



Woman Sewing Before a Garden Window, 1895 by Edouard Vuillard

Care of the Soul - Summary

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Care of the Soul by Thomas Moore (1992)

Notes by Deb Bodeau and Doug Muder (1997)

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[Overview of Care of the Soul](#)

The goal of this book is to aid the reader in noticing the soul, recognizing its importance, and meeting its needs. Moore's approach is that of a guide. He does not make points supported

by well-constructed arguments. Instead, he draws attention to situations in which the soul's concerns arise. He gives examples of how those situations appear from the soul's perspective.

Moore characterizes "soul" as those aspects of human consciousness that are imaginative, intuitive, and aesthetic. He therefore resists the temptation to define soul, to pin it down and pull it into the domain of the rational mind. Instead, Moore's meaning of "soul" has to be gleaned from associations. Moore associates "soul" with meaning, genuineness, satisfaction, depth, community, love, attachment, and simple pleasures, and "loss of soul" with meaninglessness, emptiness, disillusionment, loss of values, and vague depression. Meeting the soul's needs--caring for the soul--basically consists of integrating the imaginative, aesthetic aspects of consciousness into our awareness.

A major psychological function of "soul" is to bridge the gap between rational, narrative consciousness and the unconscious.

[Outline of Care of the Soul](#)

The book is organized into an introduction and four sections.

The [Introduction](#) sounds the three major themes of the book:

- the importance of soul as the seat of imagination, mediating between mind and body.
- the contrast between an organic model of "caring" for the soul and a medical model of "curing" psychological ills.
- reintroducing ancient (especially Renaissance) wisdom into modern psychological discourse.

Introduction

The Introduction sounds the major themes of the book:

- **The importance of soul as the seat of imagination, mediating between mind and body.** "The great malady of the twentieth century, implicated in all of our troubles and affecting us individually and socially is 'loss of soul.'" [p xi] "Tradition teaches that soul lies midway between understanding and unconsciousness, and that its instrument is neither mind nor body, but imagination. ... It is commonplace for writers to point out that we live in a time of deep division, in which mind is separated from body and spirituality is at odds with materialism. But how do we get out of this split? We can't just 'think' ourselves through it, because thinking itself is part of the problem. What we need is a way out of dualistic attitudes. We need a third possibility, and that third is soul." [p xiii]
- **The contrast between an organic model of "caring" for the soul and a medical model of "curing" psychological ills.** "The aim of soul work, therefore, is not adjustment to accepted norms or to an image of the statistically healthy individual. Rather, the goal is a richly elaborated life, connected to society and nature, woven into the culture of family, nation, and globe." [p xviii] "Care of the soul is not solving the puzzle of life; quite the opposite, it is an appreciation of the paradoxical mysteries

that blend light and darkness into the grandeur of what human life and culture can be." [p xix] "As you read this book, it might be a good idea to abandon any ideas you may have about living successfully and properly, and about understanding yourself. The human soul is not meant to be understood. Rather, you might take a more relaxed position and reflect on the way your life has taken shape." [p xix]

- **Reintroducing ancient (especially Renaissance) wisdom into modern psychological discourse.** "Within our history we do have remarkable sources of insight from people who wrote explicitly about the nature and needs of the soul, and so we can look to the past for guidance in restoring this wisdom." [p xi] "The idea of a soul-centered world goes back to the earliest days of our culture. It has been sketched out in every period of our history, in the writings of Plato, in the experiments of the Renaissance theologians, in the letters and literature of the Romantic poets, and finally in Freud, who gave us a glimpse of a psychic underworld full of memory, fantasy, and emotion. Jung made explicit what was embryonic in Freud, speaking forthrightly for soul and reminding us that we have much to learn about it from our forebears. Most recently James Hillman, my mentor and colleague, and others in his circle--Robert Sardello, Rafael Lopez-Pedraza, Patricia Berry, and Alfred Ziegler, for example--have presented a new approach to psychology that is mindful of this history and explicitly follows Ficino's advice to put soul at the very center of our lives." [p xiv]

The first section looks at ways in which psychological dysfunctions can be read as symptoms of failure to address the soul's concern.

Section One: Care of the Soul

This section consists of a single chapter.

Chapter 1: Honoring Symptoms as a Voice of the Soul

This chapter introduces one of the major techniques of the book, together with one of its most difficult ideas. The idea is that a psychological symptom is actually a scream of pain from some distressed part of the soul, and that the goal should be, not to eliminate the offending soul-piece as one would take out an inflamed appendix, but rather to care for it, so that it stops being motivated to produce symptoms. The technique is More's refusal to look at any part of the patient's soul as "bad", and, instead, to seem to side with the symptom rather than against it.

