone immediately. This impulse must be resisted in order to change the Anima in the unconscious. Delay the excitement, delay acting on it, and it will lose its urgency, and the man will tire of it.

With time and practice, the man will be able to enter the situation consciously, without falling prey to these emotions. Once he is able to hold these opposites in consciousness, not to commit to any action, he will be able to integrate his Anima. This struggle is the battle for moral responsibility, the search for light and meaning.

The Slow-to-react Anima

When the man finds himself lost in ambiguity, and at a loss on what to do, he needs to act. The Anima is an expert on implanting doubt. He must step into life to get out of this trap. He needs to act in some way. He must escape the repetitive pattern of getting excited about ideas and then discussing them to death until he is totally uninspired. He needs to develop a disciplined consciousness for solutions and directions. The correct attitude is to accept that it may not work, or that it is possibly not the right thing to do but take action regardless. One must act based on the knowledge or understanding that is available at that point in time. Omniscience is not the province of man and waiting for it is to suffer a slow and painful death by passivity, until the inevitable onset of complete paralysis. Overcoming the Anima, in this regard, is through experiencing reality and the unknown, not merely talking about it.

Developing the Inferior Function

The integration of the Anima requires the balance between the intellect and the instinct. One must not sacrifice the intellect for the Anima either, because this will also develop an unbalanced relationship with the Anima. Whatever the inferior function is, the man must engage it bravely and enter into it slowly. He must not use the inferior function to govern his external realm but use it in the internal realm. As long as he tries to use his feeling function in the external realm, he will be heavy, slow, mystical and inarticulate. But if he turns his feeling function inwards, and allows himself to feel, no matter how silly or infantile, he will slowly develop his feeling function. This ability to think naively, without rules, allows the libido (energy) to rush forth and re-energize the psyche. But to give a voice to the unconscious inferior function, the man must learn to sacrifice the superior ruling attitude of rules and structure, which is not easy. We will explore this inferior function in more detail in Module 5.

ANIMUS POSSESSION

It is important to remember that this masculine image is unconscious and has its roots in the relationship a woman had with her father. Her experience of her personal father puts the flesh on the inborn archetype of the Animus, and both define her attitude towards men and the functioning of her inner masculinity.

Symptoms

We all know at least one woman who has become possessed by her Animus. She is a ball-busting bitch. These women walk around with stinkwood penises, beating both men and women over the head with it, insisting that they know it all and know it all better than everyone else! This Animus hound is never wrong. She knows everything. She inflicts an unstoppable, unconscious flow of talk on others, in which she has an unyielding conviction.

The Animus hound usually suffers from a weak and uncertain feminine image and a damaged instinct. Her mother was not available either emotionally or physically. This makes her vulnerable to Animus possession. This woman has a negative image about her femininity and is usually highly critical and judgmental of other women. She herself is vain, false and jealous,

but is not aware of it, and projects it out, labelling others as vain, false and jealous.

The Animus in this woman has one goal, and that is to pull her away from life and cut her off from it. He prevents this woman from entering a spiritual life and keeps her focused on the material, physical world. She suffers from a Will to Power, a psychological imbalance that affects her relatedness to others and the world in the most insidious way. When the feeling life (Eros) is missing, the result is someone who pursues and values only the intellect, resulting in a stiff attitude, and lacking warmth and feeling.

She has no heart.

She is cut off from her instincts, unbalanced and destructive. She can only relate to men sexually, and when confronted with a relationship, she asks the wrong questions. Instead of thinking about whether she loves him or cares for him, she asks herself whether she should sleep with him now, or she tries to work out the best way to manipulate him.

The Animus is critical and harsh, and he constantly whispers to this woman that she is a failure, that she can't amount to anything and that it is too late now anyway. He criticizes those around her and points out their flaws and mistakes.

The Animus often attacks the woman's creativity by instilling doubt about the validity of her ideas and her ability to implement them. He also sows the seeds of doubt and suspicion. The

Animus loves getting stuck on small things and making them into big things in order to hold back life and prevent growth.

He is an expert on making mountains out of molehills. Like a dog with a bone, he picks and analyzes, and comes up with various intimations of what is going on, wasting an enormous amount of psychic energy.

Furthermore, this woman craves life, and like the proverbial vampire, she will suck it from whomever she can, even her children.

Being this woman is not easy, it is a hard and unforgiving existence – a dog-eat-dog world.

Integrating the Animus

Easier said than done—the integration of the Animus involves humility and sacrifice. A woman needs to sacrifice her magical power that she has over men in order to individuate. This power will keep her focused on her prestige persona and clinging to this power is her Animus' hold over her.

