

Probe: Robert Moore's Thought on Optimal Human Psychological Development, and Walter J. Ong's Thought

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Article abstract

In my deeply personal and candid probe I explore highlights of the thought of the late Jungian psychotherapist and theorist Robert Moore (1942-2016; Ph.D. in religion and psychology, University of Chicago, 1975) of the Chicago Theological Seminary. In addition, I explore highlights of the historical thought of the late American Jesuit Renaissance specialist and cultural historian and pioneering media ecology theorist Walter J. Ong (1912-2003; Ph.D. in English, Harvard University, 1955) of Saint Louis University – where I took five courses from him over the years. My favorite scholar is the American Jesuit Renaissance specialist and cultural historian and pioneering media ecology theorist Walter J. Ong (1912-2003; Ph.D. in English, Harvard University, 1955) of Saint Louis University – where I took five courses from him over the years.

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Probe: Robert Moore's Thought on Optimal Human Psychological Development, and Walter J. Ong's Thought

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Abstract: In my deeply personal and candid probe I explore highlights of the thought of the late Jungian psychotherapist and theorist Robert Moore (1942-2016; Ph.D. in religion and psychology, University of Chicago, 1975) of the Chicago Theological Seminary. In addition, I explore highlights of the historical thought of the late American Jesuit Renaissance specialist and cultural historian and pioneering media ecology theorist Walter J. Ong (1912-2003; Ph.D. in English, Harvard University, 1955) of Saint Louis University – where I took five courses from him over the years. My favorite scholar is the American Jesuit Renaissance specialist and cultural historian and pioneering media ecology theorist Walter J. Ong (1912-2003; Ph.D. in English, Harvard University, 1955) of Saint Louis University – where I took five courses from him over the years.

Introduction

In plain English, when I was an undergraduate student at Saint Louis University about 60 years ago, I became an Ong fan, and when I subsequently became a scholar, I continued to be an Ong fan. Each time we become a fan of one certain person, we are infatuated with that one certain person. However, to some others, our infatuation with that one certain person may seem like an obsession with that one certain person.

In the case of me being an Ong fan, my passionate commitment to writing about Ong's work may seem like an obsession with him and his work to some people. As far as I am concerned, that's their problem – not mine.

However, if we are going to use the pejorative-sounding term obsession to characterize my tireless dedication to writing about Ong's work, then we should look to the example that Ong himself set. After he had his great breakthrough regarding orality and literacy in our Western cultural history in the early 1950s, he never tired of writing about orality and literacy in our Western cultural history! He became famous for writing about orality and literacy in our Western cultural history! Ong's former teacher at Saint Louis University (1939-1941), the Canadian Catholic convert and Renaissance specialist and cultural historian and pioneering media ecology theorist Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980; Ph.D. in English, Cambridge University, 1943) also became famous for writing about orality and literacy in our Western cultural history tirelessly over the years.

Yes, when we become a fan of a certain person, our infatuation with that person may, over time, grow into a more and more passionate affair on our part. In the case of my being an Ong fan, my infatuation with him and his work grew stronger over the years from the fall semester of 1964 onward. Yes, Father Ong did indeed encourage my interest in his work. Yes, Father Ong did thank me personally for my professional publications about his work, and he also, at times, mentioned my professional publications about his work in some of his own publications.

I assume that all other people's experience of becoming a fan of a certain other person grows in similar ways when they interact with that certain other person, even when they join that person's fan club in the cases of highly public personalities.

Now, in my various *OEN* articles over the years, I have frequently discussed Ong's work – most notably in my *OEN* article "Walter J. Ong's Philosophical Thought" (dated September 20, 2020).

In the years since I retired from teaching at the University of Minnesota Duluth at the end of May 2009, I have published more than 640 articles at <https://www.opednews.com>. Because the *OEN* website includes a feature whereby patrons may sign up as fans of a certain author, I should tell you that I have 21 fans there. Even though my *OEN* articles are characteristically "persistently, unfailingly generous, with astute comprehension" (in the words of a professional colleague who is not is not one of my 21

fans at the *OEN* website – but to whom I've occasionally sent links to my *OEN* articles that I think might interest him), suffice it to say that my 640 or so *OEN* articles are not everybody's cup of tea, figuratively speaking.

