



**Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte**

Begriffe, Methoden und Debatten der zeithistorischen Forschung

## Intellectual History

by Riccardo Bavaj

There is no single answer to the question: What is intellectual history?<sup>1</sup> Commenting in the mid-1980s on two recent volumes dedicated to the sub-discipline's methods and perspectives,<sup>2</sup> John Pocock wryly remarked: "I recommend reading them, but after doing so myself, I am persuaded that whatever 'intellectual history' is, and whatever 'the history of ideas' may be, I am not engaged in doing either of them."<sup>3</sup> In the United States, in many respects the heartland of intellectual history, the scholarly community has grappled with the ambiguous relationship of "intellectual history" to "the history of ideas" for almost a century. The term "intellectual history", coined by James Harvey Robinson at the beginning of the twentieth century, was adopted by a variety of scholars who, mostly focussed on a well-defined period of time, either favoured a functionalist conception of ideas as epiphenomenal or preferred a more autonomous yet still contextualist understanding of historical thought.<sup>4</sup> Arthur O. Lovejoy, who co-founded the History of Ideas Club in 1923, advanced the alternative approach, setting out to trace the meanings of essentially unchanging, molecule-like "unit-ideas" from ancient to modern times without any sustained contextualization.<sup>5</sup> Since then, both terms have either been used interchangeably or they have been kept separate to refer

- 1 This article is based on research conducted as a Feodor Lynen Research Fellow at Saint Louis University, Missouri, U.S.A. I am indebted to Frank Lorenz Müller (St Andrews) for his comments and to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for the award of the fellowship.
- 2 Preston King (ed.), *The History of Ideas. An Introduction to Method*, London/Canberra 1983; Dominick LaCapra/Steven L. Kaplan (eds.), *Modern European Intellectual History. Reappraisals and New Perspectives*, Ithaca/London 1982.
- 3 J.G.A. Pocock, *What is Intellectual History?*, in: *History Today* 35 (Oct. 1985), pp. 52-53, here p. 52.
- 4 James Harvey Robinson, *An Introduction to the History of Western Europe*, Boston/London 1902; id., *An Outline of the History of the Intellectual Class in Western Europe*, New York 1911; id., *Some Reflections on Intellectual History*, in: id., *The New History. Essays Illustrating the Modern Historical Outlook*, New York 1912, pp. 101-131. Early examples of either strand of "intellectual history" may be found in the work of Charles A. Beard, Carl Becker, Vernon L. Parrington, Merle Curti, and Perry Miller.
- 5 See Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being. A Study of the History of an Idea. The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University, 1933*, Cambridge, Mass./London 1936; id., *Essays in the History of Ideas* [published for the History of Ideas Club of the Johns Hopkins University], new ed. New York 1960 (first published 1948).

to distinct scholarly traditions, usually differentiating between the "external" contextualist approach of "intellectual history" and the "internal" approach of "the history of ideas".<sup>6</sup> The confusion has been compounded by the diversity of attempts to define key analytical terms such as "idea" and "concept".<sup>7</sup>

In the broadest sense, intellectual history has been linked to a variety of scholarly fields. The most important ones are the history of philosophy, the philosophy of history, the history of science, the history of literature, the history of art, [discourse history](#), conceptual history, the history of political thought, the history of ideologies, the history of political cultures (*Politische Kulturforschung*), the cultural history of politics (*Kulturgeschichte des Politischen*), the history of intellectuals, the history of mentalities (*histoire des mentalités*), the history of the book, [media history](#), and [visual history](#). The issue as to where to draw the line between intellectual history and cultural history has been particularly fiercely contested.<sup>8</sup>

Methodological debates on intellectual history have usually been centred on six critical issues. First, the purpose of intellectual history: Should scholars in the field primarily aim to historicize past thought, largely confining themselves to revisiting and reconstituting "archives" of ideas, or should they also discuss topical concerns in a future-oriented "laboratory" of *Ideenpolitik*, engaging in intellectual history as a way of making politics?<sup>9</sup> Second, and related to the first issue, the existence of perennial questions: Can intellectual historians legitimately explore, without falling into the trap of anachronism, the ways in which thinkers, from Plato to Pareto, dealt with issues that are taken to have a timeless quality and are believed to transcend historical periods? Third, the explanation of intellectual transmutations: How are intellectual historians to account for changing ideas over time? What strategies can they adopt to unravel the complex relationship between intellectual and social change? And how are they to approach the interplay between structure and agency vis-à-vis ideational modifications? Fourth, the interrelation of text and context, often referred to, if somewhat misleadingly, as the inside-outside, or internal-external, relation: How should intellectual historians

6 A similar ambiguity has marked the usage of the terms *Geistesgeschichte* and *Ideengeschichte*.

7 While compelling analytical definitions of the term "idea" are largely wanting, there are many accounts on its conceptual history. See, for instance, George Boas, *Idea*, in: *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas. Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, ed. by Philip P. Wiener, Vol. 2, New York 1973, pp. 542-549; H. Meinhardt et al., *Idee*, in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. by Joachim Ritter, Vol. 3, Basel/Stuttgart 1974, pp. 56-133; and most recently Andreas Dorschel, *Ideengeschichte*, Göttingen 2010, pp. 46-87.

8 See, for instance, the symposium on Intellectual History in the Age of Cultural Studies, in: *Intellectual History Newsletter* 18 (1996), pp. 3-69; and the "interchange" on The Practice of History, in: *Journal of American History* 90 (2003), pp. 576-611, here esp. pp. 588-591; see also Donald R. Kelley, *Intellectual History and Cultural History. The Inside and the Outside*, in: *History of the Human Sciences* 15 (2002), No. 2, pp. 1-19.

9 I borrow the distinction between "the archive" and "the laboratory" from Herfried Münkler, *Politische Ideengeschichte*, in: id. (ed.), *Politikwissenschaft. Ein Grundkurs*, Reinbek bei Hamburg 2003, pp. 103-131, here pp. 103-104; for a similar approach that distinguishes between "the archive" and "the arsenal", see Marcus Llanque, *Politische Ideengeschichte. Ein Gewebe politischer Diskurse*, München/Wien 2008, pp. 1-3; see also Marcus Llanque, *Geschichte politischen Denkens oder Ideenpolitik. Ideengeschichte als normative Traditionsstiftung*, in: Harald Bluhm/Jürgen Gebhardt (eds.), *Politische Ideengeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert. Konzepte und Kritik*, Baden-Baden 2006, pp. 51-69.

situate ideas that are traceable in textual utterances, in the discursive web of other texts as well as in the context of social structures, cultural milieus, political systems and institutions? Fifth, the objects of historical inquiry: Should intellectual historians primarily investigate ideas, concepts, ideologies or "languages"? Should they primarily deal with one or two individuals, or should they attend to larger groups of people, perhaps even "collectives of thought"? Should they focus on "great thinkers" and/or "intellectuals" (a notoriously contested term)<sup>10</sup> or should they concentrate on other, potentially less esoteric agents of thought, including the supposedly "inarticulate masses"? Sixth, and related to the former issue, the source-base: Should intellectual historians confine themselves to textual utterances (in the stricter sense of the word) or should they stretch the limits of their field and consult visual and audible material as well – and if so, how?

### Intellectual History: A Field of Elusive Boundaries

What complicates the mapping of the sub-discipline's precincts is a bundle of overlapping issues. To begin with, contributions to the field of intellectual history have been made by a wide array of scholars – these hailing from different national traditions, grounded in varying academic subjects, and employing diverse methodological approaches. Moreover, communication between these various scholars has often proven rather limited. For instance, the numerous debates on intellectual history in American academia went largely unnoticed in Germany until very recently.<sup>11</sup> Even the occasional reference to Arthur O. Lovejoy in German works may sometimes do more to obscure American traditions of intellectual history than illuminate them.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, traditions of *Geistesgeschichte* and *Ideengeschichte* did find their way into American academia, primarily through the conduit of German émigrés such as Ernst Cassirer, Peter Gay, Felix Gilbert, George Mosse, Fritz Stern and Leo Strauss.

