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The Historical Development of the English School

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Introduction

The English School's emblematic text is *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (1977) by Hedley Bull, who was the Montague Burton Professor of International Relations (IR) at Oxford from 1977 to 1985. The book's title neatly captures the School's key contention that, despite the formally anarchical or decentralized authority structure of world politics, sovereign states have formed a society, exhibiting a tolerable degree of international order and thereby enabling, though only to a limited degree, also a pursuit of justice. Martin Wight (1991), Bull's mentor and another key figure in the English School, had characterized such a view of world politics as a *via media* between what he called "realism" and "revolutionism" and named it "rationalism," a label pointing to the capacity of human beings, as in Locke's view (1924, 126), to act *reasonably* toward one another even in the state of nature (Wight 1991, 13–14). "Rationalism" in Wight's tripartite scheme (see Keene 2008) is therefore distinct from other forms of "rationalism," especially the one, more common in (North American) IR, associated with "rational choice."

Wight (1991) and Bull (1990) saw an early example of "rationalist" international thought in the writings of Grotius, hence also their label "Grotian" to denote "rationalist" thinkers. Wight's alternative names for the other two positions, incidentally, were "Machiavellian" or "Hobbesian" for "realism" and "Kantian" for "revolutionism" (see Keene 2008), and for Kant and "Kantianism" in particular, see Linklater and Suganami (2006, Chapter 5). However, Bull's central idea that "anarchy among states is tolerable to the degree to which among individuals it is not" is closer to the argument common to Hobbes, Spinoza, Pufendorf, Wolff, and Vattel than what is found in Grotius (Suganami 1989, 10–16). Indeed, the influence of Vattel, an eighteenth-century international jurist, is so pronounced in Bull's thoughts about the desirable content of international law in the society of sovereign states, and that society's capacity to satisfy human needs and welfare (1966a, 1966b, 1977), that it would not be an exaggeration to consider Bull as a twentieth-century Vattel. How far the world has moved on beyond what is captured in the Vattelian conception has therefore been an important question that has underlain a number of more recent publications emanating from, or surrounding, the English School. Among them are *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* by Nick Wheeler (2000), *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Reassessment* by Linklater and Suganami (2006), and *On Global Order: Power, Values, and the Constitution of International Society* by Andrew Hurrell (2007), one of the last of Bull's students and now himself the Montague Burton Professor at Oxford University (2007–).

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When it is stated, however, that English School works exemplify Wight's rationalism, two qualifications need to be entered immediately. First, as Wight (1991, 158) himself had stressed, the three modes of thought that he had identified dovetail and are indistinctive at the edges. It is noteworthy that the English School's view of international politics overlaps to some extent with a moderate version of Wight's realism, and Wight's "Grotian" tradition encompassed Churchill, Acheson, and Morgenthau and his "revolutionists" Gladstone, late Nehru, and Lincoln (Wight 1991, 160, Table 2). Wight's "realist" tradition accordingly contained harder realists, including Cavour, early Bismarck, Hitler, Mussolini, and Welensky under a subtype labeled "Aggressive Machiavellian" and late Bismarck and Salisbury under "Defensive Machiavellian" (Wight 1991, 160, Table 2).

Second, there is an interpretation, advanced by Richard Little (2000, 2009) and favored by Barry Buzan (2001), that the English School's view is best characterized as "pluralism" in that, according especially to Wight (1991, xiv) and Bull (1977, 41–2), complex realities of international politics cannot be captured by any single model, but that the realist, rationalist, and revolutionist models, taken together, shed light on different aspects or features of world politics as a whole. There is some truth in this interpretation, and its heuristic value as a way of developing the intellectual resources of the English School should be appreciated. Nevertheless, it is also undeniable that founding figures of the English School, Wight and Bull key among them, tended to see themselves as drawing special attention to those aspects of world politics which, they saw, were best captured by rationalism or the "international society" perspective (Linklater and Suganami 2006, 29–32).

Literature on the History of the English School

A good comprehensive history of the English School as an intellectual movement is yet to be written. There is no detailed account, which also gives a synoptic view, of the people in the network, their writings, and the evolving social contexts in which they wrote, covering the interwar, Cold War, and post-Cold War periods through which those who have come to be associated with the label "the English School" have gradually developed their collective identity. There are some partial histories, however.

Among them, Tim Dunne's *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School* (1998) is probably the best known. In this work, Dunne drew special attention to the collective activities of the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics as well as the works of its individual members as a central pillar of the English School. The importance of the British Committee for the historical development of the English School is undoubted. Two of the School's key texts, *Diplomatic Investigations* edited by Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (1966) and *The Expansion of International Society* edited by Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (1984), stem directly from the Committee's works. Besides, some key figures of the English School – Wight and Bull among them – were also central figures in the British Committee. But the two entities were quite distinct; one an exclusive club of several scholars and practitioners, with a clear sense of its membership, holding occasional seminars supported by external funding, and the other an intellectual movement of a loose but much larger network of scholars best described as forming a cluster without a clear external boundary. It would be a "category mistake," as C.A.W. Manning (1975, 67), one of the founding figures of the English School, would have wasted no time in pointing out, to conflate two such ontologically distinct entities.

