

the statesman in favor of that of the prophet of moral righteousness or of the armed revolutionary—who may indeed turn out to be the same person. Morgenthau makes a strange mentor for such legions, and it is an odd sensation to read his careful, stately prose juxtaposed with that of the neo-Maoists in the columns of the *New York Review of Books*.

We live in a terrifying world where sanity and relative insanity must join forces in the struggle against the unctuous madness of our rulers. In such a world the place in history of a man such as Hans Morgenthau, whose intellectual roots lie in a more genteel past, becomes difficult to assess. Many who might agree with much of his thinking may well view it as belonging more properly to a civilized era now dead. The central concept of his theory of international relations, the national interest, may no longer be all-important at a time in which, as he himself admits, nuclear weapons have revolutionized strategy and created the possibility of wars which no one can win and which therefore can serve no nation's interest. Perhaps, too, the prudence which for Morgenthau is the central hallmark of the statesman is no longer a relevant mode of coping with a world in which total disaster threatens from so many quarters. In a recent comment on the strictures of George Kennan—a man who much resembles Morgenthau in his outlook—against the impatience and extremism of the young, Stephen Spender has noted that Kennan himself points out how little time is left to save the environment from total degeneration, thus him-

self implying that only revolution can stem the tide. We live in a world in which the threat of dying or becoming a murderer in Vietnam is imminently real to the young, in which we all are in danger of nuclear annihilation or of strangling in our own wastes, a desperate world in which the statesman may have lost his place. The Morgenthaus and the Kennans and all the civilized critics of our folly may have to yield leadership to men who say that if we are going to die anyway we might as well do it for a cause, however illusory.

No one can predict whether, teetering on the brink, we will be able to muster the sanity to pull back. If we do, it will be in some measure because of the legacy of realism which Morgenthau has striven to build up for us throughout his career as a counselor to policy makers and to educated public alike. He seems already to be on the verge of a paradoxical victory in his struggle against the shallowness and sterility of a "value-free" social science, one in which the banners of commitment and concern are carried by the New Left in every discipline. If the world ever again becomes a place in which men can reason about the difficult political choices before them, Hans Morgenthau will be remembered as one who in dark days kept faith with the central intellectual tradition of Western politics as an exemplar of a political philosophy which recognizes the need for confronting our choices rather than denying them, who knew that it was the tragic fate of the statesman to stand in a flawed world as the scapegoat for us all.

HANS MORGENTHAU: REALIST AND MORALIST

Roger L. Shinn

"He speaks, in the biblical phrase, truth to power."

Hans J. Morgenthau

In that short sentence Hans Morgenthau describes one role of the intellectual who relates himself to the political world. It is clear, from the way he states it, that he admires this vocation. It is also clear, from his own career, that he has often exercised that vocation.

Morgenthau's eminence is such that he needs no praise from me. As an analyst of international affairs he is a brilliant scholar, a shrewd observer of the

actions behind the headlines, a puncturer of pomposities, and an irritant to sluggish minds. These qualities are sufficiently well known that I shall not elaborate them.

Instead I want to point to a fascinating paradox in

Roger Shinn is dean of Union Theological Seminary, New York. He is author of *Christianity and the Problem of History*, among other books, and editor of *The Search for Identity: Essays on the American Character*.

Morgenthau. It is the kind of paradox that bothers those who love simple coherence. It may be that there are marks of inconsistency in it and that Morgenthau will not appreciate my concentration on this paradox in what is intended as a tribute to him. Yet it is this paradox that, in my judgment, elevates him above many other intelligent and learned thinkers. Although it makes his judgments occasionally unpredictable, it makes them the more alluring. If I read some writers in order to confirm my opinions and others in order to sharpen my polemical wits, I read Morgenthau in anticipation—to see what he will say and how he will intrude upon my thought patterns.