Now, in the meantime, I recently published an *OEN* article titled "Robert Moore on Optimal Human Psychological Development" (dated September 17, 2024). In it, I discussed the work of the late Jungian psychotherapist and psychological theorist Robert Moore (1942-2016; Ph.D. in religion and psychology, University of Chicago, 1975), most notably (1) The Impotent Lover "shadow" form of the feminine Lover archetype in the human psyche, (2) The Addicted Lover "shadow" form of the feminine Lover archetype in the human psyche, and (3) the one optimal and positive form of the feminine Lover archetype in the human psyche.

Just to be clear here, I want to succinctly and candidly set forth here a profile on myself using Robert Moore's terminology about both the feminine Lover archetype in my psyche and the masculine Lover archetype in my psyche. Yes, my candor here in profiling myself expresses a certain self-effacing attitude about myself that is rooted in humility.

As a result of traumas that I experienced up to the age of four as a young child involving my mother, I was locked into mainlining The Impotent Lover "shadow" form of the feminine Lover archetype in my psyche in my subsequent years of childhood, in my teenage years, and in my adult years of my life up to about the time I turned 30 years old on March 17, 1974. At that time, as the result of a short but intense affair I had with a woman about my age, I definitively switched to mainlining The Addicted Lover "shadow" form of the feminine Lover archetype in my psyche. However, as a result of becoming infatuated recently (in late August-September 2024) with the gloriously beautiful body of young Lynda Carter in her wonderfully revealing Wonder Woman costume as I watched the DVD version of the 1970s *Wonder Woman* television series on the big-screen television in the living room of my home, I learned how to access the one optimal and positive form of the feminine Lover archetype in my psyche.

Good for me!

Now, as a result of traumas that I experienced up to the age of four as a young child involving my father, I was locked into mainlining The Impotent Lover "shadow" form of the masculine Lover archetype in my psyche in my subsequent years of childhood, in my teenage years, and in my adult years of my life up to late August-September 2024 – well after I had turned 80 years old on March 17, 2024. In late August-September 2024, I definitively switched to mainlining The Addicted Lover "shadow" form of the masculine Lover archetype in my psyche.

Good for me!

When I say "**Good for**" me or for someone else in the present essay, I am trying not to sound censorious about myself or about Father Ong's life or about the lives of the other individual persons I have referred to here. All of them are wherever they are with respect to Robert Moore's vision of optimal human psychological development. **Good for all of them!**

You too are wherever you are with respect to Robert Moore's vision of optimal human psychological development. In the present essay, I am once again discussing his vision of optimal human psychological development to enable you to use his terminology to profile yourself.

Good for you wherever you are in terms of Robert Moore's vision of optimal human psychological development!

Once you have formulated your profile of yourself, you will then be in a position to assess areas where you need to grow psychologically.

Now, also in my *OEN* article about Robert Moore dated September 17, 2024, I connected The Impotent Lover "shadow" form of the feminine Lover archetype in the human psyche, and The Impotent Lover "shadow" form of the masculine Lover archetype in the human psyche, with the moral vision of the Roman Catholic Church regarding individual personal morality.

By specifying the moral vision regarding individual personal morality, I mean to differentiate the Church's teaching regarding individual personal morality from the commendable body of Catholic social teaching.

For example, Pope Francis' widely read 2015 eco-encyclical *Laudato Si'* is part of the commendable

body of Catholic social teaching.

For further discussion of the commendable body of Catholic social teaching, see the English lay theologian Anna Rowlands' 2021 book *Towards a Politics of Communion: Catholic Social Teaching in Dark Times*.

For a well-informed historical survey of Roman Catholic thought about individual personal morality, see the American Jesuit moral theologian James F. Keenan's 2022 book *A History of Catholic Theological Ethics*.

Now, in plain English, even though I have been an Ong fan for 60 years now, I now have to say here that Father Ong on an individual personal level did not embody the optimal and positive form of the masculine Lover archetype in his psyche. Rather, because of Father Ong's Jesuit vow of chastity, he embodies The Impotent Lover "shadow" form of the masculine Lover archetype in his psyche. Most likely, young Walter Jackson Ong, Jr., was mainlining The Impotent Lover "shadow" form of the masculine Lover archetype in his psyche for years before he entered the Jesuit novitiate in September 1935.

