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Who contextualizes the contextualizers? Disciplinary history and the discourse about IR discourse

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Abstract. Recent literature on the disciplinary history of IR has furthered our understanding of aspects of the discipline without specifying its own methods clearly enough. 'Critical' or 'internal discursive' disciplinary historians have rejected Quentin Skinner's contextual approach to the history of ideas in ways that suggest they have misunderstood it, and have failed to appreciate its potential. Furthermore, 'critical IR' itself can and should be subjected to intellectual-historical examination. The article suggests that 'critical IR' has been a form of anglophone academic radicalism specific to the late Cold War and early post-Cold War periods, and advocates further comparative work on the history of non-anglophone IR communities.

The discreet charm of disciplinary history

'[D]iscourse about IR discourse': Kjell Goldmann coined this label in 1995 and attached it to that sub-field of International Relations (IR) which reflects on the history, geography, identity, and self-legitimation of the discipline itself.[2] This sub-field has developed slowly but surely over the past 10–15 years; its literature is still compact enough to be relatively easily surveyed, and it is diverse enough to offer a number of themes that can be pursued further. For much of this period the debate within the sub-field has been structured around an engagement with the argument of Stanley Hoffmann's much-quoted article from 1977, which characterized IR as an 'American social science'.[3] Although Hoffmann's argument has sometimes been considered outmoded because superseded by contributions more concerned with epistemological issues, it continues to remind us that IR is predominantly Anglo-Saxon or anglo*phone*, insofar as English is the language of global communication in the field (as in others, of course). Anglo-Saxon IR scholars are for the most part dependent on literature written in or translated into English, and scholars from other IR communities usually read their own respective literatures in combination with the hegemonic anglophone scholarship.

Work seeking to analyse IR from an intellectual-historical perspective can give rise to feelings of impatience in some quarters, and to a desire to return as quickly as possible either to 'real' theoretical controversies or to the 'real' analysis of world

[1] I am grateful to *RIS*'s two anonymous reviewers, and to the journal's (then) Editor and Associate Editors, Michael Cox, Ken Booth, and Tim Dunne, for their comments and suggestions.

[2] Kjell Goldmann, '*Im Westen nichts Neues*: Seven International Relations Journals in 1972 and 1992', *European Journal of International Relations,* 2 (1995), pp. 245–58, quotation from p. 255.

[3] Stanley Hoffmann, 'An American Social Science: International Relations', *Daedalus,* 106 (1977), pp. 41–60.

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politics.[4] One can attempt to reply pre-emptively to such criticisms by conceding that study of the academy should not be allowed to replace 'real' theoretical or empirical work, but insisting at the same time that the work already done in this sub-field has shown convincingly enough that questions about intellectual history can be as legitimately posed within IR as in any other discipline. There are, in any case, some reassuringly 'real' theoretical issues at stake in disciplinary history, not least of which are the questions of how, and to what ends, it should be pursued. On closer examination, the literature on the history and identity of IR can be seen to fall into two broad categories. The first of these consists of work that has remained within the Anglo-Saxon or anglophone world and subjected aspects of this part of the discipline to detailed examination.[5] The second category has reflected the fact that scholarly communities outside the Anglo-Saxon world have developed in slightly different ways, operating at the points where local academic systems and intellectual cultures interact with the quantitatively dominant Anglo-Saxon discipline.[6] While it would be impossible to summarize here the literature on non-Anglo-Saxon IR communities, it has already established a solid basis for the claim that, in Ole Wæver's words, 'IR is quite different in different places'.[7]

This article concentrates on the first category of literature, and examines the ways in which different authors operating within the Anglo-Saxon core of IR have contextualized the discipline itself and the ideas and theories employed within it. The term 'contextualization' is inelegant but functional; it serves to identify the examination of what William Wallace, addressing himself a few years ago to contemporary IR theorists whose analyses he wished to challenge, called 'the historical contingency in which their predecessors developed their interpretations of global events and global morality'.[8] I shall return to the term later in order to examine it more closely, but for the moment it can be used to mean reflection on the

[4] I follow the convention of using 'International Relations (IR)' for the academic discipline, and 'international relations' or 'world politics' for the object of that field of study.

[5] William C. Olson and A.J.R. Groom, *International Relations Then and Now: Origins and Trends in Interpretation* (London: Harper Collins, 1991); Brian C. Schmidt, 'The Historiography of Academic International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 20 (1994), pp. 349–67, and *The Political Discourse of Anarchy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998); Tim Dunne, *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan/St. Antony's College, 1998); Miles Kahler, 'Inventing International Relations: International Relations Theory After 1945', in Michael W. Doyle and G. John Ikenberry (eds.), *New Thinking in International Relations* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), pp. 20–53; Stefano Guzzini, *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

[6] K.J. Holsti, *The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory* (Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1985); A.J.R. Groom, 'The World Beyond: The European Dimension', in A.J.R. Groom and Margot Light (eds.), *Contemporary International Relations: A Guide to Theory* (London and New York: Pinter, 1994), pp. 219–236; Stephen Chan, 'Beyond the North-West: Africa and the East', in Groom and Light (eds.), *Contemporary International Relations*, pp. 237–54; Klaus-Gerd Giesen, 'French Cancan zwischen Positivismus, Enzyklopädismus und Historismus. Zur Struktur und Geschichte der vorherrschenden französischsprachigen Ansatzforschung', *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 1 (1995), pp. 141–70; Ole Wæver, 'The Sociology of a Not So International Discipline: American and European Developments in International Relations', *International Organization*, 52 (1998), pp. 687–727; Knud Erik Jørgensen, 'Continental IR Theory: The Best Kept Secret', *European Journal of International Relations,* 6 (2000), pp. 9–42.

[7] Wæver, 'Sociology', p. 723.

[8] William Wallace, 'Truth and Power, Monks and Technocrats: Theory and Practice in International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 22 (1996), pp. 301–21, quotation from p. 309.

