

HOW THE SOUL IS SOLD

By Emily Yoffe

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Thomas Moore, author of the unexpected best seller "Care of the Soul" and the subsequent and much expected best seller "Soul Mates," opens the workshop with a story about a call he got from someone at "Oprah" after his appearance on the TV show. "She wanted the names of people whose lives had been changed by my book," he says. "I said no. She said, 'Don't you want to change people's lives?' I said no. They won't be changed anyway. The person who says they're the most changed is the least changed."

For any of the 200 people in attendance who want to give it a shot anyway, at a table in the back is a display of the ways Moore is selling his souls. There is the handsomely boxed set of the two books, and separate hardcover, paperback and audio versions. For people who need a more specific approach on how not to change their lives, there is the \$58, six-volume set of tapes titled "Soul Life," with cassettes on topics like "Introduction to Soul Life" and "Soul and the Family."

Moore finds it an exhausting business, this hawking of one's ideas to groups of people searching for an answer to -- well, searching for an answer. "Some people get energized by this," he says at the lunch break. "It wipes me out." Still, such events, this one held in a Manhattan church, are the price Moore pays to get his name before the kinds of people who will buy his books and tell their friends. A lot of friends. Since its publication in 1992, "Care of the Soul" has sold more than a million copies. And as people stream up to him during the breaks, he autographs his books with unfailing grace.

Events like this are also wearing for his collaborator at today's workshop, the psychoanalyst James Hillman. Hillman complains of a headache during the lunch break and after eating a sandwich, naps on the floor in a sleeping bag. For him, such workshops are not a means to propel himself onto the best-seller list. Though he is Moore's inspiration, the wellspring of the younger man's ideas, these workshops are the primary way he makes his living.

This Saturday's joint lecture, sponsored by the New York Open Center (\$85 for members; \$95 for nonmembers) is called "Aphrodite's Revenge: Dark Eros and Pink Madness." Over the course of the day the two men contemplate where to find the Greek goddess of love and sex in today's world, and how she retaliates for attempts to repress her. It is an abstruse topic, but Moore and Hillman, in their very different ways, make it vivid, perhaps even pertinent to those attending.

But there is something larger at work here than a meditation on a Greek goddess. It is a demonstration of how to package ideas. It is the difference between selling a million copies of a book and 35,000 (the total sales, after 19 years in print, of Hillman's major work, "Re-Visioning Psychology). It is why Moore is at ease on "Oprah" and Hillman will never be invited.

There is almost no distinction between Moore's ideas and Hillman's. Moore himself freely acknowledges his intellectual debt to Hillman. And he should. "Care of the Soul" can be seen in part as a gloss on Hillman's work, a clearer, more direct translation of Hillman's ideas. Call it Hillman Lite.

Hillman Heavy asks no less than to replace the governing beliefs of psychoanalysis. In Hillman's view psychology should be about depth, not growth. "After a certain age you do not grow," he has said. "If you start growing after that age, it's cancer." He has devoted decades to dethroning our culture's faith in the ego, to deflating our worship of heroic action and to deprecating our certainty in the concept of self. Hillman wants society to turn away from its obsession with the unanchored altitudes of spirit, and come back down to earth, to the soul. He also asks us to reject the judgmental thinking of monotheism and return our psyches to the polytheism exemplified by ancient Greece.

Hugh Van Dusen, who edits both Moore's and Hillman's books at HarperCollins, while celebrating the success of the former, regrets the obscurity of the latter. "It's sad but relevant that Hillman's books never sold very well. . . . It does seem that Tom has been able to take many of Jim's ideas and his own ideas and put them in a literary form that is widely accessible."