In Morgenthau we see the paradox of the realist and the moralist. He is the hard-nosed skeptic, shredder of hypocritical poses, destroyer of idealism whenever it pretends to occupy a throne that is not really its own. Yet he is a champion of honesty, a patriot of his adopted nation, a herald of its heritage who calls it to be faithful to its best history and visions. He might, by balancing these two emphases in careful moderation, be a helpful but unexciting figure. Because he pushes each strenuously, occasionally even extravagantly, he is a more enticing thinker.

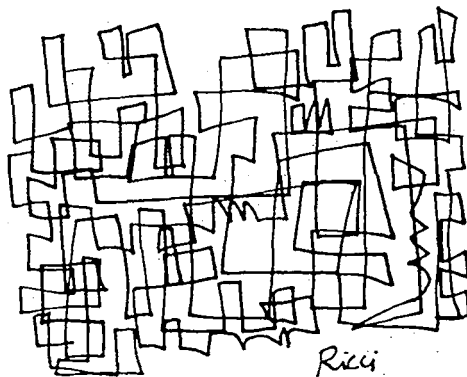
To call Morgenthau a realist will surprise nobody. His name is almost synonymous with political realism. Some critics would even call him a cynic. I do not, but I have occasionally felt the abrasiveness of his mind as he destroys idle hopes and dreams with chill empiricism and logic. Morgenthau's realism needs no documentation but a few examples may be in order.

Does someone piously propose to solve international conflicts by referring them to the United Nations? Morgenthau favors using and strengthening the U.N. but he permits no illusions about its virtues or effectiveness. It is a meeting-place of nations all pursuing their national interests, not a moral force above the strife. It is an arena, better than many other arenas, for relating national policy to the policies of other nations; it is not a substitute for national policy.

Again, is someone prating about the immorality of intervening in the affairs of other nations? Morgenthau points out that all great nations today make verbal opposition to intervention, direct or indirect, while in fact they advocate and practice intervention. Putting aside clichés, he insists that in many a case either action or abstention from action is a kind of intervention. So he concludes: "Intervene we must where our national interest requires it and where our power gives us a chance to succeed." (*A New Foreign Policy for the United States.*) That might seem to be

the perfect expression of ruthless *Realpolitik*. Actually, in context, it is part of an argument for reduced intervention by the United States. But this use of the argument takes nothing away from its realism.

Once again, is someone proposing expanded foreign aid as a generous act of the rich nations to help other people and encourage world peace? Morgenthau dissects the case—even of so winsome and persuasive a writer as Barbara Ward—with relish. There is, he grants, such a thing as humanitarian foreign aid, e.g., in times of disaster, but it is exceptional and even in such cases has political meanings. Far more frequent is the sort of aid that has a plain political purpose that is not primarily humanitarian. Some foreign aid is simply bribery, and the old-fashioned system of acknowledging it as bribery had advantages over the modern system of ineffectively concealing the bribe under high-sounding ideologies. Other types of foreign aid are intended to help economic development and thereby encourage stability in the recipient-nations and world peace. Morgenthau shows that economic development often makes for instability and war. His conclusions are not to abandon foreign aid but to employ it more shrewdly. In the process he has demolished most of the rhetoric that persuades church and public to support foreign aid.



These few examples, chosen almost at random from the many available, are part of Morgenthau's case that there can be no understanding of politics apart from "lust for power." Often he makes his point so emphatically that one must wonder whether he indulges in a Manichean separation of idealism from realism. He is capable of an almost ascetic isolation of

the life of the intellect from the corrupting world of power. "In his search for the truth, the ideal type of intellectual is oblivious to power; in his pursuit of power, the politician at best will use truth as a means to his ends." ("Truth and Power," *The New Republic*, November 26, 1966.)

In that sentence the description of the politician might be called cynical rather than realistic. (Is Morgenthau perhaps describing the politician at worst rather than "at best"?) But there is no cynicism about the ideal of seeking truth. The intellectual betrays his responsibility if he becomes the agent of the political powers. He might, in pursuit of his calling, simply ignore the world of power, but this for Morgenthau is an evasion. The high calling of the intellectual is to speak "truth to power."