To be sure, there have also been sustained attempts to mediate between the Cambridge School of intellectual history and the German history of concepts (*Begriffsgeschichte*).<sup>13</sup> Yet, some concessions notwithstanding, the schools' main protagonists proved fairly reluctant to buy into one another's analytical language and tended

10 For the most plausible suggestion as to how to define an "intellectual" see Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds. Intellectuals in Britain*, Oxford 2006.

11 For a notable exception see Tim B. Müller, *Der linguistic turn ins Jenseits der Sprache. Geschichtswissenschaft zwischen Theorie und Trauma. Eine Annäherung an Dominick LaCapra*, in: Jürgen Trabant (ed.), *Sprache der Geschichte*, München 2005, pp. 107-132.

12 One may, for instance, be stretching the special relationship between Britain and the United States if one ascribes Lovejoy, alongside G.H. Sabine, to the realm of English academia. See Luise Schorn-Schütte, *Historische Politikforschung. Eine Einführung*, München 2006, pp. 53-56; ead., *Neue Geistesgeschichte*, in: Joachim Eibach/Günther Lottes (eds.), *Kompass der Geschichtswissenschaft. Ein Handbuch*, Göttingen 2002, pp. 270-280, here p. 270.

13 See above all the perceptive comparisons drawn by Melvin Richter, *The History of Political and Social Concepts. A Critical Introduction*, New York/Oxford 1995; see also Iain Hampsher-Monk/Karin Tilmans/Frank van Vree (eds.), *History of Concepts. Comparative Perspectives*, Amsterdam 1998; Kari Palonen, *Die Entzauberung der Begriffe. Das Umschreiben der politischen Begriffe bei Quentin Skinner und Reinhart Koselleck*, Münster 2003.

to stress methodological differences instead.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, despite the great attention that the Cambridge School has received from German historians and political scientists,<sup>15</sup> its approaches have been rarely deployed in German-speaking historical writing and are largely conspicuous by their absence from contemporary history in particular.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, while attracting the attention of five discussion forums in major Anglo-American journals, Mark Bevir's *Logic of the History of Ideas* – one of the salient books in the last few decades on the method of intellectual history – has barely made an impact in Germany.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, it is not only national parochialism<sup>18</sup> but subject-specific deformations (in the sense of *déformations professionnelles*) which have created multiple parallel universes that go by the name of intellectual history or one of its conceptual cognates. The frequently invoked objective of interdisciplinarity – certainly one of the most popular commonplaces of the field – has often bumped up against disciplinary boundaries and institutional barriers. Whether one delves into the writings of philosophers, historians, political scientists, sociologists or literary critics, one will encounter very different notions of intellectual history.<sup>19</sup>

Subject-specific peculiarities feed diverse methodological allegiances, even if there is considerable transdisciplinary crossover. While for obvious reasons hermeneutics still looms large in the differing worlds of intellectual history, still hotly debated are the intricacies of hermeneutical *traditions*, whether in the vein of Wilhelm Dilthey, R.G. Collingwood, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer or Paul Ricoeur. Some scholars have, for example, revisited Collingwood's much criticized notion of "re-enactment",<sup>20</sup>

14 See, for instance, J.G.A. Pocock, Concepts and Discourses. A Difference in Culture? Comment on a Paper by Melvin Richter, in: Hartmut Lehmann/Melvin Richter (eds.), *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts. New Studies on Begriffsgeschichte*, Washington D.C. 1996, pp. 47-58; see also Quentin Skinner, Rhetoric and Conceptual Change, in: *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought* 3 (1999), pp. 60-73.

15 See most recently the well-informed introduction by Marion Heinz/Martin Ruehl, Nachwort, in: Quentin Skinner, *Visionen des Politischen*, ed. by Marion Heinz and Martin Ruehl, Frankfurt a. M. 2009, pp. 253-286; see also the collection of articles by Martin Mulsow/Andreas Mahler (eds.), *Die Cambridge School der politischen Ideengeschichte*, Frankfurt a. M. 2010.

16 The Cambridge School has, of course, most extensively published on early modern history, but its approaches are principally not limited to this period.

17 Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas*, Cambridge 1999; see the discussion forums in: *Rethinking History* 4 (2000), No. 3, pp. 295-372; *Philosophical Books* 42 (2001), pp. 161-195; *History of European Ideas* 28 (2002), pp. 1-117; *History of the Human Sciences* 15 (2002), No. 2, pp. 99-133; *History & Theory* 41 (2002), pp. 198-217; for a brief overview of Bevir's approach in German, however, see Philip Ajouri, Lovejoy und die Folgen, in: *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* 1 (2007), No. 2, pp. 116-121, here pp. 118-121.

18 For a useful compilation of perspectives on national traditions of the history of political thought see Dario Castiglione/Iain Hampsher-Monk (eds.), *The History of Political Thought in National Context*, Cambridge 2001; see also the instructive article by Ernst Schulz, German "Geistesgeschichte", American "Intellectual History" and French "Histoire des Mentalités" since 1900. A Comparison, in: *History of European Ideas* 1 (1981), No. 3, pp. 195-214.

19 For an account of the multifaceted nature of the field, which is littered with names of key figures, see the book by the former editor of the *Journal of the History of Ideas* Donald R. Kelley, *The Descent of Ideas. The History of Intellectual History*, Aldershot 2002; see also Dorschel, *Ideengeschichte*.

20 See Giuseppina D'Oro, Re-Enactment and Radical Interpretation, in: *History & Theory* 43 (2004),

while others, informed by "folk-psychological" frameworks of beliefs, desires and intentions, rediscovered empathy as a way of understanding and explaining historical agency.<sup>21</sup> Intellectual historians have also sought methodological inspiration from philosophers of language: Ludwig Wittgenstein, John Austin, W.V. Quine and Donald Davidson provided vital insights into the production of meaning and suggested imaginative ways of (radical) interpretation that proved beneficial to several exponents of the field. Others, however, have primarily drawn on Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge and his studies on ideologies and styles of thought; or they have been guided by Thomas S. Kuhn's approach to the history of science, which has set the tone for many works of intellectual history since publication of his *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in 1962. Clifford Geertz's *Interpretive Theory of Culture* proved influential from the following decade on, as did Hayden White's *Tropics of Discourse*, which shed light on the rhetorical and "poetic" nature of (historical) scholarship. Additionally, despite Michel Foucault's fierce criticism of what he took to be the history of ideas, his discourse analysis and archaeology of knowledge have also entered the intellectual history discussion in certain quarters. By contrast, Niklas Luhmann's complex reflections on the evolution of ideas and the correlation between semantic traditions and social structures still await historians brave enough to translate his abstract theory into actual practice.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, for better or for worse, programmatic statements and methodological elaborations tend to vary from actual practice. While Arthur O. Lovejoy has become a convenient whipping boy within and beyond the field – because he was careless or daring enough to posit the timeless existence of "unit-ideas" – the actual products of his scholarship usually received better reviews.<sup>23</sup> Needless to say, as a reaction to the popular Lovejoy bashing, various scholars tried to salvage the philosopher's legacy of searching for historical intelligibility and offered interpretations to which a less idealist audience might be more receptive.<sup>24</sup> By contrast, while Reinhart Koselleck's reflections on the method of *Begriffsgeschichte* have attracted staunch, if not uncritical, followers within

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pp. 198-208; William H. Dray, *History as Re-Enactment*. R.G. Collingwood's Idea of History, Oxford 1995; Markku Hyrkkänen, *All History is, More or Less, Intellectual History*. R.G. Collingwood's Contribution to the Theory and Methodology of Intellectual History, in: *Intellectual History Review* 19 (2009), pp. 251-263; Colin Tyler, *Performativity and the Intellectual Historian's Re-Enactment of Written Works*, in: *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 3 (2009), pp. 167-186.

21 See especially Karsten R. Stueber, *Rediscovering Empathy. Agency, Folk Psychology, and the Human Sciences*, Cambridge, Mass./London 2006; id., *Intentionalism, Intentional Realism, and Empathy*, in: *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 3 (2009), pp. 290-307.

