Introduction: An Intellectual Journey

My first published essay was entitled 'Everlasting capitalism'. It appeared in 1968 in a student magazine at Cambridge and discussed Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*, and his argument that all radical alternatives to capitalism had disappeared in the West. Published in 1964 *One Dimensional Man* was one of the first books I encountered when I started at Cambridge the following year. A friend gave it to me to read and it led to intense discussions. It opened a window for me into the world of European critical theory and confirmed my growing interest in political ideas, making me wonder whether Marcuse was right that history and ideology in the West had come to an end, and that there was no longer any possibility for radical dissent or radical change.

This book contains a selection of my articles and papers on political ideas and ideologies over the last forty years, They have been chosen to illustrate some of the main themes of my writing in intellectual history and the history of political ideas. In the companion volume to this one, *After Brexit*,[1] I have put together a selection of essays from my writings on political economy and British politics. Although there is inevitably some overlap in themes between the two books, they are intended to be self-standing, and hopefully the essays selected give each book an internal coherence. This Introduction is followed by notes on the themes of each essay.

The title essay of this collection is 'The western ideology' (Chapter 1). It was delivered as the Leonard Schapiro Lecture at the PSA Conference in Swansea in April 2008. By the western ideology I mean the doctrines which came to define western modernity. This was not just a struggle of ideas but also a struggle of states to determine who had the right to define what the West was, what modernity was and who best represented it. This struggle took place over several centuries between states and within states. In important respects it is still going on, but at

various points in the last two centuries intellectual advocates of liberal modernity have declared that the battle is over and liberal modernity has won. The American and French Revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century were held by many contemporaries to represent the triumph of reason over superstition and liberty over tyranny. Hegel's enthusiasm for Napoleon knew no bounds. Napoleon was the incarnation of the world spirit. His victorious armies were sweeping away the old Europe and ushering in the new Age of Liberty – equality under the law and national self-determination.

It became a settled conviction of liberals in the nineteenth century that the Enlightenment principles which triumphed in the two great Revolutions were the principles which should order politics, economy and society. They accepted that there were many conflicts to come but the basic shape of the modern world had been settled, and there were no higher institutional or ideological alternatives. If human beings wanted progress, happiness and liberty they had to embrace and fight for the implementation and extension of liberal principles throughout the world.

Many contested the liberal juggernaut and in particular the idea that the principles of modernity were settled. Conservatives rejected the new western ideology because they rejected the Enlightenment and its conception of modernity and fought to defend what they could of Europe's *ancien régime* of hereditary right, feudal property and established religion. The tide of change initiated by the spread of capitalism, science and democracy steadily undermined these efforts and led to revolutions and internal reforms. A liberal international order with Britain as its champion gradually emerged, and liberal regimes were established in a growing number of states. But this was not the only battle which liberals had to fight. The nineteenth century saw major struggles between liberalism and socialism and between liberalism and nationalism. Socialism and nationalism both claimed to embody a higher form of modernity than liberalism, and to be the true interpreter of the western ideology. Internal struggles between classes and external struggles between states contributed in the first half of the twentieth century to two world wars and communist revolutions in Russia in 1917 and China in 1949.

From the standpoint of the liberal West and its two leading states, Britain and the United States, the challenges of nationalism and authoritarianism represented by Germany, Austria-Hungary and later Japan were decisively defeated, and the threat of Soviet and Chinese Communism successfully contained. After the Second World War, the United States assumed the leadership of the West and of the wider

'free world'. It organised a new liberal international order under its leadership, and fought a long 'cold war' with the Soviet Union. In the 1950s some US intellectuals confidently proclaimed the end of ideology, at least as far as the internal politics of the West was concerned, and some critics of the liberal versions of the western ideology like Herbert Marcuse agreed with them. But the turmoil of the next three decades then intervened.

A much greater watershed was reached in 1991 when Soviet Communism collapsed, leaving the United States and its western allies as undisputed victors. The proclamations of an end of history were this time even louder, and for a short time hopes for a new world order and 'One World', the regaining of a unified world system which had existed before 1914, were widely entertained. But history has returned again, particularly since the financial crash in 2008 and the austerity and political turmoil which have followed. This time it has taken the form of nationalism, both through the internal challenge to liberal and cosmopolitan elites and the rise of new nationalist great powers who are not eager to work within the rules of an international order they did not shape. The liberal rules-based international order has also been weakened by attacks from within, and by the evident decline in the capacity and the willingness of the United States to lead.

