Interview with Mark Bevir

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Dr. Bevir was interviewed by Admir Skodo.* September 4th, 2009.

Mark Bevir is a professor of political science at the University of California, Berkeley, where he currently teaches courses on political theory and philosophy, and public policy and organization. Bevir was born in London, and educated at the University of Exeter and Oxford University. He lectured at the University of Madras and at Newcastle University before moving to Berkeley. He has been a visiting fellow at universities in Australia, Finland, France, the UK, and the USA. Bevir has published extensively in philosophy, history, and political science literatures. His interests are diverse, including Anglophone, continental, and South Asian thought, particularly radical, socialist, and critical theory of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Philosophical concerns include postanalytic approaches to subjectivity, social inquiry, ethics, and democratic theory. Bevir's intellectual influence has been greatest in the fields of philosophy of history, interpretivism, and governance.

Could you tell us about your background in general, that is, the ideas, movements, and institutions that influenced the emergence of your thought?

Family and social influences are often as important as more formal academic ones. My family merged nonconformist roots with romantic humanism. Most members of my mother's family had been Congregationalists, Quakers, or Unitarians. Several had jobs in or around the publishing industry.

Romantic humanism emphasizes the importance of individuals, especially their creative and imaginative life. My family believed in the power of books, reading, and literature. As a

child, I got the message that a good life was spent looking for personal growth, where growth was associated with family, learning, and self-expression, rather than public status, wealth, and power. This romantic humanism probably influenced my view of history as constituted by situated individuals acting on their beliefs for reasons of their own to make and remake diverse practices.

A less romantic kind of humanism was also present in everyday Londonlife. Historically Londoners have taken a comic and non-moralistic delight in the diversity of life around them. Think of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and Dickens's novels, or, in political theory, of More's Utopia and Morris's News from Nowhere. All these writers share a pleasure in people's idiosyncrasies and a vision of warm fellowship. But I do not want to describe this culture in overly literary or academic terms. My father used to love the hustle and bustle of theWest End, its pubs, restaurants, and the theatres in which he worked. The same kind of London life influenced me through the everyday conversations and interactions that surrounded me as I took the No. 18 bus to and from school or as I wandered up and down the market in the North End Road.

Non-conformism as religious faith did not much influence me. Neither of my parents was a churchgoer. I grew up in an atmosphere that was secularist and even outright atheistic. Yet, non-conformism also overlaps with an antiestablishment ethos that did influence me. I have a hostile reaction to dominant groups and their pious orthodoxies. Even today, although I am left-wing, I often find myself wanting to debunk the left pieties of theBerkeleyestablishment on campus and in city politics. An antiestablishment ethos probably influenced my sympathy for radical democratic and non-governmental utopias.

An anarchic ethos was also present in the punk culture that attracted some of my generation. We grew up in the wake of the hippies, and we detested them. Their alleged radicalism

had degenerated into (or revealed itself to be) mere self-indulgence and self-righteousness. Punks reacted against their cant. Punks dislike moralism; they almost never tell other people what to do to save their souls or to save the world. However, the punk generation is neither amoral nor hedonistic. To the contrary, many of us attach an almost extravagant value to intellectual honesty as an antidote to the self-righteous moralism of the erstwhile hippies and radicals of the late 60s and early 70s.

I know that you did your undergraduate degree at the University of Exeter, and then moved on to Oxford to gain a D.Phil. Under whom did you study at Oxford? I forget. And can you tell us about the experiences and differences between your time in Exeter and Oxford? (It might be interesting to know about non-intellectual matters as well, such as university cultures).

Yes, I studied as an undergraduate at Exeter. My teachers included a remarkably gifted set of political theorists: Janet Coleman, Maurice Goldsmith, Iain Hampsher-Monk, and, as a visitor, Lyman Sargent. I did not really appreciate my good fortune let alone make the most of it. I was too busy discovering life, having fun, clubbing, falling in love, and hitch-hiking and backpacking around Europe and Asia.

I remember a moment in my second year when I thought, “I can do this.” A lecturer asked us what Freudians, structuralists, and others might say about a totem poll. Suddenly I got it. I began to put my hand up and answer, and he was nodding, and I just got it. I might sound arrogant, but I knew then I would get a good degree. It was not that I found academic work terrifically interesting. It was just that I knew I could do it fairly easily while enjoying being in love, socializing, and travelling. What could be better?