22 See, however, Reinhard Laube, *Reisen mit Proviant. Luhmanns Ideengeschichte*, in: *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* 2 (2008), No. 4, pp. 116-119, who refers to the study by Marie Theres Fögen, *Römische Rechtsgeschichten. Über Ursprung und Evolution eines sozialen Systems*, Göttingen 2003.

23 See the perceptive comments by Maurice Mandelbaum, *Arthur O. Lovejoy and the Theory of Historiography*, in: *Journal of the History of Ideas* 9 (1948), pp. 412-423; id., *The History of Ideas, Intellectual History, and the History of Philosophy*, in: *History & Theory* 5 (1965), Beiheft 5, pp. 33-66; Louis O. Mink, *Change and Causality in the History of Ideas*, in: *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 2 (1968), No. 1, pp. 7-25.

24 See, for instance, John Patrick Diggins, *Arthur O. Lovejoy and the Challenge of Intellectual History*, in: *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67 (2006), pp. 181-208; Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen, *Making Sense of Conceptual Change*, in: *History & Theory* 47 (2008), pp. 351-372; see also Daniel J. Wilson, *Lovejoy's The Great Chain of Being after Fifty Years*, in: *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48 (1987), pp. 187-206.



and beyond German academia, their translation into practice prompted some trenchant criticism. The multi-volume encyclopedia of "historical basic concepts" (*Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*) seemed, in part, suspiciously close to an "elitist" history of ideas long thought to be dead.

### Texts, Contexts, Meanings and Beliefs: Approaches to Intellectual History

Much has been written on the Cambridge School of Intellectual History, not least by its leading exponents, who seem to have entered a phase of self-memorialization. With the awe-inspiring eloquence that brought him many admirers, Quentin Skinner has given countless interviews in the last fifteen years, recalling his own intellectual socialization and constructing a compelling narrative of the School's evolution. Apparently it all started in the 1960s. Peter Laslett, a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, published his pathbreaking edition of John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* in 1960, an edition which placed the classic firmly in the historical context preceding the Glorious Revolution of 1688, thereby altering the treatises' interpretation for generations to come (they had traditionally been viewed as a celebration of the Revolution).<sup>25</sup> John Pocock published his first methodological inquiries into the history of political thought in 1962 as part of an important series founded and co-edited by Laslett.<sup>26</sup> John Dunn, a fellow of King's College, Cambridge, followed suit with reflections on the "identity" of the history of ideas, which appeared in 1968 and made the case for a fundamental revision of the history of philosophy in general and the history of political thought in particular. Mocking the "bloodlessness" and unhistorical nature of a field preoccupied with Platonic ideas and reified reconstructions of "great books", Dunn argued in favour of a history of thought that rendered thinking a "social activity" and that investigated the question as to what thinkers were "doing" in saying things, that is, when they engaged in "speech acts" (John Austin) in a particular context at a particular time.<sup>27</sup>

Echoing Dunn's plea for a proper historical contextualization of ideas, Skinner published an article in *History & Theory* in 1969 that was to provide intellectual historians with a key reference point in the field's methodological debates.<sup>28</sup> Usually characterized as "iconoclastic"<sup>29</sup>, Skinner's article sought to defend the autonomy of ideas

25 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*. A Critical Edition with an Introduction and Apparatus Criticus by Peter Laslett, 2nd ed. Cambridge 1967 (first published 1960).

26 Pocock elaborated on the different "levels of abstraction" at which different political thinkers worked. J.G.A. Pocock, *The History of Political Thought. A Methodological Inquiry*, in: Peter Laslett/W.G. Runciman (eds.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, 2nd series, Oxford 1962, also in: J.G.A. Pocock, *Political Thought and History. Essays on Theory and Method*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 3-19.

27 John Dunn, *The Identity of the History of Ideas*, in: *Philosophy* 43 (1968), No. 164, pp. 85-104, here pp. 87-88, 93-94.

28 Quentin Skinner, *Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas*, in: *History & Theory* 8 (1969), also in: James Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context. Quentin Skinner and his Critics*, Princeton 1988, pp. 29-67. A much abbreviated and extensively revised version of the article appeared in: Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, Vol. 1, Cambridge 2002, pp. 57-89.

29 See, for instance, James Tully, *The Pen Is a Mighty Sword. Quentin Skinner's Analysis of Politics*, in: Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context*, pp. 7-25, here p. 7; and Glen Newey, *How Do We Find Out What He Meant?*, in: *Times Higher Education*, 26 June 1998.

against, on the one hand, the Namierite fashion of dismissing world-views as nothing but claptrap with disguised vested interests, and, on the other, Marxist critiques of ideology, which conceived ideas as straightforwardly based on socio-economic structures. More importantly, however, Skinner made a case for historicizing philosophical texts and heaped scorn on various "anachronistic mythologies" that he exposed in the "canonical" practice of intellectual historians. For instance, he criticized the mythology of coherence that he thought to be generated by synoptic profiles of thinkers, this rendering their thoughts much more consistent than they actually were.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, it is not least the intricate meanderings of Skinner's own work that underline the appositeness of his critique.<sup>31</sup> After all, his recent reflections on "classical republicanism" and a "third concept of liberty" make for an astonishingly straightforward attempt to influence present ways of thinking – quite different from some of his earlier writings, which gained him a reputation for antiquarian scholarship.<sup>32</sup>

What others dismissed as antiquarianism was above all a scathing critique of the convention of approaching "great thinkers" with a particular range of supposedly "abiding questions" (e.g. "Why should I obey the state?") and tapping into "classic texts" as a never-ending source of "dateless wisdom" encased in purportedly "perennial" ideas.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, Skinner heeded Collingwood's advice that questions as well as answers were continually changing and that to understand a text historians had to see it as an attempt to resolve a specific problem. Furthermore, Skinner took from Wittgenstein the view that historians should not seek to unravel the general semantic meanings of words but should rather investigate their concrete linguistic and hermeneutic meanings; that is, historians should explore the specific usages of words in specific contexts and above all the actual point of, and intention behind, their usages in the context of particular language games. To refine his methodological tools, Skinner also drew on Austin's theory of speech acts, which enjoyed immense popularity in the scholarly community of the 1960s and 1970s. In particular, he borrowed that crucial notion of the illocutionary act, which was at the heart of Austin's elaborations on "how to do things with words" and which nicely dovetailed with Wittgenstein's dictum "words are also deeds".<sup>34</sup>

30 See Skinner, *Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas* (1969/88), pp. 32-49, 57; for different takes on the issue of anachronism see Mark Bevir, *Are there Perennial Problems in Political Theory?*, in: *Political Studies* 42 (1994), pp. 662-675; Conal Condren, *A Reflection on the Problem of Anachronism in Intellectual History*, in: *Scientia Poetica* 8 (2004), pp. 288-293.

31 The most recent comments on Skinner's shifting viewpoints offers Robert Lamb, *Quentin Skinner's "Post-Modern" History of Ideas*, in: *History* 89 (2004), pp. 424-433; id., *Recent Developments in the Thought of Quentin Skinner and the Ambitions of Contextualism*, in: *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 3 (2009), pp. 246-265; id., *Quentin Skinner's Revised Historical Contextualism. A Critique*, in: *History of the Human Sciences* 22 (2009), No. 3, pp. 51-73.

32 Quentin Skinner, *A Third Concept of Liberty* [Isaiah Berlin Lecture], in: *Proceedings of the British Academy* 117 (2002), pp. 237-268; see also id., *Liberty before Liberalism*, Cambridge 1998; and his earlier piece: *The Idea of Negative Liberty. Philosophical and Historical Perspectives*, in: Richard Rorty/J.B. Schneewind/Quentin Skinner (eds.), *Philosophy in History. Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy*, Cambridge 1984, pp. 193-221.

