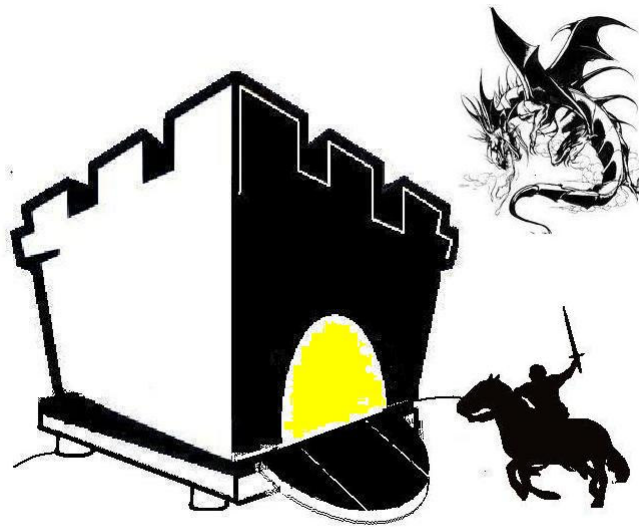

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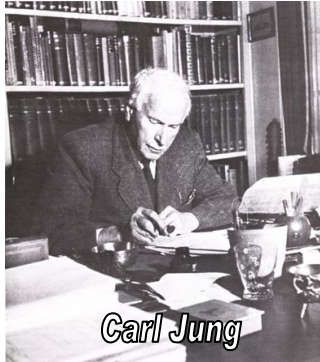


Three Solutions for Your Greatest Problems in Life

Fortress Living: Three Solutions for your Greatest Problems in Life

Lesson One

The Three Greatest Problems in Life

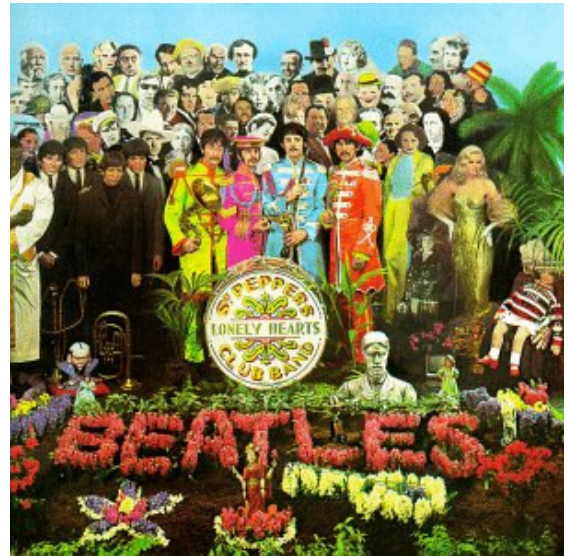


The famous psychological theorist, Carl Jung, once mused on the greatest problems in life. He reportedly said, “the greatest and most important problems of life are fundamentally insoluble. They can never be solved only outgrown.”

Is that a true statement? Many look to a man like Jung as an expert on issues of mental health. His theories formed the basis of many common themes in industrial and personal psychology: temperament analysis, introversion/extroversion, the roles we play in our social stories. He published some 19 influential works that continue to be used in graduate schools and academic programs today. He even appeared on the original cover of the Beatles album, Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Heart Club Band!

But the question remains, was his answer correct? Are the greatest problems in life “fundamentally insoluble?” Jung is not alone in his skepticism. More and more people today think he’s right, and that we shouldn’t spend too much time trying to find answers to life’s nagging question. The best thing we can do is “live.”

So, what are the greatest problems in life? I don’t know that Jung enumerated them but we don’t have to look very far to find what they are. In fact, I’ll list three of them. There are numerous problems that people have—so many we could never really count them all. But there are three main categories into which all those individual problems fall.