Dunne's focus on the British Committee had, however, led him to underestimate Manning's formative influence, especially in the United Kingdom, on the study of international society in the discipline of IR, which had been a central theme of previous discussions

concerning the English School. Linklater and Suganami's *The English School of International Relations* discusses this in its first chapter, which portrays the School's changing identity as perceived by the IR community. While noting Dunne's exclusion of Manning from – and also his inclusion of E.H. Carr in – his version of the School as problematic even by his own criteria of its membership, they accommodate Dunne's revisionist attempt as itself part of the history of the discipline, contributing to the IR community's changing construction of the idea of the English School (Linklater and Suganami 2006, 33–8).

Unlike Dunne, however, Brunello Vigezzi drew a clear distinction between the British Committee and "a broader-based (and vaguer) 'English School of International Relations'" (Vigezzi 2005, viii) and wrote a detailed work on the former under the title *The British Committee on the Theory of International Politics (1954–1985): The Rediscovery of History*. Interestingly, moreover, Vigezzi's painstaking reconstruction of the Committee's activities reveals considerable doubts and uncertainties in the minds of its key figures, and disagreements among some of its members, regarding the purposes and directions of their collective activities. It was far from the case, Vigezzi shows, that the Committee possessed well-formulated collective research projects and produced its two edited volumes and other individual works along some clear path.

In addition to these few works on the English School and the British Committee, there are also some works on individual authors associated with one, the other, or both. Among them are Bull's "Martin Wight and the study of international relations," written as an introduction to Wight's *Systems of States* (1977); Suganami's "C.A.W. Manning and the Study of International Relations" (2001a); and Ian Hall's "History, Christianity and Diplomacy: Sir Herbert Butterfield and International Relations" (2002). As part of their continuing interest in the history of international thought, Peter Wilson (2004) and David Long (2005) have written on Manning's contribution to IR, while, recently, an interesting book has been added to this short list of works on individual authors: *Remembering Hedley*, edited by Coral Bell and Meredith Thatcher (2008).

The Emergence of the Idea of "the English School"

Although a comprehensive history of the English School is yet to be written, the idea that there is such an entity is now broadly accepted, mainly among those who specialize in the study and teaching of IR. For the specialists' use, there is an English School web site (http://www.polis.leeds.ac.uk/research/international-relations-security/english-school/, accessed June 13, 2013), but Google directs interested persons also to a Wikipedia entry on "the English School of International Relations theory" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E… of_international_relations_theory, accessed August 26, 2013) as currently the most popular site, revealing perhaps the extent to which undergraduate students rely on this source in writing their essays.

The awareness that there was such a network of scholars gradually grew in the late 1970s against a background of an impressive succession of publications in the United Kingdom in the 1960s and 1970s. Manning's *The Nature of International Society* was published in 1962. This comprised a series of idiosyncratic essays based on "The Structure of International Society," an introductory undergraduate course which he had taught at the London School of Economics (LSE) in the previous 30 years. Four years later, *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* appeared, edited by Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, publicizing the work of the British Committee since 1959 when it held its very first meeting.

The appearance of this collected volume was a major event in the history of the English School, and a number of the essays remained influential for some decades: "Why Is There

No International Theory?" by Wight and two articles by Bull, "Society and Anarchy in International Relations" and "The Grotian Conception of International Society." The first characterized international politics as "the realm of recurrence and repetition…in which political action is most regularly necessitous" (Wight 1966, 26), a depiction which resonated with an early, more realist phase in the evolution of Wight's own thought (Wight 1991, 268). The second became the basis of Bull's *The Anarchical Society* and later inspired Dunne to reflect on post-9/11 IR under the title "Society and Hierarchy in International Relations" (2003). The third came to shape the solidarist/pluralist debate concerning humanitarian intervention among later English School writers, most notably Wheeler (2000), Dunne (Wheeler and Dunne 1996), and Robert Jackson (2000).

Six years after the publication of *Diplomatic Investigations* came another collection of essays, *The Aberystwyth Papers: International Politics 1919–1969*, edited by Brian Porter (1972), a former pupil of Manning and Wight at the LSE. In it we find "The Theory of International Politics 1919–1969" by Bull and then noted for his defense of "the classical approach" against the move in North America to develop a scientific study of international politics (Bull 1969). There was also Manning's last substantial essay, "The Legal Framework in the World of Change" (1972), in which he expressed his long-held views concerning the nature and role of law in the society of sovereign states. Butterfield, who wrote "The Balance of Power" (1966a) and "The New Diplomacy and Historical Diplomacy" (1966b) for the Butterfield and Wight collection, now contributed a piece on "Morality and an International Order" (1972).

One year later, *The Bases of International Order: Essays in Honour of C.A.W. Manning* came out, edited by his former pupil, Alan James (1973), much of whose teaching at the LSE and later at Keele University was dedicated to developing his mentor's ideas about international society and about IR as a university undergraduate degree program (Manning 1951a, 1951b, 1954). Manning's former students and colleagues, including F.S. Northedge, Geoffrey Goodwin, Wight, Bull, and James, contributed to this collection. The following year saw the publication of John Vincent's *Nonintervention and International Order* (1974), based on his doctoral dissertation supervised by Bull and J.D.B. Miller at the Australian National University (ANU), from where, via Princeton and the ANU again, Vincent joined the teaching team at Keele in 1976.

