

Anima/ Animus and Gender Essentialism: An Epistemological Reflection Based on C. G. Jung

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Resumo

This article aimed to develop a critical and epistemological reflection on the conceptual shortcuts of *anima/animus* in dialogue with the revisions advanced through gender studies. Based on the framework of conceptual research, the study selected authors from the Jungian field who engaged in this approximation; their considerations were analyzed in light of the epistemology of complex psychology. For the purposes of this research, authors were selected whose works explicitly synthesize the main premises of the revision of *anima/animus* concepts through the lens of gender studies, and not through a systematic and integrative literature review. Drawing upon the dialogue between these studies and the epistemology of complex psychology, six axes of conceptual deviations were identified: the transposition of symbol into sign, by understanding *anima/animus* as gender archetypes; the reading wherein C. G. Jung purportedly conflated body and psyche, countered by the concept of psychization; the interpretation of "masculine" and "feminine" as social categories rather than modalities of psychic functions; the understanding of *Eros* and *Logos* as sociobiological attributes rather than notional and intuitive concepts; the lack of differentiation between image and the irrepresentable psychoid archetype; and the collapse of the compensatory function of these figures when placed symmetrically within the psyche. Based on these findings, the study concluded that it is necessary to distinguish between the linguistic resources employed by C. G. Jung in describing *anima/animus* within his

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historical and cultural context and the epistemological foundations of these concepts, which in themselves already provide the basis for a non-literalist and non-essentialist understanding.

Descriptors

gender, junguian psychology, epistemology, Jung, Carl Gustav, 1875-1961.

Anima/animus e o essencialismo de gênero: uma reflexão epistemológica a partir de C. G. Jung

Resumo

O presente artigo teve como objetivo realizar uma reflexão crítica e epistemológica a respeito dos atalhos conceituais de *anima/animus* em interlocução com as revisões empreendidas a partir dos estudos de gênero. Baseando-se na estrutura de uma pesquisa conceitual, foram selecionados para este trabalho autores do campo junguiano que realizaram essa aproximação, cujas considerações foram analisadas à luz da epistemologia da psicologia complexa. Para a realização desta pesquisa, foram selecionados autores cuja produção sintetiza de forma explícita as principais premissas da revisão dos conceitos de *anima/animus* pelos estudos de gênero e não pela revisão sistemática e integrativa da literatura. Feita a interlocução entre esses estudos e a epistemologia da psicologia complexa, foram identificados seis eixos de desvios conceituais: a transposição do símbolo em sinal, ao se compreender *anima/animus* como arquétipos de gênero; a leitura de que C. G. Jung fusionou corpo e psique, contraposto pelo conceito de psiquificação; a interpretação de "masculino" e "feminino" como categorias sociais e não como modalidades de funções psíquicas; o entendimento de Eros e *logos* como atributos sociobiológicos e não como conceitos nocionais e intuitivos; a indiferenciação entre imagem e o arquétipo psicóide indeterminado; e o colapso da função compensatória dessas figuras quando colocadas de forma simétrica na psique. A partir disso, o estudo concluiu que é necessário realizar uma diferenciação entre os recursos linguísticos que C. G. Jung utilizou ao descrever *anima/animus* em seu momento histórico e cultural dos fundamentos epistemológicos de tais conceitos que, em si mesmos, já fornecem subsídios para uma compreensão não literalista e essencialista.

Descritores

gênero, psicologia junguiana, epistemologia, Jung, Carl Gustav, 1875-1961.

Anima/animus y el esencialismo de género: una reflexión epistemológica a partir de C. G. Jung

Resumen

Este artículo realiza una reflexión crítica y epistemológica de los atajos conceptuales de *anima/animus* en interlocución con las revisiones emprendidas por los estudios de género. Sobre las bases de una investigación conceptual, se seleccionaron para este trabajo autores junguianos que realizaron esa aproximación, analizando sus consideraciones con la aplicación de la epistemología de la psicología compleja. Para realizar esta investigación se seleccionaron autores cuya producción sintetiza de forma explícita las principales premisas de la revisión de los conceptos de *anima/animus* por los estudios de género y no por la revisión sistemática e integrativa de la literatura. Luego de la interlocución entre estos estudios y la epistemología de la psicología compleja, se identificaron seis ejes de desvíos conceptuales: la conversión del símbolo en señal, al comprenderse *anima/animus* como arquetipos de género; la lectura de que C. G. Jung fusionó cuerpo y psique, contrapuesto por el concepto de psiquificación; la interpretación de "masculino" y "femenino" como categorías sociales y no como modalidades de funciones psíquicas; la compresión de *Eros* y *logos* como atributos sociobiológicos y no como conceptos nocionales e intuitivos; la indiferenciación entre imagen y el arquetipo psicoide indeterminado; y el colapso de la función compensatoria de esas figuras cuando son colocadas de forma simétrica en la psique. De ahí, el estudio concluyó que es necesario diferenciar los recursos lingüísticos que C. G. Jung utilizó al describir *anima/animus* en su momento histórico y cultural de los fundamentos epistemológicos de dichos conceptos que, en sí mismos, ya proveen datos para una comprensión no literal y esencialista.