Oxford was different. I discovered that I enjoyed research, and I began to make the transition from carefree student to

having a working routine. Talk of political theory or academia being a vocation sounds self-indulgent and self-righteous to me. But, at Oxford, political theory did start to become my job – a job I have thoroughly enjoyed ever since.

I very nearly did not do postgraduate work. I did not intend to be an academic. However, the British state was giving me a graduate scholarship on which to carry on living the carefree life of a student for another three years, and that was a very attractive prospect. My life proved to be idyllic. I studied in the morning (initially in the Philosophy Faculty Library, and later in the magnificent upper reading room of the Bodleian Library), grabbed lunch in college, read the paper, did a bit more work, met up with friends, and went for a swim and a drink. I had a close group of friends, few of whom became academics but all of whom liked to discuss philosophy, literature, and politics.

At Oxford I initially devoted myself entirely to philosophy. I had taken philosophy courses atExeter. ButOxfordgave me a much more extensive and rigorous training. It was a fantastic time and place to study philosophy. During my first year, I sat through the famous 1986 "Star Wars" seminars in the library of All Souls. Jerry Cohen, Ronald Dworkin, Derek Parfitt, and Amartya Sen each had two afternoon sessions to present and debate their recent work. It was electrifying. For me, however,Oxfordwas not just, or even mainly, about ethical, political, and legal philosophy. I was just as absorbed by philosophy of language, action, and science. The whole atmosphere was incredibly inspiring. Many of the world's leading philosophers engaged graduate students, sharing their incredible passion for getting the argument right.

I learnt a lot and was profoundly influenced by the analytic approach that dominated Oxford philosophy. Even today I think that if we define analytic philosophy broadly, it is just about relying on argument and clarity rather than

pretentiousness and vacuous phrases. Equally, if we define analytic philosophy narrowly, I have always been sceptical; it generally neglects history and literature, and it sometimes makes logical distinctions for their own sake without considering whether those distinctions either appear in our everyday concepts or matter for our everyday practices.

Eventually I came up with two thesis topics, one on the logic of political inquiry and one on the history of socialist thought. I went to see Alan Ryan who encouraged me to pursue the historical topic. He served as my supervisor until he left for Princeton when José Harris took over.

How would you characterize your methodology in your thesis? What most influenced your approach to British socialism?

When I started working on British socialism, I approached the topic from the standpoint of a historian of ideas. Yet I soon realized that almost all the existing literature on the topic came from social history. Consequently, I began to think about how I might use the work I had done in the philosophy of language, action, and science to defend a different approach to the history of socialist movements. For a start, I drew on post-analytic philosophers such as Donald Davidson and Peter Winch to develop an analysis of social explanation as based on appeals to beliefs and meanings. To explain socialist movements, historians can not merely evoke social groups and their allegedly objective situation and interests; they have to explore beliefs and ideas. In addition, I tried to develop a historicist analysis of meanings and beliefs. My inspiration here came from post-positivist philosophy of social science, which I drew on to defend a form of explanation based on the concepts of tradition and problem. I got carried away and wrote something like 30,000 words on the philosophy of social explanation. A very truncated version became the first chapter of my thesis. Later many of my ideas found there way into The Logic of the History of Ideas.

As I turned my thesis on British socialism into a series of articles, I continued to explain practices in terms of beliefs, and beliefs in terms of traditions and dilemmas. I was lucky that my approach echoed contemporary developments in social history. As a historian of political thought, I obviously took ideas seriously. Luckily for me social historians were beginning to pay more attention to topics associated with language, discourse, and culture. When I was writing my thesis, I came across Gareth Stedman Jones's Languages of Class (1983), which was just beginning to launch the "linguistic turn" in British social history. Stedman Jones was later my external examiner. When I began writing for publication in 1987, I sent my work to intellectual history journals; but by the early 1990s mainstream history and social history journals were receptive to my way of approaching the socialist movement through its political theory.

Although I was lucky, it wasn't chance. British socialists were trying to come to terms with Thatcherism. The New Right undermined orthodox Marxist and Labourist histories with their linear narratives of capitalism, primitive rebellion, class consciousness, trades unions, Labour Party, and welfare state. Some social historians turned to language and culture to develop an alternative history. My interest in British socialism arose, similarly, as an attempt to identify alternatives to the statism that had dominated the Labour Party.

In your published work, the "Cambridge School" – especially J.G.A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner – has been of your main points of reference in working out your own approach to intellectual history. When did you first encounter it?