The western ideology has always been contested, and the order it created has often been criticised as tolerating, and in many cases being based upon, systematic inequalities and exclusions. It has also been extraordinarily resilient, in part by being associated with two hegemonic states, first Britain and then the United States. Economic liberalism has been a key component of the western ideology and, although by no means the only strand, at times it has been a dominant strand. Any discussion of contemporary political ideas and ideologies has to recognise the central role it has played in the western ideology, but it is important not to treat the western ideology monolithically as though it was a single doctrine. That ignores the never-ending contests to define and interpret its essential principles. No one doctrine has ever entirely captured it.

The title essay acts as a frame for the other essays in this collection. Some of them explore the character of economic liberalism and why it has been such a resilient form of political economy for two hundred and fifty years, one capable of mutating in many different ways and giving rise to a multitude of different schools and doctrines. The first group of essays explore some of these doctrines, particularly as expressed in the writings of Friedrich Hayek, one of the most important thinkers and interpreters of economic liberalism of the

twentieth century. Some of his key ideas are explored in 'Hayek on knowledge, economics and society' (Chapter 4). His ideas on economic liberalism have such power and reach because as a form of political economy they are closely aligned with the fundamental institutions of the market order – households, markets and states. This is explored in the second essay, 'Neo-liberalism and the tax state' (Chapter 2). In this way, neo-liberalism continues much older ideological traditions of economic liberalism. Neo-liberals, including Hayek, liked to claim their version of economic liberalism as the only valid one, But other schools of economic liberalism, including Keynesianism, have always contested this. The complex interplay of ideas and interests in different standpoints in political economy is the subject of the third essay, 'Ideas and interests in British economic policy' (Chapter 3).

Other essays in this collection explore ideas which criticise liberal forms of the western ideology. The sixth essay on G.D.H. Cole (Chapter 6) explores his account of social democratic and Marxist ideas written in the era when both were at the peak of their appeal and influence, and economic liberalism was on the retreat. 'Marxism after communism' (Chapter 5) analyses the impact of the 'end of history' on both Marxism and social democracy, and what either might offer in a post-communist and post-socialist world. 'Social democracy in a global age' (Chapter 7) looks at some of the challenges facing social democrats in an era characterised by increasing economic, cultural and political interdependence. Chapter 8 explores the debate in the British Labour party over whether its purpose was the fulfilment or the rejection of the western ideology.

A very different critique of the western ideology comes from conservative thinkers. The two essays (Chapters 9 and 10) on Oakeshott examine his rejection of socialism but also his sceptical response to many accounts of liberal modernity, including Hayek's, where they involve turning the state into an enterprise to achieve particular social purposes. The final essay, 'The drifter's escape' (Chapter 11), explores strands of political and religious thought in Bob Dylan's song lyrics that reject ideas of progress in human affairs and the notion that politics might serve some higher good.

Intellectual and political influences

None of us can escape the contexts which form us – culturally, intellectually and politically. I was at school and then university in the 1960s amidst all the tumultuous events, both political and cultural of that time. I first became aware of politics through some of the defining

moments at the start of that decade – the Cuban missile crisis (1962), the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela (1962), and the assassination of President Kennedy (1963). The shock of Kennedy's assassination was immense. Still at school, I was attending a lecture to be given by Isaiah Berlin at the University of Sussex on Machiavelli. Just before he was about to start a porter rushed in and shouted, 'If anyone wants to know the President of the United States has just been assassinated.' Berlin was impassive and after a short pause launched into his lecture. If we had had smart phones we would all have been on them. I remember nothing of the lecture but the memory of the moment when I first heard about Kennedy has never left me.

The first politics book I remember owning was *Political Ideals* by Bertrand Russell. I began paying close attention to British politics for the first time after the 'night of the long knives', when Harold Macmillan dismissed one third of his Cabinet in 1962, and I then watched with fascination the unravelling of the Government's authority during the Profumo affair in 1963. I still counted myself a Conservative at the time, but other thoughts were beginning to stir.