Descriptorios

género, psicología junguiana, epistemología, Jung, Carl Gustav, 1875-1961.

Introduction

Currently, the conceptual shortcuts of *anima/animus* are commonly revised through the lens of gender studies, in which the authors listed below understand that, with these two terms, C. G. Jung was referring to gender archetypes and had even gone as far as to formulate an archetypally-based "gender theory." Taking into account the new perspectives on gender in our time, some authors

deem it necessary to revise *anima/animus* through this lens. As will be presented in the course of this essay, such an undertaking comes into epistemological tension with complex psychology, as can be seen in the following quotation, which contains a sophisticated definition formulated by C. G. Jung regarding these two conceptual shortcuts:

The autonomy of the collective unconscious expresses itself in the figures of *anima* and *animus*. They personify those of its contents which, when withdrawn from projection, can be integrated into consciousness. To this extent, both figures represent functions which filter the contents of the collective unconscious through to the conscious mind (Jung, 1950/2021, para. 40, p. 32).

Jung (1950/2021) emphasizes that *anima/animus* consist of personifications of the unconscious; therefore, it is not possible to know in advance what these two psychic functions actually designate, since for Jung (1921/2023), the unconscious is a boundary 'concept that encompasses all psychic contents and processes not directly related to the ego. According to Clarke (1992/2015, p. 34):

Jung maintained that the unconscious mind, like the 'transcendent', is knowable, not in itself, but only by its manifestations, i.e. in terms of observable phenomena. It was, he said, making use of a Kantian term, a 'boundary concept', which offers no insight into the hidden workings of nature, but merely points to the limits of what can be known.

In view of this, when Rowland (2024) and McKenzie (2006), for example, assert that *anima/animus* represent gender archetypes, a transposition of symbol into sign occurs, insofar as images that mediate the collective unconscious are reduced to pre-established categories of social identity — namely, gender. Regarding the difference between symbol and sign, Jung points out:

The psychological machine which transforms energy is the symbol. I mean a real symbol and not a sign. Thus the hole dug in the earth by the Watchandis is not a sign for the female genitals, but a symbol representing the idea of the Earth-woman who is to be fertilized. To mistake it for a human woman would be to interpret the symbol semiotically. (. . .) when it does not understand the true nature of the symbol and lowers it to a mere sign (Jung, 1928/2022, para. 88, p. 58-59).

As demonstrated in the course this essay, reading *anima/animus* through the lens of gender studies results in a semiotic interpretation

of a concept that belongs to a different epistemological horizon. In this sense, it becomes necessary to distinguish the linguistic resources used by C. G. Jung when describing *anima/animus* within his historical and cultural context from the symbolic phenomenon itself that such concepts express. Following the framework of conceptual research outlined by Laurenti et al. (2016), the present essay investigated the terms *anima/animus* in Jung's work in relation to the contemporary developments of these conceptual shortcuts. The aim was to identify sources of conceptual deviation that emerge when *anima/animus* are translated as gender archetypes, since such a translation generates theoretical eclecticism by integrating categories from distinct epistemological frameworks into complex psychology. The term "conceptual deviation," according to Laurenti et al. (2016), consists of the transposition of fundamental notions from one epistemological horizon to another without explicit translation criteria. The selection of texts was not based on a systematic review, but rather on an authorial choice guided by the hypothesis that gender-based critiques of complex psychology, by displacing the symbolic horizon toward sociological discourse, constitute a case of conceptual deviation. Authors whose works synthesize the core premises of this approach were selected, including Goldenberg (1976), Samuels (1992), Young-Eisendrath (2002), McKenzie (2006), Saiz et al. (2023) and Rowland (2024).

Based on this methodological framework, six main axes of conceptual deviation were identified to guide the analysis: (i) the reading of *anima* and *animus* as gender archetypes, which entails the transposition of symbol into sign; (ii) the interpretation wherein Jung purportedly conflated body and psyche, countered by the concept of psychization, which distinguishes biological instinct from its symbolic elaboration; (iii) the understanding of "masculine" and "feminine" as modalities of psychic functions rather than gender categories; (iv) the reading of *Eros* and *Logos* as notional and dynamic concepts rather than rigid categories tied to biological sex or social identity; (v) the lack of differentiation between image and the irrepresentable psychoid archetype; and (vi) the collapse of the compensatory function of these figures when they are placed symmetrically within the same psyche, thereby nullifying their mediatory role between consciousness and the collective unconscious. It is important to emphasize that this study does not intend to make value judgments regarding the contributions of gender studies to complex psychology, but rather to identify the deviations to which every attempt at conceptual expansion is subject. The aim of this essay is to provide conceptual and epistemological clarifications left unresolved by such revisions and to suggest possible avenues of dialogue between gender studies and complex psychology.