33 Skinner, *Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas* (1969/88), p. 30.

34 See J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* [The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955], ed. by J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa, 2nd ed. Cambridge, Mass. 1975 (first

Skinner, to put it differently, urged his colleagues to focus their studies on authorial intentions, i.e. the intended illocutionary force of texts, and he geared historians towards the question as to what thinkers were *doing* in articulating ideas. Not dissimilar to Koselleck's understanding of concepts,<sup>35</sup> Skinner conceived of ideas as polemical tools and rhetorical weapons purposefully employed in battles of legitimization. He argued that texts in political and social philosophy should primarily be read as "moves" and interventions through which authors supported or criticized, commended or condemned the "actions" of other authors, particular institutions, or certain states of affairs. Potential entrapments in the hermeneutic circle aside, Skinner's intentionalism became the *basso continuo* running through his methodological articles in the decades to follow, when he had to make himself heard over a polyphonic choir performing variations on William Wimsatt's and Monroe Beardsley's famed theme of the "intentional fallacy" – whether the "composer's" name be Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, or Jacques Derrida.

Intentionalism is, of course, only one aspect of Skinner's methodology. It is with good reason that his monograph series is called "ideas in context" (more on this in the following section). Skinner argued that historians needed to lay bare the relevant linguistic conventions, such as genres and rhetorical traditions, which a writer must follow to reach his target audience in the market of opinions. For instance, the more broadly a positively evaluative term was taken to be applicable, the wider the range of actions a writer could hope to legitimize. If historians succeeded in recreating the linguistic context, Skinner claimed, they could eventually "read off" what a writer was doing.<sup>36</sup>

Scrutiny of the linguistic context, however, has featured still more prominently in the work of Skinner's colleague John Pocock. Whether he used the terms "paradigm", "discourse" or "language" (his analytical framework was never geared towards linguistic consistency), Pocock has placed more emphasis than Skinner on the constraining power of language. Indeed, he has been more of a structuralist historian than his supposed alter ego in Cambridge. As he pointed out in a widely read article published in 1987, he was mainly interested in studying "languages in which utterances were performed, rather than the utterances which were performed in them", which meant that the examination of "idioms, rhetorics, specialized vocabularies and grammars" that transcended the writings of one particular author took priority over the production of intellectual biographies so fashionable these days.<sup>37</sup>

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published 1962); for a recent critique of Skinner's concept of "meaning" see A.P. Martinich, *Four Senses of "Meaning" in the History of Ideas. Quentin Skinner's Theory of Historical Interpretation*, in: *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 3 (2009), pp. 225-245.

35 See the enlightening comments by Reinhard Mehring, *Begriffssoziologie, Begriffsgeschichte, Begriffspolitik. Zur Form der Ideengeschichtsschreibung nach Carl Schmitt und Reinhart Koselleck*, in: Bluhm/Gebhardt (eds.), *Politische Ideengeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert*, pp. 31-50.

36 Quentin Skinner, *A Reply to my Critics*, in: Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context*, pp. 231-288, here p. 275.

37 J.G.A. Pocock, *The Concept of a Language and the Métier d'Historien. Some Considerations on Practice*, in: Anthony Pagden (ed.), *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 1987, also in: Pocock, *Political Thought and History*, pp. 87-105, here pp. 88-89; see also J.G.A. Pocock, *Languages and their Implications. The Transformation of the Study of Political Thought*, in: id., *Pol-*



Instead of engaging the vast literature of critical assessments of the Cambridge School,<sup>38</sup> I will be using the remainder of this section to discuss, if only very briefly, approaches to intellectual history that have been advanced by two very different scholars: Mark Bevir and Dominick LaCapra. Informed by post-analytic philosophy – and hence no easy read for historians unfamiliar with the philosophical discipline – Bevir's *Logic of the History of Ideas*, published in 1999, provides a normative second-order study of intellectual history and the human sciences in general, exploring key concepts of the field such as tradition, meaning and belief. As Bevir explained in one of the numerous debates on his book, the *Logic* may also be read as an attempt to put the approach of the Cambridge School on a surer philosophical footing.<sup>39</sup> Taking his cue from the philosophical strands of "holism", "postfoundationalism" and "folk psychology", and drawing on philosophies of mind, language and action as developed by Wittgenstein, Quine and Davidson, Bevir maintains that ideas cannot have any innate meanings but possess meaning only in relation to agents, which alone are able to provide the "background theories" that lend meaning to ideas. Therefore, ideas only exist as beliefs, which historians are to ascribe to people while being governed by logical presumptions in favour of sincere, conscious and rational beliefs – "rational" being defined as "consistent". These beliefs are, moreover, part of wider "webs of belief" which arise against the background of intellectual and social traditions. "Webs of belief" is one of the *Logic*'s pivotal terms, one which Bevir borrows from Quine and Ullian's classic introduction to the study of rational belief,<sup>40</sup> and which is, in fact, at the heart of Bevir's understanding of intellectual history as the history of beliefs.

While some historians may shrug their shoulders, wondering at the necessity to write a dense three-hundred-page account of this conception of intellectual history (let alone hundreds of pages of comments and "replies to critics"), Bevir has doubtless resolved various philosophical problems that marked Skinner's and Pocock's contextualism. It would go beyond the scope of this article to expound Bevir's analytical framework of "weak intentionalism" and "procedural individualism", which relates hermeneutic meanings to the expressed beliefs of individual agents (whether authors or readers) and escapes the typical pitfalls of historical reasoning that either emerge from assumptions of *a priori* intentions un-mediated through language or that follow from notions of structuralism which imply mind-independent meanings. Suffice it to say that the *Logic* not only offers crucial insights into the generation of meaning and the complex inner workings of "webs of belief", but also provides strategies to explain intellectual change through the exploration of "dilemmas" that are triggered by the (mediated) appropria-

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itics, Language and Time. *Essays on Political Thought and History*, new ed. Chicago/London 1989 (first published 1971), pp. 3-41, here pp. 25, 29.

38 See above all the recent comments by Mark Bevir, Contextualism. From Modernist Method to Post-Analytic Historicism?, in: *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 3 (2009), pp. 211-224; Robert D. Hume, Pocock's Contextual Historicism, in: D.N. DeLuna (ed.), *The Political Imagination in History. Essays Concerning J.G.A. Pocock*, Baltimore 2006, pp. 27-55; William Walker, J.G.A. Pocock and the History of British Political Thought. Assessing the State of the Art, in: *Eighteenth-Century Life* 33 (2009), No. 1, pp. 83-96.

39 See Mark Bevir, Clarifications, in: *History of European Ideas* 28 (2002), pp. 83-100, here pp. 86-87.

40 See W.V. Quine/J.S. Ullian, *The Web of Belief*, 2nd ed. New York 1978 (first published 1970).

tion of new experiences or forms of reasoning.

If Skinner and Pocock may be said to have offered new methodological avenues and a useful heuristic for intellectual historians, and if Bevir may be credited with providing the field with a sound philosophical basis, then Dominick LaCapra stands out as the master of reflection. He is the great "problematizer", fighting the evils of reductionism. Nothing is simple, everything is complex. LaCapra's goal is to complicate things. One of the most distinguished exponents of the field, he has taught intellectual history at Cornell University for more than four decades. His work is greatly indebted to psychoanalysis, philosophy and literary theory, and is replete with appropriations of Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, Mikhail Bakhtin and Jacques Derrida. It is not always easy, therefore, to follow the circuitous meanderings of his reflections.<sup>41</sup> In this article I will focus on two issues: the relation of text and context, and the practice of reading.

One of LaCapra's anti-reductionist missions is to counter simplistic strategies of contextualization. Aimed at practices he detects in the work of social and cultural historians, he cautions not to hypostatize the context and render it a "dominant structure saturating the text with a certain meaning". The context itself, he argues, is "a text of sorts".<sup>42</sup> "Meaning", he claims, "is indeed context-bound, but context is not itself bound in any simple or unproblematic way". Instead, he points to the inter-textual qualities of contexts. Moreover, he finds fault with contextualist practices of intellectual historians who use "simple documentary texts" or "simplistic interpretations" thereof in order to constitute a context to which they subject, and make conform, "complex texts".<sup>43</sup> Obviously, LaCapra distinguishes various types of texts: On the one hand there are texts "especially valuable to think *with*" – that is, complex "worklike" texts which "actively invite continual self-questioning" and are "particularly effective in engaging critical processes", potentially unleashing "transformative forces"; on the other hand, there are texts merely "worth thinking *about*" – that is, documentary texts which are symptomatic of and perpetuate existing structures of thought (LaCapra speaks of "ideologies").<sup>44</sup> This distinction makes LaCapra a supporter of "canon formation", even though the contours of his "self-questioning" canon never really clarify themselves.