The "Cambridge School" first came to my attention at the end of my time atOxford. In the summer of 1987 or 88 I attended a seminar series on the history of political thought which was organized, I think, by John Robertson and Larry Siedentop, and

which brought leading Cambridge historians to Oxford. In addition, my friend, James Meadowcroft, was doing a thesis on British concepts of the state from 1880 to 1914, and he introduced me to Quentin Skinner's historical writings. Finally, Michael Freeden (who became my internal examiner) set up a graduate seminar on political theory as history and ideology, and early in 1989 I presented a paper on philosophical problems with J. G. A. Pocock's method.

I submitted my doctorate early in 1989. After I passed my viva, we went backpacking around South Americafor about five months. I wanted to publish my Pocock paper and thought to do so I had to cover Skinner's work, so I took with me the collection of his essays, Meaning and Context. Perhaps I am the only person to have studied Skinner while lying in a hammock sailing and trekking through the Amazon basin! Anyway, the result was my article on "The Errors of Linguistic Contextualism".[1] I finished that article late in 1989, after which I paid little attention to the Cambridge School for a couple of years while we were living in India. I only returned to them after I began working at the University of Newcastle.

How would you characterize the importance of the Cambridge School as a backdrop for your own thought?

The Cambridge School was important to me for a number of reasons. Most obviously I was becoming a historian of political thought at a time when they were the dominant intellectual force in the sub-field in Britain. Any historian of political thought of my generation would have come across them and felt pressed intellectually to come to terms with their approach. The only thing that sets me apart is the extent to which they not only grabbed my attention but also got me writing about them.

The work of the Cambridge School particularly grabbed my attention for two reasons. The first was the sheer quality of

their historical scholarship. No doubt lots of young historians were inspired by their work. Certainly I was greatly impressed. Very few historians of ideas had worked on British socialism. My own work thus engaged socio-cultural historians at a time when they were far more committed to archival research than were historians of ideas. So, I ploughed through various archives and spent months in the British Newspaper Library at Collindale. The Cambridge School stood out as historians of political thought who, likewise, were interested not only in grand philosophical texts but in the ways these texts came together with others in traditions and ideologies. Even todayCambridgeproduces much of the best empirical work in the history of political thought. At Cambridge, historians of political thought get an exceptional training in the craft of historical research. They are often based in the Department of History and so particularly receptive to historians' standards of evidence, archival research, and language competence.

Although I admired the historical craft of the Cambridge School, they concentrate on the early modern era whereas I worked on the modern era. I was a reader of their histories, rather than a specialist working on related empirical material. Moreover, I found relatively few echoes of the languages and traditions that concerned them in the late nineteenth and twentieth century thinkers who I was studying. In the modern era, natural jurisprudence and civic humanism appear less prominent than Enlightenment and romantic ideas and evolutionary theories and statistical modelling. The gap between early modern and modern thought limited the extent to which I drew inspiration from the empirical content of the histories of the CambridgeSchool. Indeed, one of the earliest articles I wrote on them attempted to explain historically why their work on early modern thought had little continuity in the modern era. [2]

The second reason the CambridgeSchoolparticularly grabbed my

attention was Skinner's use of analytic philosophy to defend his method. It would be difficult to overstate how important his doing so was for me. I had already drawn on analytic philosophy to develop an account of social explanation that could guide my work on British socialism. Skinner's work suggested that I might apply and extend my earlier philosophical analysis to other aspects of the history of political thought. The focus of my philosophical work thus expanded from the analysis of social action to the analysis of history meaning. It is only a little too simple to say that when I wrote the Logic, I combined the resulting work on meaning (chapters 2 and 4) with updated and extended versions of my earlier work on social explanation (chapters 5 and 6).

Although Skinner and I both drew on analytic philosophy, several of our differences reflect our debts to different strands of analytic philosophy and our different concerns. Skinner was influenced mainly speech-act theory and he wanted to defend a method. He drew on speech-act theory to argue that knowledge of the relevant conventions is necessary and perhaps even sufficient to ensure understanding of an utterance. He thus concluded that his contextualist method was a prerequisite of an adequate interpretation of a text. In contrast, as I said earlier, I drew on Davidson and philosophers of science to provide a historicist analysis of beliefs and social explanation. Unlike Skinner, I do not think there can be any necessary or sufficient condition for understanding. Obviously sensible historians will study the linguistic contexts of texts, but they will also study authors' biographies and socio-economic contexts. There is no reason uniquely to privilege linguistic contexts. The Logic is not a methodological work; it is a philosophical analysis of social life.