C. G. Jung in dialogue with contemporary revisions of *anima/animus*

The present dialogue opens with the work “Jung: A feminist revision”, in which Rowland (2024) undertakes a critical rereading of the concepts focused upon in this study. She states that the term “feminine,” as used in her work, does not stem from an essentialist conception, but rather from the cultural construction of feminine characteristics that is historically conditioned and not situated within a female body. From this perspective, the author maintains that Jung collapsed psychic gender into bodily sex, given the way he approached the “feminine” from an archetypal starting point:

Jung tended to collapse gender identity into bodily sex. He believes that a body shape bestowed a straightforward gender identity on women and men. Such an attitude leads to innate femininity and masculinity (Rowland, 2024, p. 73).

Immediately following this, Rowland (2024) recognizes that the unconscious, in its compensatory function, does not allow such essentialism to be absolute, as Jung seems to have suggested when articulating *anima/animus* as gender archetypes. The author stresses that the mind cannot have a fixed gender, for archetypes are, in her view, subject to shifting cultural notions of masculine and feminine. In the same vein, Young-Eisendrath (2002) argues that the Jungian theory of contrasexuality entails an implicit essentialism by assuming that *anima/animus* derive from biological traits of the opposite sex, as if the unconscious reproduced sexual differences in a naturalized manner. Like Rowland (2024), Young-Eisendrath (2002) interprets Jung’s formulation as still grounded in a genetically and morphologically based notion of the psychic other, as emphasized by McKenzie:

Jung’s *anima/animus* (A/A) thinking leads us into a trap of linear orderliness, fixed identities, androgynous symmetries, and archetypes that are differentially inherited, based on sexual anatomy, a breach in the universality of the collective unconscious. His gender theory does however allow for both genders to reside in an individual but posits a slow and sex-appropriate emergence of the contra-sexual from the unconscious. Jung’s A/A cannot account for the transgendered experience with its reversal of starting points and fluidity of

sexual attractions. Jung's A/A is a terrible fit for our time (McKenzie, 2006, p. 407).

It can be observed, in the preceding passages, that *anima/animus* are understood as gender archetypes and, consequently, must be revised in light of the fluidity of gender experiences, particularly those lived by LGBTQIAPN+ individuals. McKenzie (2006) further notes that such archetypes are inherited on the basis of sexual morphology, a point that Jung (1939/2020) addressed in the essay "Consciousness, unconscious, and individuation," originally published in 1939, where he states that, since man possesses a minority of female genes, he carries a feminine form in his unconscious, designated as the *anima*. As will be shown below, this is an outdated statement by Jung that was superseded by the author himself when he later developed the conceptual shortcut of the psychoid archetype. Nevertheless, it remains relevant to ask: "How is Jung able to write so often as if he is collapsing gender identity into bodily sex?" (Rowland, 2024, p. 86). C. G. Jung offers a potential answer to this question:

Different from the dynamic factors are the modalities of psychic functioning which influence human behaviour in other ways. Among these I would mention especially the sex, age, and hereditary disposition of the individual. These three factors are understood primarily as physiological data, but they are also psychological inasmuch as, like the instincts, they are subject to psychization. **Anatomical masculinity, for instance, is far from being proof of the psychic masculinity of the individual.** Similarly, psychological age does not always correspond with the physiological age (Jung, 1937/2017, para. 248, p. 65, emphasis added).

Obviously, in the preceding passage, Jung is not positing a conflation of gender and body, not least because the concept of gender did not belong to his epistemological horizon. In another respect, he is demonstrating that the modalities of psychic functions are psychized, just as occurs with the instincts: "Instinct, as a psychic phenomenon, would be, on the contrary, an assimilation of the stimulus into a complex structure that I call psychification" (Jung, 1937/2017, para. 234, p. 61). In this respect, instinct is modified when it encounters the psychic datum and begins to acquire variable characteristics, much like the psyche, which is endowed with a vast capacity for variation and transformation. It is precisely here that the concept of the psychoid becomes fundamental to understand that, for Jung (1946/2017), the relationship between body and psyche consists of a paradoxical tension between two aspects of the same underlying background; they cannot, therefore, be

reduced to an epiphenomenon of one or the other; they are complementary expressions:

Since psyche and matter are enclosed within one and the same world, and, moreover, are permanently in contact with each other, and ultimately rest on transcendent and unrepresentable factors, there is not only the possibility, but even a certain probability that matter and psyche are two different aspects of one and the same thing (. . .) (Jung, 1946/2017, para. 418, p. 165).