Good for Father Ong!

Ah, but what about the feminine Lover archetype in his psyche? Well, I have to say here that my interpretation here of Father Ong is that he had indeed somehow learned how to access the one optimal and positive form of the feminine Lover archetype in his psyche.

Good for Father Ong!

Yes, I know that this sounds a bit puzzling. I admit that I am somewhat puzzled about this myself. However, this is my honest and candid assessment of Father Ong based on my years of friendship with him. He was gifted in his ability to relate positively and supportively to people -- to both men and women.

Now, in my estimate, both the men and the women who perform in porn videos are mainlining both The Addicted Lover "shadow" form of the feminine Lover archetype in their psyches and The Addicted Lover "shadow" form of the masculine Lover archetype in their psyches.

Good for them!

When boys and men watch women having sex in porn videos, those boys and men are mainlining The Addicted Lover "shadow" form of the feminine archetype in their psyches.

Good for them!

Now, I would be seriously remiss here if I did not also point out that I cannot point to even one person that I know of who embodies (or who has in the past embodied) the optimal and positive forms of both the feminine Lover archetype and the masculine Lover archetype in his or her psyches!

That is why in my *OEN* article about Robert Moore's work dated September 17, 2024, I refer to his thought about optimal human psychological development as a vision of optimal human psychological development – because the most fully optimal human psychological development that he envisions has not yet been actuated in any person that I know of.

Nevertheless, I will also use Robert Moore's terminology about (1) The Impotent Lover "shadow" form, (2) The Addicted Lover "shadow" form, and (3) the one optimal and positive form of both the feminine Lover archetype and the masculine Lover archetype in the human psyche in the present essay.

Now, I titled one of my recent *OEN* articles "Thomas J. Farrell's Encore on Young Lynda Carter as Wonder Woman" (dated September 30, 2024). It was an encore *OEN* article in the sense that it was a follow-up to my earlier *OEN* article "Young Lynda Carter as Wonder Woman" (dated September 3, 2024).

Incidentally, the actress Lynda Carter today maintains an email address for her fans to send her fan letters if they wish to do so: fanmail@lyndacarter.com, and staff she employs are delegated to reply to fan email message sent to her, making it clear that Lynda Carter herself is not replying but a fanmail staff person is reply on her behalf. I have sent Lynda Carter three different fan letters, and I have received three polite replies to them.

I imagine that many other actresses and actors have fans. However, I do not know if any other actresses and actors maintain email address for their fans to send them fan letters if they wish to – or delegate staff to reply to their email messages, if they do maintain email addresses for their fans to contact them.

Now, as I watched the DVD version of the 1970s *Wonder Woman* television series (1976-1979; 59 episodes) on the big-screen television in the living room of my home in late August into September

2024, I became infatuated with the gloriously beautiful body of the young Lynda Carter in her wonderfully revealing Wonder Woman costume.

Now, as a result of my infatuation with young Lynda Carter's gloriously beautiful body in her wonderfully revealing Wonder Woman costume, I learned how to access the one optimal and positive form of the feminine Lover archetype in my psyche.

Many, many thanks to young Lynda Carter for performing in her wonderfully revealing wonder Woman costume and showing off her gloriously beautiful body that evoked my becoming infatuated with her gloriously beautiful body!

Before the young Lynda Carter landed the Wonder Woman role, she was a beauty queen. It is wonderful that a beauty queen played the role of Wonder Woman in the 1970s when second wave feminism was so popular. The lyrics of the Wonder Woman theme song on the 1970s *Wonder Woman* television series invite us to imagine her as a heroine that everybody has been waiting for – perhaps including everybody in second wave feminism, eh? (The catchy lyrics of the Wonder Woman theme song are sung to music with an upbeat undulating rhythm.)

However, I am sure that I did not see any of the episodes of the 1970s *Wonder Woman* television series (the first season was broadcast on ABC; the second and third seasons were broadcast of CBS) in the 1970s. However, I did view the re-broadcast of the 1970s series more recently on Ion Television. Of course, the re-broadcast episodes on Ion Television were interrupted regularly for commercial breaks. But I did not become infatuated with the gloriously beautiful body of young Lynda Carter in her revealing Wonder Woman costume as a watched re-broadcast episodes on Ion Television. However, I was impressed enough with those re-broadcast episodes to order the DVD version of the 1970s *Wonder Woman* television series.

