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Why are we still discussing Barrington Moore more than 45 years after the publication of *Social Origins*, his *magnum opus*? Frankly, if you take that one book, *Social Origins*, away from Moore, this symposium would not exist, because Moore would surely have faced the usual fate of scholars and scholarship, which is to be forgotten. Yet we remember Moore because of his *Social Origins*, even though it is a flawed book in many ways. Its core hypotheses, for example that democracy depends on a strong bourgeoisie and that an anti-peasant coalition of labor-repressive landed elites with a weak bourgeoisie, exemplified by the “marriage of iron and rye” in 19th century Germany, leads to authoritarianism, do not hold up very well beyond Moore’s own cases.⁵ Moreover, subsequent research has marshaled new data on the countries covered in *Social Origins* that show Moore’s claims to be empirically shaky even for his selected cases. In addition to these problems of external and internal validity, the book is methodologically unreflective and even primitive by today’s standards. Indeed, in their recent assessment of the evolution of the field of comparative European politics, Giovanni Capoccia and Daniel Ziblatt classify Moore as part of the old, “second generation,” of comparative historical analysis, characterized by macroscopic, class analytic theoretical frameworks and the neglect of transnational factors, such as international diffusion and flows.⁶ According to Capoccia and Ziblatt, the work of Moore and of other second-generation scholars has been supplanted

5. James Mahoney, “Knowledge Accumulation in Comparative Historical Research: The Case of Democracy and Authoritarianism,” in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

6. Giovanni Capoccia and Daniel Ziblatt, “The Historical Turn in Democratization Studies: A New Research Agenda for Europe and Beyond,” *Comparative Political Studies* 43 (August/September 2010): 931-68.

by a new, third generation, which turned out far more attuned to how non-class factors, such as religious conflict, ethnic cleavages, political parties and the international diffusion of ideas, shaped democratization in Europe and beyond.

Despite its shortcomings, *Social Origins* is still a classic. Yet, should social sciences have classics? According to Max Weber, himself a prodigious producer of classics, “In science, each of us knows that what he has accomplished will be antiquated in ten, twenty, fifty, years. That is the fate to which science is subjected... Every scientific ‘fulfillment’ raises new ‘questions’; it asks to be ‘surpassed’ and outdated.”⁷ The philosopher of science, Thomas Kuhn, makes Weber’s point more succinctly: “Science destroys its past.”⁸ The physiologist Claude Bernard provides an apt organic metaphor to convey a related idea, asking “What use can we find in exhuming worm-eaten theories or observations made without proper means of investigation?” And A. N. Whitehead offers the dictum, “A science which hesitates to forget its founders is lost.”⁹ As this symposium itself affirms, the field of comparative politics has hesitated to forget Barrington Moore. Is comparative politics therefore lost?¹⁰

I think not. Classics, even flawed ones like *Social Origins*, can give good value. Of course, they can be abused. Scholasticism is one form of abuse, and many students will

7. Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” in H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 138.

8. As quoted in John S. Dryzek and Stephen T. Leonard, “History and Discipline in Political Science,” *The American Political Science Review* 82 (December 1988): 1245-60.

9. The Bernard and Whitehead quotations are from Merton, “The Uses and Abuses of Classical Theory,” 28 and 33.

10. There are, of course, important prior questions: Is comparative politics a science? And, if so, what kind of science is it?

say that assigning all 500 pages of *Social Origins* is abusive, too. Still, *Social Origins* provides a powerful and compelling model of intellectual excellence. Scholars and students alike need such models to help them define standards toward which to strive. Moreover, as John Stephens shows in his contribution to this symposium, Moore’s Marxist-inspired class-analytic theoretical framework spurred a productive research program on democracy. And Sheri Berman highlights how Moore offers a valuable model of the fruitfulness of integrated social science which comfortably straddles politics, culture, society, and economy, rather than segregating them in disciplinary silos. Despite its many weaknesses, *Social Origins* is a remarkable and enduring achievement, most notably in terms of its theoretical ambition and empirical scope, but also with regard to its use of irony. Moore was attuned to ironies in history, and an eye for irony is important because it alerts us to unintended consequences.