In light of this, such an epistemological observation implies recognizing that the body is not a datum to be overcome by the unconscious, as Rowland (2024) suggests, since the two stand in a complementary relation to each other. From this standpoint, Jung (1946/2017) introduces a non-reductionist and paradoxical view of the body–psyche phenomenon and, through the delimitation of the process of psychization, establishes a complex differentiation between biological sex and psychic masculinity/femininity — that is, a symbolic quality that does not merely designate anatomical sex or cultural gender, but rather the psyche's modes of operation through principles of structure (*Logos*) and relatedness (*Eros*). Even Hillman converges with Jung on this point:

As Jung shows all through the *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (CW 14) and elsewhere, 'male' and 'female' are biological metaphors for the psychic conditions of conscious and unconscious. **Anima integration in the model of the hermaphrodite does not mean acquiring characteristics of the other gender**; rather, it means a double consciousness, mercurial, true and untrue, action and inaction, sight and blindness, living the impossible oxymoron, more like an animal who is at once superbly conscious in its actions and utterly unconscious of them (Hillman, 1985/2020, p. 145, emphasis added).

In this passage, Hillman (1985/2020) deployed the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' as metaphors to describe the paradoxical relationship between the conscious and the unconscious, rather than as gender norms or physiological data. This conception, already outlined in C. G. Jung's works, prevents such terms from being understood in a substantialized way — as gender markers, that is, as designations of what constitutes a man or a woman in social and historical terms. However, from the standpoint of the Jungian concept of psychization, this relation exceeds the merely metaphorical level, since masculine and feminine are not just comparative images, but autonomous psychic qualities, modes of psychic functioning that correspond to *Eros* and *Logos* as structuring principles of consciousness and the unconscious, as outlined by

Jung (1954/2012b). Although Hillman (1985/2020) preserves the psychic dimension of such concepts in this passage, elsewhere in his work he proposes a re-elaboration of the notion of *anima*, suggesting that the *anima* archetype is inherent to the psyche of both men and women alike. At this juncture, the author departs from C. G. Jung's epistemological horizon to formulate his own archetypal perspective, an issue that will be revisited later. Nevertheless, still regarding the "masculine" and the "feminine" as psychic qualities, in the text "Woman in Europe" (1927/2002), Jung made the following statement concerning the social and psychological achievements that women were bringing about in their own right:

When a woman embraces a traditionally male profession, studying and working like a man, she ends up doing something that, at the very least, does not correspond to her feminine nature, and may even be harmful (. . .) And when I say harmful, I am not referring only to physiological damage, but above all to psychological damage (Jung, 1927/2022, para. 243, p. 129).

It is worth noting that Jung (1927/2022) understands woman and man as two pairs of opposites; that is, one constitutes the other's shadow. In this regard, bringing the shadow to consciousness entails a "psychic loss," insofar as one has been living on a plane where one is unconscious. From this perspective, Jung (1927/2022) is elaborating upon the psychological challenges faced when man and woman live out their opposite principle, framing this movement as a psychological achievement:

Masculinity means knowing what you want and doing what is necessary to achieve your goal. Once this lesson is learned, it's obvious that it can never be forgotten without significant psychological harm. The independence and critical thinking that she acquires through this knowledge are positive values, and that's how a woman experiences them. That's why she doesn't want to abandon them (Jung, 1927/2022, para. 260, p. 137).

The considerations put forward by Jung (1927/2022) regarding woman in Europe are commonly read as essentialist from the perspective of gender studies; however, this passage offers a counterpoint to such alleged essentialism when the author states that the psychic masculinity achieved by women is positive and should not be abandoned. It is important to underscore that Jung's definition of masculinity in this text does not stem from a biological or gender-based standpoint; rather, he grounds it as a psychic

quality, reinforced by the concept of psychization (Jung, 1919/2017).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that Samuels (1992) pointed out that speaking of masculine and feminine separately constitutes a projection that reinforces dichotomies. This issue is also addressed by Rowland (2024), insofar as she argues that, by elaborating on *anima/animus* in binary terms, Jung was reproducing a system in which one term becomes privileged over the other within a hierarchical regime, thereby suggesting a Derridean deconstruction of complex psychology. However, C. G. Jung's conceptual framework is not binary but paradoxical, for "(. . .) we have to understand this kind of paradoxical thinking when we want to understand psychological facts. It's the same with all pairs of opposites (. . .)" (Jung, 1928-1930/2022, p. 173). In this regard, Jung clarifies that the unconscious does not express itself in terms of "either/or", which are typical of a binary construction, but in terms of "both/and simultaneously," grounding this conception in alchemical symbolism:

The enormous role played by contrasts and their union makes it understandable why the language of alchemy is so fond of paradox. To achieve union, alchemy attempts not only to look at opposites together, but also to express them together (Jung, 1954/2012a, para. 35, p. 68).

