

The Education of Barrington Moore, Jr.¹

Robert Jackall
Williams College

International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society, Vol. 14, No. 4, June 2001, 675-681.

Barrington Moore, Jr., the distinguished author of a great many books, graduated in 1936 from Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts.² This essay examines some of the educational roots of his intellectual orientations and remarkable intellectual productivity.

Williams College was chartered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1793 on an extension of a 1755 bequest of \$9,297 from Colonel Ephraim Williams. Williams, the commander of a Massachusetts militia unit, paused at Albany on his way to his death at the

¹ Special thanks to Linda Hall of the Williams College Archives; to Rebecca Ohm Spencer and Christine Ménard of the Sawyer Library staff at Williams College; to Carol Witek of the Williams College Registrar's office; to Nancy Bellows, secretary of the Political Science department at Williams College; and to Janice M. Hirota and Arthur J. Vidich for their helpful editorial suggestions.

² Moore's main works are: *Soviet Politics: the Dilemma of Power; the Role of Ideas in Social Change* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1950); *Terror and Progress USSR: Some Sources of Change and Stability in the Soviet Dictatorship* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954); *The Western Impact on the Structure of Authority in Indian Society* (Cambridge: Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1955); *Political Power and Social Theory: Six Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958); *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); *Reflections on the Causes of Human Misery and Upon Certain Proposals to Eliminate Them* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972); *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* (White Plains, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1978); *Privacy: Studies in Social and Cultural History* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1984); *Authority and Inequality Under Capitalism and Socialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 1987); *Moral Aspects of Economic Growth, and other Essays* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); and *Moral Purity and Persecution in History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). In addition, Moore co-authored, with Robert Paul Wolff and Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965) and co-edited (with Kurt H. Wolff), *The Critical Spirit: Essays in Honor of Herbert Marcuse* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967). Moore worked in the government with Marcuse in Washington, D.C., during the Second World War.

Battle of Lake George during the French and Indian War in order to write his last will and testament. Williams mandated the establishment of a free school in the township that had hosted the militia unit he commanded, provided that the township, then in dispute between New York and Massachusetts, fall in the latter state, and provided that the town be re-named after him. Throughout the better part of the nineteenth century, the College educated young men mostly from New England, training the sons of local gentry to become clergymen, lawyers, physicians, and teachers serving Vermont, New York, and western Massachusetts.

The ethos, and enduring ideology and public face of the College, was set by Mark Hopkins (1802-1887) who taught at Williams College from 1830-1887 and was its president from 1836-1872. In his inaugural address as president, Hopkins said: "We are to regard the mind, not as a piece of iron to be laid upon the anvil and hammered into any shape, nor as a block of marble in which we are to find the statue by removing the rubbish, nor as a receptacle into which knowledge may be poured; but as a flame that is to be fed, as an active being that must be strengthened to think and to feel -- and to dare, to do, and to suffer."³ All students graduating from Williams during Hopkins's tenure as president had to take his famous senior course on morals, leading the ill-fated James A. Garfield, Class of 1856, briefly President of the United States before his assassination in 1881, to say famously that "[t]he ideal college is Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a student on the other."

The College became a national institution toward the end of the nineteenth century as more and more of its fiercely loyal alumni (the College had founded the first Society of Alumni in the world in 1821) became men of affairs. By 1906, of all New England colleges, Williams had the largest representation of students from states outside the region.⁴

Moore entered Williams in 1932, after attending the St. George's School in Newport, Rhode Island, from 1926-1932. The Williams that he came to still bore Hopkins's mark. There were less than 1000 students, all male, organized socially into fraternities, taught by talented faculty almost all of whom came from Ivy League schools, all dedicated to college teaching many for a lifetime. Moore says: "Through a combination of family influence and those of good teachers . . . I wanted to be a professor of classics."⁵ He chose to attend Williams in part because of its renowned and stiff classics requirement. The College had only a few years before (1925) completed a review of its curriculum and re-dedicated itself to the idea of producing liberally

³ *An inaugural discourse, delivered at Williams College, September 15, 1836* (Williamstown, Massachusetts: Williams Tracts, no. 1, College Archives, Stetson Hall).

⁴ The historical information on Williams College is borrowed liberally from Frederick Rudolph, *Mark Hopkins and the Log* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), the source for the standard history of the institution in the Williams College Catalog, published annually.

⁵ Personal correspondence, 24 January 2001.

educated young men. Eschewing the notion of general education then in vogue at Harvard and elsewhere, the Williams curriculum did not require students to take fixed courses, except for a Latin requirement for all students. But the College did insist that students concentrate deeply in the areas that they chose to pursue.