41 In fact, some of his deliberations are so vague that one may wonder at both their effectiveness and falsifiability. See, for instance, some passages in Dominick LaCapra, *Intellectual History and Its Ways*, in: *American Historical Review* 97 (1992), pp. 425-439; for a critique see Russell Jacoby, *A New Intellectual History?*, in: *American Historical Review* 97 (1992), pp. 405-424.

42 Dominick LaCapra, *Reading Exemplars. Wittgenstein's Vienna and Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, in: *Diacritics* 9 (1979), also in: id., *Rethinking Intellectual History. Texts, Contexts, Language*, Ithaca/London 1983, pp. 84-117, here pp. 95, 117. LaCapra's understanding of "text", of course, is broader than conventional usages of the term would suggest, comprising any kind of cultural artefact or "signifying practice", and largely following Derrida's notion of a "general text" made up of a relational network of "instituted traces". Dominick LaCapra, *Introduction*, in: id., *Soundings in Critical Theory*, Ithaca/London 1989, pp. 1-10, here p. 7; id., *Canons, Texts, and Contexts*, in: id., *Representing the Holocaust. History, Theory, Trauma*, Ithaca/London 1994, pp. 19-41, here p. 23. A former version of the essay *Canons, Texts, and Contexts* appeared in the *Intellectual History Newsletter* 13 (1991).

43 LaCapra, *Reading Exemplars*, p. 117.

44 LaCapra, *Canons, Texts, and Contexts*, pp. 24-25; see also id., *Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts*, in: LaCapra/Kaplan (eds.), *Modern European Intellectual History*, also in: LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History – Texts, Contexts, Language*, pp. 23-71, here pp. 29-33.

There are not only different kinds of texts, however, but also, and more importantly, different techniques of reading (LaCapra speaks of "protocols"): first, "the denial or repression of reading", which follows from conventional and "self-sufficient research paradigms" and relegates any text to the status of symptomatic documents; second, the synoptic reading, which offers condensed content analyses characterized by paraphrases and concise theme-centred reconstructions of arguments and contexts – a method LaCapra sees exemplified, in its most sophisticated form, in the acclaimed works of Steven E. Aschheim and Martin Jay; third, the deconstructive reading, which eschews synoptic, content-oriented reductionisms, decentres authorial agency, and uncovers "internal contestations" in texts; fourth, the redemptive reading, which transcends tensions in a harmonizing, neo-Hegelian fashion, and endows even traumatic experiences with meaning; and fifth, the dialogic reading, which combines the reconstruction of texts as "networks of resistances" and a self-critical "dialogic exchange" with them – the method LaCapra has developed, reworked, and tirelessly propagated over the last thirty years.<sup>45</sup> "What is the other saying or doing? How do I – or we – respond to it?" This is the question that LaCapra asks his colleagues to consider when approaching texts.<sup>46</sup> Intellectual history should not only historicize past texts; it should also actively engage and "carry" them into the present as a critical form of "political intervention".<sup>47</sup>

## Journals, Networks and Monograph Series: The Revival of Intellectual History

In articles on intellectual history it has become something of a commonplace to either bemoan its marginal status or hail its surprising renaissance. In the United States the 1950s are typically viewed as the golden age of this academic field, while the 1970s are usually regarded as its nadir.<sup>48</sup> The rise of social history caused headaches among intellectual historians who often felt attacked and marginalised from the mid-1960s onward.<sup>49</sup> The momentum seemed to shift again in wake of the linguistic and [cultural turn](#) that reached the mainstream of American historical writing in the late 1980s.<sup>50</sup>

45 Dominick LaCapra, *History, Reading, and Critical Theory*, in: id., *History and Reading. Tocqueville, Foucault, French Studies* [Green College Lectures, University of British Columbia], Toronto/Buffalo/London 2000, pp. 21-72. This text draws on an earlier publication: Dominick LaCapra, *History, Language, and Reading. Waiting for Crillon*, in: *American Historical Review* 100 (1995), pp. 799-828. The quotation "networks of resistances" is taken from LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts*, p. 64.

46 LaCapra, *History, Reading, and Critical Theory*, p. 67.

47 LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts*, p. 63; see also id., *Canons, Texts, and Contexts*, pp. 32-41.

48 See John Higham, *The Rise of American Intellectual History*, in: *American Historical Review* 56 (1951), pp. 453-471; see also the more recent overviews of American intellectual history by Thomas Bender, *Intellectual and Cultural History*, in: Eric Foner (ed.), *The New American History*, rev. and exp. ed. Philadelphia 1997, pp. 181-202; David A. Hollinger, *American Intellectual History, 1907-2007*, in: James M. Banner, Jr. (ed.), *A Century of American Historiography*, Boston/New York 2010, pp. 21-29.

49 See J.G.A. Pocock, *A New Bark up an Old Tree*, in: *Intellectual History Newsletter* 8 (April 1986), pp. 3-9, here p. 3.

50 See the important article by John E. Toews, *Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn. The Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience*, in: *American Historical Review* 92 (1987),

Since then, intellectual history has indeed been gathering force.

A glance at the relevant journals, academic networks and monograph series may be indicative of this revival. To begin with, the annual publication of the *Intellectual History Newsletter*, launched in 1979, at times resembled a collection of notes from the academic underground, and the advance of self-publishing technology did little to dispel the impression of a student newspaper. The *Newsletter* was the platform of the Intellectual History Group founded two years earlier at a conference dedicated to the "tasks and opportunities of American intellectual history". As the editors of the conference volume freely admitted, the gathering was a crisis meeting scheduled in the midst of a siege.<sup>51</sup> The rhetoric used by the editors of the successor journal *Modern Intellectual History* could hardly be more different. In their first editorial from 2004, the editors praised the reemergence of intellectual history as an expanded interdisciplinary enterprise. Published with Cambridge University Press, the trimester journal claims to be the first of its kind, implicitly denying the legacy of its samizdat-like predecessor.<sup>52</sup>

In 2007 the *Intellectual History Review* appeared for the first time, inviting articles on "intellectual work in social, cultural and historical context".<sup>53</sup> While *Modern Intellectual History* is primarily devoted to the period from the mid-seventeenth century to the present, the *Intellectual History Review* rarely publishes anything that post-dates the Enlightenment. Preceded by the newsletter *Intellectual News*, the *Review* also serves as the publishing outlet of the International Society for Intellectual History (ISIh) which was founded in London in 1994.<sup>54</sup> The Society aims to foster and coordinate initiatives of key institutions in the academic field, drawing support from the *Journal of the History of Ideas* (the 70-year-old American flagship of the discipline) as well as having ties to the Herzog August Library in Wolfenbüttel, Germany. This research centre is not only engaged in organizing conferences on intellectual history and preparing an International Dictionary of Intellectual Historians that was initiated by the ISIh.<sup>55</sup> In cooperation with the German Literature Archive in Marbach and the Foundation of Weimar Classics, it also launched the journal *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* in 2007. In its objective of transcending disciplinary boundaries, the *Zeitschrift* largely follows the example of its

pp. 879-907; see also David Harlan, *Intellectual History and the Return of Literature*, in: *American Historical Review* 94 (1989), pp. 581-609.

51 John Higham/Paul K. Conkin (eds.), *New Directions in American Intellectual History*, Baltimore/London 1979; see also [Thomas Bender], *Organization of the Intellectual History Group*, in: *Newsletter – Intellectual History Group* 1 (Spring 1979), p. 1. The book is dedicated, "with esteem and affection", to Merle Curti, one of the most popular intellectual historians between the mid-1930s and the mid-1960s. See, for instance, Merle Curti, *The Growth of American Thought*, 3rd ed. New York/Evanston/London 1964 (first published 1943).

52 See [Charles Capper/Anthony J. LaVopa/Nicholas Phillipson], *Editorial*, in: *Modern Intellectual History* 1 (2004), pp. 1-2.