It follows, then, that C. G. Jung's conceptual framework operates through the logic of paradox — a fact that stands in contrast to the view that the conceptual shortcuts of *anima/animus* ultimately reinforce gender binarism within a social perspective. Such an interpretation merely projects a binary mentality onto a conceptual construct that actually aims to transcend it. To further this distinction, it is necessary to reconsider *anima/animus* through the conceptual shortcut of the psychoid archetype.

Anima/animus and the psychoid archetype

In contemporary research, several scholars of Jungian psychology share the understanding that C. G. Jung conflated gender stereotypes prevalent in his time with the definitions of *anima/animus*. According to Samuels (1992), Jung purportedly claimed, based on his "theory" of archetypes, that there was something eternal and substantial regarding woman and the feminine; Samuels thus draws attention to how Jung failed to account for the continuous role of culture in our understanding of what we call "feminine." According to Saiz et al. (2023), in their revision of *anima/animus*, the masculine is not equivalent to man, nor the feminine to woman; rather, both *anima* and *animus* are

integral parts of the human psyche and cannot be conditioned by sex or gender. It should be reiterated that the anatomical and psychic differentiation between masculinity and femininity had already been observed by Jung (1937/2017) through the concept of psychization — initially addressed in 1919 in the text “Instinct and the Unconscious” (Jung, 1919/2017). Building upon this distinction between the feminine and the *anima*, Saiz et al. (2023, p. 322) further state that: “(. . .) it is important to specify: the archetypal feminine, the *anima*, is not femininity. The *anima* is an archetypal and dynamic pattern of organization of the psyche as are the *animus* and the *androgynous*.” This passage reveals that Saiz et al. (2023) are seeking to differentiate the *anima* from the cultural feminine, based on the understanding that C. G. Jung had not fully undertaken such an endeavor. From an epistemological standpoint, it is important to consider the following text:

In projection, the *anima* always assumes a feminine form, with certain characteristics. **This empirical observation does not mean, however, that the archetype itself is constituted in the same way.** The masculine and feminine syzygy is only one of the possible pairs of opposites, but in practice it is one of the most important and frequent. **It has many relationships with other pairs (of opposites) that do not present sexual differences, and can therefore only be placed in a sexual category in a forced way.** Such relationships are found in multiple shades, mainly in kundalini yoga, gnosticism, and alchemical philosophy. (. . .) It seems probable to us that an archetype in a state of rest, not projected, does not possess a determinable form, but constitutes a formally undefined structure, with the possibility of manifesting itself in determined forms through projection (Jung, 1954/2020, para. 142, p. 79, emphasis added).

In “On the Nature of the Psyche,” Jung (1946/2017) establishes a fundamental epistemological demarcation by asserting that the archetypal images mobilized by the unconscious must not be confused with the archetype as such. The latter consists of an irrepresentable basic form, whose contents can only be apprehended by consciousness in an approximate manner. In the essay “Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious” (1954/2020), Jung applies this reformulation to the conceptual shortcut of the *anima*, distinguishing between projection, archetypal image, and the archetype proper. He emphasizes that the feminine form of the *anima* constitutes a symbolic and empirical expression, and that the *anima* archetype possesses neither fixed content nor a determinate form. Consequently, with the concept of *anima*, Jung is not making an assertion about “woman”, nor is he postulating a substantial

feminine essence. The form of the expression of the *anima* is mediated by culture and individuality — hence the emphasis on projection. Another important aspect is that this text, revised in 1954, already reflects the influence of the reformulation of the archetype as psychoid (*Seeleähnliche*), or “psyche-like” Jung (1946/2017). Therefore, *anima* and *animus* are not the essential feminine or masculine, but psychic functions of mediation between consciousness and the collective unconscious, assuming specific forms when projected or personified. Contemporary critiques based on gender studies thus effect a transposition of symbol into sign when they fail to sufficiently make this distinction.

In the course of the same essay, Jung (1954/2020) demonstrates that *anima/animus* integrate the archetypal configuration of the syzygy, and that only through a strained effort could all manifestations of this structure be reduced to contrasexual model. It is important to emphasize that the syzygy consists of a personification of the conscious/unconscious opposites, that is, a symbol of the paradoxical tension between these two poles of the psyche. It is equally important to consider that the syzygy is not a binary construction of gender, as discussed by Rowland (2024), but an archetype: “(. . .) it turns out that the imagination is so bound to this motif that, at all times and in all places, it is motivated to project it again and again” (Jung, 1954/2020, para. 120, p. 69). As noted above, the syzygy and the relation between the pairs of opposites must be understood through the lens of paradox. Jung (1930/2013) initially developed this line of thought in “The Secret of the Golden Flower,” further deepening it in his alchemical studies (Jung, 1954/2012a).