The first British election I really noticed, although at 17 too young to vote, was in 1964 when Labour under Harold Wilson gained a precarious four-seat majority. Labour's slogan 'Let's go with Labour and we'll get things done' would be regarded as far too prolix by today's spinmeisters, but it captured a national mood and helped end thirteen years of Conservative rule. It was one of the relatively few occasions in its history when Labour succeeded in generating enthusiasm around a message of national renewal. Living through a change of government with all the optimism and high expectations such events generate, particularly in the young, was exhilarating. It was reinforced by Lyndon Johnson's sweeping victory over Barry Goldwater in the US Presidential election of November 1964.

That moment of relative hope and optimism did not last. On going up to Cambridge in 1965, I picked up a copy of the Labour Club magazine *Forward*. It had a US soldier in Vietnam holding a flamethrower and declaring, 'I am canvassing on behalf of the Democratic Party.' I immediately enrolled in the Labour Club, which turned out to have only fifty members, half of whom were Fabians or other kinds of social democrat and half of whom were various varieties of Marxist. That all changed very rapidly. Within two years the Socialist Society, the successor to the Labour Club, had more than one thousand members. The second half of the decade saw intense disillusion with establishment parties and establishment politics, and the rise of radical movements, including the protests against the Vietnam War, the new

feminism, and the libertarian counter-culture, all of which particularly attracted the student young, and transformed the way many in that generation thought and lived. The effects for good and ill are still with us. Such bursts of radical energy, which are cultural as much as they are political, do not happen very often. Living through such a moment, particularly when you are young, changes you in ways you do not fully understand at the time. Nothing is ever quite the same again.

I was first drawn into the study of politics through economics, sociology and the history of political thought rather than through political science or international relations. I chose to study economics at university for my first degree, although quite why I cannot remember: as it was not an option at my school, I had little knowledge of what was involved. I had taken A-levels in History, English, and Latin/Ancient History. But economics proved a good choice. In the 1960s the Economics Faculty at Cambridge was still dominated by great Keynesians like Joan Robinson, Nicholas Kaldor and James Meade, and still called itself the Faculty of Economics and Politics. There was no separate faculty or department of politics. The economics tripos was in those days a broad social science tripos, including papers on politics, sociology, and economic history, as well as on economic theory and applied economics. I took papers on British and US political institutions, the British industrial revolution, political sociology, sociological theory, Russian economic development, statistics, macro-economics and micro-economics. Joseph Schumpeter would have approved.

Parts of the course seemed deadly dull, hardly relevant to a world in turmoil or to the much more exciting world of ideas. Only much later did I learn to appreciate the importance of the marginal-cost pricing of road and rail. But Cambridge offered a wealth of other ways to learn and grow intellectually. At the height of the student protests an 'Anti-University' sprang up in Cambridge, a whole programme of alternative lectures and seminars with many speakers from outside Cambridge to provide the extra intellectual stimulus and real world involvement we felt we were not getting from our ordinary courses. Challenging orthodoxies and crossing boundaries is something the young often do, and should be encouraged to do. When Friedrich Hayek was a student at the University of Vienna he spent a lot of his time attending lectures and reading in subjects far removed from what he was supposed to be studying. As he commented many years later, in the University you were not expected to confine yourself to your own subject.

Over the course of my degree I became more and more interested in the historical and philosophical aspects of economics, and in the other

social sciences. I was also reading widely in the history of political ideas, but papers in that subject were only offered by the Faculty of History and so were not available to me. After I graduated from Cambridge in 1968, I became one of the first students on a new MA programme in political thought in the Politics Department at Durham, which was taught by David Manning, a former student of Michael Oakeshott, and Henry Tudor, a former student of Herbert Marcuse. There were only five students on the course, which made for an intense and rewarding experience. I studied Marx and Marxism under Henry Tudor in much greater depth than had been possible before, while David Manning introduced me to the very different intellectual world of Oakeshott. On the first day of the course a fellow student, John Gibbins, thrust a copy of Oakeshott's *Experience and its Modes* into my hands and said, 'You will need this.' He was right. I had never encountered Oakeshott in my studies at Cambridge. That was now to change. To be immersed in two such powerful and contrasting all-encompassing systems of thought as those of Marx and Oakeshott had a profound influence on me. Oakeshott came to Durham in 1969 to give a talk to the department, and spent some time with the MA group. I experienced at first hand his personal magnetism and the fascination of his conversation about ideas.