Since the Animus involves the Will to Power vs. Eros (feeling), facing the Animus head-on is futile. The woman must cleverly outwit and avoid him. Women cannot fight the Animus by killing him, they can only catch him and escape. The internal conflict that the Animus creates is overcome by walking out and away from it.

Within her, the Animus-possessed woman has two opposing forces—the Animus and the negative Anima (her inferior shadow perception of herself). These two forces in her can balance each other out by pitting them against each other. Through this conflict between her shadow and her Animus, she can make the connections within herself and with the world. This is the power of the integrated Animus—consciousness and a connection with herself, her passions, and her values.

In life, women are often presented with a situation that provides an opportunity to overcome this Animus possession. The opportunity to get out of the complex usually triggers the neurosis. Once the unconscious complex is activated, nothing can stop it. But when the ruling attitude is inappropriate (Animus possession), it will result in failure, and the consequence is a loss of libido, a depression. This is an indication that the current approach and attitude are no longer valid, and a new approach is needed. To constellate this new approach, reflect on the following suggestions for dealing with Animus possession.

Some guidelines for dealing with typical Animus experiences

The Critical Animus

When the Animus is arguing and criticizing, the right approach to deal with it is to say to the Animus, “Since you are so opinionated about what is wrong with others, let’s look at my shadow”. The interaction between these two opposing forces, the shadow and the Animus, results in consciousness. This consciousness allows a woman to discern what her own ideas and opinions really are, and the difference between her feminine ego and masculine Animus.

The Animus Hound Possession

Animus-possessed women suffer from a tremendous flow of unconscious blind talk, which they have a righteous conviction in. The question a woman must ask is, “Do I really believe that?” At every turn, she needs to confront her opinions through reflection.

The Attacking Animus

The Animus can torture a woman, feeding her ruminations and thoughts about failure. To step out of this internal conflict,

the best way is to say to the Animus, “Ah, you are right, it is too late, I am a failure, so let’s not speak about it anymore”. This allows the energy to move forward and not to dissipate in the internal conflict, and the woman is left alone to try her hand at whatever she is doing anyway.

The Inflated Animus

Being Animus possessed implies inflation, since the Animus is an archetype and belongs to the collective unconscious. The standards used by the Animus are collective standards and no individual is able to attain them. The benchmark the Animus uses to criticize is too high for a normal human being to live up to. The Animus always knows better, but in assuming this position the woman is only inflating her own abilities. When she finds herself saying or thinking, “You should be doing this,” to herself or others, it would be wise to counteract this Animus position by taking on some humility and admitting that she may not know everything.

The Suspicious Animus

The Animus is very adept at falsifying information or feeding the woman suspicions. Something really nice or sweet may happen, but then much later—for example that evening—she will reflect on an event and start reading into what happened

and was said and become suspicious and doubtful. This Animus laughs at feelings and thinks that they are a weakness. Be aware of this Animus tactic and don't let him break down positive experiences. Again, the approach would be to agree with him. He may be right, but you would like to believe that it was a positive experience anyway. The woman must reflect on how she feels about others and make her feelings and emotions conscious.

The Destructive Animus

The Animus attacks what is good and the germs of new ideas by criticizing the woman's ability to implement them as well as the validity of these ideas. Again, the correct approach is to agree, but you are going to try anyway. The Animus is very critical of everything and everyone. He is usually right too, but when he is triggered and she is possessed, he is likely to be wrong by confusing her with stormy arguments and a misty confusing atmosphere.

The Impatient Animus

The Animus is often very impatient, making the woman feel that she has to make up her mind immediately, to act straight away, instead of waiting for her psyche to bring forth the proper new development. The truth is that for women it often takes years for the new development to emerge. However difficult it is to stay within this space of tension, resist the temptation to

move immediately and give your psyche time to process and create the solution (barring of course a situation that is life threatening).

The Animus is a demon who wants to pull the woman away from life, cut her off from it. That is why she must run away and not get trapped by it.

An integrated Animus

An integrated Animus allows the woman to be actively and creatively enterprising. This woman is able to take up new ideas and new movements and is often at the forefront of the new zeitgeist.

She engages in life and does not hide from it behind false bravado and intellectual verbosity. She is spiritual and intellectual and confident in her own knowledge and wisdom.

This wise woman has a healthy attitude towards disappointment. She risks being hurt in relationships without the bitterness, and with a well-developed sense of humor. She accepts that life consists of both growth and decline and embraces it.

Conclusion

As with the Animus, the Anima is the bridge to the unconscious and the roadmap to this unconscious realm lies within the inferior function of the man. The ultimate goal of this

journey is individuation, which is the most authentic and whole expression of an individual. Integrating the Anima and Animus is a vital aspect of this journey.