53 Stephen Clucas/Stephen Gaukroger, *Editor's Introduction*, in: *Intellectual History Review* 1 (2007), p. 1.

54 See Constance Blackwell, *Editor's Letter. The Inaugural Issue*, in: *Intellectual News. Newsletter of the International Society for Intellectual History* 1 (Autumn 1996), pp. 5-7.

55 See the contributions to the conference on *Intellectual History in a Global Age* in: *Journal of the History of Ideas* 66 (2005), No. 2, especially Ulrich Johannes Schneider, *The International Dictionary of Intellectual Historians*, pp. 143-154, and Allan Megill, *Globalization and the History of Ideas*, pp. 179-187.

nominal equivalent in the U.S., the *Journal of the History of Ideas*. Yet, as it runs a regular section called "think-image" (*Denkbild*), it seems more committed than its older sibling to embracing visual history as an integral part of its profile.<sup>56</sup>

The *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* no doubt testifies to the rise of a multifaceted intellectual history in German academia. Its profile is both thematically and methodologically broader than the two journals that previously defined the field in terms of academic periodicals: the *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, founded in 1923, which has usually been preoccupied with literary criticism, whereas the *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, founded in 1948 and associated with the Society for Intellectual History (*Gesellschaft für Geistesgeschichte*), has been mainly concerned with the history of religion, Jewish intellectual history, and studies informed by Hans-Joachim Schoeps' *Zeitgeist* approach (which tried to capture the "the spirit of the age"), even though the journal's purview has certainly expanded in recent years.<sup>57</sup>

That intellectual history has gained a more prominent position in the field of German academia may also be gleaned from the attention drawn to it by Germany's premier journals of historical scholarship. Both the *Historische Zeitschrift* and *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* – the latter of which has traditionally been rather sceptical towards the ethereal sub-discipline – have been discussing new approaches to intellectual history in the last ten years.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, prompted by the recent publication of important studies on the subject,<sup>59</sup> the British periodical *German History* recently devoted a discussion forum to new perspectives on the intellectual history of West Germany.<sup>60</sup> More remarkable still is the new monograph series *Ordnungssysteme*, which is geared towards a methodological renewal of *Ideengeschichte* and focusses on the interplay between in-

56 See Ulrich Raulff/Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer/Hellmut Th. Seemann, *Einen Anfang machen. Warum wir eine Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte gründen*, in: *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* 1 (2007), No. 1, pp. 4-6; see also Warren Breckman, *Konzeption und Geschichte des Journal of the History of Ideas*, in: *ibid.*, pp. 106-113.

57 For a recent overview of the history of the *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* and the now Potsdam-based Society for Intellectual History see Joachim H. Knoll, *Jahresringe der Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, in: *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 60 (2008), No. 1, pp. 1-19; for Hans-Joachim Schoeps' *Zeitgeist* approach see Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Was ist und was will die Geistesgeschichte. Über Theorie und Praxis der Zeitgeistforschung*, Göttingen 1959.

58 See, for instance, Alexander Gallus, "Intellectual History" mit Intellektuellen und ohne sie. Facetten neuerer geistesgeschichtlicher Forschung, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 288 (2009), pp. 139-150; Friedrich Kießling, *Westernisierung, Internationalisierung, Bürgerlichkeit? Zu einigen jüngeren Arbeiten der Ideengeschichte der alten Bundesrepublik*, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 287 (2008), pp. 363-389. Volumes 27 (2001) and 33 (2007) of *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, respectively, were devoted to *Neue Ideengeschichte* and *Intellektuelle*.

59 See above all Jens Hacke, *Philosophie der Bürgerlichkeit. Die liberalkonservative Begründung der Bundesrepublik*, Göttingen 2006; A. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past*, Cambridge 2007; see also Dominik Geppert/Jens Hacke (eds.), *Streit um den Staat. Intellektuelle Debatten in der Bundesrepublik 1960-1980*, Göttingen 2008; and most recently Sonja Asal/Stephan Schlak (eds.), *Was war Bielefeld? Eine ideengeschichtliche Nachfrage*, Göttingen 2009; Jens Hacke, *Die Bundesrepublik als Idee. Zur Legitimationsbedürftigkeit politischer Ordnung*, Hamburg 2009.

60 Elliot Neaman/A. Dirk Moses/Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey/Jens Hacke/Christina von Hodenberg/Thomas Meyer, *The Intellectual History of the Federal Republic*, in: *German History* 27 (2009), pp. 244-258.



tellectual, political and social phenomena. It is not committed to any unitary approach, but leaves it largely to its authors to pursue new avenues. While some of them have followed the increasingly popular trend of intellectual biographies,<sup>61</sup> others have successfully combined intellectual history with Pierre Bourdieu's methodological toolkit,<sup>62</sup> or have deployed Ludwik Fleck's conceptual framework, which revolves around "styles" and "collectives of thought" (*Denkstile* and *Denkkollektive*).<sup>63</sup>

The *Ordnungssysteme* series has provided a publishing outlet for the Tübingen-based "Westernization" project<sup>64</sup> as well as for a major research programme on "approaches to a new intellectual history". The programme comprised thirty-one projects and was funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) between 1997 and 2003. Taking its cue from Max Weber's oft-quoted notion of ideas and world views as a "moving force" (*Weichensteller*) behind interests and social action,<sup>65</sup> the programme placed much emphasis on the question of the social impact and diffusion of ideas – ideas being loosely defined as "imagined formations" (*gedachte Ordnungen*) of a social and political order.<sup>66</sup> The authors' effort to anchor ideas in concrete socio-cultural milieus is comparable to the "social history of American thought" advanced by Merle Curti from the 1940s onward<sup>67</sup> and to the "social history of ideas" discussed in America by Peter

61 See, for instance, Marcus M. Payk, *Der Geist der Demokratie. Intellektuelle Orientierungsversuche im Feuilleton der frühen Bundesrepublik*: Karl Korn und Peter de Mendelssohn, München 2008.

62 See above all the model study by Morten Reitmayer, *Elite. Sozialgeschichte einer politisch-gesellschaftlichen Idee in der frühen Bundesrepublik*, München 2009; for a helpful introduction to Bourdieu that may be of interest to intellectual historians see Olaf Blaschke/Lutz Raphael, *Im Kampf um Positionen. Änderungen im Feld der französischen und deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft nach 1945*, in: Jan Eckel/Thomas Etzemüller (eds.), *Neue Zugänge zur Geschichte der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Göttingen 2007, pp. 69-109; and Richard Shusterman (ed.), *Bourdieu. A Critical Reader*, Oxford 1999.

63 See Thomas Etzemüller, *Sozialgeschichte als politische Geschichte. Werner Conze und die Neuorientierung der westdeutschen Geschichtswissenschaft nach 1945*, München 2001; Frieder Günther, *Denken vom Staat her. Die bundesdeutsche Staatsrechtslehre zwischen Devisen und Integration 1949-1970*, München 2004.

64 See Michael Hochgeschwender, *Freiheit in der Offensive? Der Kongress für kulturelle Freiheit und die Deutschen*, München 1998, which also contains a programmatic foreword by the series' editors: Dietrich Beyrau/Anselm Doering-Manteuffel/Lutz Raphael, *Vorwort der Herausgeber*, pp. 9-13; see furthermore Julia Angster, *Konsenskapitalismus und Sozialdemokratie. Die Westernisierung von SPD und DGB*, München 2003.

65 See the classic commentary by M. Rainer Lepsius, *Interessen und Ideen. Die Zurechnungsproblematik bei Max Weber* (1986), in: id., *Interessen, Ideen und Institutionen*, Opladen 1990, pp. 31-43; see also the early deliberations by the Weber expert Talcott Parsons, *The Role of Ideas in Social Action*, in: *American Sociological Review* 3 (1938), pp. 652-664.

66 Ausschreibungstext des Schwerpunktprogramms: *Ideen als gesellschaftliche Gestaltungskraft im Europa der Neuzeit – Ansätze zu einer neuen "Geistesgeschichte"* (1997), in: Lutz Raphael/Heinz-Elmar Tenorth (eds.), *Ideen als gesellschaftliche Gestaltungskraft im Europa der Neuzeit*, München 2006, pp. 525-531, here p. 526; see also Lutz Raphael, "Ideen als gesellschaftliche Gestaltungskraft im Europa der Neuzeit". *Bemerkungen zur Bilanz eines DFG-Schwerpunktprogramms*, in: *ibid.*, pp. 11-27.