"One effective 'trick' in caring for the soul is to look with special attention and openness at what the individual rejects, and then to speak favorably for that rejected element. ... Much soul can be lost in such splitting, so that care of the soul can go a long way simply by recovering some of this material that has been cut off. [p 16]

"Observance of the soul can be deceptively simple. You take back what has been disowned. You work with what is, rather than with what you wish were there." [p 9]

"Modern psychology ... is often seen as a way of being saved from the very messes that most deeply mark human life as human. We want to sidestep negative moods and emotions, bad life choices and unhealthy habits. But if our purpose is first to observe the soul as it is, then we may have to discard the salvational wish and find deeper respect for what is actually there. By trying to avoid human mistakes and failures, we move beyond the reach of soul." [p 9]

"Observance means first of all listening and looking carefully at what is being revealed in the suffering. An intent to heal can get in the way of seeing. By doing less, more is accomplished. Observance is homeopathic in its workings rather than allopathic, in the paradoxical way that it befriends a problem rather than making an enemy of it." [p 10]

Moore sounds a theme he will return to frequently: Care of the soul means paying attention to one's Shadow. Adverse symptoms often point to the repression of something important. We must learn what we have stuffed into our "dark double--the person we choose not to be." As we take ownership of our personal shadows, "morality can deepen and drop its simplicity, becoming at the same time both more demanding and more flexible."

The second section demonstrates how a soul-based perspective changes our perception of common psychological and practical issues: Problems to be solved become entry points for exploring one's basic humanity.

Part Two: Care of the Soul in Everyday Life

The first three chapters track personal development: childhood and family, narcissism and adolescence, and love (primarily romantic love). The next four chapters focus on "shadow" issues, which involve aspects of life and behavior we seek to ignore, repress, or eliminate: jealousy and envy (love's shadow), power and violence, depression, and physical illness. He closes the section with a chapter on issues related to money and work.

"The shadow is a frightening reality. Anyone who talks glibly about integrating the shadow, as if you could chum up to shadow the way you learn a foreign language, doesn't know the darkness that always qualifies shadow." [p 133]

Chapter 2: The Myth of Childhood and the Family

Moore offers some introductory observations on the importance of family to a soul-centered perspective. He then explores three fundamental components of family: father, mother, and child.

"We may be tempted at times to imagine the family as full of innocence and good will, but actual family life resists such romanticism. Usually it presents the full range of human potential, including evil, hatred, violence, sexual confusion, and insanity. In other words, the dynamics of actual family life reveal the soul's complexity and unpredictability, and any

attempts to place a veil of simplistic sentimentality over the family image will break down." [p 26]

He returns to the "care vs. cure" theme: "By 'getting to the root' of present problems in family background, we hope to understand what is going on, and in that understanding we hope to find a cure. But care of the soul doesn't require fixing the family or becoming free of it or interpreting its pathology. We may need simply to recover soul by reflecting deeply on the soul events that have taken place in the crucible of the family." [p 26-27] "We might imagine family therapy more as a process of exploring the complexity of our sense of life than of making it simple and intelligible." [p 29]

"Recovery of soul begins when we can take to heart our own family fate and find in it the raw material, the alchemical *prima materia*, for our own soul work." [p 28] "What if we thought of the family less as the determining influence by which we are formed and more the raw material from which we can make a life?" [p 30]

"In general, when we try to escape the family's 'dysfunctions', we fall into complicated, paradoxical tangles. ... A renewed entry into the family, embracing what has previously been denied, often leads to an unexpected alchemy in which even the most difficult family relationships shift enough to make a significant difference." [p 31-32]

Moore recommends looking at the family story more as myth than as history. "To care for the soul of the family, it is necessary to shift from causal thinking to an appreciation for story and character, to allow grandparents and uncles to be transformed into figures of myth and to watch certain family stories become canonical through repeated tellings." [p 29] "When we tell stories about the family without judgment and without instant analysis, the literal persons turn into characters in a drama and isolated episodes reveal themselves as themes in a great saga. Family history is transformed into myth." [p 32]

By the same token, the soul can use myths and sagas as a springboard for contemplation of the family, its effects on one, and one's role in it, without getting caught up in mental arguments about who-did-what-to-who. Moore provides extended examples of this process by considering Father in the context of the Odyssey, and Mother in the context of the myth of Demeter and Persephone.

For Child, Moore first draws attention to positive attributes: the Divine Child, a "figure of creativity and spontaneity." He then draws attention to some attributes that are conventionally devalued, pointing out that they also present opportunities for the soul's growth: vulnerability, inferiority, immaturity, ignorance.

