CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Radicals and Reactionaries in Twentieth-Century International Thought

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The emergence of the history of international thought as a major subfield of International Relations (IR) is one of the most significant developments within the discipline in the past 20 years. Scholars working in the area have transformed our understanding of the origins and evolution of the discipline and the thinking about international relations that occurred prior to the coalescence of IR in the mid-twentieth century. Textbook caricatures of canonical thinkers and key texts have now been replaced with nuanced, historically sensitive interpretations of the work of major figures—from Raymond Aron and Hedley Bull to Hersch Lauterpacht and Alfred E. Zimmern (see, e.g., Davis 2009; Ayson 2012; Jeffery 2006; Markwell 1986). The evolution of important traditions of thought are now understood far better than they once were, as is their influence on various theorists and practitioners in far greater detail (see, inter alia, Ashworth 2014; Clark and Neumann 1996; Hall 2006a, 2012; 2014; Hall and Hill 2009; Haslam 2002; Holthaus 2014a, b; Keane 2002; Long and Wilson 1995; Navari 2013; Onuf 1998; Rosenboim 2014; Schmidt 1998; Rosenthal 1991; Williams 2007). As a result, we now have a much more robust and accurate account of the development of the discipline of IR and the wider development of non-disciplinary thinking about the subject. We now know, for
instance, that the “Great Debates” of Anglo-American IR were more complicated than some theorists have suggested and, indeed, that at least one of those debates—the “First Great Debate” between “idealism” and “realism”—did not happen in the way that some remembered and others chose to represent it (Ashworth 2002; Long and Wilson 1995; Quirk and Vigneswaran 2005; Thies 2002; Wilson 1999).

There is, however, a great deal more work to be done on the history of international thought. So far, in the main, scholars have tended to focus on mainstream realist and liberal internationalist thinkers, and especially on English-speaking ones—or, like Aron or his contemporaries, the German-born thinkers Henry Kissinger or Hans J. Morgenthau—theorists who made their most important contributions to IR in English. But, although it is true that the center stage of IR has, for the past century, been dominated by realists and internationalists, it is also true that many others have made significant contributions from the fringe—whether radical or reactionary—and that those contributions have stimulated realist and internationalist thought. Karl Mannheim’s radical sociology of knowledge, for example, was central to the shaping of E. H. Carr’s version of realism in his iconic *The Twenty Years’ Crisis* (Carr 1939; cf. Hall 2006b; Jones 1998; Molloy 2003). Moreover, it is now well-established that Carl Schmitt’s thought played a key role in the development of Morgenthau’s thinking (see, *inter alia*, Frei 2001; Müller 2003; Pichler 1998; Scheuerman 1999).

To understand the evolution of international thought over the past century, as these examples show, we need to look at these fringe provocations as well as the canonical texts of the mainstream consensus. This book thus moves beyond realists and liberals to radicals and reactionaries and tries to escape the Anglo-centricity of the history of international thought. It also looks beyond the English-speaking world to those thinkers who flourished on the European continent—in French, German, and Italian—as well as thinkers beyond Europe, in India and Japan.

To date, only a handful of non-English language works have been widely cited in the field and the work of only a handful of non-“Anglo-spheric” scholars have been analyzed in any detail (see, e.g., Fawcett 2012). The notorious and, for some, dangerously attractive Carl Schmitt looms large among them (see Hooker 2009; Odysseos and Petito 2007; cf. Hall 2011b; Teschke 2011), but the work of