At Williams, Moore continued his thorough education in the classics begun at St. George's. He majored in Latin. Including honors work, he took twelve Latin courses in four years (out of a total of forty courses, five each semester). After the basic drillings of introductory Latin in his freshman year, complete with readings of Caesar and Cicero, he read the comedies of Plautus and Terence, as well as the odes, epodes, epistles, and satires of Horace in his sophomore year. In junior year, he read the works of Tacitus, Suetonius, Catullus, Vergil, and Ovid. In his senior year, he surveyed highlights of Latin literature from the earliest surviving texts to the end of the Augustan age (14 AD). Moore also took eight courses in Attic Greek, beginning with courses in elementary grammar and progressing to reading the New Testament, the Homeric poems, Plato's *Apology* and *Crito*, Aristophanes's *The Clouds*, Demosthenes, Thucydides, as well as several plays by Sophocles and Euripides, though not, it seems, by Aeschylus. In his junior year, Moore took a year-long course in the social, political, economic, and military history of the Greek and Roman civilizations. The course ranged from the origin of the Greek city states through the Roman conquest of Greece, then from the age of the Gracchi brothers to the era of Theodosius, and on to an analysis of the Roman foundations of European civilization. Students were required to consult the original Greek sources and encouraged to consult those in Latin. Throughout his time at Williams, Moore was deeply influenced by two classicists, Maurice W. Avery and John V. A. Fine, who taught him, he says, "a great deal that was important beyond the subject matter."⁶

⁶ Personal correspondence, 17 March 2001. Maurice Wescott Avery (1896-1973), the son of a livery stable owner in Bath, Maine, graduated from Bowdoin College in 1919 and received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1928. He taught at Williams College from 1923-1965. He edited a widely used reader *Latin Prose Literature: Cato to Suetonius* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1931). John Van Antwerp Fine (1903-1987) graduated from Princeton University in 1925 and received his Ph.D. from Yale in 1932. He taught at Williams from 1934-1940. He wrote *Horoi; Studies in Mortgage, Real Security and Land Tenure in Ancient Athens* (Baltimore: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1951) and *The Ancient Greek: a Critical History* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983), a book that covered the political and military history of Greece from the Bronze Age until the ascendancy of Alexander the Great. From Williams, Fine went to Princeton University where he taught until 1972, and continued as professor emeritus until his death. During his years at Princeton, Fine also directed graduate studies in classics.

During his senior year, Moore took a year-long course on medieval civilization with Richard Ager Newhall.⁷ According to the Williams Catalog for 1935-1936, the course surveyed the "cultural, institutional, economic, and political development of Europe and the Mediterranean basin from the decline of the Roman empire to the Renaissance," complete with analyses of the rise of the papacy, monasticism, and feudalism, as well as of Islam and the caliphate and the crusades.

Moore rounded out his college studies with a variety of courses. In addition to a scattering of offerings in biology and physics, he studied relatively advanced French modern drama and novels, including some difficult works of Balzac. He took a year-long course on rhetoric offered by the English department that surveyed the principles of composition and did a detailed analysis of exposition and narrative, with treatments of the essay, the novel, the biography, and narrative poetry. He also took a year-long course in fine arts, studying architecture, painting, and sculpture from ancient Egypt to the Italian Renaissance.

Moore graduated with Final Honors in Latin, and also received the 1936 Rice prize in Greek. He had earlier won the 1934 Benedict prize in Latin and the 1935 Benedict prize in Greek. He was a member of the Classical Society for all four of his College years, serving in his senior year as the society's president.

But while continuing the rigorous classical training that Williams offered, Moore decided early on that his interests lay in social science. In his freshman year at Williams, Moore took a general year-long political science course with Charles Fairman.⁸ Fairman introduced Moore to

⁷ Newhall (1888-1973), a well-regarded scholar and, by several accounts, a legendary teacher, taught at Williams College from 1924-1956. See Richard Ager Newhall, *The English Conquest of Normandy, 1416-1424: A Study in Fifteenth Century Warfare* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924); *The Crusades* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1927), revised ed. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963; *Henry V's Policy of Conciliation in Normandy, 1417-1422* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin, 1929); *Muster and review; a problem of English military administration, 1420-1440* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940). See also Russell H. Bostert, ed., *Newhall and Williams College: Selected Papers of a History Teacher at a New England College, 1917-1973* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989).