I wrote my MA dissertation on the relationship between Marx and Adam Smith, and then returned to Cambridge with the offer of an SSRC studentship to undertake doctoral research under the supervision of Philip Abrams, a political sociologist and one of the architects of the new social and political sciences tripos. It was typical of the casualness of British universities at that time that I was offered the studentship without interview or even having to specify a topic. I spent the first six months considering and discarding a great array of subjects before finally deciding to study recent changes in Conservative ideas and policy. This proved to be a decision which shaped my subsequent academic career. The spur to this was Enoch Powell. His break from the Conservative leadership in 1968 and his articulation of a radical new vision – against immigration, against the EEC, against Keynesianism and social democracy, and for a politics of national identity and free market economics – fascinated me. It seemed to show the potential for a very different kind of Conservatism than the one represented by Macmillan, Butler, Heath and Macleod which had been dominant since 1945. I worked on this project during the Heath Government of 1970–74, a period of growing conflict, division and looming crisis. The project grew into a study of the governing and electoral strategies of the Conservative party since 1945, the politics of power and the politics of support, and the tension between them which I argued

explained why the party was in such disarray and divided over its future direction. This study was published in 1974 as *The Conservative Nation*, and it gave me a research programme which has lasted until the present. In 1970 Thatcherism was no bigger than a small cloud on the Conservative horizon, any more than Brexit was in 2010. But within a few years both had permanently transformed the Conservative party. Powell's legacy for the Conservatives in both respects was profound.

The political and economic crisis of the 1970s was the most serious crisis capitalism had faced since the 1930s. The optimism of the golden decades of the 1950s and 1960s, when economic prosperity had returned and western democracies had strengthened, disappeared. There was a sharp political polarisation and new radical alternatives emerged on both left and right about the best way forward. Edward Heath lost two elections and then the Conservative leadership. Margaret Thatcher, who succeeded Heath in 1975, was to be a very different kind of Conservative leader to any since 1945. Labour moved back into government in 1974 but without a solid parliamentary majority or agreement on how to deal with the problems the British economy now faced.

The crisis influenced my writing in two ways. I continued working on Conservatism and on the ferment of ideas on the right in the 1970s, particularly the revival of economic liberalism and the debate on British decline. The 1970s saw a new intensity in that century-old debate in the British political class. Thatcher was to make the reversal of British decline a key manifesto commitment in 1979. She did not use the slogan 'Make Britain great again', but the thought was the same. At the same time, I made my first attempt to analyse the wider structural causes and consequences of a major economic crisis. I had been collaborating with Paul Walton on Marxist theory and Marxist political economy after we had met in 1968 in Durham, when Paul was studying for an MA in sociology. In 1972 we published *From Alienation to Surplus Value*, which won the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize. We devoted the lecture held to mark the prize to an analysis of the rapidly unfolding economic crisis, and this eventually turned into another book, *Capitalism in Crisis: Inflation and the State*, published in 1976.

In 1973 I was appointed to a lectureship in political economy at the University of Sheffield in the Department of Political Theory and Institutions. This was the department which Bernard Crick built. He became its first professor when the department was established in 1965, and David Blunkett (later Labour Home Secretary) was one of his students. When I joined the department there were two professors, Colin Leys and Howard Warrender, and ten other lecturers. I taught

courses on the political economy of modern Britain and on Marx and his interpreters. It was a strange time in British universities, with fears being fanned in the media about left-wing cultural subversion of British institutions. A local newspaper discovered that the department was about to be accused on an ITV programme fronted by Lord Chalfont of having been taken over by Trotskyists, and splashed it across its front page. At the time the political enthusiasms of the lecturers covered all the ground from the far-right Freedom Association to Third World Marxism, but did not actually include Trotskyism. The people most offended by the accusation were the Conservatives in the department, of whom there were several. The offending line was struck out before broadcast after the Vice Chancellor spoke to someone in the ITV hierarchy. It was a first lesson in how the British establishment worked.

There were many things wrong with universities in the 1970s, but they gave their lecturers a degree of licence which seems a lost age now. I had complete freedom in what I taught and what I researched, and indeed whether I did any research at all. Nobody checked. Just being a lecturer, teaching your students and professing your subject was considered enough. If you did some research as well and published the occasional article that was a bonus. I revelled in the freedom. It gave me space to develop my teaching and research in the directions I chose and also to spend one day a week teaching political economy to day release classes of Yorkshire and Derbyshire miners, ICI shop stewards, and the Fire Brigades Union. Day release classes are long gone, but I am still grateful to the participants who taught me far more than I ever taught them. This was political economy from a different angle.