Chapter 3: Self-Love and Its Myth: Narcissus and Narcissism

In this chapter, Moore explores the relationship between selfishness, narcissism ("the habit of focusing attention on oneself rather than on the world of objects and others" [p 55]), and the soul. "The one-sidedness and moralism of the various attacks on narcissism suggest that there may be some soul lying around in this rejected pile of ego and self love. ... Is our

negative branding of narcissism a defense against a demanding call of the soul to be loved?" [p 55-56]

"How then do we preserve the symptom of narcissism, assuming that there is a gold nugget in that clump of dirt? How do we penetrate through the superficial sludge to the deeper necessity? The answer, as we are beginning to recognize by now, is to bring the wisdom of the imagination into play." [p 56-57]

Moore demonstrates by exploring the myth of Narcissus. He finds, for example, that in the story, narcissism "turns gradually into a deeper version of itself. It becomes true stillness, a wonder about oneself, a meditation on one's nature." [p 60] "Narcissus becomes able to love himself only when he learns to love that self as an object. He now has a view of himself as someone else. This is not ego loving ego; this is ego loving the soul." [p 63]

Moore then explores how polytheism provides a remedy for some of the ills of narcissism. "The narcissistic person becomes fixed on a single idea of who he is, and other possibilities are automatically rejected. We can read the myth ... as a lesson in polytheism." [p 67] "Polytheism ... means that psychologically we have many different claims made on us from a deep place. It is not possible, nor is it desirable, to get all of these impulses together under a single focus. Rather than strive for unity of personality, the idea of polytheism suggests living within multiplicity." [p 66] "When we try to keep life in order with a monotheistic attitude... our moralism against ourselves can keep certain parts of our nature at a distance." [p 67]

Finally, Moore explores ways in which narcissism substitutes for, and inhibits, a deep love for oneself, leading one to focus on the surface, on one's self-description rather than on one's experiences and engagements with meaningful activity. He concludes: "The healing of narcissism, the fulfillment of its symptomatic hunger, is achieved by giving the ego what it needs--pleasure in accomplishment, acceptance, and some degree of recognition. Masochistic refusal of the ego's desire is no way to care for the soul." [p 73]

Chapter 4: Love's Initiations

Moore begins by contrasting ancient and modern views of love: "Love is a kind of madness, Plato said, a divine madness. Today we talk about love as though it were primarily an aspect of relationship and also, to a great degree, as if it were something within our control. We're concerned about how to do it right, how to make it successful, how to overcome its problems, and how to survive its failures. ... We always expect love to be healing and whole, and then are astonished to find that it can create hollow gaps and empty failures." [p 77]

"It may be useful to consider love less as an aspect of relationship and more as an event of the soul. This is the point of view taken in ancient handbooks. There is no talk about making relationships work. The emphasis is on what love does to the soul. Does it bring broader vision? Does it initiate the soul in some way? Does it carry the lover away from earth to an awareness of divine things?" [p 79]

"Maybe one function of love is to cure us of an anemic imagination, a life emptied of romantic attachment and abandoned to reason. Love releases us into the realm of divine imagination, where the soul is expanded and reminded of its unearthly cravings and needs." [p 81]

He discusses how "Freud offers one way of turning our focus in love away from the contingencies of life and toward the soul" by describing transference. Each new love evokes memories and images of previous ones, particularly those from the family. This leads to a contemplation of how a new love casts a new light on many existing relationships.

As a transition to his use of myth and saga, he observes that "Love brings consciousness closer to the dream state. In that sense, it may reveal more than it distorts, as a dream reveals--poetically, suggestively, and, admittedly, obscurely."

Moore uses the story of Tristan and Isolde as a springboard for considering the relationship between sadness and romantic love. "When we reflect on the tragedies of our own loves, when we slowly find our way through their miseries, we are being initiated into the mysterious ways of the soul. ... It isn't necessary to take a pill or search out a therapeutic strategy to dismiss the feeling, because to dismiss that feeling is to banish an important soul visitor. The soul apparently needs amorous sadness. It is a form of consciousness that brings its own unique wisdom." [p 85-86]

When we look at love from the soul's perspective, "we give its fantasies validity and weight without reducing them all to action." [p 86] And so thoughts of separation from a loved one may not relate to literal separation so much as a need to better define one's individuality. Or feelings of loneliness may not point to the failings of our outer community so much as our being out of touch with "the inner persons who crowd our dreams and waking thoughts." [p 95]

He draws attention to "love's shadows": "By nature love feels inadequate, but this inadequacy rounds out the wide range of love's emotions. Love finds its soul in its feelings of incompleteness, impossibility, and imperfection."

Chapter 5: Jealousy and Envy: Healing Poisons

In keeping with his theme of paying attention to the Shadow, Moore turns our attention to these shadows of love and accomplishment. In each case he finds these negative emotions to be important messengers.