Having discussed how the Cambridge School grabbed my attention, I should add that to some extent their importance for my work is in the eye of the beholder. Of course, I

greatly admire them. But my historical work owes more to the British New Left, especially E. P. Thompson and Stedman Jones, and most of the philosophical ideas in the Logic come from my earlier work on social explanation. Moreover, little of the work I have done since the Logic has related directly to the Cambridge School.

Since finishing the Logic, you have written much on governance. How does that work relate to your philosophy of history?

This question takes me back to how my philosophical debts and concerns differ from Skinner's. Skinner aimed to defend a particular methodology for intellectual historians. His defence of this methodology also served to carve out a particular niche for intellectual history. In brief, he argued that the speech acts represented an object of study in their own right and could not be reduced to socio-economic factors. My view is far more imperialistic. I think intellectual history – the study of beliefs – is not just a niche discipline but the main feature of all the human sciences. Again, because my philosophical analyses cover social ontology and social explanation, they apply not only to intellectual history but to all of the human sciences. My imperialism arises because I think the human sciences concern activity – I reject attempts to reify activity by conceiving of it as an institution, system, or structure – where activity is a product of the beliefs or reasons of the actor. Human sciences explain actions by reference to the beliefs and desires of the actors, and they explain these beliefs by reference to the relevant traditions and dilemmas. Adequate explanations necessarily refer to intellectual history, that is, the contingent shifts in modes of thought.

So, to answer your question directly: my work on governance tries to apply my philosophy of history to the study of current political developments. I want to explore recent changes in the state in terms of changing beliefs, the actions

they inspire, and the impact of these actions. I also want to explain the relevant changes in beliefs by showing how governance has been constructed variously by actors inspired by different historical traditions and responding to dilemmas. The aim is to decenter the new governance, refusing to treat it as an ineluctable product of a uniform social logic driven by, say, globalization or functional differentiation, and instead to explore its various forms and their contingent historical roots in diverse beliefs, traditions, and dilemmas.

I have been lucky here in my collaboration with Rod Rhodes. When Rod came toNewcastle, I was still a junior faculty member, whereas he was a top Professor with a big reputation – one of the top scholars of British politics. His inaugural lecture was on postmodern approaches to public administration, and, as I recall, rejected postmodern epistemology while identifying the rise of governance with a postmodern era. Afterwards I suggested that anti-foundationalism, if not postmodernism, posed serious questions that human scientists should not ignore. We continued the discussion over a number of lunches and evenings in pubs. In 1997, we began collaborating, applying my theories to British politics and governance. Our collaboration has been one of the great joys of my scholarly life. I have had the great good fortune of seeing my theoretical ideas applied to governance by a scholar who has a better feel for empirical developments than anyone I have met, and who has used his seniority to try new things with verve and imagination.

Once again, although I was lucky, it was not chance. The Anglo-governance school offered a serious alternative to the Westminster Model of British politics; they drew attention to the role of policy networks, and described a differentiated polity organised around the core executive. However, by the mid-1990s, rational choice had presented them with significant theoretical challenges. Rational choice theorists raised the

questions about the micro-theory, explanatory power, and analysis of change. Some governance scholars responded rather defensively; they clung to meso-level concepts like “structure”, appealed to critical realism to say structure are real, and doing little either to disaggregate or analyse structures. My theories have given Rod and some other governance scholars an alternative way of responding to the questions posed by rational choice. I offered them a micro-theory based on beliefs and desires, a historicist analysis of explanation, and a theory of change as a response to perceived dilemmas.

You have held a chair in Political Science at Berkeley for a decade now. Has being in the United States, and Berkeley in particular, had any noticeable impact on your work?

Overall the move to America has been great. We settled quickly. Our children were 4 and 6 when we moved and they are now as much American as British. We have all become American citizens. Personally I greatly enjoy working at UC Berkeley. My colleagues are terrific. A couple of years ago we appointed two fantastic new political theorists – Kinch Hoekstra and Sarah Song. The Department is friendly and supportive, leaving individual faculty free to get on with their own work. The San Francisco Bay Area is, of course, a stunning place to live.