Their differences in style are no better illustrated than here at St. Peter's Lutheran Church. Moore, a former seminarian and therapist, has the gentle, reassuring manner of someone trained in gentleness and reassurance. He is 54 but is preternaturally young looking, his skin glowing and unlined. He doesn't so much lecture as evoke images of Aphrodite that seem to have just floated through his mind. These images suggest that each of us, in some of our most trifling moments, is in service to the goddess. He mentions associations with Aphrodite: flowers, smiles, gold. "Let's say you're walking down Madison Avenue and you're caught by a gold object -- that's so easy here. One of the great means we have of contemplation today is the store window."

When it is Hillman's turn to speak he doesn't evoke, he provokes. He is tall, thin, ascetic-looking at 69, with cropped white hair, a hawklike nose and deep creases across his temple which point like arrows to his penetrating sea-colored eyes. On stage, he is on the attack, working himself into a sweat, pacing, as he flips through a stack of stapled bits of paper. Hillman's subject is not beauty but pornography. His speech is about Aphrodite's reviled son, Priapus, the god best known for his grotesquely enlarged phallus, the god of exposure.

In his rat-tat-tat style Hillman leaps from politics, to personal addresses to the gods, to psychological analysis of current films, to etymological elaborations, to just plain talking dirty. Listening to him is like riding a great wave; just when you think you have caught the rhythm, you find yourself dumped gasping on the shore.

He scorns society's attempts to repress pornography, explaining that the imagination is more powerful than our rational beliefs. No matter what laws we enact ("Law is the myth of America. Lawyers are our priests") he says, the truths of human nature embodied in the myths will be played out over and over again, never losing their ability to shock. He cites an example: "The most recent case of Priapus, who was stocky, middle-aged, swarthy, was Clarence Thomas. There he was, uncovered on TV. It was an exposure. That whole myth reappeared."

At the end of Hillman's performance, Moore rejoins him on stage. Like a good student, he praises his master. Yet in his praise, there is an edge. (As the Greeks knew, sons are prone to knife their fathers.) "I've been doing this for 20 years, listening to this man

speak," Moore says. "I remember having to respond to a talk so far beyond me, I didn't know what to do. I get so caught up, so mesmerized . . . I had a blank piece of paper for taking notes. But it stayed blank the whole time."

"THESE ARE THE THINGS I'VE written," James Hillman says, sweeping a hand across a long shelf of books in the office of his Connecticut house. There are nearly 20 books that he wrote or co-wrote, with titles like "The Myth of Analysis" and "We've Had a Hundred Years of Therapy and the World's Getting Worse." It seems an ironic monument to someone intent on dismantling ego, hero and self. After all, what is such a shelf if not a tribute to an ego-driven, heroic self-image? His answer is typically Hillmanesque, mixing metaphor and myth: He gets possessed by demons. "The demonic is something that is a taskmaster to do these things or say these things or produce these things," he explains. "It's the slave driver. You spend your life making it, then it tortures you: 'What are you doing now? We want more. You didn't finish that.' "

He may never finish. This month Doubleday published "Kinds of Power: An Intelligent Guide to Its Uses," of which he says proudly, "There's not one practical idea in the whole book." Under way is a book for Random House that looks at individual destiny and re-examines the importance of childhood experiences.

All the books provide intoxicating bursts of illumination, but they are also dense, allusive, complex. Hillman's writing style suggests that he will not be drawn into the delusion of the logically laid-out argument. "It requires a lot of culture," he says of his oeuvre. "It's work to read it." He offers almost no case histories, anecdotes or biography to help anchor the reader or show how to apply his ideas to one's own life.

Though Thomas Moore insists, like his mentor, on the fallacy of helping people, his books belie this. They are full of examples from his therapeutic practice, homiletic advice on finding soul: wash your dishes by hand as a household ritual, share your dreams with your loved one. The pervasive implicit message is that you can make your life better.