Equally significant is Jung's clarification regarding his conceptual shortcuts: “[the psychologist] must free himself from the common opinion that the name simultaneously explains the psychic facts it denotes” (Jung, 1929/2017, para. 223, p. 55). In this passage, Jung states that his concepts do not “contain” the phenomena they describe. The fixed points of reference he uses as descriptive aids are indispensable in practice, yet irrelevant in theory. By employing boundary concepts and drawing upon everyday language to express them, Jung (1929/2017) became the target of the widespread misconception that a name predetermines the nature of things. Thus, from an epistemological standpoint, gender critiques that understand *anima /animus* as social roles proceed from the assumption that Jung was describing the constitutive characteristics of men and women; they presume that renaming the concept or revising it in sociological terms would fundamentally alter the phenomenon itself. This epistemological demarcation is further deepened when Jung returns to the Kantian critique of metaphysics and asserts that:

What we see of the world is far from the totality; it is merely the surface. We do not penetrate the substance of the world, what Kant called 'the thing-in-itself.' This would be the unconscious of things, and, insofar as they are unconscious, they are unknown to us (Jung, 1928-1930/2022, p. 69).

With this understanding, Jung (1928-1930/2022) reaffirms that complex psychology is not a metaphysics tasked with explaining the essence of things in themselves, but a scientific endeavor in which its concepts describe and organize the manifestations of the unconscious, as exemplified by the concept of the *anima* revised through the notion of the psychoid archetype. Accordingly, it becomes necessary to understand *anima/animus* as functions of mediation with the collective unconscious, as outlined by Jung (1950/2021), which may present themselves clothed in particular images, yet are not phenomenologically reducible to them.

Eros e logos and the compensatory function of *anima/animus*

Eros and *Logos* are commonly understood as terms used in an essentialist manner by C. G. Jung. This is particularly noted in the critical work of Rowland (2024), who asserts that there is no theoretical reason to assume that *Logos* is an attribute of masculine consciousness and *Eros* an attribute of feminine consciousness: "Neither *Eros* nor *Logos* can be placed in a position derived from bodily sex, because the Jungian unconscious works against bodily essentialism" (Rowland, 2024, p. 90). Goldenberg (1976) also offered critical observations on this matter, stating that although C. G. Jung mentioned that *Eros* and *Logos* corresponded to intuitive concepts, they were taken literally to ascribe essentialist traits to woman and man. Regarding these two terms, Jung asserted: "Far be it from me to want to give an overly specific definition of these intuitive concepts. I use the terms *Eros* and *Logos* merely as notional terms" (Jung, 1950/2021, para. 29, p. 27). Thus, these two concepts are working tools that assist in describing how the conscious field of a man may be characterized by *Logos* (*Sol*) and that of a woman by *Eros* (*Luna*). As will be discussed below, it is not possible to regard this schema as a fixed category, something C. G. Jung himself recognized when he explicitly emphasized that these are intuitive concepts and notional terms. According to Barbugiani (2025), it is possible to establish a correspondence between Jung's "intuitive concept" and that of Henri Bergson, insofar as Jung (1950/2021) recognizes that *Eros* and *Logos* are terms describing living, dynamic processes of the psyche, thereby resisting any rigid or fixed definition.

Moreover, in “*Mysterium Coniunctionis*”, Jung (1954/2012b) did not subordinate woman to the unconscious, as contemporary reinterpretations contend. Instead, he clarifies therein that although alchemy employed *Sol* and *Luna* to describe masculine and feminine principles, this symbolic correspondence does not warrant concluding that woman is identified with the unconscious, since the unconscious opposite principle in man commonly personifies itself as a feminine element. Jung (1954/2012b) explicitly states that women also possess consciousness and that *Sol* — one of the alchemical luminaries for masculine consciousness — does not only concern men. If it did, one would have to admit that women lack consciousness, a notion that C. G. Jung promptly rejected in the text in question, asserting that: “(. . .) The moon is not only dark, as it is also a body that provides light, or in other words, it can also represent consciousness” (Jung, 1954/2012b, para. 217, p. 239). Therefore, according to Jung, (1954/2012b), feminine consciousness appears to exhibit a lunar quality (*Eros*), while the unconscious is personified through the image of the sun (*Logos*). He thereby demonstrates that the psyche exists in a paradoxical tension between these two principles and emphasizes that *Eros* and *Logos* arose from psychological considerations regarding the attitude of consciousness, rather than from bodily sex, as suggested by Rowland (2024).