"Jealousy feels so overwhelming because it is more than a surface phenomenon. Whenever it appears, issues and values are being sorted out deep in the soul. ... Jealous is an archetypal tension, a collision of two valid needs." [p 99-100] The mythical Hippolytus comes to grief because "his monotheistic focus on one divine mystery ... abuses another." [p 99] "We may be like Hippolytus, sincerely and honestly devoted to principles that we consider absolute, while, unknown to us, other different, seemingly incompatible demands are also coming our way." [p 100]

Moore next uses the myth of Hera as goddess of jealousy to highlight the tension between erotic desire and possessiveness. "Erotic creativity is the making of a world, jealousy is the preservation of the hearth and interiority. If we did not become jealous, too many events would take place, too much life would be lived, too many connections made without deepening. Jealousy serves the soul by pressing for limits." [p 107] Hera "is dependency given dignity and even divinity. ... In the spirit of Hera, the couple protects the relationship and values signals of their dependency. For Hera, you make a phone call when you're on a trip or out of town. For Hera, you include your partner in visions of the future." [p 109] "If we want to cure our jealousy, we may have to enter into it homeopathically. Those very qualities that are so pronounced in jealousy--dependency, identity through another, the longing to protect the union--may have to be taken even closer to heart so that Hera can be honored." [p 112]

Moore turns our attention to envy. "On the one hand, envy is a desire for something, and on the other, it is a resistance to what the heart actually wants. In envy, desire and self-denial work together to create a characteristic sense of frustration and obsessiveness." [p 113] He describes how envy can be misdirection. By focusing on what someone else has, one can be distracted from one's own negative behaviors, or from pains for which one believes there can be no cure. "If in envy the person wishes life were better, then maybe it's a good idea to feel that emptiness deeply. Wishes can be fluffy instruments of repression, turning attention to unrealistic and superficial possibilities as a defense against the void that is so painful." [p 116]

"In both jealousy and envy, fantasies are potent and utterly captivating, yet they float in an atmosphere somehow removed from actual life. These fantasies are illusions, images kept at bay so they can't touch life directly. But dwelling in an imaginary life is a way of avoiding soul. Soul is always attached to life in some way. As symptoms, jealousy and envy keep life at a safe distance; as invitations to soul, they both offer ways into one's own heart where love and attachment can be reclaimed."

Chapter 6: The Soul and Power

Moore contrasts the type of power focused by ego-centered consciousness with that accessed by soul-centered consciousness. For the former, he uses Hillman's characterization of Herculean or heroic uses of power: "using brute strength and narrow, rationalistic vision. The power of the soul, in contrast, is more like a great reservoir or, in traditional imagery, like the force of water in a fast-rushing river. ... Our role with this type of power is to be an attentive observer noticing how the soul wants to thrust itself into life." [p 119]

Moore explores some sources of or access points to soul power:

"Soul power may emerge from failure, depression, loss. The general rule is that soul appears in the gaps and holes of experience. It is usually tempting to find some subtle way of denying these holes or distancing ourselves from them. But we have all experienced

moments when we've lost a job or endured an illness only to find an unexpected inner strength." [p 120]

"We are who we are because of the special mix that makes up our soul. In spite of its archetypal, universal contents, for each individual the soul is highly idiosyncratic. Power begins in knowing this special soul, which may be entirely different from our fantasies about who we are or who we want to be." [p 121]

"Soulful emptiness is not anxious. In fact, power pours in when we sustain the feeling of emptiness and withstand temptations to fill it prematurely. We have to contain the void. Too often we lose this pregnant emptiness by reaching for substitutes for power." [p 121]

Moore discusses ways in which "the logic and language of the soul" differ from those of rational consciousness. He uses two Sufi teaching stories as sources of examples. He then looks at several ways issues of power can arise in everyday life: the relationship between violence and power, sadomasochism, and destruction (both fantasized and actual).

"It would be a mistake to approach violence with any simple idea of getting rid of it. Chances are, if we try to eradicate our violence, we will also cut ourselves off from the deep power that sustains creative life. Besides, psychoanalysis teaches, repression never accomplishes what we want." [p 126-127] We can either become aware of and use our threatening impulses, or we can repress them and watch helplessly as they erupt in unexpected and undesirable behaviors.

"Genuine power, in which there are no tyrants and no genuine victims, breaks, in sadomasochism, into two parts: violence and victimization, controller and subject." [p 129]

Destruction becomes a natural outlet for soul power from which we cut ourselves off. Ways we lose access to soul power include clinging to innocence, and identifying with the puer fantasy (explored in the myths of Narcissus and Hippolytus). Moore points to a variety of dreams of violence, destruction, and danger that indicate that the dreamer has lost access to soul power. "If we do not claim the soul's power on our own behalf, we become its victims. We suffer our emotions rather than feel them working for us. We hold our thoughts and passions inward, disconnecting them from life, and then they stir up trouble within." [p 135]

"If violence is the repressed life force showing itself symptomatically, then the cure for violence is care of the soul's power." [p 135]