Hillman offers no recommendations; he doesn't try to fix things: "My suggestion is that there's no way out of the human condition," he says. "Sex, death, marriage, children, parents, illness. There's no way out. They're a misery, all of them. You can spend 10 years in therapy and it will still be sex, death, marriage . . . "

Hillman doesn't believe in biography, or at least not in a forward-marching chronicle of cause and effect. I ask him why he left Zurich in 1978, after 10 years as director of studies of the Carl G. Jung Institute -- and 32 as a European expatriate -- to move to Dallas, of all places. "When you say 'why' it puts me back to that day of going to Dallas. When I left Dallas is when I realized why I moved there. It was to be with an amazingly lively group of people for four or five years. It was to think about the city and the soul in the world. That's the 'why.' But you find that out later."

Even though he doesn't believe in explanatory biography, it doesn't mean one can't be imposed upon him. He was born, he is fond of pointing out, in a hotel room in Atlantic City. His father's family owned the hotel. His mother's father was a rabbi, Joseph Krauskopf, a radical reformer who at the beginning of the century worked to create an

American Judaism in which many traditions would be discarded. The need to challenge orthodoxy has certainly been an animating principle in the life of Krauskopf's grandson.

During World War II Hillman joined the Navy; he was assigned to help rehabilitate blinded sailors, teaching them how to adjust to daily life. He was tormented by the pain he saw, and by the system he was part of that wanted to pretend everything was fine, that everyone was getting better. After the war he began wandering. He has said he went to France to be an intellectual, Ireland to be a writer and India to be a neurotic. Finally, he arrived in Zurich in the 50's. It was at the height of the psychoanalytic culture, a culture divided into two schools -- Freudian and Jungian.

Jung, once a student of Freud, had broken with the father of analysis in part over the view of the unconscious. Freud had elaborated a theory of the personal unconscious; Jung extended it into a collective unconscious that contains archetypal images and figures that exist in all cultures, all people.

For Hillman, arriving in Zurich was like Percival finding the Grail. Jung was still alive, and Hillman, who came to know the Great Man, dedicated himself to becoming a Jungian. He trained as an analyst, taught, wrote and eventually became the institute's director of studies. A fellow Jungian psychoanalyst and friend, Clarissa Pinkola Estes, author of "Women Who Run With the Wolves," says Hillman continues to inspire her. "What touches me most is James's faithfulness to the often difficult and dense world of ideas, and to the difficult, even sacrificial demands that the world makes on those who attempt to remain close to it."

AROUND 1969, THOSE DEMANDS became too much for Hillman. He had a breakdown in his personal and professional lives. His first marriage collapsed, and he found he could not even force himself to sit in the analyst's chair.

"A crisis is very important," he says. "Freud and Jung both had creative breakdowns. I'm in favor of destruction, aggression, hating things. Not bearing things anymore. We think the breakdown comes because our life is in bad shape. But maybe the ideas cause the disorder. Something tries to break through and causes the disorder."

What was breaking through was that he no longer could accept what he saw as the smug assumption that he, or anyone else, could cure people. He also believed that since Jung's death in 1961 his disciples had stopped thinking for themselves and were turning Jung's work into a religion. Hillman's answer for his crisis was an old one. It was the guiding principle behind the Renaissance and the Romantics: a return to Greece. As with all things Hillman, not a literal return but a return of the imagination. He began a serious study of Greek mythology, and found in those endlessly strange, profoundly imaginative stories, a way to reconnect to psychology.

Jung too was intrigued with polytheism, but for Hillman it became the organizing principle of the psyche. In a real break from Jung, he turned away from what was the accepted essence of mental health: a wholeness of personality, individuation. Instead he wanted to take the heroic self off its pedestal. As Moore explains in "A Blue Fire," "Hillman's psychological polytheism does not portray a life of chaos but one of many elements rising and falling . . ." Hillman calls the school he founded (though he rejects the word founder as too heroic) archetypal psychology.

Hillman realized that in order to resume his vocation, he had to re-imagine it. He stopped seeing himself as a doctor curing people and envisioned himself as being in a sculpture studio, working with his patients on the contours of their psyches. In 1970 he started a journal devoted to archetypal psychology and a publishing company, both named Spring, which continue to this day and out of which have come some 70 books by himself and others.

