

Weaving Voices Article (Feb-July 2000)

Contributions of the Members of the C. G. Jung Society of Sydney

We are always on the lookout for material for Weaving Voices. If you would like to submit an article of 1700 words or suggest something, please contact one of the committee members.

The Soul of Sex: Cultivating Life as an Act of Love Harper Collins, 1988

REVIEWED BY MARC MARUSIC

We need more sex, not less – but we need sex with soul. This is the main theme in this enriching re-imagining of sex and pleasure, about the sex of the soul as much as the soul of sex. But isn't our society already sex-obsessed? Well, as Freud pointed out, we display outrageously and obsessively that which we don't fully possess or have deeply at our disposal. So we have not found the heart of sex, and made it a fully integrated part of our lives. By not giving serious value to pleasure (with our preference for Apollonian virtues of prudence, moderation and hygiene), we use sex for other purposes, and it can turn cold and nasty. We seek avidly for sexual satisfaction, but don't give much attention to *eros in the whole of life*. To work at drudgery all day and come home to watch a sexy movie is to have eros and work belong to separate categories in our lives.

The word "eros" has been diminished to refer to plain physical sex. But in Greek literature eros is nothing less than the magnetism that holds the entire universe together, and human love in its many forms is simply a participation in that greater eros. Sex with soul is a communion with another level of existence. Sex keeps us connected to our deepest natures, links us with our roots, so it expands the source from which we live our lives. The splitting of body and spirit, of transcendence and sensuousness, of virtue and desire, is a neurosis, a disturbance of soul. Indeed, as Blake said, the body is the soul manifested by the senses.

A reconciliation of spirit and body, as in Moore's other books, is a key theme. Both our sex lives and religion would benefit from this – religion instead of being a "sexless mental exercise in dry understanding." Would find its lost capacity for ecstasy and not separate itself from sex and passion, and our sexuality would not be neurotically separated from our spiritual aspirations. Sensation, rather than being an enemy of spirituality, feeds it, as sensation can be an effective way out of ego.

An important part of this project is to see the discrepancy between the Jesus of the Gospels (a man not afraid of eros, who lived from his heart and from his body) and the Jesus who is the object of belief and worship (obsessive suppression of eros among many of his followers). Although Moore is into celibacy, it never seems anxious or repressive. It is so comfortably part of his philosophy and style that he doesn't have to judge others for their sexual ways. He demonstrates a soul-centred eroticism – a sexuality rooted in compassion and in capacity for friendship, with the heart as an organ of sex. Moore, who talks about his own experiences of it, sees celibacy not as a denial of sex but as a different way of living it. This highlights a key theme in this book – that sexuality is deeper and more subtle than we usually imagine.

This applies to sexual fantasies and desires too. When we allow sex its soul, we can see that they are not always to be taken literally, but as poetry and image pointing to the unfolding of the soul and the erotic dynamic in life. We could then accept that every sexual fantasy is valid and makes sense,

that no desire needs to be repressed – rather, to be entertained, considered, discussed. Our sexual fantasies can draw us into as intimate relationship, entice us out of a relationship that has lost its vitality, or, in a generally happy relationship, help keep desire itself alive and at work.

Many things which our culture would divide into opposites (secular and sacred), Moore identifies as commonalities – sexual images seem to share some of the qualities of the religious image and the contemplative gaze; Priapic silliness (when full of heart and irony) and the dumb, off-colour joke have something in common with the spiritual ‘cloud of unknowing.’ Life goes on in spite of our attempts to make it work and give it sense. Moore points to numerous things in popular culture and Greek mythology that remind us of life’s earthy vitality and that laugh at our earnestness and moralism (which is morality without soul), to which I could add *South Park*, which perhaps does more to serve the soul than most other TV programmes.

The soul of sex reaches beyond the taste of any one of us, and, as he shows in *Dark Eros*, his study of de Sade’s work, the soul can be nourished by images that reflect the less than virtuous side of life. As in his earlier *Care of the Soul*, Moore reminds us that sometimes we find the soul more easily in those areas that are more earthly or ordinary than sublime or remarkable.