QUOTES from Collected Works by Carl Jung

We must therefore expect the unconscious of woman to show aspects essentially different from those found in man. If I were to attempt to put in a nutshell the difference between man and woman in this respect, i.e., what it is that characterizes the animus as opposed to the anima, I could only say this: as the anima produces moods, so the animus produces opinions; and as the moods of a man issue from a shadowy background, so the opinions of a woman rest on equally unconscious prior assumptions. Animus opinions very often have the character of solid convictions that are not lightly shaken, or of principles whose validity is seemingly unassailable. If we analyse these opinions, we immediately come upon unconscious assumptions whose existence must first be inferred; that is to say, the opinions are apparently conceived as though such assumptions existed. But in reality the opinions are not thought out at all; they exist ready-made, and they are held so positively and with so much conviction that the woman never has the shadow of a doubt about them.

It goes without saying that the animus is just as often projected as the anima. The men who are particularly suited to these projections are either walking replicas of God himself, who know all about everything, or else they are misunderstood word-addicts with a vast and windy vocabulary at their command, who translate common or garden reality into the terminology of the sublime. It would be insufficient to characterize the animus merely as a conservative, collective conscience; he is also a neologist who, in flagrant

contradiction to his correct opinions, has an extraordinary weakness for difficult and unfamiliar words which act as a pleasant substitute for the odious task of reflection.

Like the anima, the animus is a jealous lover. He is an adept at putting, in place of the real man, an opinion about him, the exceedingly disputable grounds for which are never submitted to criticism. Animus opinions are invariably collective, and they override individuals and individual judgments in exactly the same way as the anima thrusts her emotional anticipations and projections between man and wife. If the woman happens to be pretty, these animus opinions have for the man something rather touching and childlike about them, which makes him adopt a benevolent, fatherly, professorial manner. But if the woman does not stir his sentimental side, and competence is expected of her rather than appealing helplessness and stupidity, then her animus opinions irritate the man to death, chiefly because they are based on nothing but opinion for opinion's sake, and "everybody has a right to his own opinions." Men can be pretty venomous here, for it is an inescapable fact that the animus always plays up the anima—and vice versa, of course—so that all further discussion becomes pointless.

In intellectual women the animus encourages a critical disputatiousness and would-be highbrowism, which, however, consists essentially in harping on some irrelevant weak point and nonsensically making it the main one. Or a perfectly lucid discussion gets tangled up in the most maddening way through the introduction of a quite different and if possible perverse point of view. Without knowing it, such women are solely intent upon exasperating the man and are, in consequence, the more completely at the mercy of the animus. "Unfortunately, I am always right," one of

these creatures once confessed to me.

However, all these traits, as familiar as they are unsavoury, are simply and solely due to the extraversion of the animus. The animus does not belong to the function of conscious relationship; his function is rather to facilitate relations with the unconscious.

Instead of the woman merely associating opinions with external situations—situations which she ought to think about consciously—the animus, as an associative function, should be directed inwards, where it could associate the contents of the unconscious. The technique of coming to terms with the animus is the same in principle as in the case of the anima; only here the woman must learn to criticize and hold her opinions at a distance; not in order to repress them, but, by investigating their origins, to penetrate more deeply into the background, where she will then discover the primordial images, just as the man does in his dealings with the anima. The animus is the deposit, as it were, of all woman's ancestral experiences of man—and not only that, he is also a creative and procreative being, not in the sense of masculine creativity, but in the sense that he brings forth something we might call the spermatic word. Just as a man brings forth his work as a complete creation out of his inner feminine nature, so the inner masculine side of a woman brings forth creative seeds which have the power to fertilize the feminine side of the man. This would be the femme inspiratrice who, if falsely cultivated, can turn into the

worst kind of dogmatist and high-handed pedagogue—a regular “animus hound,” as one of my women patients aptly expressed it. A woman possessed by the animus is always in danger of losing her femininity, her adapted feminine persona, just as a man in like circumstances runs the risk of effeminacy. These psychic changes of sex are due entirely to the fact that a function which belongs inside has been turned outside. The reason for this perversion is clearly the failure to give adequate recognition to an inner world which stands autonomously opposed to the outer world, and makes just as serious demands on our capacity for adaptation.

With regard to the plurality of the animus as distinguished from what we might call the “uni-personality” of the anima, this remarkable fact seems to me to be a correlate of the conscious attitude. The conscious attitude of woman is in general far more exclusively personal than that of man. Her world is made up of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, husbands and children.