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conditions in which scholarship on international relations is produced. This article draws attention to the questions of intellectual-historical method and disciplinary politics that are either posed explicitly or arise implicitly within this literature, noting that although there is a measure of agreement on the need to place the evolution of the discipline in some kind of context, there is no unanimity about the best methods to be adopted, or indeed on the relevance or otherwise of historical events to academic practices. I suggest that in order to understand these controversies, we need to appreciate that IR's intra-disciplinary debate has itself been influenced by broader intellectual-historical and political factors. Disciplinary history is seen by some scholars as part of a 'critical' intellectual project: its task is, they argue, to expose misconceptions about the past and thereby to open the way to more emancipatory academic practices.[9] While not disputing the right of 'critical' authors to work in this spirit if they wish to do so, I contend that the 'critical' project or projects are themselves part of intellectual history, and not a privileged vantage-point from which IR's disciplinary history can be written. This means that 'critical IR' itself needs to be analysed and contextualized.

The article addresses these issues as follows. In the next section, I review the ways in which the existing literature deals with the question of disciplinary history, identify some of the problems that arise, and show how these debates overlap with the issue of 'critical IR'. Section 3 (p. 261) presents Quentin Skinner's approach to the history of ideas as a basis for future intellectual-historical work. I situate Skinner's work within recent debates on the history of ideas, argue that its potential has so far been underestimated within IR (partly because it has been misunderstood by some of IR's own disciplinary historians), and discuss some of its strengths and weaknesses and the extent of its applicability to a more contemporary context. In Section 4 (p. 265) I attempt to reformulate debates about disciplinary history and 'critical IR' in terms of the history of academic and political radicalism in the North Atlantic area during the last few decades. This involves reference to a body of literature on the recent history of the American and North Atlantic academies and to French intellectual history in the post-1945 period; the objective is to provide at least a partial explanation of the way certain strands of 'continental' thought entered the Anglo-Saxon academy.

Without claiming that these exploratory remarks represent a fully-fledged analysis of recent North Atlantic intellectual history on Skinnerian lines, I do suggest that it would be worthwhile embarking on such a project as a way of illuminating aspects of IR's intra-disciplinary debates and placing them on a sounder footing. The article therefore represents an initial attempt to reintegrate disciplinary history with the international political history that is, in one form or another, IR's main object of study. In conclusion, it also endorses the view that if the project of disciplinary history is to become as genuinely international as IR itself has always claimed to be, it will need in future to devote more attention to the production of knowledge about international politics in other, non-anglophone academic communities.

[9] It could be argued that no homogeneous body of 'critical' scholarship exists. There is certainly no homogeneity about 'critical IR', but there is an archipelago of approaches drawing on philosophy, on literary, political, and social theory, and on feminist approaches in all these fields, held together by a family resemblance—the imperative of providing emancipatory perspectives to the discipline. I leave the term in inverted commas in order to signal both a recognition that some scholars see themselves as challenging a perceived disciplinary *status quo*, and a reservation of judgement on the criteria which might distinguish 'critical' scholarship.

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Events and ideas

Most scholars who have concentrated their attention on the development of IR within the Anglo-Saxon world have tended to assume that the emergence of different schools of thought within the discipline needs to be understood in the light of 'real world' developments—the world changes, and scholarship changes in an attempt to keep up. It has been argued, for example, that the discipline established itself as part of a post-1918 attempt to prevent future wars; that the crisis of the inter-war international system and the challenge posed to it by Nazi Germany prompted scholars to turn back towards the study of power politics; that the interdependence and regime theory literature of the 1970s and 80s developed as part of a response to the changing position of the USA within the world economy; that neorealism emerged at a time of decline in superpower detente and transition to a renewed phase of Cold War; and (more critically) that post-1945 IR as a whole has been an American or North Atlantic discipline, functioning predominantly in the English language as a result of its preoccupation with a policy agenda dominated by the interests of the USA.[10]

In some of the more recent and detailed intra-disciplinary literature, this assumption about the importance of the external historical context has been challenged. The challenge was perhaps most explicitly stated by Brian C. Schmidt in an article published in 1994, which argued that the contextual influence of political events had been assumed without being demonstrated and that a 'critical internal discursive history' of the discipline was therefore required.[11] Since then Schmidt has pursued this project and published a history of US political science from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, and Tim Dunne has adopted a similar approach in a study of the English School.[12] This work can be seen as a sub-category of a broader genre of contributions sharing the assumption that a discursive or genealogical method is appropriate both for contributions to the discipline and for analyses of the discipline.[13] The 'internal discursive' school of disciplinary historiography presents itself as 'critical' in two related respects. The 'critical' intellectual project legitimizes the general enterprise of writing disciplinary history, and a 'critical' method—internal discursive analysis—is applied in order to narrate a new version of that history. This category of intra-disciplinary literature is, it seems to me, simultaneously valuable and puzzling. Valuable, because these authors have

[10] Hoffmann, 'An American Social Science'; Steve Smith, 'Paradigm Dominance in International Relations: The Development of International Relations as a Social Science', in Hugh C. Dyer and Leon Mangasarian (eds.), *The Study of International Relations: The State of the Art* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan/Millennium, 1989), pp. 3–27; Olson and Groom, *International Relations Then and Now*; Kahler, 'Inventing International Relations'; Guzzini, *Realism in International Relations*.

[11] Schmidt, 'The Historiography of Academic International Relations'.

[12] Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy*; Dunne, *Inventing International Society*.

[13] This sub-category would also include Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and 'Short Circuits: Society and Tradition in International Relations Theory', *Review of International Studies,* 22 (1996), pp. 339–60; Steve Smith, 'The Self-Images of a Discipline: A Genealogy of International Relations Theory', in Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds.), *International Theory Relations Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 1–37. Smith's contribution can be compared with an earlier piece by the same author (Smith, 'Paradigm Dominance in International Relations') to reveal an individual scholar moving from a historical-contextual stance to a genealogical one.

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provided us with absorbing accounts of historically and geographically specific niches within the discipline in a way that general overviews cannot; puzzling, because although there is a general commitment to discourse analysis it remains unclear what intellectual-historical method these authors themselves believe they have employed. My own view is that this work is only partly internal, and reveals in spite of itself that we do indeed need some kind of historical-contextual method for the pursuit of intellectual history in general, and for disciplinary history in particular. I therefore summarize this work before returning in the next section to the general question of intellectual-historical method.