Moving to America also broadened my intellectual outlook. It changed the way I think about the relationship of my work to the wider world of political theory and political science. In political theory, I would now place more stress on what I have in common with Skinner and the Cambridge school. We are historicists. In contrast, American political theory owes much to a strange and defensive anti-historicist reaction to behaviouralism. Before behaviouralism, political scientists used theoretical concepts to study institutions, while political theorists gave histories of these concepts. Behavioural theory implied history was irrelevant while

providing political with a new “positive” theory. Many American political theorists defended the study of past texts not with a historicist philosophy but by rejecting both historicism and positivism. Leo Strauss offered a philosophically sophisticated defence of natural right. Sheldon Wolin and others, typically lacking Strauss’s philosophical background, turned to an odd (or perhaps just confused) mixture of the old ideas-to-institutions historicism with pearl diving. Pearldiving here means searching past texts for sparks of wisdom, where the wisdom of the sparks often seems to depend less on a philosophical defence of them than on their defending the political and political action from positivist technocracy.

This understanding of American political theory has prompted me to put more emphasis on what my work has in common with the Cambridge School. We offer historicist alternatives to natural right and pearl diving. As historicists, we focus on the meanings of texts to particular people at particular times. I do not want to exclude people reading texts and getting good ideas from them. The problem with pearl diving is rather its lack of philosophical account of the objects being studied. The pearls are not the meanings of texts to authors or to previous readers. Moreover, they surely can not meanings intrinsic to the texts: surely texts are just marks on paper until someone attaches a meaning to them. So, while political theorists may be inspired by past texts, the pearls are just their own philosophical, sociological, cultural, or aesthetic accounts of an object such as, for example, the nature of empire. The wisdom of such pearls depends, therefore, on their being adequate accounts of their object. A theorists’ ability to offer such accounts in terms of a past text is irrelevant. The past text serves only as inspiration and perhaps a mode of presenting an argument; it does not legitimate the argument.

What about political science? Has being in the United States

altered your ideas?

Well, I still believe that my historicist philosophy as applying to the human sciences as a whole. But we've already discussed that idea, and I don't think being in America has made much difference to it. I guess the main change has been my growing interest in the history of political science. Like many historicists, I think that one of the main reasons for studying the history of political thought is that political ideas influence political activity and so political practices and institutions. I also think that for much of the last century political science had a far greater impact on political activity than did academic political theory: survey techniques, rational choice models, ideas of evidence-based policy making, and so on have had far more impact on political activity than the ideas of John Rawls or Jacques Derrida. If historians of political thought are interested in ideas that have remade our world, they might pay at least as much attention to the history of political science as to political philosophy.

My views here resemble Michel Foucault on governmentality. We are interested in technical ideas from the social sciences that inform public policy and other political activity. Actually, I think that as Foucault shifted from his earlier archaeological works to his later genealogical ones, he effectively became a historicist. I see my book on New Labour and my recent one on Democratic Governance as genealogies, tracing the contingent rise of forms of social science that present themselves as neutral expertise and then influence policy makers and so the world in which we live.

Nonetheless, relatively few American political theorists (let alone political scientists) share my interest in approaching Foucault as a historicist. Instead they generally approach him in a way indebted to the pearl diving I discussed earlier. American Foucauldians usually treat him as a quasi-canonical author whose texts they can dive into to discover

anti-positivist pearls in defence of the political. Sometimes they use his concepts in unhistorical critiques of current cultural phenomenon. But, ironically, they almost never undertake the kind of meticulous and detailed historical scholarship that characterizes Foucault's own work. There is a miss-match between their explicit avowal of genealogy and the modes of inquiry on which they rely.

I was interested to hear you mention social history as a background to your work on British socialism and even the philosophy of history. Much of contemporary social and cultural history – I am thinking of "micro-history" and the "history of mentalities" for instance – has also tried to reconceptualize intellectual history. These approaches seem to differ from yours, however. For instance, they ground thought to its historical socio-cultural setting, and see the dynamics of thought as guided by conflicts between different social strata. Also, they focus on ordinary people, whose thought is revealed not in their own writings, but in official recordings of their speech in relation to legal transgressions. How do you see your work in relation to these approaches?