Vincent's argument exhibited some striking similarities with Bull's, as was to be seen when *The Anarchical Society* came out in 1977, especially with respect to the continuing importance of the society of sovereign states as a constitutional framework of world politics. That was also the year in which Bull was elected to his Oxford chair. Before this, in 1975, Manning's *The Nature of International Society* was reissued, and 1976 saw Northedge's *The International Political System* (1976), based, in turn, on his undergraduate lectures at the LSE. In 1977, Wight's *Systems of States* appeared, based on his papers presented at the British Committee in the 1960s and early 1970s and posthumously edited by Bull. This was followed by *Power Politics* (1978), also by Wight, edited by Bull and Carsten Holbraad, the latter having authored *The Concert of Europe: A Study in German and British International Theory 1815–1914* (1970), based on his doctoral thesis supervised by Wight.

By the late 1970s, therefore, it was possible to see that a network of scholars was gaining a momentum and influence in the British study and teaching of IR. These scholars, old and young, seemed to be interrelated through some overlapping personal linkages, all saying broadly similar things, often under similar titles, about IR and the way to study that subject.

It was against this background that in 1981 Roy E. Jones published a polemical article in *Review of International Studies*, the journal of the British International Studies Association (BISA). His article, "The English School of International Relations: A Case

for Closure?," is perhaps more famous for its title than its content. Jones's made some pertinent observations – in particular, the School's neglect of the economic dimension of world politics, a weakness that Buzan (2004), among others, has sought to remedy. But, interestingly, nothing of substance was published to reinforce, or rebut, his claims. There were mainly some reservations and doubts expressed as to whether those key scholars whom Jones treated as the school members could be seen to form an intellectually coherent grouping (Grader 1988). It is mostly remembered for the role it played in bringing the existence of "the English School" to the (chiefly UK) IR community's awareness and thereby contributing, ironically, to the school's formation as a more self-conscious grouping. Jones "helped to create" the English School, as Dunne (1998, 3) rightly observed. Suddenly well noted in BISA circles for his outspoken attacks on British mainstream IR, Jones, for his part, was to be elected to the editorship of its journal.

By the end of the 1980s, however, Wilson was able to cite a number of articles published in that decade as evidence of "increasing acceptance among International Relations scholars that there [was] a group of writers which should be recognized as constituting a distinct school of thought" – more often than not called the English School (1989, 49). He was cautious in his claim that there was a school of thought here primarily in the sense that "the thought of the scholars in question [Manning, Wight, Bull et al.] is sufficiently similar for them to be grouped together, and thereby distinguished from other International Relations scholars" (1989, 52). But he also noted that these scholars formed an "intimate intellectual grouping, based at the LSE in the 1950s and 1960s, which inaugurated and first developed the approach" (1989, 55), centered on the concept of "international society" as a key feature of world politics.

According to Wilson (1989, 55–6), their positions were similar in the following respects: their stress on the relative orderliness of the relations of states, their focus on the institutional bases of international order, their rejection of utopian projects for a radical restructuring of the existing international system, and their dismissal of behavioral or scientific methodology in favor of empathetic understanding and interpretation. These suggested commonalities were in accord with what Suganami (1983) had earlier identified as a set of intellectual dispositions shared by a few writers who, under the influence of Manning, took an "institutionalist" approach in British mainstream IR.

Suganami did not use the label "the English School" to refer to them and preferred "institutionalists," partly because there was some doubt expressed at that time as to the appropriateness of the adjective "English" to refer to a school of thought led by Manning, a South African, and Bull, an Australian. It may be noted here that Jones used the label "the English School" for two reasons: he was dismayed that the seminal thinkers of this school showed little evidence of any commitment to what he regarded as "the truly British liberal tradition of economic and political studies, founded largely in the eighteenth century, to which numbers of outstanding Scotsmen and even one or two Welshmen made significant contributions" (1981, 2), and "[f]or the most part they also share[d] a common academic provenance in the department of international relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science" (1981, 1). Jones, himself a Welshman, was then teaching at Cardiff.

The existence of the "English" School, however, is now a commonly accepted fact not only in the UK IR profession but, increasingly, also more globally. A few factors seem to have contributed to this. For one thing, there really were some overlapping connections and similarities among some of those whom Jones (1981) first wrote of as forming a school (and a few others whom he did not include in his discussion). Moreover, an increasing number of commentators in the IR profession began to talk of "the English School" as forming a distinct grouping in the study of IR. And, for their part, most of those who were said to belong to this grouping – and were still alive – accepted, or did not strongly resist,

this labeling. The English School is an entity that emerged historically as the IR profession gradually came to accept it as a really existing entity, not merely an externally imposed categorization.

The Development of English School Works

The writings of the English School, or scholars commonly associated with that label, embody one or more of the following three concerns in their respective investigations into world politics: "structural," "functional," and "historical."

Manning's *The Nature of International Society* is a classic example of the first kind. Its aim was to present the formal institutional structure of contemporary world politics. Manning's answer was simple: those who act and talk in the name of sovereign states conduct their interactions on the basis of a set of official assumptions, and central to this, for him, was the idea that sovereign, or constitutionally independent, states formed a society in which international law (and morality) were deemed to be binding.

Importantly, Manning contrasted an inquiry into the formal structure of the global social universe, or a "formal-structure study," with what he called "social dynamics proper" (1975, 201). He wrote: "Within, beneath, alongside, behind and transcending, the notional society of states, there exists, and for some purposes fairly effectively, the nascent society of all mankind" (1975, 177). It was a concern of "social dynamics proper" to investigate this complex human universe, containing a variety of social organisms – "the peoples, and the people, and the groups, the organisations, and the associations not yet articulated for effective action" (1975, 201). While recognizing the importance of such an investigation, however, Manning did not himself engage in it in any substantive manner.