Schmidt's original argument sought to challenge both the assumption that IR had an unbroken tradition reaching back to classical Athens and the premise that political events had determined and caused the way in which the discipline had developed. He presented his alternative, 'internal discursive' approach as one that would unmask self-interested attempts to legitimate one's own preferences with the help of a retrospectively constructed analytical tradition, and correct the mistakes of contextualists like Hoffmann who, he argued, were not in fact able to explain theoretical and methodological changes within the discipline via their general references to external context. What was required, argued Schmidt, was a historiography more sensitive to the diversity of academic responses to external events, of the discursive practices adopted within the discipline, and of the ways in which they changed. He acknowledged the possibility of a relationship between external context and internal conceptual change, but said the relationship was frequently tangential and needed to be demonstrated rather than assumed.

In his book *The Political Discourse of Anarchy*, Schmidt reconstructs the history of academic political science and IR in the United States from about 1850 to the mid-twentieth century. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards there was a theoretical conversation about state sovereignty and anarchy, out of which the field of International Relations emerged; within this field, the concept of anarchy was understood in different ways at different times and a variety of conclusions were drawn. He is able to show that certain subjects were discussed much earlier than has been generally assumed, and that others did not in fact dominate periods in which they are usually believed to have been dominant. Perhaps the most important challenge here is to the belief that the inter-war period of the nineteenth century was dominated by an idealist discourse which was replaced by realism after 1945: in fact, says Schmidt, there was considerable continuity between pre- and post-World War II discourses revolving around the role of international organizations in world politics.

The value of Schmidt's book as a corrective to earlier and briefer accounts of the history of IR is undeniable, and it has been rightly welcomed as filling a gap in the intra-disciplinary literature. What is less clear is why Schmidt is so opposed to contextual explanations, or why he believes a degree of contextualism is incompatible with some version of his preferred 'internal discursive' method. In fact, Schmidt refers repeatedly to historical context as he explains how and why American political science and IR developed as they did: successive waves of German scholars were forced by political conditions at home to emigrate to the United States, and they introduced their perspectives on the state into American discourses from the mid-nineteenth century onwards; the American Civil War prompted scholars to discuss codes of military conduct; the existence of colonial empires and the League of Nations helped, unsurprisingly, to shape discourses on colonial empires and

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international organizations. Much of this looks suspiciously contextual.[14] In his final summary, Schmidt says that disciplinary history should investigate 'how the field comprehended external events rather than how external events have impacted the development of the field'.[15]

This appears reasonable, but what is being advocated here is the study of interactions between external context and internal discourses, and it is not clear why this needs to be distinguished from the position taken by contextually-minded historians of ideas. In fact, Schmidt's rejection of contextualism is a rejection of a crude version according to which political events determine and cause academic discourse. Not only is it difficult to see what exactly would be meant by the positing of a causal relationship here (how could events *cause* ideas?), it can also be shown that this view is not in fact held by Quentin Skinner, who is generally regarded as the paradigmatic contextualist historian of ideas and who is cited as such by Schmidt.[16] Even Schmidt's use here of the word 'impacted' suggests a retreat towards a contextualist position. To say that events 'impact' academia would be a significantly weaker claim than the argument that they cause academic discourses, and there is surely in the end no great difference between saying that scholars 'comprehend' events and that events 'impact' on scholars.

This problem reappears, in a somewhat less serious form, in Tim Dunne's book on the history of the English School, *Inventing International Society*. Dunne, like Schmidt, advocates an internal discursive method for disciplinary historiography, and has himself criticized Schmidt for not applying that method consistently.[17] But even here there are some uncertainties. Dunne opens his book with a promise to provide a 'contextual account' of the English School as an intellectual community.[18] A few pages later he endorses Schmidt's (1994) criticism of the mistaken assumptions made by conventional histories about the 'determinative and causal effect' of world events, before saying that he intends to offer an account of 'the context within which the internal debates were carried forward' and promising 'an account of the internal history of the English School'.[19] Dunne then rejects contextualism 'either of the kind found in International Relations or the history of ideas' as a misleading imputation of causality to the world, and cites Skinner as an example of this.[20] (It is conceivable that Dunne is citing Skinner here as a critic rather than an advocate of determinist contextualism—in my view a more accurate reflection of the latter's position—but it seems more likely that the citation is intended to be critical and that Dunne has, like Schmidt, misunderstood Skinner.)

If one attempts to reconstruct Dunne's intellectual-historical method by looking at its results, it does appear that he has been more careful to exclude external events from the analysis than Schmidt. Even so, events continue to raise their heads, and some of the most illuminating parts of the book are those in which the scholars of

[14] I am not the first commentator to have argued that Schmidt's analysis is less internal than he claims: see Tim Dunne, 'International Theory and the Mirror of History', *European Journal of International Relations,* 4 (1998), pp. 347–62, and Richard Little, 'Historiography and International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 25 (1999), pp. 291–299.

[15] Schmidt, *The Discourse of Anarchy*, pp. 230–1.

[16] Schmidt, 'The Historiography of Academic International Relations', p. 350 and 360.

[17] See Dunne, 'International Theory and the Mirror of History'.

[18] Dunne, *Inventing International Society*, p. xi.

[19] Ibid., p. 1 and 17 (an approving citation of Schmidt).

[20] Ibid., p. 2 and 17 (the citation of Skinner).

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the English School are located in a particular time and place—their biographies and institutional affiliations are summarized, the history of the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics is narrated, and the question of E.H. Carr's alleged Stalinism is addressed. Dunne also suggests persuasively that one of the British academy's functions has been to socialize elites from Britain's former colonies (this comment is made in relation to Hedley Bull's biography).

As I have already suggested, I believe there is a fairly simple explanation for some of the uncertainties discernible in Schmidt's and Dunne's statements about their intellectual-historical methodology: they have misunderstood Skinner and believe him to hold a much cruder view of the relationship between events and ideas than is the case. Schmidt and to a lesser extent Dunne are rather more contextualist than they care to admit, and their work suggests that it is very difficult to write the history of a discipline like IR without regular and extensive reference to what Harold Macmillan referred to pertinently in another connection as 'Events, dear boy, events'.