Concerning the book’s impressive scope, spanning eight countries across Europe and Asia and covering centuries of history, Moore had initially planned to cover a far broader range of cases. According to Moore, “I actually started *Social Origins* with a much more ambitious plan, an overly ambitious plan. I was going to study a wider range of countries, not just ones with an agrarian class structure, but also ones with an industrial social structure, and maybe even a couple of others.”¹¹ The fact that *Social Origins* was a scaled down version of a maniacally overstretched plan, and not an expansion of a smaller, more measured one, provides insight not just into Moore’s ways of working. It also sheds light on the temperament that can drive scholars to tackle huge questions like explaining the different routes countries take to modernity.

11. Gerardo L. Munck and Richard Snyder, *Passion, Craft and Method in Comparative Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 97.

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Another productive use of Moore stems from the nature of his career trajectory, which was characterized by productivity and innovation sustained across more than six decades. Specifically, and for this reason I am especially fond of Moore, he offers hope for the middle-aged scholar. He published his best known work, *Social Origins*, at the age of 53, having started working on it ten years earlier. During the first two decades of his career, Moore's work evolved through three distinct stages. Although *Social Origins* is a cross-regional comparative historical analysis, Moore had previously focused on a single country, Russia, publishing two books on Soviet politics. And prior to that, he did quantitative cross-national work. In fact, his dissertation even had a world scatter plot, and his first article was published, tellingly, in the journal *Sociometry*.¹² It bears emphasis that Moore's dissertation was barely approved by his committee and provided, as Moore puts it, a "very rocky start" to his career. I often share this story about Moore's inauspicious start with graduate students when they are feeling down about their work. So, Moore provides hope both for young and middle-aged scholars.

Moore and the Role of Area Studies in the Era of Globalization

Although Moore is best known for his broadly comparative research, he was, as Michael Bernhard and Jeffrey Kopstein remind us in their contribution, also an area specialist on Russia. His first two books were on Russia, and he worked at Harvard's Russian Research Center during much of his career. Indeed, based on Moore's prior trajectory of research focused on Russia, one would have hardly predicted he would ever produce a cross-regional comparative book like *Social Origins*. When I asked Moore about the surprising evolution of his research from a single-country to a broadly comparative focus, he replied:

"I couldn't stand the idea of being a Russia specialist, especially after looking at some of the people who were becoming Russia specialists. Many were very narrow and simultaneously conceited. I didn't like them and didn't think much of them. I find that country specialists are often pretty unbearable."¹³

Although Moore was dismissive of the pretentious parochialism to which area studies are susceptible, I am confident he would concur that we do need to know something about something. That is, we need depth. A careful reading of the copious footnotes in *Social Origin* underscores the impressive historical depth of Moore's research. His second big book, *Injustice*, is mostly an in-depth historical case study of class relations and workers' attitudes in one country, Germany.¹⁴ Deep contextual knowledge of the history, culture, and language of places is, of course, the strong suit of area studies.

Yet depth alone was not sufficient for Moore: depth without breadth led to pretentious parochialism. Indeed, a hallmark of Moore's work is its ability to comfortably combine depth with breadth. We can draw inspiration for rethinking area studies for the contemporary era of globalization from Moore's depth without parochialism and breadth without false universalism. The parochialism, conceited or not, often associated with traditional area studies is passé in our increasingly interconnected globe. Still, despite exaggerated claims that we now live in a "flat" homogenous world, profound cultural, socioeconomic, and political differences persist and emerge anew across and within regions. Grasping these differences and their implications for human wellbeing, in turn, requires the rooted contextual

knowledge produced by area studies. Globalization thus creates a dual demand for knowledge that, like Moore's work, is both broad and deep, alert to cross-regional patterns and commonalities, yet also carefully attuned to contextual specificities.

I suspect Moore would endorse the proposition that understanding today's pressing human problems, from climate change, to economic inequality and exclusion, to urban violence, requires area studies with a comparative and global vision. He would therefore support what we might call "globalized area studies." Still, given his ornery tendencies, Moore may instead have reacted negatively to my brief for globalized area studies, writing acerbically in the margins, "product differentiation." But worrying about whether Moore would approve is surely an abuse of Moore. So, let's not worry about it.

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12. Barrington Moore, Jr., "Social Stratification: A Study in Cultural Sociology." Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1941

13. Gerardo L. Munck and Richard Snyder, *Passion, Craft and Method in Comparative Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 96.

14. Barrington Moore, Jr., *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* (White Plains, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1978).