Chapter 7: Gifts of Depression

This chapter explores ways in which a soul-centered perspective could transform our beliefs and attitudes about depression. He begins by noting the potential benefits of depression: "Some feelings and thoughts seem to emerge only in a dark mood. Suppress the mood, and you will suppress those ideas and reflection. Depression may be as important a channel for 'negative' feelings, as expressions of affection are for the emotions of love." [p 137]

Moore bases his reflections on the Renaissance association of melancholy with Saturn. He explores how the mythology and imagery of Saturn might enrich and even ennoble our view of depression. Melancholy is "deeply rooted in Saturn's preference for days gone by, for memory and the sense that time is passing. These thoughts, sad as they are, favor the soul's desire to be both in time and in eternity, and so in a strange way they can be pleasing." [p 138-139] Melancholy is part of our aging process, which "brings out the flavors of a personality." Depression also restores our commonly-repressed awareness of death and mortality. People "are disillusioned because the values and understandings by which they have lived for years suddenly make no sense. Cherished truths sink into Saturn's black earth like chaff at harvest time. Care of the soul requires acceptance of all this dying." [p 142]

"The emptiness and dissolution of meaning that are often present in depression show how attached we can become to our ways of understanding and explaining our lives. Often our personal philosophies and our values seem to be all too neatly wrapped, leaving little room for mystery. Depression comes along then and opens up a hole." [p 143] "This peculiar kind of education--learning our limits--many not be a conscious effort only; it may come upon us as a captivating mood of depression, at least momentarily wiping out our happiness and sending us off into fundamental appraisals of our knowledge, our assumptions, and the very purposes of our existence." [p 143]

Moore associates depression with the alchemical operation of *reductio*, with the animus, with coldness and dryness, with psychological distance from (rather than emotional involvement in) the circumstances of life. In each case, there are positive qualities to be observed. Viewing depression as pathological, and fighting it, cuts us off from those qualities. Moore uses the experiences of one of his patients to demonstrate how yielding to and using depression can lead to growth and maturation.

Chapter 8: The Body's Poetics of Illness

In this chapter, Moore invites us to "Imagine a medical approach more in tune with art, one that is interested in the symbolic and poetic suggestiveness of a disease or a malfunctioning organ." [p 155] He characterizes conventional approaches as mechanistic and reductionist.

Moore reflects on the relationship between "symptom" and "symbol", and describes a personal experience of gaining access to powerful imagery in the course of treatment for pain. He discusses the importance of bodily pleasure--of pleasure and contentment for individual organs and limbs--and draws attention to the philosophy of Epicurus and Ficino. "We could imagine disease as not just a physical phenomenon but as a condition of the person and world, as the failure of the body to find its pleasure."

"With this larger dimension in mind, we could examine our lives to see how our actions might be offending the very roots of our existence. We could look for self-contradiction and self-alienation. I don't mean to suggest personal guilt for our symptoms, but we could look to our physical problems for guidance in aligning our lives with our natures or, mythologically speaking, with the will of the gods."

Illness can serve to draw our attention to soul concerns. "In a very real sense, we do not cure diseases, they cure us, by restoring our religious participation in life." "If we were to examine our diseases poetically, we might find a wealth of imagery that could speak to the way we live our lives."

Moore concludes by suggesting ways in which a soul-centered awareness could transform our relationships with our bodies. He contrasts the 19th-century mechanistic view of the body with the Renaissance view of the body as "manifestation of the soul." He gives examples of how an individual might treat exercise or yoga, and of how we as a society might redesign hospital care.

Chapter 9: The Economics of Soul: Work, Money, Failure, and Creativity

Moore observes that "One of the most unconscious of our daily activities from the perspective of the soul is work and the settings of work--the office, factory, studio, or home. I have found in my practice over the years that the conditions of work have at least as much to do with disturbances of soul as marriage and family." He draws upon "the medieval idea that the world is a book to be read" and invites us to "read" our surroundings, whether home or workplace: "examine its environment, look closely at its tools, consider the way time is spent and note the moods and emotions that typically surround the work itself."

Moore presents several ways in which we can envision work differently. We can break down the separation between sacred and profane: "Monastic writers describe work as a path to holiness." We can treat work as liturgy, "occasionally ritualizing the everyday things we do." We can contemplate the myths of Daedalus and Hephaistos, and see echoes of the divine creative process in our work. We can take an alchemical perspective: "The plain concerns of ordinary work are the raw material, the *prima materia*, as the alchemist called it, for working out our soul's matter." We can become aware of the relationship between work and narcissism: "Our work takes on narcissistic qualities when it does not serve well as a reflection of self."

One of the ways we can lose sight of work as reflection of self is by focusing inappropriately on money. Moore notes that "The crucial point is our attitude. In most work there can be a close relationship between caring for the world in which we live (ecology) and caring for the quality of our way of life (economy)." He explores some of the associations our culture teaches us to make with money, and how a soul-centered perspective might transform these.