Another book published in the same year as Schmidt's and Dunne's, Stefano Guzzini's *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy*, challenges internalist historiography. Guzzini advocates a historical-sociological analysis in which the internal history of the development of realist debates is related to the external story of a community of researchers responding to their political and social environment. However, Guzzini, having set out this approach to intellectual history, does not stick to it and concentrates for most of the book on an (extremely valuable) analysis of realist thought. His historical sociology is very thin and frequently self-contradictory, as the claim that realism came to dominate both the US academy and US policymaking is not backed up by much evidence and is further undermined by historical details to which Guzzini himself draws attention—for example, the fact that George Kennan opposed the formation of NATO and that Hans Morgenthau opposed the Vietnam War. In this respect at least, Guzzini's book would seem to confirm Schmidt's argument that contextualist work tends to assume a certain relationship between events and ideas without being able to demonstrate it.[21]

The recent disciplinary history literature therefore presents us with some curious paradoxes. Anti-contextualists do not manage to exclude references to context, while contextualists (Guzzini does not describe himself in these terms, but the cap fits him reasonably well) have surprisingly little to say about the relationship between the academy and the worlds of politics and foreign policy. How are we to find a way out of this apparent impasse? Before returning to Quentin Skinner's work in the following section, I wish to explore further the relationship between the methodological issue and the 'critical' agenda espoused by both Schmidt and Dunne (and, for that matter, by Guzzini). Even though their respective methodologies are not as radical as they claim, the 'critical' element is an integral part of their overall arguments. Schmidt aligns himself with 'dissent' within IR and, while criticizing post-positivists for paying insufficient attention to the early history of the discipline,

[21] Little makes a similar point in his discussion of Guzzini's book, in 'Historiography and International Relations'. The idea that US foreign policy closely mirrored realism's theoretical agenda has also been nicely rebutted by Jack Donnelly, 'Realism and the Academic Study of International Relations', in James Farr, John S. Dryzek and Stephen T. Leonard (eds.), *Political Science in History: Research Programs and Political Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 175–97.

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concludes his book by arguing that the discourse of anarchy is a matter of internal disciplinary debate rather than a necessity imposed by the external world—in other words, Schmidt is a constructivist about International Relations as well as international relations. Dunne sees the task of intellectual history as the search for the normative potential of any text (which provides him with an aspiration rather than a method), and his study of the English School aims to reveal the radical potential of the Grotian tradition by placing these authors within a 'broadly-defined critical agenda for International Relations theory'.[22] This radical potential can be revealed, he argues, *via* a defence of the English School against those, for example post-modernists, who have argued that the former are little better than realists, and by bringing to light their capacity to provide normative guidelines for thinking about culture, community, identity, and international solidarity.

Attempts to write 'critical' disciplinary history leave themselves open to an objection at this point. If this historical genre is motivated by 'critical' concerns to reshape the present and future of the discipline (and the world), why should the 'critical' literature itself not be subjected to intellectual-historical examination (by whatever methods)? Neither these authors nor their normative preferences stand outside history, nor would they—one hopes—claim to do so. But in that case, and irrespective of the merits of the historical accounts written by these authors: who contextualizes the contextualizers (if that is what they are), and how should this be done? The general point here is that 'critical IR' itself, with its scholarly methods and goals, itself emerged in a specific historical context that should be open to examination. This point was well made by Chris Brown in his recent introductory text *Understanding International Relations*. Brown's general treatment of sub-fields within the discipline remains fairly traditionally historical-contextual. He is on the whole sympathetic to more recent 'critical' approaches, and offers a partial account of the historical circumstances of their emergence. Dependency theory, he notes, was unable to offer a satisfactory explanation of changes in the world economic system in the 1980s, and 'this intellectual failure left space for new approaches to emerge'.[23] This seems right, and it suggests a further question: why did the particular approaches making up 'critical IR' emerge when they did, at a time when the attractiveness of broadly Marxist approaches was, as Brown says, in decline?

I have argued in this section that an engagement with the history of the discipline of IR leads us naturally to the question of the historical context and emergence of 'critical IR'. I have also argued that Quentin Skinner's approach to the history of ideas has been rejected by IR scholars working on disciplinary history in a way that suggests it has not been fully understood, and that some of these scholars are themselves operating in ways that may be more compatible with Skinner's work than they realize. The purpose of the next section is to place the discussion on a sounder footing by returning to Skinner's work and offering what I contend is a more satisfactory account of it; in Section 4 (p. 265) I return to the 'critical IR' question.

[22] Dunne, *Inventing International Society*, p. xi.
[23] Chris Brown, *Understanding International Relations* (Basingstoke & London: Macmillan, 1997), p. 57.

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Quentin Skinner on the history of ideas

The field of intellectual history or the history of ideas (the terms are not always used as synonyms) is a broad one, and it has its own history.[24] Throwing caution to the winds and risking oversimplification, we could define intellectual history with Donald R. Kelley as an inherently interdisciplinary undertaking located at the intersection of history, literature, and philosophy.[25]

Quentin Skinner's main concern in his work on the history of ideas is the reconstruction of authorial intentions pertaining to texts from the early modern period of European political thought.[26] Skinner sets out his approach by distinguishing it from two alternatives he views as equally mistaken. Works of political theory cannot be treated as timeless contributions to a universal philosophical debate, nor can their meanings simply be read off as determined by the economic, political, and social context in which they were written. (The first of these points distinguishes this approach from traditional assumptions about the history of ideas, and the second shows that Skinner is not the determinist or reductionist he has been taken for.) The intentions of their authors must be reconstructed from the linguistic and intellectual contexts in which those authors found themselves and on which they sought to have some effect through their writings. Skinner says that his approach to texts 'enables us to characterise what their authors were *doing* in writing them'.[27] The recovery of individual authors' intentions is only possible if the researcher possesses adequate knowledge of the dominant discourses of given periods. This requires an examination of the texts themselves, of the societies in which they were written, and of the general political vocabulary of the age. The method also requires a knowledge of literary conventions, since Skinner takes the (not universally accepted) view that there is no qualitative difference between literary and philosophical or political texts in this respect.

Applying this method, Skinner argues for example that Machiavelli did not abandon the humanist ideal of virtuous republican government but thought his contemporaries failed to appreciate the significance of sheer power in political life, and so argued that men of *virtù* should be capable of acting viciously if the situation required it. The Calvinist theory of revolution, he argues further, was in fact a constitutional justification of resistance to unjust rulers, influenced by Lutheranism and developed by the French Huguenots as a way of appealing to non-sectarian support during a period of Catholic intolerance. And when Locke wrote his *Two Treatises of Government* without mentioning the supposed prescriptive force of the ancient English constitution, he was deliberately ignoring a widely accepted form of

[24] For valuable surveys, see Donald R. Kelley, 'Horizons of Intellectual History: Retrospect, Circumspect, Prospect', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XLVIII (1987), pp. 143–69; Donald R. Kelley, 'What is Happening to the History of Ideas?' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, LI (1990), pp. 3–25.