The Nature of International Society did not appear until 1962, but it embodied decades of thinking on Manning's part, rooted in his experience of the interwar years. It is interesting to find that his thoughts on the subject were already present in outline in his 1936 lecture at the Geneva Institute of International Relations, entitled "The Future of the Collective System" (Manning 1936). As with a number of other schools of thought in IR, the roots of English School thinking can be traced to the period of the *Twenty Years' Crisis* (Carr 1939). As a legally trained scholar who witnessed the rise and fall of the League of Nations close at hand, Manning was keenly aware of the precariousness of the rule of law in the society of sovereign states. Still, he firmly believed in the society of sovereign states governed by international law as a civilizing force, hence his stress, somewhat single-minded stress, on the vital importance of preserving the obligatory nature of international law as a central assumption in the practice of interstate relations (Manning 1975, Preface; Suganami 2001a).

Bull's *The Anarchical Society*, by contrast, is much more multifaceted and elaborate than Manning's work, although Manning did influence Bull as did Wight and H.L.A. Hart, Bull's "Oxford teacher" (Bull 1977, ix). Writing against Richard Falk's globalist vision (1971), Bull's text also encompassed a functional study – an investigation into the workings and relative merits of the existing institutional structure of international society.

Like Manning, Bull (1977) took a society of sovereign states to be the constitutional structure of contemporary world politics. In this decentralized setup, sovereign states are themselves the official organs which operate the basic rules of world political conduct – a line Bull developed further in his 1979 *Daedalus* article, "The State's Positive Role in World Affairs." But, according to Bull, sovereign states operate these rules by utilizing certain historically evolved and conventionally accepted methods, or what he called "the institutions of international society." He counted five of them: (i) the practice of treating (customary

and treaty-based) international law as legally binding norms; (ii) the practice of setting up resident embassies where officially accredited diplomats represent their countries and speak on their behalf; (iii) the practice based on the idea that it is in the common interest of the society of states as a whole to maintain a rough equilibrium of power among the great powers such that "no one power is in a position where it is preponderant and can lay down the law to others" (1977, 101); (iv) the practice whereby the great powers confer in some form, ad hoc or on a more regular basis, in deciding key issues of the society of states; and (v) the practice based on the idea of war as a means of settling international disputes in accordance with certain rules *ad bellum* and *in bello* (1977, Part 2).

Of a number of things that may be recounted in Bull's treatment of these five "institutions," two are particularly noteworthy in the current global political context. One is his observation that what undermines international order is no longer so much war between sovereign states as violence committed by non-state actors. "International society will not be able to afford to allow these new forms of war to lie permanently beyond the compass of its rules," he wrote (1977, 199). The other is his stress – following Oppenheim (1905, 73) – on the balance of power as a precondition of international order and of an effective operation of international law (1977, 109, 117, 131). From such a perspective, the current global situation in which violent non-state actors confront the United States operating in an effectively unipolar system would have seemed a particularly disturbing condition, although Bull did not live to see it (Dunne 2003; Clark 2005, Chapter 12).

Manning had earlier observed that the society of sovereign states was one of a number of ways in which mankind might be organized (1975, 9–10) and that this framework existed within a larger global social structure, which, he said, was the aim of "social dynamics proper" to decipher (1975, 201). Bull has made two corresponding observations: that the society of states is one of a number of possible political organizations of the human race and its moral justification depended on its effectiveness as a means of securing basic human needs and contributing to more advanced human goals (1977, 22, 282–96) and that a new global political system was emerging which could not be described exhaustively as simply a system or society of states for other kinds of actors were involved in it (1977, 21, 276–81). He therefore spoke of "the world political system" (1977, 276–81) or "the world-wide network of interaction that embraces not only states but also other political actors, both 'above' the state and 'below' it" (1977, 276).

Nonetheless, Bull's central move was to confirm and endorse the division of the world into sovereign states and their coexistence and cooperation under the decentralized regime of "institutions" he identified. In his judgment, what was needed was not a transformation of this formal structure, but strengthening of the element of society in world politics; if the sovereign states system is to contribute, beyond the more basic goals of international peace and security, toward economic and social justice and efficient environmental control, the element of international society must be preserved and strengthened. For this purpose, he suggested, "a sense of common interests among the great powers, sufficient to enable them to collaborate in relation to goals of minimum world order" (1977, 315), would be essential. But he added: "a consensus, founded upon the great powers alone, that does not take into account the demands of those Asian, African and Latin American countries cannot be expected to endure" (1977, 315). The future of international society is likely to depend, he opined, on the creation of a genuinely universal international society grounded in a cosmopolitan culture incorporating non-Western elements to a much greater degree than has so far been the case (1977, 317).

Read optimistically, this is a normative statement, implying the possibility of progress. Read pessimistically, it resembles the Huntington (1993) theme of the clash of civilizations. What it means for the cultural underpinnings of the contemporary global international society to incorporate non-Western elements and under what conditions such

transformation may take place are questions which Bull, regrettably, did not address. Clearly, these are vital questions to raise in an era in which integration appears accelerated in some areas of culture yet fragmentation seems quite pronounced.

In addition to the formal-structure and functional studies of the society of sovereign states, historical transformations of past and present international societies have also been a key interest of the English School. Here Wight's British Committee papers are of particular significance. He saw a states system as a group of states that recognize no political superior and have more or less permanent relations with one another through messengers, conferences and congresses, a diplomatic language, and trade. He found three historical examples: the Western states system, which arose in Europe in the fifteenth century and now covers the whole world; the classical Hellenic–Hellenistic system; and the states system that existed in China during the Period of Warring States (Wight 1977, 16–17).