Starting from purely psychological considerations, I have tried in various places to characterize male consciousness through the concept of *Logos* and female consciousness through that of *Eros*. In this task I sought to understand by “*Logos*” distinguishing, judging, recognizing, and by “*Eros*” relating. **Both concepts had for me the value of intuitive conceptions, which cannot be defined exactly or exhaustively (. . .) As it is difficult to establish a psychological theorem without immediately being forced to invert it, examples to the contrary readily appear at this point as well:** men who care little for judging and knowing, and women who manifest an exaggeratedly masculine capacity for distinguishing and judging. I would like to designate these cases as regular exceptions (. . .) (Jung, 1954/2012a, para. 218-219, p. 240, emphasis added).

In light of these considerations, Jung (1954/2012b) acknowledges that it is not possible to rigidly infer *Eros* and *Logos* from bodily sex upon observing “regular exceptions.” However, such cases do not imply a symmetrical coexistence of *anima/animus* in all individuals, as these exceptions refer to the unsymbolized irruption of the principle opposed to the conscious attitude — that is, possession by the lunar *anima* in man and the solar *animus* in woman. This possession by the opposite principle should not be readily

interpreted as negative or pathological, since Jung (1955-1954/2012b) also asserts that this exception may have formed the basis for the alchemical conception of the *Hermaphroditus* — a symbolic configuration of psychic totality. Jung (1954/2012b) thus seeks to underscore that the field of consciousness exhibits specific tonalities or modes of functioning for which the terms *Eros* and *Logos*, or *Sol* and *Luna*, serve as an approximate model to describe rather than substantiate them into rigid gender categories. Both are, after all: “(. . .) two basic powers of the soul that form a pair of opposites and mutually condition each other” (Jung, 1959-2009/2013, p. 498). In this sense, we all “have” *Eros* and *Logos* present in the psyche, with the psychodynamic difference being that one of these principles resides in the conscious field while the other manifests in the unconscious through the compensatory phenomenon of the *anima* (the unconscious *Eros*) and the *animus* (the unconscious *Logos*). Jung (1950/2021) states that, through integration, the *anima* imparts a relational polarity to masculine consciousness, while the *animus* imparts a reflective polarity to feminine consciousness, thereby mobilizing *Eros* and *Logos*, respectively, into the conscious field. Subsequently, the image that emerges through this integration is that of the alchemical androgyne, which psychologically personifies the opposites *in potentia* within the unconscious, evoking the idea that, in strictly psychodynamic terms, the psyche is androgynous, as described by Jung (1954/2012b).

Taking these considerations into account, when Young-Eisendrath (2002), McKenzie (2006), and Saiz et al. (2023), for example, claim that *anima/animus* are symmetrically present in everyone’s psyche, an epistemological deviation occurs, since, in psychodynamic terms, every person presumably “has” *Eros* and *Logos* within the psyche; however, according to Jung (1950/2021), *anima/animus* are compensatory archetypal phenomena specifically related to the principle that is guiding the conscious field. Regarding the *anima* in woman and the *animus* in man, he thus emphasized:

(. . .) No, it is the feminine part of a man’s psychology, so it wouldn’t exist in a woman. When it does exist, it is absolutely identical to the woman’s conscious principle, and then I would call it *Eros*. The same is true with a man. *Animus* in a man is not a person, it is his conscious principle, so I would call it *Logos* (Jung, 1928-1930/2022, p. 461).

In this passage, taken from a seminar presented by C. G. Jung in 1930 and compiled in “Dream Analysis”, Jung (1928-1930/2022) reinforces that *anima* and *animus* are complementary psychic functions of the conscious structure and do not coexist symmetrically in everyone. In other words, he employed these two concepts to describe functional structures of mediation with the

collective unconscious rather than gender essences. Thus, these functions do not compensate the individual's gender identity, but rather the predominant attitude of consciousness in terms of *Eros* or *Logos*, which, according to Jung (1954/2012b), do not designate substantial "feminine and masculine contents," but instead help to describe functions pertaining to the dynamics of psychic complementarity between the conscious and the unconscious. By way of analogy, asserting that *anima/animus* are symmetrical within the same psyche would be equivalent to considering that an extraverted thinking type would also have introverted feeling within their conscious field — in both cases, the compensatory function of the psyche collapses.