[25] Kelley, 'What is Happening', p. 4.

[26] I draw here on the following primary and secondary works: Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought,* vol. 1: *The Renaissance*, and vol. 2: *The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Quentin Skinner, *Machiavelli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); James Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics* (Cambridge: Polity, 1988); Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[27] Skinner, *The Foundations,* vol 1, p. xiii, emphasis in original.

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political reasoning in order to reject it. The analysis of literary style comes into play in, for example, Skinner's study of Hobbes, where he identifies the figures of speech employed by Hobbes and gives examples of their use by other sixteenth and seventeenth century authors.

This is the method conventionally described by both supporters and critics of Skinner as 'contextualist'. A degree of caution is necessary here, as 'context' can potentially refer to a number of different things including intentions, motivations, the societal environment in which a text was produced, a cultural community, modes of discourse, and the body of an individual author's work.[28] In fact, while Skinner's historical studies do insist on a careful reconstruction of the political and social environments in which particular works were written, his methodological writings tend to reserve the term 'context' for the linguistic and literary conventions that need to be identified. Mark Bevir, who disagrees with Skinner but also provides a bracing examination of the philosophical issues at stake, suggests that Skinner should be described as a 'conventionalist' rather than a contextualist, the latter term being applied to other members of the Cambridge School of historians such as J.G.A. Pocock, in whose work authorial mental activity plays a more limited role.[29] What can be said with some certainty is that, as already argued, Skinner does not attribute to 'events' any kind of capacity to cause linguistic actions.[30] Nor does Skinner claim that a reconstruction of authorial intentions, once carried out, will exhaust the meaning of a text, since 'surplus meaning' going beyond authorial intentions will always remain,[31] and he also does not insist that there can only be a single correct reading of a given text.[32]

Of course, even if my claim that Schmidt and Dunne have misunderstood Skinner is correct, it does not follow that his work is unchallenged within the history of ideas. Within the secondary debate provoked by Skinner one can identify a neo-traditionalist response;[33] a genealogical challenge;[34] a number of challenges related to issues like the recoverability of intentions and the relationship between meanings and intentions;[35] and the charge that the whole argument is circular. The neo-traditionalist response argues that the notion of 'perennial issues' in the history of political thought cannot be so lightly dismissed. Jens Bartelson, who favours a radically genealogical approach both to the history of ideas and to IR, seeks to shift attention away from historical circumstances towards an exploration of the relationship between political concepts and the conditions of possible knowledge in different periods. He argues that Skinner assumes a suprahistorical vantage point from which intellectual history is observed and which enables observations to be expressed in a timeless language. (The main problem with this argument is that

[28] These distinctions are drawn by Dominick LaCapra, in 'Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts', *History and Theory*, XIX (1980), pp. 245–76.
[29] Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[30] For a robust correction of this misinterpretation, see Peter L. Janssen, 'Political Thought as Traditionary Action: The Critical Response to Skinner and Pocock', *History and Theory,* XXIV (1985), pp. 115–46.
[31] Skinner, 'A Reply to My Critics', in Tully, *Meaning and Context*, p. 272.
[32] Janssen, 'Political Thought as Traditionary Action', p. 141.
[33] For example John Patrick Diggins, 'The Oyster and the Pearl: The Problem of Contextualism in Intellectual History', *History and Theory,* XXIII (1984), pp. 151–69.
[34] Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*.
[35] See the debates in Tully, *Meaning and Context*.

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Bartelson himself is unable to account for discontinuities or transitions from one discursive regime to another.) Bevir's investigation of the logic of the history of ideas argues that knowledge of linguistic conventions or contexts is not sufficient to enable us to recover the intentions behind an utterance, and proposes instead that we can write good intellectual history by attributing beliefs to authors on the basis of evidence and comparison rather than by using any fixed method.

The circularity objection is sufficiently troubling to merit closer attention. One reviewer of Skinner's 1998 book *Liberty Before Liberalism* summed up this objection as follows: 'Hermeneutic circularity threatens, and at more than one level. We need to know how to work out what forms of words express what illocutions: but to understand one, we already need the other. The conventions themselves also need interpretation, and it is hard to see what evidence could be adduced to do this job apart from other examples of conventions. It seems that we have to do the interpretation before we do the interpretation.'[36] Does Skinner have an answer to this charge? He does not deny that hermeneutic circularity is an issue. Replying to his critics in an earlier contribution, he says: '[T]he process is undoubtedly circular; but there is surely no difficulty about seeing where to start. What I am claiming is that we should start by elucidating the meaning, and hence the subject matter, of utterances in which we are interested. We should then turn to the context of their occurrence in order to determine how exactly they connect with, or relate to, other utterances concerned with the same subject matter. My suggestion is that, if we succeed in identifying this context with sufficient accuracy, we can eventually hope to read off what the speaker or writer in whom we are interested was doing in saying what he or she said.'[37]

As Bevir quite rightly points out, the very least we are entitled to expect of an approach to the history of ideas is that it should be applicable to itself.[38] Skinner, it seems to me, passes this test, and in his comments on the intentions behind his own work he suggests a further escape route from circularity and also replies effectively to the charge that he lays claim to a suprahistorical vantage point. In the final section of *Liberty Before Liberalism*, Skinner reflects on the changes that have taken place in the field of the history of ideas since the 1960s and the way in which political theory has been reintegrated with political history.[39] As a result, the field has become more centrally concerned with the study of the 'changing political languages in which societies talk to themselves'.[40] Even though the past may contain questions we no longer ask, we can re-examine and reconsider them, and thereby remind ourselves that our present values and ways of thinking about them reflect choices made earlier. Skinner is thus well aware of his own contingency, and no claim to a suprahistorical vantage-point is being made. He writes further: 'If the study of intellectual history is to have the kind of use I am claiming for it, there must be some deeper level at which our present values and the seemingly alien assumptions of our forbears to some degree match up …. I am suggesting [that] intellectual historians can hope to provide their readers with information relevant to

[36] Glen Newey, 'How do we find out what he meant? Historical context and the autonomy of ideas in Quentin Skinner', *Times Literary Supplement,* 26 June 1998.
[37] Skinner, 'A Reply to My Critics', p. 275.
[38] Bevir, *The Logic*, p. 309.
[39] 'Freedom and the Historian', in Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, pp. 101–120.
[40] Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, p. 105.