Wight then formulated a few large questions that interested him: (1) What case is there for thinking that a states system is preferable to alternative forms of political organization, of which, historically, there were many varieties (1977, 44)? (2) Is there a case for suggesting that a states system can only maintain its existence on the principle of the balance of power, that the balance of power is inherently unstable, and that sooner or later the system culminates in the establishment of an empire (1977, 43–4)? (3) Given that historical states systems arose against the background of cultural homogeneity, what level of cultural unity was necessary for their effective operation (1977, 33–4)? (4) Do the governing rules of states systems vary radically from one system to another, or is there much commonality across them (1977, 34)?

Regarding question (1), the British Committee seems to have taken the position that a system of sovereign states was "legitimate and desirable" (Watson 1990, 103). Bull's *The Anarchical Society* is an elaborate articulation of this stance. Regarding question (2), Wight noted that earlier states systems ended in an empire (1977, 43–4), but Watson, having examined a wider range of states systems than did Wight, suggested that the tendencies of states systems to move toward hegemony, dominion, and empire are countered by forces that tend to loosen and break up empires and dominions in the direction of multiple independences (Watson 1990, 106, 1992, Chapter 12).

Question (3) was addressed by the British Committee in its final phase, leading to the publication of *The Expansion of International Society* (1984), edited by Bull and Watson. The chief concern underpinning the Bull and Watson project was the future of international society, with its historical roots in Europe, in the contemporary multicultural world. The two scholars acknowledged that, compared with the European international society of the latter part of the nineteenth century, the global international society of the latter part of the twentieth century lacked solidarity owing, among other things, to its cultural heterogeneity. The main conclusions of this collaborative volume, to which there were many contributions also from outside the membership of the British Committee, were the following: that new entrants to international society have accepted its rules and institutions, although they have also sought to modify existing ones to eliminate discriminations against them; that they have had to do so because they could not do without them even in their mutual relations; and, further, that the leading elements of all contemporary societies have accepted a cosmopolitan culture of modernity upon which rest international legal, diplomatic, and administrative institutions (Bull and Watson 1984, 430–5).

Bull and Watson's judgment that the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa perceived strong interests in accepting the rules and institutions of international society, originating in the West, because *they could not do without them* even in their relations with one another is similar to Manning's earlier claim that the states' need to pay formal deference to the authority of international law as law was in the nature of "a situationally

generated pragmatic inevitability" (1972, 328). James's view, found in his review of *The Expansion of International Society*, is interesting to compare:

> To me it seems that when independent political units come into regular contact with each other certain requirements present themselves almost as a matter of logical necessity: some rules are necessary for the regulation of their intercourse, and also, therefore, some agreement on how these rules are to be established or identified; there must also be some means of official communication, and with it an understanding that official agents must be personally respected and privileged; and if the collectivity of units is deemed to form a society this carries with it the concept of membership, and hence the necessity for some criterion whereby this political unit is identified as a member and that not. These requirements would seem to be valid whatever the cultural complex or geographical location of the political entities who establish or later join an international society. (1986b, 466; see also Vigezzi 2005, 155 ff.)

Needless to say, this "almost logical necessity" points only to a causal *potential* embedded in intersocietal dynamics; the potential may or may not realize itself, and, where it does, it will manifest itself in a variety of historically contingent ways. This is reminiscent of Hart's well-known observation in his *The Concept of Law* that there are good reasons for any legal system to embody certain basic principles – or what he called "the minimum content of natural law" (1961, 189–95) – but that they will manifest themselves in different, historically variable ways. In this connection, it is of great interest to note Watson's historical observation that "regulatory arrangements always come into being between civilized polities when the volume of contacts becomes worth regulating" (1992, 318). He added: "Anything more intimate, a society that goes beyond rules and institutions to shared values and aspirations, has hitherto always developed within a cultural framework, even if some of the values and assumptions are later adopted by communities outside the culture" (1992, 318).

Question (4), in Wight's list, relates closely to this topic. Do the norms governing different international states systems reveal historical variability, do they show any pattern, and do they converge on some common set of principles, grounded in what used to be called "reason" – for which Manning's "situationally generated pragmatic inevitability," James's "almost logical necessity," and Hart's "natural necessity" are modern-day substitutes? Such questions are of great interest to institutional historians and historical sociologists. Andrew Linklater, inspired by the work of Wight among others, has been studying the historical sociology of states systems, focusing on how "harm" has been defined and regulated in various states systems (Linklater 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2009; Linklater and Suganami 2006).

Throughout the 1980s, the English School continued to publish works along the three strands discussed here. In the same year as the publication of *The Expansion of International Society*, Gerrit Gong, himself a contributor to that collected volume, also published a historically oriented work, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society* (1984), based on his doctoral thesis supervised by Bull. James's *Sovereign Statehood: The Basis of International Society*, published in 1986, was an example of formal-structure study, which closely followed his mentor's, Manning's, conceptual analysis of "sovereignty" (James 1986a). In the same year, Vincent published *Human Rights and International Relations*, a functional study in the sense that the author enquires how the society of sovereign states may function with respect to the goal of human rights protection. But the English School, which continued throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s to contribute significantly to the study of world politics, was to lose its by far most active figure, Bull. Wight had died in 1972. Bull's untimely death in 1985 was to be followed in 1990 by the tragic death of Vincent, still in his 40s, soon after his arrival at the LSE as its Montague Burton Professor of IR.