Moore reflects on how work brings with it the possibility of failure, and how this can serve as an entry point to soul awareness. Finally, he reflects on creativity and the many ways it can manifest in work.

The third section looks at the relationship between soul and spirituality. Moore characterizes spirituality as the tendency of consciousness to transcend everyday

experience, and to seek eternal sources of meaning. While this goal is different from the soul's, many practices that serve spirituality also serve to care for the soul.

Section Three: Spiritual Practice and Psychological Depth

"Spirituality is an aspect of any attempt to approach or attend to the invisible factors in life and to transcend the personal, concrete, finite particulars of this world." [p 232] Soul, on the other hand, focuses on the concrete, and seeks depth rather than height, engagement rather than transcendence. Spirit and soul can either compete or cooperate.

Chapter 10: The Need for Myth, Ritual, and a Spiritual Life

Psychological well-being, soul, and spirituality are interdependent. "In the modern world we tend to separate psychology from religion. We like to think that emotional problems have to do with the family, childhood, and trauma--with personal life but not with spirituality. We don't diagnose an emotional seizure as 'loss of religious sensibility' or 'lack of spiritual awareness.' Yet it is obvious that the soul, seat of the deepest emotions, can benefit greatly from the gifts of a vivid spiritual life and can suffer when it is deprived of them." [p 203-204]

The modern world contains many barriers to healthy spirituality. "Most of our science, physical and social, operates as if there were no interior life, or at least assumes that the interior life has little or nothing to do with the outside world. If the interior life is acknowledged, it is considered secondary, something to tend to once we have taken care of the real concerns of business or daily life." [p 205-206]

"In the modernist syndrome, technology becomes the root metaphor for dealing with psychological problems." By the same token, the "modernist syndrome" turns religion into a set of functional practices and a mechanism for establishing community. But the types of community compatible with this syndrome do not meet the soul's needs.

Moore then investigates four ways in which soul and spirituality can be mutually supportive: retreat, religious practice, myth, and ritual.

Using the example of a stone tower that Jung built for himself, Moore emphasizes the importance of occasional retreat from the modern world. "It could take the modest form of a drawer where dreams and thoughts are kept. It could consist of five minutes in the morning dedicated to writing down the night's dream or to reflect on the day ahead." [p 211]

He recommends re-establishing contact with a religious tradition, particularly the one in which you were raised--radically reformed, if necessary. "Even though my current work has nothing explicitly to do with the established church, it is deeply rooted in that tradition. ... The teachings I grew up with and studied intensely have now been refined, tuned and adjusted in a personal reformation that I by no means planned." [p 214]

"Jung advised us to turn to traditional mythology in order to *amplify*, to see more clearly and hear more sharply the themes that are special to us. ... Soul work involves an effort toward increasing awareness of these myths that form the foundation of our lives, for if we become familiar with the characters and themes that are central to our myths, we can be free for their compulsions and the blindness that comes upon us when we are caught up in them." [p 223-224]

Finally, Moore considers ritual, which relies on "this simple idea, that some actions may not have an effect on actual life but speak instead to the soul." [p 225] He contrasts neurotic rituals with those that have been consciously constructed and chosen: " neurotic rituals could signify a loss of ritual in daily life that, if present, would keep the soul in imagination and away from literalism." [p 225-226]

Chapter 11. Wedding Spirituality and Soul

Moore postulates that modern society's problem isn't that it doesn't have enough spirituality, but that it has too much of the wrong kind. If our imagination about the visible world is impoverished, imagination about the invisible world will become neurotic. "The more compulsively materialist we are, the more neurotic our spirituality will be, and vice versa. ... Ficino's recommendation for healing such a split is to establish soul in the middle, between spirit and body, as a way to prevent the two from becoming extreme caricatures of themselves. The cure for materialism, then, would be to find concrete ways of getting soul back into our spiritual practices, our intellectual life, and our emotional and physical engagements with the world." [p 232]

One symptom of this neurosis is fundamentalism: "If we deprive our sacred stories of their mystery, we are left with the brittle shell of fact, the literalism of a single meaning. But when we allow a story its soul, we can discover our own depths through it. ... The sacred teaching story, which has the potential of deepening the mystery of our own identity, instead is used defensively in fundamentalism, to spare us the anxiety of being an individual with choice, responsibility, and a continually changing sense of self." [p 236] "Whether we are talking about religious stories or our own personal stories, the same problems often appear. What we too often hear are conclusions, a reduction of the rich details of a story to some overarching meaning or moral." [p 238] "The problem is never spirituality in itself, which is absolutely necessary for human life, but the narrow fundamentalism that arises when spirituality and soul are split apart." [p 240]