67 Curti, *American Thought*, p. vi; see also his earlier book: *The Social Ideas of American Educators*, New York 1935; see further the stimulating article by Franklin L. Baumer, *Intellectual History and its Problems*, in: *Journal of Modern History* 21 (1949), pp. 191-203; and the comments by Higham, *Rise of American Intellectual History*, pp. 470-471; Rush Welter, *The History of Ideas in America. An Essay in Redefinition*, in: *Journal of American History* 51 (1965), pp. 599-614, here p. 602.

Gay and Robert Darnton from the late 1960s on.<sup>68</sup> Bourdieu has featured less prominently in American intellectual history,<sup>69</sup> though, despite attempts at transdisciplinary and transnational mediation by historians like Roger Chartier, whose own reflections on the circulation of texts, the practice of reading, and the production of representations have been widely discussed in the U.S.<sup>70</sup> While, in terms of methodology, the international impact of both the monograph series and the collaborative research programme may appear rather limited, they are a clear milestone in the development of the sub-discipline in Germany, where its reputation had long been tainted by (at times fairly stereotypical) notions of Friedrich Meinecke's *Ideengeschichte* or Wilhelm Dilthey's and Ernst Cassirer's *Geistesgeschichte*.<sup>71</sup>

Tackling ideas in their historical contexts rather than treating them as free-floating and disembodied entities marked by a timeless quality – this also lies at the heart of the monograph series *Ideas in Context*, launched by Cambridge University Press in 1984. The *Ideas in Context* series is sometimes seen as exerting a defining influence on the entire field of British intellectual history – and beyond.<sup>72</sup> The series' first volume was largely an Anglo-American co-production and derived from a series of lectures given at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, a hub of intellectual history in the United States.<sup>73</sup> Johns Hopkins is not only home to major exponents of the so-called Cambridge School (geographically somewhat counterintuitive), but also the cradle of its intellectually rather distant relatives: the *Journal of the History of Ideas* and the still older History of Ideas Club.<sup>74</sup> The series has hitherto launched more than ninety mono-

68 See Peter Gay, *The Social History of Ideas. Ernst Cassirer and After*, in: Kurt H. Wolff/Barrington Moore, Jr. (eds.), *The Critical Spirit. Essays in Honor of Herbert Marcuse*, Boston 1967, pp. 106-120; and, fairly critical of Gay's attempt to translate his approach into practice, Robert Darnton, *In Search of the Enlightenment. Recent Attempts to Create a Social History of Ideas*, in: *Journal of Modern History* 43 (1971), pp. 113-132; see more recently Robert Darnton, *Two Paths through the Social History of Ideas*, in: Haydn T. Mason (ed.), *The Darnton Debate. Books and Revolution in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford 1998, pp. 251-294.

69 For a notable exception see Fritz Ringer, *Fields of Knowledge. French Academic Culture in Comparative Perspective, 1890-1920*, Cambridge 1992, esp. pp. 1-25; see also, however, the sceptical comments on Ringer's analytical framework by Martin Jay, *Fieldwork and Theorizing in Intellectual History*, in: *Theory and Society* 19 (1990), pp. 311-321; and the rejoinder by Fritz Ringer in: *Theory and Society* 19 (1990), pp. 323-334.

70 For an attempt to familiarize an American audience with French approaches to intellectual history, from the days of Lucien Febvre onward, see Roger Chartier, *Intellectual History or Sociocultural History? The French Trajectories*, in: LaCapra/Kaplan (eds.), *Modern European Intellectual History*, pp. 13-46.

71 For a recent view on Dilthey's and Cassirer's intellectual history see Stephan Otto, *Ungelöste Probleme in Diltheys und Cassirers Renaissancedeutung. Überlegungen zu den Prämissen und Methoden einer ideengeschichtlichen Rekonstruktion der frühen Neuzeit*, in: Thomas Leinkauf (ed.), *Dilthey und Cassirer. Die Deutung der Neuzeit als Muster von Geistes- und Kulturgeschichte*, Hamburg 2003, pp. 21-37; see also Andreas Hoeschen, "Geistesgeschichte" versus "History of Ideas"? Ernst Cassirer's Beitrag zur ideengeschichtlichen Begriffsbildung im Kontext der Lovejoy-Spitzer-Kontroverse, in: *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 75 (2001), pp. 145-174.

72 See, for instance, the appraisals in: Richard Whatmore/Brian Young (eds.), *Palgrave Advances in Intellectual History*, Basingstoke/New York 2006.

73 Rorty/Schneewind/Skinner (eds.), *Philosophy in History*.

74 For the History of Ideas Club see George Boas et al., *Studies in Intellectual History*, Baltimore 1953; see

graphs, amounting to a total sales figure of over 170,000 copies. This figure has, moreover, been far exceeded by the sales success of the student-oriented series *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*, which has complemented the renowned monograph series since 1988, introducing classic and not-so-classic texts in political philosophy to the English-speaking mass market of higher education.<sup>75</sup>

### Spaces and Emotions: Some Future Perspectives on Intellectual History

While in the British system of higher education it has become increasingly common, though still not very popular, to work out in minute detail what one's own university will hopefully look like twenty years from now, I will resist the temptation to formulate any full-fledged schemes for the future of a sub-discipline. Instead, I will use this brief conclusion to sketch out two areas of investigation that may hold some promise for intellectual historians: spatial history and the [history of emotions](#).

Intellectual history, I submit, would benefit from a more sustained attempt to engage recent debates on spatial history. Many significant studies have been published on the history of geographical imaginations – investigations, for example, of "the West", "the East", "Europe" and "Central Europe" – some of them with an eye to the spatialization of political thought and the deployment of spatial images in political discourse. Intellectual historians, however, have rarely sought advice on methodological issues from colleagues in the Geography Department or from sociologists with a focus on spatial theory, such as Henri Lefebvre.<sup>76</sup> The booming field of cultural and human geography has a lot to offer to intellectual historians who may find valuable inspiration in the studies of John A. Agnew, Denis Cosgrove, Stephen Daniels, James S. Duncan, Derek Gregory, David Harvey, Doreen Massey and Yi-Fu Tuan.<sup>77</sup> A transfer of knowledge from geographers to intellectual historians could, among other things, help broaden the source-base of the field, providing the necessary tools to read and deconstruct historical maps. Despite the criticism his approach has attracted in recent years, Brian Harley's reflections on the deconstruction of maps still offer a suitable starting point.<sup>78</sup>

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also George Boas, *The History of Ideas. An Introduction*, New York 1969.

75 See the useful article by CUP executive director Richard Fisher, "How To Do Things With Books". Quentin Skinner and the Dissemination of Ideas, in: *History of European Ideas* 35 (2009), pp. 276-280, here pp. 278-280. Given that about 960,000 copies of the *Cambridge Texts* series had been sold by 2008, it is likely that the one million threshold has been passed by now.

76 See above all Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, new ed. Malden, Oxford/Carlton 2004 (first published in English 1991, in French 1974).

77 See most recently the useful introductions to spatial theorists in: Phil Hubbard/Rob Kitchin/Gill Valentine (eds.), *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, Los Angeles 2004; and the reader by Phil Hubbard/Rob Kitchin/Gill Valentine (eds.), *Key Texts in Human Geography*, Los Angeles 2008; see also the literature referred to in my article: Riccardo Bavaj, Was bringt der "Spatial Turn" der Regionalgeschichte? Ein Beitrag zur Methodendiskussion, in: *Westfälische Forschungen* 56 (2006), pp. 457-484.