It is perhaps unsurprising therefore to find that the 1990s were a relatively quiet decade in the activities of the English School. Besides, the IR community at large had come to be focused on the debates between the neorealists and their critics emanating from North

America. However, during this period, a younger generation of scholars began to make contributions, following in the footsteps of Bull and Vincent in particular. Among them were Hurrell; Dunne, a former doctoral student of Hurrell at Oxford; and Wheeler, with whom Dunne collaborated closely at one point. Their publications in the 1990s included the following: "Kant and the Kantian Paradigm in International Relations" (1990), "Collective Security and International Order Revisited" (1992), "A Crisis of Ecological Viability? Global Environmental Change and the Nation-State" (1994), "Society and Anarchy in the 1990s" (1998), and "Power, Principles and Prudence: Protecting Human Rights in a Deeply Divided World" (1999) by Hurrell; "International Society: Theoretical Promises Fulfilled?" (1995a) and "The Social Construction of International Society" (1995b) by Dunne; "Pluralist and Solidarist Conceptions of International Society: Bull and Vincent on Humanitarian Intervention" (1992) and "Guardian Angel or Global Gangster: The Ethical Claims of International Society Revisited" (1996) by Wheeler; and "Hedley Bull's Pluralism of the Intellect and Solidarism of the Will" (1996) and "Good Citizenship: A Third Way for British Foreign Policy" (1998) by Wheeler and Dunne. The titles of these publications are highly indicative of their authors' close ties with the older English School.

During this period, Jackson, then at the University of British Columbia, "discovered" the works of Manning, Wight, Bull, James, and Vincent through his British colleagues and began contributing works which are closely associated with the English School perspective (Jackson 1990, 1995, 1996). This decade also witnessed the publication of Buzan's "From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School" in *International Organization* (1993) and Alex Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999), each bringing some key English School notions more closely to the North American audience's attention.

However, the most significant event in the 1990s, in terms of the impact it had on the IR community's interest in the English School, was arguably Dunne's publication of *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School* (1998). His revisionist account made some commentators, working with, or within, a more traditional conception of the English School, feel that he had misconstrued the School's identity (Knudsen 2000, 2001; Suganami 2000, 2001b). However, his book played an important part in drawing the IR community's attention more closely to the theoretical and historical studies emanating from the leading members of the British Committee. The Wight–Bull–Vincent line of theoretical speculation, aimed at gaining wisdom from contending traditions of international thought, came to be seen as the main pillar of the English School (Epp 1998, 48), as did the historical orientation of the Wight–Watson line.

Furthermore, Dunne's exclusion of Manning from his idea of the English School may have made the grouping more attractive to those who had been dismayed by the racist assumptions conspicuous in some of Manning's later writings (Dunne 2000, 233). But, with or without Manning, a question may still be raised: how far is the School's endorsement of the division of humankind into sovereign polities – specifically on the grounds that mutually hostile communities, divided by deep cultural cleavages, would otherwise not coexist easily (Bull 1966a) – based on an essentialized notion of intercommunal differences which potentially connives with racist assumptions and practices?

Normative Orientation

There is a common tendency to think of the English School as engaging in normative theory (Dunne 1998, 9). But some clarification is called for regarding the precise nature and mode of their engagement with normative issues. Manning drew a clear distinction between a categorical normative proposition of the form "X ought to be done" and a factual statement

of the type "Y is the case"; and while he did not object to IR scholars offering a hypothetical, instrumental advice of the kind "if Y is your goal, then X is the way to achieve it," he did not regard it as a proper role of an academic specialist to engage in categorical normative advocacy (1975, xii, 126, 211). For James, questions of the form "what ought to be done?" are unworthy of discussion in any academic setup since there is, in his view, no way to respond to such questions on any objective grounds. Besides, it was important to leave behind any personal moral or political commitments to enhance objectivity in one's academic work, James stressed (1982), a position that stemmed ultimately from the Humean fact/value distinction, via the positivist stress on *Wertfreiheit* in social science, and, more directly perhaps, from Carr's (1939) critique of utopianism as symptomatic of infantile "sciences."

Bull in fact followed very similar lines. His statements in *The Anarchical Society* about the elementary goals of modern international society were presented as factual observations (1977, 8–20). And his defense of the states system governed by the five institutions of international society was said emphatically to be circumscribed by his book's contingent aim to consider what is instrumentally the best means to achieve order in world politics (1977, xii). Like James, Bull believed that moral questions "cannot by their very nature be given any sort of objective answer" (1969, 26) and stated that "[t] here is no such thing as 'rational action' in the sense of action dictated by 'reason' as against 'the passion,' a faculty present in all men [sic] and enjoining them to act in the same way" (1977, 126; also Cochran, Chapter 12in this volume). He also believed "in the value of attempting to be detached or disinterested" (1977, xv), adding that it was clear to him that "some approaches to the study of world politics are more detached or disinterested than others" (1977, xv).