⁸ Charles Fairman (1897-1988) taught at Williams from 1930-1936. He was a graduate of the University of Illinois (1918). After taking graduate courses at the University of Illinois and the University of Paris, he received his Ph.D. at Harvard University in 1926 for a dissertation entitled "The Law of Martial Rule." He was an assistant professor in government at Harvard, 1924-25, an assistant professor of government at Pomona College from 1926-1928, and then a lecturer in government at Harvard from 1928-1930. While on leave from Williams in 1933-1934, Fairman was a Carnegie Fellow in International Law and received a LL.B. from the University of London in 1934. After leaving Williams in 1936, Fairman took a second degree in law from the Harvard Law School where he became close friends with Felix Frankfurter, his

the work of William Graham Sumner (1840-1910), and to that of Albert Galloway Keller (1874-1956), Sumner's student, collaborator, editor, and successor in the social sciences at Yale University. Separately and together, these two scholars produced a large body of work that, according to Moore, was crucial in shaping his life-long interest in the problems of authority, social inequality, religious fanaticism, systematic obfuscation, revolution, war, totalitarianism, persecution, and other causes of human misery.⁹ But Sumner and Keller were quite different scholars. Sumner, as Arthur J. Vidich and Stanford M. Lyman have convincingly argued, never fit the category of a born-again Herbert Spencer with which he has been labeled.¹⁰ Sumner was scarcely a complacent evolutionist. Indeed, he confronted the issues of his time with both a hard-

mentor. Fairman went on to become professor of political science and law at Stanford University, and professor of law at the Washington University School of Law and at the Harvard Law School. He is the author of: *Mr. Justice Miller and the Supreme Court, 1862-1890* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939); *The Law of Martial Rule* (Chicago: Callaghan and Company, 1943); *American Constitutional Decisions* (New York: Holt, 1948); *Government Under Law in Time of Crisis* (Cambridge: Harvard Law School, 1955); *Reconstruction and Reunion, 1864-88* (New York: Macmillan, 1971); *Five Justices and the Electoral Commission of 1877* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), part two of *Reconstruction and Reunion, 1864-88*. Fairman also authored: "Does the Fourteenth Amendment Incorporate the Bill Of Rights? The Original Understanding," *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 2, no. 1 (December 1949), a much cited source about the origins and scope of the controverted amendment; "What Makes a Great Justice: Mr. Justice Bradley and the Supreme Court, 1870-1892," *Boston University Law Review*, vol. 30, no. 1 (January 1950). Moore and Fairman renewed their friendship in Cambridge when Fairman taught legal history at Harvard Law School. Personal correspondence, 24 January 2001.

⁹ Personal correspondence already cited and 25 March 2001. William Graham Sumner's main works, listed chronologically, were: *Lectures on the History of Protection in the United States* (New York: International Free-Trade Alliance, 1877); *Andrew Jackson as a Public Man* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1882); *A History of American Currency* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1884); *Problems in Political Economy* (New York: H. Holt, 1885); *Protectionism: the -Ism Which Teaches That Waste Makes Wealth* (New York: H. Holt, 1885); *Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1890); *The Financier and the Finances of the American Revolution* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1891); *Robert Morris* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1892); *Folkways: A Study of the Sociological Importance of Usages, Manners, Customs, Mores, and Morals* (Boston: Ginn, 1906); *Andrew Jackson* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1910); *War and Other Essays*, edited with an introduction by Albert Galloway Keller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911); *The Challenge of Facts and Other Essays*, edited by Albert Galloway Keller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1914); *Earth, Hunger, and Other Essays*, edited by Albert Galloway Keller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1914); *The Forgotten Man, and Other Essays*, edited by Albert Galloway

headed skepticism and a passionate moralism, entirely appropriate for addressing the grave realities unfolding in American society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Keller, on the other hand, though he shared many of his mentor's views, particularly a belief in the ultimate absurdity of all religions, seems to have gotten caught up in the then-fashionable fad of evolutionary institutional analysis that for many years afflicted social science, anthropology in particular. In such a framework, the analyst does a "comparative analysis" of particular institutional forms as manifested in all the societies throughout the world, locating those forms, lower to higher, along a continuum of human development.¹¹

Keller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1918); *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925); *The Science of Society*, with Albert Galloway Keller and Maurice R. Davie (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927); *Essays of William Graham Sumner*, edited, with prefaces, by Albert Galloway Keller and Maurice R. Davie (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934).

