

OPEN TO DESIRE:
EMBRACING A LUST FOR LIFE
Mark Epstein

BOOK NOTES
By Michael Mervosh

7 - From Object To Subject

The transformation of desire leads it from the masculine pursuit of an object to a transformation into the feminine receptivity of the subject.

What we desire, in our longing for completion, is ultimately in search of being.

- *The loosening of our desire's fixed agenda – its relaxation – is the birthing process of the subjective experience – identifying as the one who desires.*

Male desire is represented by the phallus. It wants what it wants. It seeks satisfaction beyond the protection of the mother. It desires penetration.

An Ounce of Space

The feminine desire is not for penetration but for space – a space between individuals that makes room for the individuality of both parties and for meeting at the edge. (The contact boundary between two separate individuals.)

“Just give me an ounce of space to love you from.”

Feminine desire provides an interpersonal space within which lies the potential for both self-discovery and connection.

The ‘flavor of separation’ is the most critical ingredient in an erotic relationship.

- *Proper spaciousness provides ‘a sense of vastness in a small or limited space’, the feeling of mystery that keeps something interesting even when it is very well known.*

Whether a man is seeking an object of desire, or whether the woman is making herself into one, the mode of relating is the same.

Desire, while it can be inflamed under the object mode, is unlikely to be satisfied with it.

It is much more likely to be diverted into clinging in the frantic effort to secure some kind of unforthcoming security.

The opening of subjective appreciation, on the other hand, involves a recognition of the unpossess-ability of the other.

This recognition, which literally 'gives space', is like a well-crafted Japanese garden.

Since the other is never quite capable of being totally revealed, he or she is also capable of being continually inspiring.

- *Desire feeds off otherness, and otherness inspires desire.*

The progression from object to subject is one of the links among emotional, relational, and spiritual life that comes together on the path of desire.

At the core of this coming together is a need for the masculine objective mode to be balanced by the feminine subjective one. Yet this is no easy task.

The more we relate to each other as objects, the greater our disappointment.

When we accept the fact that no one adult person can satisfy all of our needs, we are on the road to appreciating our adult partners for who they are, not for who we wish they would be.

Winnicott – *"It is a joy to be hidden, but disaster not to be found."*

This is about the need for recognition of one's self as a subject.

While a subject can be found, it cannot be captured. Finding it is more of an ongoing process of discovery than it is a onetime act.