Formal religion can be an ally of the soul, if we use its stories, rituals, and iconography to stimulate our religious imagination. Rationality can be an ally of soul as well: "The thick stuff of life sometimes needs to be distilled before it can be explored with imagination. This kind of sublimating is not the defensive flight from instinct and body into rationality. It's a subtle raising of experience into thoughts, images, memories and theories." [p 246]

Moore locates faith not in unquestioning belief, but in steadiness in the face of uncertainty. "People sometimes put their trust in a spiritual leader and are terribly betrayed if that person then fails to live up to ideals. But a real trust of faith would be to decide whether to trust

someone, knowing that betrayal is inevitable because life and personality are never without shadow. The vulnerability that faith demands could then be matched by an equal trust in oneself, the feeling that one can survive the pain of betrayal." [p 254]

The ideal relationship of soul and spirit is symbolized by the divine marriage. "But it is not an easy marriage to effect. Spirit tends to shoot off on its own in ambition, fanaticism, fundamentalism, and perfectionism. Soul gets stuck in its soupy moods, impossible relationships, and obsessive preoccupations. For the marriage to take place, each has to learn to appreciate the other and to be affected by the other--spirit's lofty aims tempered by the soul's lowly limitations, soul's unconsciousness stirred by ideas and imagination." [p 258-259]

The final section looks at how a soul-centered perspective could transform our relationship to the material world, to places and objects.

Section Four: Care of the World's Soul

Moore finds value in the notion of the *anima mundi*, the soul of the world. "The trouble with the modern explanation that we *project* life and personality onto things is that it lands us deeply in ego. ... My own position changes when I grant the world its soul. Then, as the things of the world present themselves vividly, I watch and listen. I respect them because I am not their creator and controller. They have as much personality and independence as I do." [p 268]

Chapter 12: Beauty and the Reanimation of Things

"Everyone knows that we can be deeply affected by the things of nature. ... Made things also have soul. We can become attached to them and find meaningfulness in them, along with deeply felt values and warm memories." [p 269-270] "The things of this world are part of our home environment, and so a soulful ecology is rooted in the feeling that this world is our home and that our responsibility to it comes not from obligation or logic but from true affection." [p 271]

"If things have soul, they can also suffer and become neurotic. ... We don't seem to realize how much of our own pain reflects the diseases of our things. In the idea of the *anima mundi* there is no separation between our soul and the world soul. If the world is neurotic, we will share in that disorder. If we are depressed, it may be because we are living or working in a depressed building." [p 272-273]

"In a world where soul is neglected, beauty is placed last on its list of priorities." [p 277] "For the soul, then, beauty is not defined as a pleasantness of form but rather as the quality in things that invites absorption and contemplation." [p 279] "If we can be affected by beauty, then soul is alive and well in us." [p 280]

"Religion, soul, and the world are profoundly implicated in each other. But we can't pursue that insight and also retain the prevailing world view according to which the world is dead and subjectivity is limited to a reasoning ego." [p 283]

Chapter 13: The Sacred Arts of Life

"In that moment of contemplation, art intensifies the presence of the world." [p 286] This final chapter is about living artfully, so that one maximizes the opportunity to be arrested by life and the world.

Moore specifically recommends that we:

- Pause
- Take time
- Surround ourselves with soulful objects
- Pay attention to our fantasies and dreams
- Practice "ordinary arts" of the home

Doug's Commentary

Care of the Soul

Moore refuses to define soul, but I think I'll take a stab at it.

First some background: The more science comes to understand about perception, the more we appreciate the importance of imagination. In one sense, we perceive the world around us. But in another sense, we imagine it.

Our senses constantly present us with a dazzling, bewildering array of reports: shapes, colors, noises, smells, pressures, textures--but not things, not people, not situations. We don't sense those things, we construct them with our imagination. If we couldn't imagine them, we couldn't see them. Our mind is constantly filtering sense reports, and then imagining a scene that contains all the elements it has decided are important. The wonder of evolution is that human imagination is so well adapted to the environment--when we react to the scenes we have imagined, we do things that contribute to our survival in the real world.

Imagination, then, is not something that we do in odd moments. It's not reserved for daydreams or art projects. Imagination is absolutely central to every moment of our lives. If we stopped imagining, our world of things and people and situations would dissolve into a chaos of shapes and colors and noises.

The world that we see around us, the world we imagine and then react to, is a product of our creative imagination; in other words, a work of art. (This simple fact is what Hindu mystics are saying when they say that the world is "maya". This word is often translated as "illusion",

but a more accurate translation is "artifice".) Like any work of art, it can be made well or poorly. We can live inside a cartoon, or inside a scene of elaborate depth and texture. The difference between those two possibilities isn't in the world, it is in us.