I have mixed feelings about these developments in socio-cultural history. I'll start with the positives. First, my work on British socialism is as much part of the cultural turn in social history as it is part of Cambridgestyle history of political thought. So, I approve of a more cultural approach to social history. Second, theLogic suggests intellectual history concerns not a distinct realm of speech acts in linguistic contexts, but the beliefs that have informed all actions, practices, and institutions. So, I approve of attempts to integrate intellectual history with the study of social practices. Intellectual history should not be about a detached realm of sophisticated ideas and rhetorical moves in discourses. It should cover all the diverse beliefs people have held; it should find evidence of these beliefs in

reported actions as well as written texts; and it should insist that one reason for recovering these beliefs is to explain actions and practices. Like microhistorians and the historians of mentalities, I believe in a kind of total history focused on meanings or beliefs.

My differences with most socio-cultural historians reflect the different routes by which we came to believe in this kind of a total history. Generally they inherited social history's belief in total history before applying a cultural turn to it. In contrast, I drew on analytic philosophy to argue that all social explanations should explain actions in terms of beliefs and beliefs in terms of traditions and dilemmas. As a result, I am suspicious of the lingering reductionist motifs found in much socio-cultural history. I accept that people's beliefs are informed by their experiences: my concept of a "dilemma" refers precisely to the way people's interpreted experiences lead them constantly to modify their beliefs and actions. But it is important to remember the interpreted nature of these experiences. Again, because people interpret the world around them in accord with their prior beliefs, historians cannot straightforwardly tie thought to social groups or cultural strata.

Does your work contain, or is it motivated by, "non-intellectual" elements, such as social or political issues?

Yes, at times it does, although really I work on what interests me. Often I pick up topics rather haphazardly or opportunistically. I respond positively or negatively to the interests and beliefs of people around me. Or I pick up topics that seem interesting because of work I have already done.

Generally I have pursued my intellectual interests, but, of course, intellectual interests can be political ones. The most obvious example is my work on British socialism. At the time the left was struggling to come to terms with Thatcherism

or, beyondBritain, with neoliberalism. Many people thought Thatcherism highlighted problems with the Labour Party's statist and reformist socialism. My work was an attempt to recover alternative non-governmental and utopian strands of socialism and perhaps to explain why they had become marginal with the Party.

I should perhaps add that I think my work on governance is also about coming to terms with neoliberalism and its meaning for the future of the left. Much of my work on governance is about understanding the contingent beliefs and traditions that have remade the state since the late 1970s. I focus not only on neoliberalism and the new public management, but also on theThird Wayand joined-up government. I try to show they arose contingently as ideologies absorbed new forms of alleged expertise arising out of the social sciences. And, at times, I advocate more participatory and dialogic alternatives.

Yet, my work on governance, like that on British socialism, is more about understanding the world than promoting a particular social or political cause. My anti-establishment and punk backgrounds make me somewhat susceptible to a type of nihilism. For a start, I do not like the idea of telling others what they should do. Moralising always sounds a bit self-righteous to me. In addition, I have never been able to see any secure grounds for insisting on moral arguments. Ethical reasons are distinctively normative and I am not sure how anyone can insist on these normative reasons trumping all others.

These nihilistic susceptibilities mean I have struggled to find a comfortable voice in which to write about normative political philosophy. I would like to do so. I want to speak about non-governmental and participatory forms of socialism and their relevance to environmentalism. I am increasingly preoccupied by the desirability, even necessity, of promoting sustainability and related ideals through collaborative governance. Currently I am toying with several ways of

addressing these ethical issues while respecting a certain type of nihilism. One possibility is to speak conditionally: “once we begin to talk ethics, then . . .”. Another possibility is to use different, less academic, more literary forms of writing. Who knows what I might try?

Do you see your works as expressing essentially the same theses and arguments from their emergence until today, or do you perceive that there has been a noteworthy change in your thought? Perhaps there is one going on right now?

It depends on the level of abstraction at which you look at it. There are certainly patterns and continuities in my work, but, equally, I hope I am not merely repeating myself! No one big change stands out. I suspect that the patterns owe much to the romantic humanism and anti-establishment ethos I mentioned at the beginning. The changes have come about in part because I have struggled to develop these ideas philosophically and in part as I have used the resulting philosophy to guide empirical studies into new topics. Generally I see my work as a continuing attempt to elucidate my philosophical theories and to apply them self-reflexively so as to narrate them and their rivals and show how they help us understand modern history and politics.

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[1] Bevir, M. (1992) “The Errors of Linguistic Contextualism”. *History and Theory*31(2): 276-298

[2] Bevir, M. (1996) “English Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century”. *History of Political Thought* 17 (1): 114-127.

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