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the making of judgements about their current values and beliefs, and then leave them to ruminate.'[41] Intellectual history is therefore also something that might extend the range of our present political choices, 'enlarging our present horizons instead of fortifying local prejudices'.[42] Circularity, or to be more precise a tension between a historically-minded analysis and the assumption that at least some of the concepts used in early modern Europe are sufficiently recognizable to be of assistance today, is therefore acknowledged but seen as benign. Skinner comes close to Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics when he comments that reading always involves an engagement between a reader and a text situated in two different historical contexts, and forces us to recognize that our own conceptualizations are not privileged; this also rather weakens Skinner's commitment to authorial intentions.[43]

While I cannot force Schmidt or Dunne, or other historians of IR such as Guzzini, to accept Skinner's intellectual-historical approach, I can suggest that they take a second look at his writings and reconsider whether the methods proposed there are really so incompatible with what they wish to do—and, up to a point, with what they have done. However, it is important to remember Skinner's warning against the traditionalist assumption that past theorists were concerned with exactly the same issues that preoccupy us today. When disciplinary historians legitimize their writings with reference to a contemporary 'critical' project, they risk shifting back towards a 'perennial issues' approach (this danger is present in Dunne's work, which seeks to show that the English School are on the 'right', that is, the non-realist and constructivist, side in contemporary normative debates). In addition, Skinner's 'ruminations' are a fairly low-key enterprise and may seem tame by comparison with the 'dissident', 'subversive', and suchlike activities preferred by many 'critical' scholars. Nevertheless, rumination is a perfectly respectable pastime; there is no requirement for intellectual history to be 'dissident'.

It is also clear that a method initially applied to Renaissance and early modern Europe will need some amplification if it is to be used to deal with the more complex and professionalized academic environment of the mid-to-late twentieth century. Additional tools from academic sociology and the sociology of science are likely to be required.[44] Furthermore, as I mentioned initially, the disciplinary history literature deals with distinct contemporary scholarly communities as well as earlier periods. In a stimulating contribution on the international circulation of ideas, Pierre Bourdieu has suggested that a foreign audience often reads a given work in much the same way as an audience separated in time from and so unfamiliar with the circumstances of an older work's composition: 'a foreign reader's judgement is rather like the judgement of posterity'.[45] Any method on which we can agree for the

[41] Ibid, pp. 117–118.
[42] Skinner, 'A Reply to My Critics', p. 287.
[43] Skinner's most approving reference to Gadamer is in 'A Reply to My Critics', at p. 286. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Die Universalität des hermeneutischen Problems', and 'Ästhetik und Hermeneutik', in *Gadamer Lesebuch* (ed.), Jean Grodin (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), pp. 58–70 and 112–119 respectively.
[44] Useful pointers have been provided by Wæver in 'Sociology'.
[45] Pierre Bourdieu, 'Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées', *Romanistische Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte/Cahiers d'Histoire des Littératures Romanes,* 14 (1990), pp. 1–10, quotation from p. 3.

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study of IR's disciplinary history should therefore be applicable to both historically and geographically or culturally distant work.

This section has not been able to prove beyond doubt that Skinnerian contextualism is *the* method to be used in writing IR's disciplinary history, but it has sought to show that Skinner has made an important contribution to the history of ideas and in particular of political thought, that Skinner can respond satisfactorily to a number of the criticisms of his work, and that some of the recent literature on IR's disciplinary history may not be as far removed from his work as its authors believe. I now turn to look at the questions we might be interested in asking about 'critical IR' itself.

Political radicalism and the North Atlantic academy

Let us assume that we are interested in the ideas that have influenced Anglo-Saxon IR during the last 20–30 years, that we are particularly interested in the ideas that have been influential within 'critical' IR, and that we would like to situate 'critical' ideas within intellectual and political history and, as far as possible, in the context of the intentions that can reasonably be ascribed to those who have put them forward. I would like to suggest that it will be helpful to look first at the recent history of the American academy and then at French intellectual history in the post-war period.

Ole Wæver's article on differences between American and European IR provides a useful starting point, and it alerts us to the question of the conditions that may render certain ideas more attractive in some academic environments than in others. Wæver finds a genuine American hegemony in the sense that American authors dominate American IR journals and have an increasing presence in European journals, but argues that the discipline is nevertheless becoming more pluralistic because of a trend towards 'de-Europeanization' in the US. This takes the form of increasing specialization around rational choice approaches in a way that shifts IR back towards the mainstream of US political science but is alien to most European scholars. Wæver's analysis brings us back to Hoffmann's 'America vs. the rest' argument in one important respect, emphasizing what are seen as considerable differences between US and British IR. However, there are some slightly puzzling aspects of his argument which merit further discussion. The picture of liberal-rationalist hegemony within American political science can be contrasted with other analyses of the broader American academy, in particular the humanities, which portray them as struggling in the grip of a deconstructionist and/or Foucauldian orthodoxy. This claim has produced a steady stream of polemical interventions, including critiques by the late Christopher Lasch and Richard Rorty.[46]

It may be possible to reconcile these views if there is a more impenetrable barrier between mainstream political science (including IR) and the rest of the social or human sciences in the US than there is in Europe. Cross-disciplinary studies which have attempted to compare the 'academic culture' of different disciplines in the US

[46] Christopher Lasch, 'Academic Pseudo-Radicalism: The Charade of "Subversion"', in *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1995), pp. 176–193; Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1998).