The 1980s saw the completion of my study of the politics of decline, published as *Britain in Decline* in 1981, and my increasing absorption in studying the politics of Thatcherism, which was published under the title *The Free Economy and the Strong State* in 1988. My work on Thatcherism was greatly advanced by the twelve articles I wrote between 1979 and 1990 for *Marxism Today*; more than any other journal, this took the lead in analysing the political, economic, and cultural consequences of the new Conservatism which was taking shape. Stuart Hall pioneered this analysis and was the first to call it Thatcherism.

Under the editorship of Martin Jacques, *Marxism Today* was transformed from the rather staid and little read theoretical journal of the British Communist Party into a broad journal of ideas and comment which was lively, eclectic, direct and challenging. It published a wide range of writers with very different political positions, and conducted interviews with politicians including many Conservatives. Martin was

a brilliant and exacting editor. He was never satisfied and he always proposed radical changes to whatever you produced. He was generally right. One of the special things about *Marxism Today* was that the journal organised occasional discussion weekends for some of the regular contributors, who included Stuart Hall, Eric Hobsbawm, Bea Campbell, Charlie Leadbeater, Robin Murray, Lynne Segal and Geoff Mulgan. There were some memorable exchanges. One of them was Bea Campbell's very direct and blunt challenge to Eric Hobsbawm on his attitude to feminism. In its relentless critique of the politics of Labour and the wider Labour movement *Marxism Today* was often seen as the intellectual harbinger of New Labour. But while some of its contributors, particularly Geoff Mulgan and Charlie Leadbeater, became actively involved as political advisors to the Blair Government, others, including Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, ultimately denounced New Labour for its caution in government. It had a project for the party, they argued, but not one for the country, and did not deliver the radical break with Thatcherism they had hoped for.

During the 1980s I also became involved in another significant collaboration, editing *Developments in British Politics* with Henry Drucker, Patrick Dunleavy and Gillian Peele, and later on with Ian Holliday and Richard Heffernan. This was a new kind of textbook and so successful that it became a series which is still going strong. I was involved for twenty years (1983–2003) up to *Developments* 7. Each book in the *Developments* series was an entirely new book with different contributors; this was hard work, but had the benefit that it forced us to keep abreast of the latest research and debates on all aspects of British politics. The idea for the series was the brainchild of Henry Drucker and Steven Kennedy. Steven was an inspirational publisher who was intellectually as well as commercially involved in all the books he commissioned. He made many things happen which otherwise would not and was a constant source of support and encouragement. One of the best things about *Developments* was the often sharp disagreements at the editorial meetings about British politics.

A new period opened in the 1990s marked by some profound geopolitical shifts – the opening of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the reunification of Germany, the end of apartheid in South Africa, and the beginnings of the economic rise of China, India and Brazil. George H. Bush declared a new world order, and it became an era of high globalisation and an economic boom which was to last until the financial crash of 2008. Progressive forces regrouped and began to make advances across the western democracies, starting with Bill Clinton's election as US President in 1992. In Britain, the tide

turned against the Conservatives after their fourth election victory in 1992. Labour won its biggest ever election victory in 1997 under Tony Blair. So overwhelming was the triumph that on election night Cecil Parkinson, once one of Margaret Thatcher's key lieutenants, when asked who should be the next leader of the Conservative party observed that at that stage of the night the party had yet to win a single seat.

In the run-up to that election victory attention began to be focused on public policy and reform, and what a progressive political platform might look like, and whether there were alternatives to the neo-liberal regimes of the 1980s. In 1993 I was one of the founders of the Political Economy Research Centre (PERC) at Sheffield. David Marquand became the first director, and we managed to persuade J.K. Galbraith to open it. He told us he would come, but that at his age he no longer fitted into the plebeian parts of aircraft. We wondered if he ever had. The University of Sheffield agreed to award him an honorary degree, which paid for his trip. It was a memorable occasion. Galbraith had an undimmed faith right to the end in a progressive political economy to counter the inequalities which capitalism created.