The rest of the world consists likewise of families, who nod to each other but are, in the main, interested essentially in themselves. The man’s world is the nation, the state, business concerns, etc. His family is simply a means to an end, one of the foundations of the state, and his wife is not necessarily the woman for him (at any rate not as the woman means it when she says “my man”). The general means more to him than the personal; his world consists of a multitude of co-ordinated factors, whereas her world, outside her husband, terminates in a sort of cosmic mist. A passionate exclusiveness therefore attaches to the man’s anima, and an indefinite variety to the woman’s animus. Whereas the man has,

floating before him, in clear outlines, the alluring form of a Circe or a Calypso, the animus is better expressed as a bevy of Flying Dutchmen or unknown wanderers from over the sea, never quite clearly grasped, protean, given to persistent and violent motion. These personifications appear especially in dreams, though in concrete reality they can be famous tenors, boxing champions, or great men in far-away, unknown cities. (C. G. Jung Vol 7 par 331-339)

Possession caused by the anima or animus presents a different picture. Above all, this transformation of personality gives prominence to those traits which are characteristic of the opposite sex; in man the feminine traits, and in woman the masculine. In the state of possession both figures lose their charm and their values; they retain them only when they are turned away from the world, in the introverted state, when they serve as bridges to the unconscious. Turned towards the world, the anima is fickle, capricious, moody, uncontrolled and emotional, sometimes gifted with daemonic intuitions, ruthless, malicious, untruthful, bitchy, double-faced, and mystical.¹⁷ The animus is obstinate, harping on principles, laying down the law, dogmatic, world-reforming, theoretic, word-mongering, argumentative, and domineering.¹⁸ Both alike have bad taste: the anima surrounds herself with inferior people, and the animus lets himself be taken in by second-rate thinking. (Vol 9i par 223)

APPLICATIONS

You will explore your own dysfunctional Anima and Animus during this module. We suggest you complete both Anima and Animus, but you are welcome to only do one or the other, depending on which one resonates for you. We have allocated two weeks for this module. If you are going to work on both, we suggest you focus on the Dysfunctional Anima in week 1 and the Dysfunctional Animus in week 2.

WEEK 1

Dysfunctional Anima

Reflect on your relatedness to yourself and others. Assess whether any of the following statements are true for you:

1. Are you afraid of trusting your feelings?
2. Do you find yourself doubting your options and choices?
3. Do you find you are often paralyzed and don't take action?
4. Do you ruin opportunities by talking yourself out of them?
5. Do you often sulk and throw tantrums?

6. Do you find yourself stuck in repetitive patterns in relationships?
7. Do you experience the same resistance in the world again and again?

Select the statements which are true for you and capture in your journal how this affects your life, an example of when it happened, what triggered it and how this makes you feel.

Beyond the application, follow the guidelines below to oppose the dysfunctional aspects of the Anima. Start integrating these guidelines into your daily life.

Guidelines

1. If you are triggered, and feel an urgency to react, wait and put off your response. Wait at least one day.
2. Stop talking to yourself and act. If you find yourself paralyzed by doubt, take action. It may be the wrong action, but it is better than not taking action.
3. Develop your feeling function. Do not dismiss your feelings. Start becoming aware of the actual feelings and not the moods, e.g., if you are mad, try to discern what is behind it. In other words, what triggered the mood and why did it trigger you exactly. Be vulnerable to yourself.

Conclusion: Please practise these techniques and share with the group on the Facebook forum how this module affected you and what you realised about yourself.

WEEK 2

Dysfunctional Animus

Reflect on your relatedness to yourself and others. Assess whether any of the following statements are true for you:

1. Are you often accused of being highly opinionated?
2. Did you have a poor relationship with your mother?
3. Are you critical and judgmental towards women?
4. Do you find women false, vain or jealous?
5. Do you value intellect above all else?
6. Do you have a harsh internal voice, the critical Animus that constantly points out your flaws and mistakes?
7. Do you tend to make mountains out of molehills?
8. Do you think this is a dog-eat-dog world?

Select the statements which are true for you and capture in your journal how this affects your life, an example of when it happened, what triggered it and how this makes you feel.

Beyond the application, follow the guidelines below to oppose the dysfunctional aspects of the Animus. Start integrating these guidelines into your daily life.

Guidelines

1. When the critical Animus berates you, bring consciousness to bear on what he is saying. Is it true in all areas of your life? Where is it true? Where is it not valid?
2. If the Animus is confusing your ability to implement, or tries to ruin creative ideas, it needs to be opposed—not in a head-on way, but cleverly, e.g., “Yes, you may be right, but I am going to try anyway.”

Conclusion: Please practise these techniques and share with the group on the Facebook forum how this module affected you and what you realised about yourself.