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are helpful here. Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske suggest, in their recent volume on *American Academic Culture in Transformation*, that the impact on the academy of the political and above all cultural upheavals of the 1960s differed considerably across the disciplines.[47] While economics and philosophy remained almost unaffected, English was transformed by debates on feminism, gender, race, and ethnicity, and cultural studies emerged as something approaching a new meta-discipline. Political science was not unaffected by these developments, but while some observers consider that its rational choice core remained untouched by the 'identity debates' and the 'culture wars', others argue that the dominance of rational choice approaches within political science is now declining.[48] Bender and Schorske go on to draw attention to the way in which this reorientation was accompanied by a shift in American scholarship's relationship to European intellectual life. In the years immediately after World War II, Anglo-Saxon philosophical liberalism and Austrian rationalist ideas were absorbed in America, and French and German influences were negligible. During the 1950s, the flow of ideas moved from West to East and American scholarship acquired primacy in many fields. After the crisis of the 1960s and with the new salience of culture and community, continental European philosophy appeared better equipped to help US scholars address their new agenda. 'The development of transdisciplinary intellectual discourse and the shifting impact of European ideas of different kinds and provenance have thus become closely intertwined.'[49]

This offers a partial explanation of some of IR's recent turns: 'critical' scholarship must be contextualized in relation to post-Vietnam upheavals in American society and the American academy. We now need to re-cross the Atlantic to explore the European origins of the developments to which the American academy became increasingly attracted after 1968. These can, as already intimated, be seen as the fruits of the declining attraction of Marxism for European intellectuals during the late Cold War period. French thought was particularly important. Throughout the twentieth century French intellectuals were expected, and considered themselves to be entitled and obliged, to intervene in the political debates of the day; there was a strong commitment on the part of many intellectuals to varieties of Marxism, in many cases to the Communist party, and sometimes to the USSR itself; and these commitments and the subsequent reactions against them helped to shape intellectual developments that resonated well beyond France.[50] The development of French thought in the 1950s and 60s owed much to the close relationship between domestic politics, intellectual life, and international politics that was characteristic of the Cold

[47] Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske (eds.), *American Academic Culture in Transformation: Fifty Years, Four Disciplines* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 'Introduction', pp. 3–13.

[48] Compare the assessments of David A. Hollinger and Rogers M. Smith in Bender and Schorske's volume: Rogers M. Smith, 'Still Blowing in the Wind: The American Quest for a Democratic, Scientific Political Science', and David A. Hollinger, 'The Disciplines and the Identity Debates, 1970–1995', in Bender and Schorske, *American Academic Culture*, pp. 271–305 and 353–71 respectively.

[49] Bender and Schorske, *American Academic Culture*, p. 13.

[50] The literature is voluminous. See: Michel Winock, *Le siècle des intellectuels* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2nd edn 1999); Sunil Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution: The Intellectual Left in Postwar France* (New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press, 1993); Sudhir Hazareesingh, *Political Traditions in Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); François Furet, *Le passé d'une illusion: essai sur l'idée communiste au XXe siècle* (Paris: Laffont, 1995).

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War period as a whole and took a specific form in France, where the Communist party was one of the two largest in Europe. This combination of circumstances affected conceptions of intellectual radicalism, the ways in which intellectuals formulated their opposition, and even their sometimes self-dramatizing conceptions of what it was to be an intellectual. The year 1956, in which Jean-Paul Sartre broke with the Communist party (though he was never a member), was perhaps the crucial year—at least as important in its impact on intellectual history as 1968 was to be in either France or the US.

If we are interested in the philosophers who have influenced 'critical' Anglo-Saxon scholarship, some useful sources are available. Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, to mention but two, have reflected on their intellectual autobiographies in strikingly similar ways. Foucault's biographer, Didier Eribon, informs us that he passed through a number of stations in the course of his intellectual-political development. Youthful membership of the French Communist party (which in Foucault's case was brief and fairly lukewarm) was succeeded by vigorous anti-communism in the early 1960s, a Maoist phase in the aftermath of 1968, and support of the rights of Spanish, Polish, and Soviet oppositionists and Vietnamese refugees during the 1970s and 80s.[51] Eribon argues that Foucault's work had little or no direct influence on the political upheavals of 1968, noting that during the 1960s he was regarded as a conservative by communists and Sartreans alike. There was a shift towards greater politicization in Foucault's work around 1968–70, but this involved a rejection of some of the orthodoxies of post-1968 radicalism: Foucault shared neither Althusser's analysis of the state ideological apparatus nor standard post-68 views of sexual liberation. Nevertheless, argues Eribon, Foucault's anti-totalitarian engagement in the 1970s and 80s was very much in the spirit of 1968.[52]

Foucault himself, looking back from the vantage-point of the 1970s, said that the political turmoil of 1968 had provided intellectual space for an analysis of power that went beyond simple denunciations of Soviet socialism or Western capitalism, and helped to create an audience open-minded enough to engage with this work by weakening the influence of the French Communist party.[53] Something similar can be found in the reflections of Jaques Derrida in the early 1990s, at the time he was writing *Specters of Marx*. Derrida presents himself as a member of a particular generation of French intellectuals. The roots of deconstruction, he says, can be found in the early-to-mid 1950s, a time of interaction between apocalyptic philosophies (the 'end of history' was already a theme in the 1950s) and an awareness of totalitarian terror in the Soviet bloc.[54] Deconstruction, he suggests, started life as a rejection of Stalinism and a 'radicalization … in the tradition of … a certain spirit of Marxism'.[55] Jean-François Lyotard, whose *The Postmodern Condition* is in Perry Anderson's words 'to this day perhaps the most widely cited work on the subject', was, like Foucault, active in French far-left politics. He had been a member of the

[51] Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault (1926–1984)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989), and *Michel Foucault et ses contemporains* (Paris: Fayard, 1994).
[52] Eribon, *Michel Foucault et ses contemporains*, pp. 69–103.
[53] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, edited by Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), especially the interview on 'Truth and Power'.
[54] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994).
[55] Derrida, *Specters*, p. 92.

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radical but anti-communist group *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, principally associated with Cornelius Castoriadis, during the 1950s and 60s. Even before he wrote *The Postmodern Condition* in the late 1970s, Lyotard had used the term 'meta-narrative' in discussing the decline of Marxism in France at a time when a number of former radicals, the *nouveaux philosophes*, had somewhat belatedly become fully aware of the evils of Stalinism after reading Solzhenitsyn. Only later did he extend the term to cover the natural sciences, the Enlightenment belief in progress, and other narratives.[56]

These accounts are only sketchy, and are obviously open to both amplification and questioning. Can all deconstructionist analysis really claim to have been motivated by some kind of Marxist spirit, as Derrida suggests? It seems more likely that French philosophers of this generation felt they had to find ways of being both post-Marxist and anti-Sartrean, since Sartre was the dominant intellectual figure of the 1950s and 60s. Eribon suggests that Foucault tended in retrospect to perceive a nonexistent degree of continuity between his earlier and later work. Nevertheless, such accounts place 'critical' philosophy in the context of twentieth-century history, and they begin to offer the kind of analysis one would expect if something like a Skinnerian method were to be applied to the intellectual history of this period. Derrida's comments on his intellectual autobiography here are, it should be noted, not deconstructionist, and Foucault's are not genealogical. Both of them attempt to reconstruct their own authorial intentions within the context of the debates and discourses they found themselves and their contemporaries already involved in. This is, in Skinner's terms, what they saw themselves as doing in writing what they wrote.