Today Hillman stands at a peculiar angle to the Jungian world. He has both extended the work of Jung and broken with it. He is so controversial a figure in that universe that when I call some analysts for comment on him, they virtually hang up on me. Others both praise and criticize him for the same thing: They say he can be so brilliant that he neglects to come down to earth and deal with real people.

"I think his work is very important," says Dr. Aryeh Maidenbaum, director of the New York Center for Jungian Studies. "He's a pioneer of new ideas. But there's a shadow side to everything. He's floating with these brilliant ideas, but Jung believed ideas had to be applicable. If you take him symbolically, he's meaningful. If you take him literally, you're a basket case."

Push Hillman to describe how people can apply his ideas, and you see why he has never had a best seller. "People ask the how question when they haven't got the idea," he responds. "We don't have an art of entertaining ideas." Hillman doesn't want people to come away from his writings with an answer but with "a sense of being puzzled, of things churning."

THIS IS THE HOUSE THAT "SOUL" BOUGHT. IT is a lovely, airy, buff-colored Victorian-style home outside of Amherst, Mass. Thomas Moore bought it almost three years ago, after writing "Care of the Soul." It is where he composed "Soul Mates" and is working on his next book, tentatively titled "The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life." He lives here with his wife, Joan Hanley, an artist, their toddler daughter and his young stepson.

Moore is tall and trim, with a gray-flecked beard and horn-rim glasses; he exudes an almost Buddhalike calm. But there is an impatience lurking just below the surface. His lips purse, or he releases a small sigh when he is asked an annoying question. And when you have suddenly become the man to see to tell you how to take care of your soul, it seems that everyone has a question.

He has agreed to be interviewed because he wants more people to know the work of James Hillman. Moore first discovered Hillman's work in the early 70's. He had left a Catholic religious order to become a graduate student of religion and eventually, he hoped, a college professor.

"I had been reading Jung; I was very interested," Moore recalls. "But I had some problems. Hillman solved those problems. He was a philosopher, not a scientist. Jung was trying so hard to be a scientist, making everything so systematized and neat."

What set Hillman apart from the psychiatric community, Moore believes, was his desire to take therapy out of the scientific, medical world to a more slippery realm, to caring

for the psyche, the soul. It is a concept Hillman traces from Heraclitus and Plato to Freud and Jung. This idea of caring for the soul has been very good to Thomas Moore. But both he and Hillman acknowledge the difficulty of defining just what soul is.

In almost an anti-definition, Hillman writes, it is "a perspective rather than a substance, a viewpoint toward things rather than a thing itself." It is also connected with "the imaginative possibility in our natures" and "refers to the deepening of events into experiences."

Moore agrees. In "Care of the Soul," he writes that, "Definition is an intellectual enterprise anyway; the soul prefers to imagine. . . ." "Soul' is not a thing, but a quality or a dimension of experiencing life and ourselves."

Moore started a correspondence with Hillman, who was living in Zurich. In 1976, they met at a conference in Dallas, where both were presenting papers. By then Moore was teaching religion there at Southern Methodist University. Hillman would arrive two years later as a psychology professor at the University of Dallas, eventually becoming graduate dean. "Jim happened to move to Dallas just by coincidence," Moore says. He pauses, smiles, then adds irresistibly, "If there are such things." The two men became friends, enjoying talks over Mexican food and combing the sales at the downtown Neiman Marcus.

Moore recalls that on one of their forays, Hillman picked up a bright yellow shirt. "I said, 'God, no.' He said, 'It's asking for me.'" Moore elaborates on the meaning of the episode: "Psychology talks about projection, that any vitality is from us. But the world is alive in a profound way. You pick up a bright-colored shirt, it brings a spirit into your life." It was in such quotidian experiences, in more penetrating talks, and in an ardent reading of Hillman's prolific output, that Moore's thinking was shaped. "I don't think anyone has influenced me, other than my father and mother, as Jim has," Moore says. Moore even writes in "Care" that he apprenticed himself to Hillman, but it is not something that was ever spoken between them. "It's not a thing you talk about. You don't say, 'I'm going to apprentice myself to you.'"