Nonetheless, Manning had considered substantive moral questions as worthy of intellectual engagement, characterizing them as "deliberative" as opposed to "inquisitive" questions. The latter can be given definitive answers; the former, by contrast, more or less persuasive arguments only (1975, 124ff.), involving, as he expounded, "[t]he probing of presuppositions, the evaluating of ends, the weighing of issues, the elucidation of concepts – all philosophical rather than restrictively scientific undertakings" (1975, 211). Correspondingly, Bull maintained that substantive moral questions are an integral part of the theory of IR (1969, 26). And he, too, held that moral questions, which are important in the practice of IR, can be "subjected to rational investigation" (2000a, 167) and "probed, clarified, reformulated, and tentatively answered" – although, ultimately, from "some arbitrary standpoint" (1969, 26). Also, whatever Bull or his English School colleagues may have said about "ought" questions and how to engage with them in IR as an academic pursuit, *The Anarchical Society* is undoubtedly a defense of international society governed by the five institutions as the best means of obtaining the elementary, primary, and universal goals of all social life as well as peace, security, and justice in IR (1977, Chapters 7, 12). It is difficult to see how in substance this defense is *not* a case of moral advocacy, even if it does not advocate any radical alteration to the system.

So, when it is stated that "International Theory as Normative Theory" is a distinctive characteristic of the founding figures of the English School (Dunne 1998, 9), it needs to be appreciated that there was considerable hesitancy and ambivalence in the way they engaged with normative questions (see Cochran in this volume). They were skeptical about moral advocacy and wished not to be seen to engage in it. When, in his 1983 Hagey Lectures, Bull addressed the issue of "Justice in International Relations" (2000b), he presented his argument as an attempt to spell out the moral implications of liberalism for contemporary global issues; he was not defending the truth of the liberal standpoint or justifying liberal values by some metaethical considerations. Of course, Bull's subscription to value noncognitivism, which is itself a metaethical position, would have meant that he did not think it possible fundamentally to defend his own liberal assumptions. This explains why he presented his argument as an application of a particular normative standpoint.

The English School's tendency to wish not to be seen to engage in moral advocacy appears, however, to have become somewhat less conspicuous in the most recent decade. Wheeler's *Saving Strangers* (2000), written in the immediate post-Cold War context against Vincent's earlier argument in favor of nonintervention (1974), is a fairly good illustration of the new trend. Vincent's 1986 book, *Human Rights and International Relations*, had, however, paved the way by advancing an argument for the priority of the right to life, and hence the right to subsistence and freedom from violence, as the most fundamental of all human rights. Such was the line toward which, in his later writings, Vincent found himself increasingly attracted (Vincent 1986; Vincent and Wilson 1993). Wheeler's book articulates and endorses it fully.

A close analysis of Wheeler's text reveals the presence of three kinds of activity: exposition of a recent trend with respect to the legality/legitimacy of humanitarian intervention (2000, 285–6); demonstration of the presence of potential solidarity in the contemporary world sufficient, in his considered view, to make effective a set of norms concerning humanitarian intervention consonant with his own moral conviction (2000, 295); and statement of his ultimate moral vision toward which, he believes, the world ought gradually to be transformed, even though, as he acknowledges, there is no evidence that such a transition is likely to occur at present (2000, 303–10).In contrast to the earlier English School writers, Wheeler makes no attempt to conceal the prescriptive character of his work's orientation.

But if there has indeed been the lifting of the taboo against normative theorizing, this has still left a new generation of the English School with a problem of justification. Either they are value noncognitivists, in which case they can only spell out the implications of their own (or some other) moral beliefs, as Bull did in his Hagey Lectures, and should therefore soften the tone of their advocacy somewhat, or they are not value noncognitivists, in which case their moral advocacy will need to be based on some deeper justifications. One possible line for the English School might be to accept that "what ought to be done?" is not a question to which an answer could ever be given from some Archimedean point. They might go on somewhat as follows. "Any answer given to such a question must necessarily stem from human consciousness and this is bound to alter historically. In every historical epoch, there are bound to be disagreements, and, even where there is a broad consensus, it will inevitably be challenged and perhaps replaced by another at some point. Given this, all we can do is to see where our consensus, if any, lies and articulate its implications. Where, however, we find no consensus, we should study clusters of contending views to deepen our understanding of the sources of disagreements and possibilities for transcending them." Such a metaethical standpoint will be consonant with the English School's broadly conventionalist and analytic orientation and its interest in the historical evolution of norms. The Navari volume (Navari, forthcoming) may present just such a standpoint.

Clearly, however, questions such as "which human rights are the most fundamental?" "how should we determine this?" "what ought to be done internationally to promote and protect them?" and "how united is the world with respect to the idea of human rights and their implementation?" are not of the sort to which we can expect to see easily agreed-upon answers now or in the near future. The division of the new English School over this set of questions between solidarists, such as Wheeler (2000), and pluralists, such as Jackson (2000), merely reconfirms this (see William Bain's Chapter 10 in this volume).

Historical Orientation

The English School is united in acknowledging the importance of historical knowledge to the study of IR. This does not mean that everyone associated with the school has made an extensive use of historical knowledge in their writings: Manning did not. Much less does it

mean that scholars not associated with the school have not attached importance to history: Morgenthau did, among countless others. But, even for Manning, there was "no point in denying the linkage between International Relations and International History" (1951a, 17) and "international history is, for the student of international relations, essential underpinner number one" (1954, 44). Here he was talking about IR as an undergraduate degree program and pointing to the need to incorporate international history as its foundation. Of course, not all scholars associated with the English School were concerned about appropriate ways of teaching IR as a degree course, which had preoccupied Manning. Butterfield and Wight, for example, were both historians, the latter leaving the IR Department at the LSE – very much Manning's creation at that time – for a Sussex Chair in History (Wight 1977, 7). For the British Committee led by Butterfield and Wight, therefore, history understandably was a main avenue through which to explore what "the theory of international politics" – then "without wide currency or clear meaning" in Britain (Butterfield and Wight 1966, 12) – might comprise.