So what is "soul"? Soul is that part of us that imagines the world. It is the artist that moment-to-moment creates the world we inhabit. And if our soul is stressed, unappreciated, undernourished, or otherwise out of sorts, then the world we inhabit will continue to be functional, but it will lack artistry. It will lack depth, meaning, and value.

How should we take care of our souls, to prevent this from happening? Three general pieces of advice seem to me to encompass everything that Moore suggests:

First, pay attention; second, accept what you see; and third, surround ourselves with objects, people, and situations that are rewarding to contemplate. This sets up a virtuous cycle: The more we exercise our imagination by paying attention to the world around us, the more we are rewarded.

Paying attention

Picture a man who spend the day running from place to place, doing one thing after another. He commutes; he works; he eats lunch in the car between errands; he goes to see a client; talks to another client on his cell phone while he's stuck in traffic; has some meetings; gets stuck in traffic again on the way home; thinks about what he has to do tomorrow; thinks about the social engagement he has that evening; stops at the gym to work out; and then gets home just in time to eat and go out again. When he's talking to his wife at dinner, she asks "Was the sun shining when you drove through the park?" He doesn't know.

Why wouldn't he know? He had his eyes open. He saw well enough to drive. Without a doubt, his senses reported to him the brightness or dimness of the light. But he wasn't paying attention. What does it mean, this "paying attention"? It means putting some effort into the way you imagine the world around you. It means raising your standards of perception, not being satisfied to live inside a cartoon.

But he wasn't paying attention as he drove through the park. He saw his situation in purely functional terms, and he could drive the car perfectly well through a cartoon world. Functionally, it wasn't important whether this world had a sun in it or not, so he didn't bother to imagine one.

A soul is like a muscle--use it or lose it. Think about what happens to this man's soul over time. It atrophies; it shrinks. Over time, he loses the ability to imagine a world that has any aesthetic depth. Perhaps the emotional nuances in a voice, or the subtle expressions of a face are also not important enough to build into his picture of the world. Like the sun, they cease to exist for him. Over time he loses the ability to hear or see them. Eventually, he loses the ability to imagine people who have the depth of character that those undertones and expressions signify--people who are more than simply clients or coworkers or acquaintances.

And so the first part of caring for the soul is simply to pay attention--to anything. Exercise your soul. Stretch your imagination so that the scene around you becomes truly artful. See the sights, smell the smells, appreciate the subtleties of the people.

This takes time and effort and energy. If you arrange your days so that you have no time or effort or energy to spare, then your soul will not get exercise. And so, a corollary of deciding to pay attention is to decide to slow down. Some scheduled downtime may at first seem boring; but what is really boring is the cartoon world that you have been imagining for yourself. The downtime just forces you to look at it. A movie with shallow characters and poor acting needs bullets and car chases to hold your attention, but one with depth and beauty does not. If your soul is building its world artfully, it can stand up to a little contemplation.

Accept What You See

One of the most important reasons not to imagine our world or ourselves in any detail is that we don't like it. We wanted the world to be better; we wanted to be somebody different. And so we decide that it is better to be the hero (or victim) of a cartoon than to be just another person in a world than has all too much grit and grimness in it.

But the problem with a cartoon world is that our soul shrinks to fit it. There is no way to give depth and meaning only to the parts of the world we approve of. If we are unwilling to imagine the depth of any part of our world, our entire world suffers.

And so Moore consistently speaks up for the Shadow, for the parts of the self that we would like to pretend don't exist. Shadows provide depth; to the extent that we accept our own shadow and the shadow of the world, our soul is stretched and exercised. Its ability to provide us with a meaningful world is enhanced.

Reward Your Contemplation

If you eat food without paying attention to it, a bag of french fries is no different from an Thai curry--both are fuel. If you pay attention to the french fries for a tenth of a second, you will notice that they are salty and a little crunchy--a fine reward for your tenth of a second. If you pay attention to them for a minute, however, you will probably notice little Moore than you did in that first tenth of a second. The Thai curry, on the other hand, if it is well made, can occupy your attention for a considerable time. It is a rich blend of flavors, and the longer you pay attention to it, the Moore you notice. The curry rewards your contemplation; it is good exercise equipment for your soul.

Similarly, if all you are doing is following the plot, a London production of *Hamlet* is no different from a made-for-TV movie. Sunset on the ocean is like a strip-mined hillside; Michelangelo's *David* is like a lawn ornament; a fine wine is like Coca-Cola--if you aren't paying attention.

All the "soulful" things that Moore talks about are only useful if you have already taken the first step and have begun to exercise your soul by paying attention. But if you have, then you will quickly notice the difference between objects that reward extended attention and those that do not. Your taste will be different from Moore's and different from mine, but some objects will be rich with associations and possibilities for you and others will not.

Surrounding yourself with objects that you find soulful encourages you to build a world of depth, meaning, and value. Richness and artistry can become habitual, just as superficiality can.