- The Problem of Danger – *We need protection*
- The Problem of Pain – *We need pleasure*
- The Problem of Failure – *We need validation*

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The Problem of Danger



When a child is born it doesn't take long to realize that the world is a dangerous place. A child's perception of that danger is incredibly limited but it recognizes the danger, nonetheless, from the very moment of birth and its descent down the birth canal, the baby is aware of danger. After this frightening journey, the next danger a child confronts is hunger. Long before he knows what hunger is, she feels its presence and the fear of being overcome by it. As we get older, our understanding of this problem is only magnified. We realize more and more how dangerous and perilous our world is. By school age, a child's danger recognition systems have expanded dramatically. Now, the threats are no longer internal—as Winnie the Pooh would say, 'a rumble in my tummy.' Now, people are a danger as well: not just strangers but bigger, stronger and more menacing children on the playground.

This problem never goes away. No matter how old or how intelligent we might be, we are always at risk of the dangers in our world. And one of the main reasons is the knowledge of our own vulnerability. A person with no sense of vulnerability or danger is not courageous but insane.

Because of this greatest problem in life all humans need a solution. We need *protection*. The newest infant is intrinsically aware of its weakness and mortality. I would say it's hardwired into our brain. We don't have to learn about the reality of danger. We certainly have to learn specific types of dangers around us, but the terror of danger itself is something inborn.

The Problem of Pain

When that newborn is crying because of hunger it is also crying because of pain and discomfort. This points to the second greatest problem in life: the problem of *pain and pleasure*. We're not only hardwired for protection. We also have neural wiring to avoid pain and pursue pleasure. So fundamental is the experience of pain and pleasure in our neural system that it provides the framework in which all of our decisions and motivations occur. Why we do the things we do? Because we need gratification. Gratification describes the feeling of pleasure and satisfaction when we don't need anything else. When was the last time you felt that you had no needs? Has it been a long time? Have you ever felt totally satisfied and gratified?



As we get older some learn to defer gratification, to postpone it temporarily. But the pain/pleasure dynamic is always a factor. Even the postponement brings pain. This greatest problem in life never goes far from view.

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Think of the athlete, training for competition. What kind of pain is he willing to endure? Why? The familiar phrase, “pain is weakness leaving the body,” is simply a practical application of the pain/pleasure problem. Implicit in the phrase is the anticipated pleasure of having greater strength and endurance. The athlete is willing to endure the pain and discomfort of training his body specifically because he believes the outcome will bring greater pleasure.

The Problem of Failure



A newborn doesn't contemplate the meaning of life or reflect on success and failure as abstract concepts. But in a few years she will in the daily grind of life. The neural mechanisms required for such thoughts take shape in early childhood. This points to the third greatest problem in life: *failure*. Even a toddler needs success. When the blocks he carefully stacked tumble down he begins to cry. Underlying this problem is another inborn quality of human beings. We need success. I call this the need for validation.

Initially, children learn how to process this need based on their interactions with others. When Little Johnny is given a smiley face on his report card at school, or a hug from his grandma for the birthday card he just gave her, those experiences provide the desired validation and affirmation of his worth. When the report card has a frown or when he gets a reprimand from his parents, he learns about the dark shadow of failure. Throughout the rest of his days he'll try to figure out how to find success—to get the smiley face on the various “report cards” of life. He won't always be thinking about “success” as an abstract, transcendent purpose. But he'll always be pursuing the validation and affirmation that attends it.



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Quiz 1 Questions:

1. What famous psychologist said the greatest problems in life are unsolvable?
 - a. Sigmund Freud
 - b. Carl Jung
 - c. Robert Young
2. According to him, since we cannot solve the greatest problems in life, the best we can do is--
 - a. Just live
 - b. Just give up
 - c. Just don't think about it
3. We become aware of the problem of danger when
 - a. We start school
 - b. Get old
 - c. We are first born
4. To solve the problem of pain the greatest thing we need is
 - a. pleasure and gratification
 - b. doctors and medicine
 - c. parents and family
5. We try and solve the problem of failure by
 - a. seeking information
 - b. seeking validation
 - c. seeking vilification