78 See the posthumously published collection of articles: John B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps. Essays in the History of Cartography*, ed. by Paul Laxton, Baltimore 2001, especially the critical introduction by J.H. Andrews as well as Harley's article *Deconstructing the Map* (1989), in: *ibid.*, pp. 1-32, 150-168; for recent attempts in German scholarship to make use of maps see Patrick Lehn, *Deutsch-*

Furthermore, I believe that intellectual history might profit from recent discussions on the history of emotions. In this respect A. Dirk Moses' study on *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* is of particular interest. Moses postulates a binary opposition within the "emotional and intellectual economy" of what he calls the "45ers" – that "key generation of postwar German intellectual history" which has received much attention in recent scholarship. Moses identifies two political languages in the discourse of "45ers": "integrative republicanism" and "redemptive republicanism". Without going into detail here, let it suffice to say that he relates this political dualism to distinct patterns of emotional reactions to the Nazi past, such as particular kinds of "stigma management", ways of coping with the "moral contamination" of Germany, and a variety of "displacement strategies".<sup>79</sup> While there are problems with Moses' central argument,<sup>80</sup> he has shown a suggestive way of taking on the enormous challenge of *explaining* political beliefs.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the efforts of Bevir and LaCapra, intellectual historians have been wary of resorting to psychological patterns of explanation; and some of the tendencies of psychohistory that evolved in the 1970s certainly give pause for thought.<sup>82</sup> However, there is something unsatisfying about a kind of intellectual history that keeps a close eye on discourses while defying any sustained consideration of the psychological workings of the mind, which are, after all, part of the complex relationship between thought and language. No wonder that Lucien Febvre's notion of the "mental equipment" (*outillage mental*) was not confined to linguistic structures but also comprised structures of affectivity – emotions, in other words.<sup>83</sup> To get a grip on emotions, intellectual historians may find William M. Reddy's concept of "emotives" useful, which he modelled on Austin's speech-act theory and set in the context of Quine and Davidson's interpre-

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landbilder. Historische Schatatlanten zwischen 1871 und 1990. Ein Handbuch, Köln/Weimar/Wien 2008; Christof Dipper/Ute Schneider (eds.), Kartenwelten. Der Raum und seine Repräsentation in der Neuzeit, Darmstadt 2006.

79 Moses, *German Intellectuals*, pp. 5, 12, 28-29, 31-37, 51.

80 See my comments in Riccardo Bavaj, Turning "Liberal Critics" into "Liberal-Conservatives". Kurt Sontheimer and the Re-Coding of the Political Culture in the Wake of the Student Revolt of "1968", in: *German Politics & Society* 27 (2009), pp. 39-59, here pp. 42-44; for an attempt to historicize the notion of the "45ers" see my article: Riccardo Bavaj, Young, Old, and In-Between. Liberal Scholars and "Generation Building" at the Time of West Germany's Student Revolt, forthcoming in: Anna von der Goltz (ed.), *Talkin' 'bout My Generation. Conflicts of Generation Building and Europe's 1968*, Göttingen 2011.

81 For another recent attempt to combine intellectual history with the history of emotions see Marcus M. Payk, *Das "Pathos der Nüchternheit"? Über Emotionalität, Generation und Demokratie in Westdeutschland 1945-1970*, in: *Moderne. Kulturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 3 (2007), pp. 128-141.

82 See Gerald Izenberg, *Psychohistory and Intellectual History*, in: *History & Theory* 14 (1975), pp. 139-155.

83 See Lucien Febvre, *Le problème de l'incroyance au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. La religion de Rabelais*, Paris 1942; see also the helpful comments by Chartier, *Intellectual History or Sociocultural History?*, pp. 18-22. For an early attempt to combine the study of ideas with methods of social psychology see James Harvey Robinson, *Conception and Methods of History*, in: Howard J. Rogers (ed.), *Congress of Arts and Science. Universal Exposition, St. Louis, 1904*, Vol. 2, Boston/New York 1906, pp. 50-51; id., *The Mind in the Making. The Relation of Intelligence to Social Reform*, New York/London 1921.

tive framework of translation.<sup>84</sup> If one's dissatisfaction with the linguistic turn is even greater, one might wish to explore the physical dimension of emotions – that is, their "habitualization" and "materialization" in "bodily techniques" and practices.<sup>85</sup> Whatever approach one chooses, it seems vital to conceive communicative spaces of the past not merely as constituted by the limits of what could be thought, said and done<sup>86</sup> but as defined by the limits of what could be felt – at a particular time, in a particular place.<sup>87</sup>

If nothing else, the plethora of approaches to intellectual history testify to the very elusiveness of the field. It is probably easier to say what today's intellectual history is not, or at least ought not to be, than to make any definitive statement about its precincts. Gone are the days when intellectual historians tackled monstrous beasts such as "the German mind" or "the American character"; and they no longer chase the Hegelian World Spirit (*Weltgeist*) or pursue purportedly unchanging, metaphysically pure ideas in their journey through time. The hikes from one towering mountaintop to the other – to evoke Friedrich Meinecke's oft-quoted metaphor<sup>88</sup> – have largely fallen out of fashion. Overall, the source-base has become broader, the methodology used has become more sophisticated, and the questions asked have become more specific. It also seems as if intellectual historians have become more amenable to methods and issues of transnational history – as have so many other groupings in the historical community.<sup>89</sup> These observations of scholarly progress may sound Whiggish, but it is hard to deny that today's intellectual history looks much different from some of its ancestors.<sup>90</sup> It goes without saying, of course, that there still exist largely unexplored shores: Many intellectual historians still shy away from drawing on images, sounds or built environ-

84 See William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling. A Framework for the History of Emotions*, Cambridge 2001; see also the critical assessment of Reddy's study by James Smith Allen, *Navigating the Social Sciences. A Theory for the Meta-History of Emotions*, in: *History & Theory* 42 (2003), pp. 82-93.

85 See the instructive article by Pascal Eitler/Monique Scheer, *Emotionengeschichte als Körpergeschichte. Eine heuristische Perspektive auf religiöse Konversionen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 35 (2009), pp. 282-313.

86 See the important study by Willibald Steinmetz, *Das Sagbare und das Machbare. Zum Wandel politischer Handlungsspielräume. England 1780-1867*, Stuttgart 1993.

87 See Ute Frevert, *Was haben Gefühle in der Geschichte zu suchen?*, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 35 (2009), pp. 183-208, here p. 205; see also the interesting discussion forum on the history of emotions in: *German History* 28 (2010), pp. 67-80.

88 See Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (1936), ed. by Carl Hinrichs, München 1959, p. 6.

89 See most recently Robert Adcock/Mark Bevir/Shannon C. Stimson (eds.), *Modern Political Science. Anglo-American Exchanges since 1880*, Princeton/Oxford 2007; Christophe Charle/Julien Vincent/Jay Winter (eds.), *Anglo-French Attitudes. Comparisons and Transfers between English and French Intellectuals since the Eighteenth Century*, Manchester 2007; Christophe Charle/Jürgen Schriewer/Peter Wagner (eds.), *Transnational Intellectual Networks. Forms of Academic Knowledge and the Search for Cultural Identities*, Frankfurt a. M./New York 2004.

90 This may also be inferred from a comparison between the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* which was published in 1973/74, and its successor, the *New Dictionary*, which came out in 2005: *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. by Philip P. Wiener, 5 Vols., New York 1973-74; *The New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. by Maryanne Cline Horowitz, 6 Vols., New York 2005; see also the comments by Jotham Parsons, *Defining the History of Ideas*, in: *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68 (2007), pp. 683-699; and F.E.L. Priestley, *Mapping the World of Ideas*, in: *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35 (1974), pp. 527-537.



ments to create a fuller picture of intellectual landscapes.<sup>91</sup> If more do so in future, the boundaries of the academic field will become even fuzzier than they already are. Go for it!

**Quote as:**

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<sup>91</sup> See, however, John E. Toews, Integrating Music into Intellectual History. Nineteenth-Century Art Music as a Discourse of Agency and Identity, in: *Modern Intellectual History* 5 (2008), pp. 309-331; see also Maiken Umbach, Memory and Historicism. Reading between the Lines of the Built Environment, Germany c. 1900, in: *Representations* 88 (2004), pp. 26-54; and the project currently researched by Daniel Morat (Berlin), *Die Klanglandschaft der Großstadt. Kulturen des Auditiven in Berlin und New York, 1880-1930*.