One of the important fruits of PERC was a new academic journal, *New Political Economy*, established in 1996, the result of a close collaboration with a number of colleagues – Tony Payne, Ankie Hoogvelt, Michael Dietrich and Michael Kenny. It became a focus for interdisciplinary and comparative work on political economy. PERC rapidly established a distinctive profile in research on political economy and public policy, and I became involved in a number of collaborative projects on stakeholding, on assets, on ownership and on the political economy of the company with a group of exceptional researchers and research students. One of the highlights for me was my collaboration with John Parkinson and Gavin Kelly on a Leverhulme project on the political economy of the company.[2] John was one of the most gifted public lawyers of his generation and made an immense theoretical and practical contribution to the reform of company law. He died very young, aged only 48, in 2004.[3]

I also began to write more on international politics in the 1990s. Another PERC collaboration with Tony Payne led to an edited book *Regionalism and World Order* (1996), and this revived a link with Mario Telo at Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB). Mario and I had first met at a conference on Thatcherism at Bologna in the 1980s and I now began to participate in projects he organised on regionalism, multilateralism, the future of Europe and most recently multiple modernities. Mario's ability to create networks of scholars not just within Europe but across the world is unequalled, and he proved very

successful in promoting intellectual engagement between scholars from different countries, different cultures and different intellectual traditions. Debating multiple modernities with academics from all over the world in Macao, the casino capital of China, was an experience impossible to forget.

I still remained very engaged with the study of British politics and in 1997 I accepted an invitation to become co-editor of *Political Quarterly* (PQ) with Tony Wright. Bernard Crick was still actively involved in the journal and the full PQ board had started to meet in the Savile Club in Mayfair, because Bernard was a member and could get a preferential rate. But the Savile barred women from being members and entering the club, so the meetings had to be held in an anteroom just by the main club entrance. When several members of the board objected strongly to meeting in a club which maintained such an archaic rule, Bernard explained that he was fighting hard to overturn it, and in the latest vote had come close to winning. The PQ board decided that the Crick version of the inevitability of gradualism was too slow and moved its meetings elsewhere. The rule is still in force today.

I was an editor of PQ between 1997 and 2012, the period of the rise and fall of the Third Way, the successes and failures of New Labour, the Iraq War and the financial crash. Other members of our editorial team were Jean Seaton, Donald Sassoon, Emma Anderson and Stephen Ball. *Political Quarterly* was founded in 1930 by Leonard Woolf, Kingsley Martin and William Robson, and later editors had included Bernard Crick, John Mackintosh, David Marquand and Colin Crouch. The aim of the journal has always been to publish articles on public policy written in plain English and which deal with issues of political importance. It has always been more than an academic journal and is the better for it. Editing it was one of the highlights of my career, and a pleasure too, particularly because of the opportunity to work with Tony Wright, who had an unequalled grasp of what understanding politics and engaging in politics involved. One of the assets of PQ was the quality and range of the members of its editorial board, and the opportunities which that provided for lively and stimulating debate and disagreement on current politics.

In 2008 a fourth period opened, in which we are still living. The financial crash in 2008 and the subsequent recession shattered western prosperity and confidence, and highlighted the growing power of non-western states. It ushered in a time of political upheaval and economic uncertainty. Neo-liberal ideas were widely discredited but still showed enormous resilience. Austerity took hold and many centre-left parties lost power to conservatives. But austerity did not bring recovery, and

many deep-seated problems were not addressed. Political challenges when they did come were mostly from populist nationalists on the right. The liberal multilateral world order began to fragment as leading states, including the US under Donald Trump, began to challenge and disregard it.

I was fortunate in this period to become involved in *Policy Network* and worked closely with Roger Liddle, Patrick Diamond, Olaf Cramme and Charlie Cadywould on a variety of projects, including a pamphlet *Open Left: The future of progressive politics* (2018). *Policy Network* was the living embodiment of the ideals of an 'open left'. It promoted dialogue and discussion on progressive politics in a non-partisan and ecumenical spirit, and built networks across Europe and around the world. The seminars and conferences which these networks organised were noted for the open intellectual exchanges they fostered.

The period since the financial crash has been more reminiscent of the 1970s than the period in between, and my writing has returned to many of the themes and preoccupations with which I started. I also returned to Cambridge in 2007, joining the Department of Politics, where I linked up with some exceptional colleagues, including Helen Thompson, David Runciman, Geoffrey Hawthorne and John Dunn. With them and Christopher Hill I helped to establish a new Department of Politics and International Studies (POLIS). Cambridge is still an amazingly rich intellectual environment. Every lost intellectual cause in the world still has its advocates and devotees in Cambridge if you look hard enough. I enjoyed once again the depth and the eclecticism of its academic culture and supervising some exceptional undergraduates and research students. Cambridge has one of the richest traditions in the study of political thought in the world, and one of the highlights of my time in Cambridge was the opportunity to attend weekly The History of Political Thought seminar and engage with some of its leading figures, especially Istvan Hont with whom I established the Cambridge Centre for Political Thought, strengthening the institutional link between the Faculty of History and the Department of Politics and International Studies. If the old ideal of the university will survive anywhere it will be in Cambridge, although even there it faces formidable pressures.