McKenzie (2006), based on the understanding that *anima/animus* constitute an archetypal theory of gender formulated by C. G. Jung, suggests that these conceptual shortcuts fail to account for the experiences of gender and sexuality lived by a large portion of the LGBTQIAPN+ population. As discussed throughout this study, such an interpretation only holds through a conceptual deviation that converts symbol into sign, disregarding the fact that Jung (1950/2021) defined *anima/animus* as compensatory psychic functions of the conscious attitude, intended to mediate contents of the collective unconscious rather than to explain gender or sexual identities. Here, it is important once again to consider the caution expressed by Jung (1929/2017) that the names given to concepts do not explain the psychic facts they denote. Although approximations can be established between *persona*, gender, and the soul-images — *anima/animus* — it is crucial not to confuse these psychic functions with the social construction of gender identity. This proposition is in line with the caution advanced by Hillman (1985/2020), who underscores that the image of the hermaphrodite does not mean uniting characteristics of both sexes and genders within the same subject:

To take this eccentric image of the hermaphrodite and literalize it in terms of sexual genders, and then moralize it into a bisexual goal for behavior, is as erroneous a step as considering the phallus as the biological penis or the great mother as the mother of one's own childhood. The battle over literalism is never won; it reappears in new guises, thus forcing us to be psychological (Hillman, 1985/2020, p. 145, emphasis added).

Although Hillman (1985/2020) moves toward a different epistemological horizon within archetypal psychology, especially regarding the compensatory character of the *anima/animus* functions, in this passage he underscores the need to avoid transposing symbols into signs of social identity categories when discussing *anima*, *animus*, and the androgyne/hermaphrodite. In

this sense, the revision of the *anima* concept undertaken by Hillman (1985/2020) does not stem from a gender perspective, but rather from an approach to the *anima* as an archetypal premise of all psychological work — which, according to him, would also justify the *anima* as an attribute of woman. While Jung (1951/2020) operates on a functional and pragmatic level, understanding the *anima* as a conceptual shortcut, Hillman (1985/2020) equates it with the psyche (soul); in his view, all psychological work is a cultivation of the soul/*anima*; therefore, he treats as a foundational premise what in C. G. Jung's work is a psychic function. Thus, James Hillman's archetypal psychology may be considered the fruit of his intimate relationship with the *anima*. Crucially, however, Jung (1946/2018) contends that marriage with the *anima* consists of an identification with the unconscious, and that such a condition is only possible in the absence of psychological self-knowledge.

Based on the arguments presented in the course of this study, one may question the heuristic value, from both a clinical and psychic standpoint, of considering *anima/animus* as gender archetypes. To what extent would such a conception aid in describing the paradoxical relationship between the conscious and the unconscious? Such inquiry does not aim to deny the concept of gender, but rather to point out that, when revising *anima* and *animus*, it is necessary to remain within the epistemology of the symbol. Finally, following the observation from Jung (1954/2012b) regarding the regular exceptions involving *anima* and *animus* and venturing a step further, we suggest that an individual's gender identity and sexuality, *a priori*, tell us nothing about how their psyche is structuring the paradoxical relationship between *Eros* and *Logos* and, therefore, reveal nothing about the compensatory function of *anima* and *animus*. These manifestations remain conditioned by the psyche's unconscious and irrational aspects, reinforcing the need for the analyst to develop a dialectical stance toward the psychic phenomenon, since, as Jung (1935/2019) affirmed, individuality is an infinitely variable system and therefore cannot be confined within rigid categories. Such a stance is vital to avoid a literalist reading of the symbol, which results, on the one hand, in a conceptual deviation within an epistemological perspective and, on the other, in reductionist and pathologizing interpretations of LGBTQIAPN+ identities.

Final considerations

It is important to underscore that the discussion presented in this article did not aim to disregard the fact that the conceptual construction of *anima/animus* occurred within a specific historical and social context, nor to imply that such a context should be

ignored in contemporary studies of complex psychology. However, as previously highlighted, it is necessary to differentiate between the linguistic resources used by C. G. Jung to construct such concepts and the epistemological foundation upon which they are based. The contemporary critique of the *anima/animus* conceptual shortcuts, in understanding them as gender archetypes, focuses on revising them through the lens of such research, particularly motivated by the broadened experiences of gender and sexuality in our time. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in this article, such an undertaking is only possible through a semiotic reading of concepts that belong to the epistemological horizon of the symbol. This is by no means a value judgment on gender and sexuality studies, which are increasingly necessary in our social, political, and historical context; rather, it is an epistemological observation emphasizing that the revision of these conceptual shortcuts through the lens of gender studies focuses on discourse, rather than on the clinical and phenomenological function of images.

Based on the conceptual reinforcement that Jung (1946/2017) introduced by qualifying the archetype as a psychoid category, much of what has been written about *anima/animus* needs to be revised through this conceptual lens — a task that could not be accomplished within the scope of this study, but which appears to be a potentially fruitful research undertaking for complex psychology. Beyond conceptual research, it is important to stress that *anima/animus* are also empirical concepts and, according to Jung (1950/2020), numerous experiences were required to grasp and describe them. Therefore, in seeking to expand and revise such concepts, it becomes necessary to ground them in psychic experience through the analysis of unconscious material — such as studies with comparative material — capable of providing empirical evidence that justify a conceptual revision or expansion.

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