It bothered Moore that people he respected said they couldn't get through Hillman. In the mid-1980's he put together an anthology of Hillman's work and wrote his own short essays explaining Hillman's thought. By then both men were in New England. Moore had become a therapist after being rejected for tenure at S.M.U. The book was called "A Blue Fire" and Moore says doing it was a liberation for him. "In a way it allowed me to go on with my own work," he says. "It was like a rite of passage."

He began work on his own book of thought, thought heavily shaped by his apprenticeship to Hillman. Moore got a literary agent and wrote an outline and 30 sample pages. The book proposal was sent around to major publishers to bid on; HarperCollins paid a six-figure advance.

"We bought it for a lot of money from an unknown author," his editor, Hugh Van Dusen recalls. But Van Dusen felt that with careful nurturing he might have a best seller on his hands. The book got very few reviews and Moore did very few interviews. Its success was, Van Dusen says, "a classic example of word of mouth and not traditional publicity."

Moore worried about Hillman's reaction to the book. Virtually all the concepts Moore presents, from his definition of soul, to the uses of depression, to the belief in polytheism as a psychological principle, can be found in Hillman. "I was uneasy because there was so much Hillman in it," he says. But he needn't have been concerned. "He's been very gracious," Moore says of Hillman. "He said the thoughts are out there for us all." Hillman even supplied a rapturous quote for the jacket: "The book's got strength and class and soul, and I suspect may last longer than psychology itself."

Was Moore surprised by the success of the book? "I was flabbergasted. I couldn't believe it. I begged publishers for years to publish stuff of mine." Now he finds himself in a situation his mentor can only imagine. "I've ended up talking to publishers who are trying to sell themselves to me."

JAMES HILLMAN ADMITS TO AN active case of hypochondria, but he is forced to acknowledge that at almost 70, he is in remarkable shape. His good health can be a bit of a burden: "I like to feel a little unhealthy. I need more depression." One of his great themes is that when you are forced to stop -- when your symptoms take over, then soul comes in. He believes that depression is a manifestation of our time and place, as hysteria was in Freud's.

"Depression is the secularization of melancholy," Hillman says. "We've lost the gods. We've lost what once was behind it. That's why it's so depressing."

But this afternoon, as he opens the gate to the hen house and delightedly feeds his chickens and ducks, Hillman seems less a scholar than a boy in a fairy tale. "Aren't they great! They're just great!" he says as they gather at his feet. He lives alone in his white clapboard house in an archetypal New England village. For Hillman, these barnyard animals are not just a diversion or a source of fresh eggs. They are exemplars of his ideas.

"It's endless learning for me," he says of watching their friendships and feuds. "One thing I learn is that so much human psychopathology is just exaggerated animal behavior. The myths keep us reminded we are animals, too. Of our kinship."

For Hillman, in an essential way we are no different from characters in the Greek myths. We are not masters of the world, or even of ourselves. He explains in his first book, "Emotion," written in 1960 and recently reissued. "Most theoretical models hold that rages, fears and passions are our personal responsibility. Somehow, somewhere, they are located inside us. . . . My contention here, however, shall be that though they be felt deeply, and we suffer emotions physically and inwardly, this fact does not make them 'ours.' Rather, I believe that emotions are there to make us theirs. They want to possess us, rule us, win us over completely to their vision."

Such ideas don't reduce us, he says, but relieve us of the burdens of self. "You get the feeling you're not trapped in your own mistakes -- there are larger things at work," he says. "You can see you are caught in a love story like Eros, or you are being a hero in some terrible myth of cleaning the stables."

