



## Care of the Soul: How to Add Depth and Meaning to Your Everyday Life

by Thomas Moore

Excerpt from the Illustrated Edition (an edited version),  
Harper Collins, 1998.

Chapter 1: Honoring Symptoms as a Voice of the Soul  
Care Versus Cure, pp. 22-24

Ancient psychology rooted in a very different ground from modern therapeutic thinking, held that the fate and character of each of us is born in mystery, that our individuality is so profound and so hidden that it takes more than a lifetime for identity to emerge. Renaissance doctors said that the essence of each person originates as a star in the heavens. How different this is from the modern view that a person is what he makes himself to be.

Care of the soul, looking back with special regard to ancient psychologies for insight and guidance, goes beyond the secular mythology of the self and recovers a sense of the sacredness of each individual life. This sacred quality is not just value--all lives are important. It is the unfathomable mystery that is the very seed and heart of each individual. Shallow therapeutic manipulations aimed at restoring normality or tuning a life according to standards reduces--shrinks--that profound mystery to the pale dimensions of a social common denominator referred to as the adjusted personality. Care of the soul sees another reality altogether. It appreciates the mystery of human suffering and does not offer the illusion of a problem-free life. It sees every fall into ignorance and confusion as an opportunity to discover that the beast residing at the center of the labyrinth is also an angel. The uniqueness of a person is made up of the insane and twisted as much as it is of the rational and normal. To approach this paradoxical point of tension where adjustment and abnormality meet is to move closer to the realization of our mystery-filled, star-born nature.

Obviously, care of the soul requires a different language from

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that of therapy and academic psychology. Like alchemy, it is an art and therefore can only be expressed in poetic images. Mythology, the fine arts, religions of the world, and dreams provide this priceless imagery by which the soul's mysteries are simultaneously revealed and contained. For guidance we can also turn to many different experts, especially to poetic-minded soul searchers such as the ancient mythographers and tragedians, Renaissance doctors, Romantic poets, and our modern depth psychologists, who respect the mystery of human life and who resist the secularization of experience. It takes a broad vision to know that a piece of the sky and a chunk of the earth lie lodged in the heart of every human being, and that if we are going to care for that heart we will have to know the sky and earth as well as human behavior.



The Greeks told the story of the Minotaur, the bull-headed flesh-eating man who lived in the center of the labyrinth. He was a threatening beast, and yet his name was Asterion-- Star. I often think of this paradox as I sit with someone with tears in her eyes, searching for some way to deal with a death, a divorce, or a depression. It is a beast, this thing that stirs in the core of her being, but it is also the star of her innermost nature. We have to care for this suffering with extreme reverence so that, in our fear and anger at the beast, we do not overlook the star.

"The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

*-Franklin D Roosevelt*

Above posting provided by [radical-quill@yahogroups.com](mailto:radical-quill@yahogroups.com).

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