Now as a result of my becoming infatuated with young Lynda Carter's gloriously beautiful body, as a I watched her perform in her wonderfully revealing Wonder Woman costume, I am no longer locked into mainlining The Addicted Lover “shadow” form of the feminine Lover archetype in my psyche that I had been locked into for at least the last 50 years or so of my life.

(Up to about the age of 30, I had been mainlining The Impotent Lover “shadow” form of the feminine Lover archetype in my psyche. But in 1974, I definitively switch to mainlining The Addicted Lover “shadow” form of the feminine Lover archetype in my psyche. Suffice it say here that the story of how I definitively switched from one “shadow” form of the feminine Lover archetype in my psyche to the other “shadow” form of the feminine Lover in my psyche in 1974 would be too long -- and too personal -- for me to recount here in detail.)

Consequently, as a result of now no longer being compulsively locked into The Addicted Lover “shadow” form of the feminine Lover archetype in my psyche, I can now freely switch back to The Addicted Lover “shadow” form of the feminine Lover archetype in my psyche when I want to enjoy the pleasures of The Addicted Lover “shadow” form of the feminine Lover archetype in my psyche when I want to – as, for example, when I watch my favorite pornstar perform in the new 2024 DVD of her that I like to watch of the big-screen television in the living room of my home. Her characteristically energetic performance in it is stellar, amazingly energetic, and awe-inspiring. Yes, my favorite pornstar simply excels at having sex – and at looking beautiful, with her well-toned athletic body, as she energetically has sex in her new 2024 video with complete strangers.

Yes, just as young Lynda Carter has a gloriously beautiful body in her wonderfully revealing Wonder Woman costume, so too my favorite pornstar also has a gloriously beautiful well-toned athletic body as she performs energetically not only in her new 2024 porn video but also as she performs in her many, many other porn videos. She has been prolific over the years in making porn videos.

Yes, I have long been infatuated with my favorite pornstar's gloriously beautiful and well-toned athletic body. (I do not want to disclose her name here.)

Yes, I am just one of my favorite pornstar's many, many fans – just as I am just one of Lynda Carter's many, many fans – and just like I am just one of Ong's many, many fans.

Nevertheless, I should here also candidly admit that, until recently, I have been mainlining The Impotent Lover “shadow” form of the masculine Lover archetype in my psyche. However, I have recently

definitively switched to mainlining The Addicted Lover “shadow” form of the masculine Lover archetype in my psyche. But, alas, I have not yet learned how to access and mainline the one optimal and positive form of the masculine Lover archetype in my psyche.

Good for me!

Now, when boys and men of all ages watch the DVD version of the 1970s *Wonder Woman* television series, they may become infatuated with young Lynda Carter’s gloriously beautiful body in her wonderful revealing Wonder Woman costume – as I did.

If they do, good for them!

But if they don’t, good for them!

However, it does not necessarily follow that boys and men who become infatuated with young Lynda Carter’s gloriously beautiful body in her wonderfully revealing Wonder Woman costume, as I did, will also experience her image on the screen as evoking the one optimal and positive form of the feminine Lover archetype in their psyches, as I did.

No, they may experience her image on the screen as evoking The Addicted Lover “shadow” form of the feminine Lover archetype in their psyches.

Similarly, boys and men who watch women having sex with men in porn videos may experience the image of each woman on the screen as evoking The Addicted Lover “shadow” form of the feminine Lover archetype in their psyches, because those boys and men are also mainlining The Addicted Lover “shadow” form of the feminine Lover archetype in their psyches, as are the women in the porn videos that are evoking their response – and those boys and men are not yet ready to learn how to access the one optimal and positive form of the feminine Lover archetype in their psyches.

Good for them!

As I say, Robert Moore’s thought about optimal human psychological development is a vision for all of us to keep in mind as we reflect on our own individual personal psychological development.