But the relationship between historical knowledge, on the one hand, and IR or any attempt to make sense of contemporary world politics, on the other, is a complex one, and the English School as a whole exhibits quite a wide variety of views on this issue (see Linklater and Suganami 2006, 85–96). According to them:

- Atemporal approaches to the study of IR must be considered inadequate because its subject matter is intrinsically historical (Butterfield 1972, 338; Wight 1977,16; Bull 2000c, 253).
- In any empirical study of IR, even by IR specialists, an idiographic dimension cannot be neglected (Watson 1992, 1; Bull 2000c, 253).
- It is of course possible to search for historical generalizations, but we should bear in mind that there may be differences, as well as similarities, in the cases compared, where the scope of investigation is large, which it needs to be to make any generalization sound (Watson 1992, 319, 325; Bull 2000c, 253, 254).
- The future world develops from the present world as much as the present world had evolved from the past world. Historical knowledge therefore helps us decipher the direction of human social development. However, historical knowledge not only enables but also constrains our speculations about future options, and furthermore, it does not necessarily provide a good guide to political action (Bull 1977, 255–6; Wight 1977, 191–2; Watson 1992, 325).
- In our thinking about IR, we should be aware that our ideas about IR may be historically bound and that there may be little or nothing radically new in human thinking about the subject (Bull 1969, 37, 1977, 255–6; Wight 1991, 6).
- The history of international politics can plausibly be written as a story of recurrence and repetition, but in writing a history of modern international society, it is possible also to draw attention to some signs of progress toward a more rational world (Wight 1966, 26; Bull 2000b, 232–3, 244).
- Historical narratives about world politics are intertwined with the theories (or interpretations) about the fundamental characteristics of world politics (Wight 1966, 33; Bull 2000c, 253, 254).

Of these richly, and perhaps surprisingly, diverse ideas, found scattered in the writings of the English School authors, it is primarily the warning not to generalize from a small number of cases and the idea that historical knowledge may help us understand the present and the future – contained in propositions 3 and 4 – that formed the central rationale behind Buzan and Little's *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of*

International Relations (2000). Their source of inspiration is Watson, to whom they dedicate their magnum opus. In his own panoramic view of historical and contemporary international societies, Watson wrote (1992, 319):

> A realistic understanding is very difficult to obtain if we remain imprisoned in the conventional legitimacies and half-conscious assumptions of our own time. We need a broader base of comparison.

And further, "Whatever arrangements our system of communities may develop, it will remain substantially the heir to its own past" (1992, 325).

Buzan and Little were critical of the existing IR discourse, based almost exclusively on observations about the Westphalian states system, and, more specifically, of the ahistoricity of Kenneth Waltz's neorealism. Their determination to break from imprisonment in our own time led them to write a book even larger in scale than Watson's work.

One key move they make, in their attempt to transcend the limitations of the Westphalia-based IR, is to define "international systems" very broadly. Thus, empires are included under the rubric as a "hierarchical" international system. What they call "pre-international systems" consist of "bands, tribes, clans, and perhaps chiefdoms." "Economic international systems" typically involve "tribes, empires, city-states, clans, and early forms of firms." And "full international systems," encompassing military-political, economic, and sociocultural exchange, may consist of like units, such as city-states or national states, or unlike units, such as empires, city-states, and barbarian tribes (Buzan and Little 2000, 6, 95, 101, 102).

The story that they construct is about how the geographic size of sociocultural, economic, and military–political systems gradually expanded, causing the progressive merging of what had been distinct regional systems and resulting in the formation of the contemporary global system (2000, 109–11, Buzan and Little). The various components of Buzan and Little's contemporary global system are all very familiar: the sharp disparity between the zone of peace, comprising powerful industrialized democracies, and the zone of war, containing much weaker modern and premodern states, and the domination of the latter zone by the former and the obsolescence of great power war and a shift from military-political to economic processes as the dominant form of interaction in the international system. Buzan and Little treat these components judiciously and construct a tentative story which works well as a synoptic account of the postmodern international system. This is the first systematic attempt by those associated with the English School movement to give some substance to Manning's "global social dynamics" (1975, 201) and to analyze the shape of Bull's "global political system" and more (1977, 20–2, 276–81). What is strikingly new is the authors' placement of this "postmodern" story in an overall narrative encompassing 60 000 years of human history. Their narrative of the present (and future) is understood as the latest phase in the unfolding of that overall story.

It is pertinent to note here that, in earlier times, "to explain" meant for something "to unfold (itself)" and thereby "to make (itself) plain." It is primarily in this sense that Buzan and Little's *mega*-narrative explains the contemporary scene as it is also partly for this reason that, for the English School, history is an important means with which to decipher the present and future. Buzan and Little have now embarked on a new project to revise the English School's story of the "expansion of international society" (see Buzan and Little's chapter in this volume). This is also a concern of a project led by Hurrell, under the title "Provincializing Westphalia," for which Keene (2008), among others, is making an important contribution. Linklater's project on the historical sociology of harm conventions is under way, and Ian Clark, who during the early 1970s came under the direct influence of Bull at the ANU, has been adding to his impressive list of publications

institutional historical works on legitimacy and hegemony, very much central to the English School's traditional research agenda (Clark 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011). The idea of the English School continues to unfold.

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