A further extension of this argument would need to compare developments in different countries and their subsequent effects on the academy. The events of the late 1960s resulted in the liberalization of Western societies and university systems, or at least in an increase in the speed of liberalization, to different degrees in different countries. In France itself, curiously enough, the philosophers who were to become so influential in the Anglo-Saxon social sciences had little impact on IR scholarship.[57] Other Western countries differed from France in various ways, and disputes about the political and intellectual legacy of '1968' continue. Immanuel Wallerstein stresses new forms of anti-systemic politics in the new peace, women's and ecological movements, widespread questioning of positivist social science, and new interactions between the natural and social sciences.[58] Ira Katznelson, one of Bender and Schorske's contributors, sees the 1960s as having brought about a more tolerant, eclectic, and pluralist culture across a number of disciplines within the US.[59] Some opponents of this view would argue that the net intellectual effects of '1968' have been negative, and some leftists, for example Terry Eagleton in Britain, continue to argue that the cultural radicalism of much post-68 scholarship served to cover up the political *defeat* of the ideals of '1968'.

[56] Perry Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity* (London and New York: Verso, 1998), pp. 24–36, quotation from p. 26.
[57] See Giesen, 'French Cancan'.
[58] Immanuel Wallerstein, *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), and *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World System* (Cambridge and Paris: Cambridge University Press/Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1991).
[59] Ira Katznelson, 'From the Street to the Lecture Hall: The 1960s', in Bender and Schorske, *American Academic Culture*, pp. 331–352.

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At the risk of oversimplifying a complex picture, it would appear that 'critical IR' emerged as part of an attempt to formulate new conceptions of intellectual radicalism within Western academies during this period. Ideas from continental European philosophical traditions found their way into Anglo-Saxon literary and cultural theory, and to some extent into the social sciences, during the 1970s and 1980s. The liberalization of Western societies helped to create conditions in which it was possible to conceive of alternative forms of radical political and epistemological opposition to the perceived liberal-democratic orthodoxies of the late Cold War period. These relied primarily on cultural rather than economic analyses. As we have seen, the 'critical IR' project(s) subsequently came to see the re-examination of IR's own disciplinary history as a necessary contribution to the emancipation of the discipline. Translated again into Skinnerian terms, what 'critical IR' scholars have been 'doing' has involved a search for positions from which to voice radical but non-Marxist opposition within higher education systems that were becoming increasingly liberal and diverse. There was some easing of this confrontation during the 1990s; it would be interesting to explore the question of how far this development was a reflection of the changed external circumstances of Western societies, or perhaps of the fact that Marxist analysis was not able to fight back very effectively.

Obviously, the brief account sketched in this section would need a good deal of amplification before it could be considered a comprehensive history of the movement of ideas between Europe and North America, in public life and academic discourses, during the second half of the twentieth century. It does, however, go some way towards showing that 'critical' ideas have a history of their own that needs to be considered by anyone wishing to invoke them within IR's disciplinary historiography. In order to appreciate where they came from we need to look at the history of various branches of scholarship and at the wider social and political context(s) in which they were formulated. And, because these ideas are now themselves part of the Anglo-Saxon social sciences and of IR, we need to be able to write intellectual history in such a way that this fact can be incorporated into the historiography of the discipline.

Conclusion

I have argued in this article that recent literature on the disciplinary history of IR, some of which has sought to question orthodox assumptions about the relationship between historical events and academic discourses, has added to our knowledge of the discipline's history without managing to specify its own intellectual-historical methods clearly enough. There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that the authors who reject Quentin Skinner's contextualist approach to the history of ideas have misunderstood that approach. I have argued both that Skinnerian contextualism has much to recommend it and that it may be more compatible with the work of scholars such as Schmidt and Dunne than these authors realize. I have also argued that the aspirations of 'critical IR' cannot by themselves serve to legitimize the project of writing an improved disciplinary history, since 'critical IR' is itself part of that history and can therefore also be subjected to intellectual-historical analysis. If we wish to analyse and contextualize these currents within the discipline, we will

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need to look at the ways in which different radical ideas emerged, moved from one academic community to another, and established themselves at different times in different disciplines, during the second half of the twentieth century. I suggest that Skinnerian contextualism or a variant of it will be a good way of proceeding here as well.

There is therefore no necessary connection between the sub-field of disciplinary history and the project(s) of 'critical IR'. There is, however, clearly a strong contingent connection, at least in the sub-sub-field that has been at the centre of this article, the historiography of the Anglo-American discipline. The strength of the contingent connection can be explained by the fact that 'critical IR' itself is predominantly an Anglo-Saxon enterprise that came to fruition in the USA and in some of the smaller anglophone IR communities—the UK, Australia, and Canada. Any disciplinary history wishing to incorporate non-anglophone communities would have to explain different patterns of development in which 'critical IR' has played no, or only a minor, role (there being, for example, fewer Foucauldians in French IR than in the US/UK, and fewer Habermasians in German IR than in the US/UK).[60]

I must conclude by attempting to demonstrate that this article is able to contextualize itself. This is easily done. The various critiques of disciplinary history are for the most part pursued by well-meaning left-liberal IR scholars (including the present author), and while they may occasionally be influenced by regrettably profane motives (for example, the desire to further one's career) they are also intended to facilitate more interesting and productive ruminations about world politics and the diverse ways in which different people think and write about that subject. That is what this article has been about.

[60] My own contribution to this sub-sub-field is 'The Politer Kingdoms of the Globe: Context and Comparison in the Intellectual History of IR', *Global Society*, 15 (2001), pp. 27–51.

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