After retiring from Cambridge in 2014, I rejoined the Department of Politics and International Relations in Sheffield, and became a professorial fellow in the Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute (SPERI), which had been established by Tony Payne as the successor to PERC. SPERI has a wonderful group of young researchers who are all engaged in innovative work which is helping to extend the

boundaries of political economy in many different directions. It was good to be able to work closely with Tony again, since we were long-time friends and collaborators on intellectual projects as well as allies in negotiating university politics and building institutions. Tony once said to me that university politics was like white water rafting: highly risky, unpredictable and requiring lots of teamwork.

SPERI was a coming home for me since, in relation to the broad field of political studies, I have always regarded myself first and foremost as a political economist. My research interests and publications have been quite diverse, but a common thread is the attempt to use a political economy approach to study politics, exploring the complex interrelationships between state, markets and households, and the ideas, policies and institutions through which these relationships are expressed. Political economy currently has various meanings, but my own approach has been primarily historical, institutionalist, and comparative, and has also sought wherever possible to be interdisciplinary. I have collaborated with economists, lawyers, sociologists, geographers and historians as well as political scientists and international relations scholars.

British universities and politics as a subject of study have changed greatly over the course of my academic career. When I went to Cambridge in 1965 the proportion of school leavers going to university was 5 per cent. In 2019 it was over 50 per cent. In 1973 I joined a department at Sheffield of thirteen lecturers, all male. During the 1980s, this shrank to eight. Today the department has more than fifty academic staff and its gender balance has been transformed. In 1973 university departments saw their role as concerned primarily with teaching and scholarship, and student numbers were very low, allowing a large amount of individual tuition and support.

The UK higher education sector was fundamentally changed in the 1980s by a number of linked developments – the huge increase in student numbers in the 1990s, the charging of full fees to overseas students, the linking of funding to departmental research ratings, and more generally the application of the new public management doctrines to the public sector by Conservative Governments in the UK in the 1980s and 1990s. All university disciplines underwent often painful changes to fit in with the new dispensation. The changes dismayed many academics, not least disciples of Hayek and Oakeshott, like Kenneth Minogue and Shirley Letwin, who became some of the strongest defenders of a traditional ideal of the university. They intensely disliked the application of neo-liberal doctrines to universities, which, like Hayek, they thought should remain outside the market and beyond the state.

In order to survive it was necessary to adapt. Many academics would have preferred to be left alone to pursue their research and teach their students, but this was no longer an option. It was necessary to learn political skills, how to manage rapidly changing departments and a rapidly changing university environment. The main downside was the time that immersion in the new bureaucracy took. But it had its compensations. It provided me with practical lessons in how politics works in large organisations that I could never have acquired from books.

In the early part of the twentieth century there were only a handful of chairs in the UK in political theory or government or international relations. From very small beginnings politics as a subject has expanded rapidly from the 1960s onwards, and there has been a parallel development of international relations and increasing integration between the two. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, politics has become an established subject in every major international university. At the same time, there have been continuing controversies over where to set the limits to the discipline, between those who want to narrow it and professionalise it, establishing a core of agreed methods and theories, in order to prescribe what can and cannot be taught within it, against those who have wanted to keep alive a broader, more eclectic vision of political science. I have always temperamentally belonged to the second group. The idea of an academic discipline, as Stefan Collini reminds us, is an unstable amalgam of forces.[4] Disciplines are constantly being reshaped and reimagined, their cores disputed. Each new generation challenges some of the ideas held by the previous one, but there are certain principles which need to be observed if a discipline is to stay healthy and preserve the best parts of the tradition of study which it represents. In my inaugural lecture at Cambridge in 2008,[5] I identified four key ones – openness to other disciplines and other approaches; a focus on problems rather than methodology; a balanced curriculum which embraces as many approaches to the subject as possible; and an appreciation of the nature of political reasoning and the limits of politics. I have been lucky to work in departments both at Sheffield and Cambridge which have promoted that kind of ethos.