Unlike Joseph Campbell, who intellectually roamed the globe examining the myths of the world and the universal themes found in them, Hillman is unapologetically specific, insistent on the primacy of Greece: "It's the foundation of everything we do. We use the language. Its politics, ethics, science. We can't help but be partly Greek. To write it off as dead white male patriarchy is just a piece of suicide."

He believes that much of current psychological thought has become dogma -- damaging dogma -- such as an obsession with the events of our childhood, which he says helps keep us in a childlike state, more concerned with reliving our pasts than addressing the issues of the world. He also wants us to expand our vision beyond our own world, to reconnect with images and stories of the ancient past. "We live in a secular world where all mysteries are called problems."

One old idea he wants revitalized is the belief in animism -- that is, the whole world is alive, and all things are ensouled. It is a belief that strikes at the essence of our Western, scientific world view, a view bequeathed by Descartes and Newton that the world is knowable, and mechanistically reducible to its component parts. He says we fool ourselves if we think human beings have transcended the primitive awareness of the spirit inherent in the world.

"We are recovering that through toxicology, through radon, through the anxiety that things are emanating," Hillman says. "We do see everything has a potency -- it will give you cancer. It comes out in the pathology."

Around lunchtime Margot McLean arrives. McLean, an artist, is 42, a slim blonde with the bubbly manner of Goldie Hawn. They have been companions for more than six years -- shortly after Hillman's 15-year second marriage to Patricia Berry, an analyst, broke up. (He has four grown children from his first marriage.) I ask if he and McLean are soul mates. "No, I don't want to use that word," he says with some distaste. "She's a good friend." They are also collaborators, working together on an illustrated book about the souls of animals.

McLean, who lives in New York, makes an inspection of the gardens. She teases Hillman good-naturedly about some additions he has made. "I leave spaces and I come back and he's put something in it," she says. "His method is to plant as much as you can in a small space." He shrugs in acknowledgment; after all, it's also the perfect metaphor for his literary style.

At lunch at a local inn, I ask him if he is at all disturbed at Moore's success with his ideas. "I think it's very fortunate," Hillman says with what appears to be absolute equanimity. "I wouldn't want it to be otherwise. It's a satisfaction to find one's thought received and moved in different places. Some of the thought is entering the body politic."

McLean joins me in pressing him about Moore. "I ask him this question all the time: 'Doesn't it bother you?'"

"He transformed it," Hillman replies. "He makes it accessible and understandable." he adds, "He's much more pastoral. There's a priestly function there. I don't have that."

McLean and I keep trying to ruffle his tranquillity. Finally, Hillman acknowledges, not that he wants to take from Moore any of the rewards that flow with best-sellerdom, but it would be nice if there were some payoff for him. "I don't blame that on anybody but myself," he says. "I'm waking up to late to the fact that money matters. I have to work, still. I should have thought of this in my 40's." THOMAS MOORE The soul presents itself in a variety of colors, including all the shades of gray, blue and black. To care for the soul, we must observe the full range of all its colorings, and resist the temptation to approve only of white, red and orange -- the brilliant colors. The "bright" idea of colorizing old black and white movies is consistent with our culture's general rejection of the dark and the gray. . . . Care of the soul requires our appreciation of these ways it presents itself. Faced with depression, we might ask ourselves: "What is it doing here? Does it have some necessary role to play?" JAMES HILLMAN Depression is still the Great Enemy. More personal energy is expended in manic defenses against, diversions from, and denials of it than goes into other supposed psychopathological threats to society: psycho- pathic criminality, schizoid breakdown, addictions. As long as we are caught in cycles of hoping against despair, each productive of the other, as long as our actions in regard to depression are resurrective, implying that being down and staying down is sin, we remain Christian in psychology.

Yet through depression we enter depths and in depths find soul. Depression is essential to the tragic sense of life. . . . It reminds of death. The true revolution begins in the individual who can be true to his or her depression.

Fonte: <http://www.nytimes.com/>