Ah, but can other men and boys today also view the DVD version of the 1970s *Wonder Woman* television series and become infatuated, as I did, with the spectacularly beautiful body of young Lynda Carter in her wonderfully revealing Wonder Woman costume? I would imagine that men and boys today could also become infatuated with her body, as I did.

Ah, but would men and boys today who do indeed become infatuated with young Lynda Carter’s spectacularly beautiful body in her wonderfully revealing Wonder Woman costume also thereby find themselves freed from being locked into mainlining The Addicted Lover form of the feminine Lover archetype in their psyches? In theory, I do not see why this could not also happen to them -- because this is what happened to me.

Now, could the men and women who perform in porn videos become free of both The Addicted Lover “shadow” form of the feminine Lover archetype in their psyches and The Addicted Lover “shadow” form of the masculine Lover archetype in their psyches?

Well, just as I see all of the optimal and positive forms of both the masculine and the feminine archetypes of maturity in the human psyche envisioned in Robert Moore’s vision of optimal human psychological development as possible, so too, in theory, I see it in the realm of the possible that men and women who perform in porn videos could become free of The Addicted “shadow” forms of both the feminine Lover archetype in their psyches and the masculine Lover archetype in their psyches. Ah, but if you were to ask me how likely this is to happen to them, I would have to say, “Not very likely.”

Now, similarly to my *OEN* article titled “Thomas J. Farrell’s Encore on Young Lynda Carter” (dated September 30, 2024), I first published a version of the present essay as my *OEN* article “Thomas J. Farrell’s Encore on Robert Moore” (dated October 10, 2024) because I revisited Robert Moore’s visionary thought in it, after I had previously discussed his visionary thought in my *OEN* article “Robert Moore on Optimal Human Psychological Development” (dated September 17, 2024).

To round out this discussion up to this point, I next want to discuss my essay “Secondary Orality and Consciousness Today” in the well-organized anthology *Media, Consciousness, and Culture: Explorations of Walter Ong’s Thought* (1991, pp. 194-209). In it, I take various hints from Ong’s publications about secondary orality and about consciousness today.

I now want to connect what I say about secondary orality in my essay “Secondary Orality and Consciousness Today” with what the late Jungian psychotherapist Edward C. Whitmont says about the goddess in the human psyche in his book *Return of the Goddess* (1982). By return of the goddess, he means the return of the goddess in the human psyche to interacting within the psyche with ego-

consciousness. Fine. I have no quarrel with that much – or with anything else Whitmont says in his astute 1982 book.

However, I now want to add here that the return of the goddess in the human psyche has emerged with the emergence of secondary orality – the orality evoked by the communications media that accentuate sound (e.g., television, telephone, radio, tape recordings, and the like).

Incidentally, I hope that you find what I just said about secondary orality convincing – because what I am saying here about secondary orality should serve as a sufficient rebuttal of all the apocalyptic nonsense that Trump keeps advancing.

Now, the apocalyptic nonsense that Trump keeps advancing appeals to many people today who feel under siege psychologically. They feel under siege psychologically because of the deep psychological currents in the psyches that are being activated because of the impact of secondary orality today, and also because of the accompanying return of the goddess in their psyches today, which makes their ego-consciousness feel under siege.

But because I see the return of the goddess, as Whitmont explains the return of the goddess, as a generally positive development accompanying our secondary orality today, I also want to say here that the return of the goddess as Whitmont explains the return of the goddess in our psyches may at times be accompanied by the overthrow of our ego-consciousness, resulting in a psychotic episode. Bummer, eh?

Now, in the present essay, I next want to discuss the literary critic Terry Eagleton's review in the *London Review of Books* titled "The Excitement of the Stuff" (dated October 2024) of the late literary critic Fredric Jameson's new 2024 book *The Years of Theory: Postwar French Thought to the Present*. As I read Eagleton's well-informed review of the late Fredric Jameson's new 2024 book about theory in literary studies, I kept thinking of how all the academic enthusiasm for Jacques Derrida and theory eclipsed Ong's profound work.

In any event, Eagleton says, "Where did this current spring from?"

Eagleton then promptly answers this question: "Since three of Derrida's major works appeared in 1967 [in French], an obvious answer would be the political turmoil of the late 1960s, in which – unusually for such mass protests – the function of academic knowledge and the fate of the humanities were among the issues at stake."