Albert Galloway Keller (1874-1956) came from Springfield, Ohio. He graduated from Yale College in 1896 and received his Ph.D. from Yale in 1899. He joined immediately joined the social science faculty at Yale and was appointed professor in 1907, succeeding his mentor, and taught at Yale until 1942. In addition to the editorial and collaborative work already mentioned, Albert Galloway Keller wrote: "The Beginnings of German Colonization," *Yale Review* (May 1901); "The Colonial Policy of the Germans," *Yale Review* (February 1902); *Homeric Society: A Sociological Study of the Iliad and the Odyssey* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1902); *Queries in Ethnography* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1903); "Notes on the Danish West Indies," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1903); *Portuguese Colonization in Brazil* (New Haven, 1906); *Colonization: A Study of the Founding of New Societies* (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1908); *Race Distinction* (New Haven: Department of Anthropology, Yale University, 1909); *Physical and Commercial Geography: A Study of Certain Controlling Conditions of Commerce*, with Herbert Ernest Gregory and Avar Longley Bishop (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1910); *Commercial and Industrial Geography*, with Avar Longley Bishop (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1912); *Societal Evolution: A Study of the Evolutionary Basis of the Science of Society* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1915), later editions in 1931 and 1947; *Industry and Trade: Historical and Descriptive Account of Their Development in the United States*, with Avery Longley Bishop (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1918); *Through War to Peace: A Study of the Great War as an Incident in the Evolution of Society* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1921); *Starting Points in Social Science* (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1925); *Man's Rough Road: Backgrounds and Bearings From Mankind's Experience* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1932), a condensed edition of Sumner's, Keller's, and Davie's, *The Science of Society*; and *Reminiscences (mainly personal) of William Graham Sumner* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1933); *Brass Tacks* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1938); *Net Impressions* (New Haven: Yale University Press,

After graduating from Williams, Moore went to Yale University where he received his Ph.D. in sociology. He says that his early college interests in authority and inequality caused him to look, while in graduate school, at the "near absence of such arrangements among the Eskimo and the pygmies of the Ituri forest."¹²

Moore's recent book, *Moral Purity and Persecution in History*, bears the mark of Sumner's morally-based tradition of social science. In this book, Moore takes as his problem nothing less than the question: why do people kill and torture one another with such systematic regularity? To get at this issue, he examines the origins of the notions of moral purity and contamination in ancient Judaism, ideas that later informed the other two great monotheistic religions of Christianity and Islam. He goes on to analyze the use of those ideas, often in secularized form, to squash dissonance of all sorts under the rubric of ridding the world of evil. The focus on primeval symbolic meanings as engines of social behavior and worldviews alike reflects not only Freud and Durkheim in their anthropological modes, but also the work of contemporary symbolic anthropologists like Mary Douglas.¹³ But Moore's book also illustrates other important habits of mind that inform his entire *oeuvre*. To argue the importance of

1942).

¹⁰ *American Sociology: Worldly Rejections of the Religion and Their Directions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 36-49.

¹¹ The Human Relations Area Files (HRAF), housed at Yale, are the epitome of this type of social science. Although HRAF was not formally instituted until 1949, a great deal of preparatory work on them was done at Yale in the 1920s and 1930s. Yale's eclectic approach to social science during Keller's time is also illustrated by the *Festschrift* for Keller, edited by George Peter Murdock, *Studies in the Science of Society, Presented to Albert Galloway Keller in Celebration of his Completion of Thirty Years as Professor of the Science of Society in Yale University* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937). The book consists of essays by twenty-six scholars who studied with Keller at Yale, including essays on: "Minority Caricatures on the American Stage," by H. E. Adams; "The Humor of Primitive Peoples," by H. A. Bowman; "Public Provision for the Blind," by C. G. Chakerian; "Social Work in Light of Social Evolution," by J. E. Cutler; "Shamanism in China," by E. D. Harvey; "Primitive Economics in the Light of Consistency in the Mores," by Nathan Miller; "The Fur Trade of Siberia," by T. C. Weiler; "The Pre-Iroquoian Cultures of New York State," by C. A. Woods; and "Correlations of Matrilineal and patrilineal institutions," by G. P. Murdock.

¹² Personal correspondence, 24 January 2001. Moore's 1941 dissertation was entitled "Social Stratification."

symbolic moral purity, he provides detailed historical analyses of the sixteenth-century French wars of religion, where Catholics and Protestants vied with one another in demonstrating bloodthirsty zealotry, of the cauldron of ideological purity that was the French Revolution, the cataclysmic event that foreshadowed much of the state-directed barbarity of the twentieth century, and of the effects that peculiarly Western religious self-righteousness has had on major religions of Asia. Moore's wide-ranging grasp of different epochs is the product of a lifetime of feeding the flame of his curiosity, kindled by the classical liberal arts education of his youth, about how the intricacies and subtleties of language, culture, social structure, and history shape institutional forces and biographies to create sometimes fantastic social worlds.

¹³ For instance, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Frederic A. Praeger, 1966).