In proposing this answer to the question that he had posed, Eagleton here makes an astute analysis – in my opinion.

Now, whatever else may be said about Ong's profound work from the early 1950s onward, his thought during the entire postwar Cold War era was not, in my opinion, connected with "the political turmoil of the 1960s."

Nevertheless, Ong had followed up his astute 1958 book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* with his astute sweeping survey of our Western cultural history in his seminal 1967 book *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History*, the expanded version of Ong's Terry Lectures at Yale University in the spring semester of 1964 – in the midst of "the political turmoil of the 1960s."

Yes, to be sure, Father Ong was an American. But Jacques Derrida was French, and so were some of the other theorists.

Yes, Father Ong's profound thought in his 1958 book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* was deeply indebted to the late French Protestant philosopher Louis Lavelle's work, as Ong himself acknowledges on page 338 in endnote 54 of *RMDD*. (Ong had received financial assistance from two Guggenheim Fellowships to travel abroad in search of volumes by Peter Ramus and his allies and his critics in libraries in the British Isles and Continental Europe. For three years [November 1950 to November 1953], Ong was based at a Jesuit residence in Paris.)

Nevertheless, Ong's former teacher at Saint Louis University in the late 1930 and early 1940s, the Canadian Renaissance specialist and cultural historian and pioneering media ecology theorist Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980; Ph.D. in English, Cambridge University, 1943) was inspired by Ong's 1958 book

RMDD to write his own widely read follow-up book *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (for specific page references to Ong's publications about Ramus and Ramism, see the "Bibliographic References" [pp. 286-287]). McLuhan's 1962 book has never gone out of print since it was originally published in 1962.

Nevertheless, "the appearance of Derrida's three major works in 1967 [in French]" also eclipsed McLuhan's 1962 book – just as it eclipsed Ong's 1958 and 1967 books.

Theory then for the rest of the century down to this day eclipsed the far more profound work of Ong and McLuhan in media ecology.

Now, toward the end of Eagleton's well-informed review of the late Fredric Jameson's new 2024 book, Eagleton says, "Postmodernists have no great relish for abstractions, think pragmatically rather than historically, and are obsessed **by** sexuality" (my emphasis)

Even though some have also described Father Ong as a postmodernist himself – perhaps in his own unique way he is – he definitely thought historically – this is one of the hallmarks of his thought.

And Ong cannot accurately be characterized as being "obsessed by sexuality" – or even as being obsessed "with" sexuality. It would surely have been out of character for Ong who was mainlining The Impotent Lover "shadow" forms of both the feminine Lover archetype and the masculine Lover archetype in his psyche to be "obsessed by sexuality."

However, in the subtitle of Ong's profound 1981 book *Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality [Gender], and Consciousness*, Ong does use the term Sexuality. But as I have clarified in my square brackets here, he is discussing gender in his 1981 profound book.

But perhaps Ong's day in the sun in academic is yet to come. I certainly hope so.

Ah, but am I in the present essay "obsessed by sexuality" – or am I in the present essay obsessed "with" sexuality. In the present essay, I would say that I am explicitly and understandably obsessed here "with" sexuality. But I do not feel that I am here "obsessed by sexuality" – as Eagleton claims postmodernists are.

See, for example, the late Michel Foucault's four-volume work titled *The History of Sexuality* (English translation: Volume 1: 1978; Volume 2: 1985; Volume 3 1986; and Volume 4: 2021).

Ah, but does it follow that I have never been obsessed by anything? No. As matter of fact, I have been obsessed by writing each of my more than 640 *OEN* articles, as I have been writing them.

However, in each instance above when I have said that I was infatuated "with" a certain woman's beautiful body, I did not say that I was infatuated "by" her beautiful body. Nor did I say that my infatuation "with" her beautiful body caused me to become obsessed "by" or "with" her beautiful body. If I take my own experience of being obsessed with writing each of my more than 640 *OEN* articles, I have to say that I have to become obsessed like that with any woman's beautiful body.

In conclusion in the process of revisiting Robert Moore's vision of optimal human psychological development in the present essay, I have immeasurably expanded the ways in which his terminology can be applied to a far greater range of people that I discussed in my earlier *OEN* article "Robert Moore on Optimal Human Psychological Development."

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