Hans Morgenthau understands very well the theological dimensions of his position. Years ago, in an argument with a political scientist whom a type-casting director might call a liberal rationalist, I quoted Morgenthau to make a point. "Oh, Morgenthau, he's just a Lutheran," was the reply; and the reply was meant to dismiss Morgenthau's thought. The fact is that Morgenthau has affinities with the Lutheran tradition and the doctrine of the two realms. He sees with Luther the peril of any tendency to merge the two realms. Western civilization in its repeated efforts to do so has made a double error. "Either it has reinterpreted the teachings of Christian ethics in a 'liberal' way, in a way which is conducive to justifying and rationalizing the political act so that the gap between the two is narrowed by changing the commands of Christian ethics; or else the political act is made to appear as something different from what it actually is, as something nicer, less sinful than it actually is, and thereby the gap is narrowed." When challenged on this statement, Morgenthau reasserted it even more emphatically: "I would still maintain that it is particularly difficult to be a Christian in politics, because the aim of man in politics is to dominate another man, to use a man as an instrument, as a means to his ends; and this is a direct denial of Judeo-Christian ethics."

The foregoing statements were made in the context of a tribute to Reinhold Niebuhr, whose "Christian realism" has affinities with Morgenthau. Niebuhr felt constrained to reply, in a mood of critical appreciation, that Morgenthau was conceding "too much to the perfectionist versions of Christianity" and not giving sufficient recognition to possibilities of moral "integrity and courage" in the service of political justice. (Morgenthau et al, *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Prophetic Voice in Our Time*.)

This brief examination of Morgenthau's realism

shows that it is in no sense indifferent to moral concerns. In fact, one of its prime motives is the passion to protect morality from corruption by identification with power. The sharp distinction between truth and power, between morality and politics, is not a comfortable assignment of non-conflicting roles; it is an agonizing distinction that must always trouble the intellectual or the moralist in his relation to the world of power.

In speaking truth to power, Morgenthau becomes a moral critic of the powerful. The American involvement in Vietnam has increasingly thrown him into that role, and he has accepted it with moral passion. This is not to say that he abandons realism. He still expects the nation to pursue the national interest rather than abandon it for some purportedly more noble purpose. But he insists that moral faults have led American leaders to misconstrue the national interest in foolish and disastrous ways.

All this is consistent with realism. What might not have been expected is the intimate connection he draws between American identity and moral purpose, a connection so close that one might ask whether Morgenthau the realist may not have some unsettling criticisms to make of Morgenthau the idealist.

"America," he writes, "was founded not upon power blindly and unrestrainedly pursued, but upon power informed and restrained by truth." (*New Republic*, ed. cit.). That statement, if it stands up under scrutiny, goes far to bridge the near-Manichean dualism that Morgenthau has sometimes expressed. It is remarkably close to the "liberal" ethic he has sometimes criticized.

In a CRIA "Conversation" in the summer of 1969 Morgenthau expressed the identity of national interest and moral purpose in words so striking that they require quotation at some length:

For from the very beginning of American history there has always existed an intimate and organic relationship between the moral stature of America—as conceived by itself as well as the outside world—and its position among the nations of the world. . . . It is this ethos which has been the source of America's strength at home; it was one of the main sources of its prestige and influence abroad. What constitutes the present tragedy and crisis of America in general and, more particularly, of American foreign policy is the fact that our rulers are no longer fully conscious of this ethos and that our actions bear an only extremely remote relationship to that ethos. . . . It is this betrayal, not only of the ethos of America but of the trust which,

you may say, the best representatives of humanity have put in the United States, that constitutes the tragedy of America today. (*worldview*, September, 1969.)

The "real source of America's strength," he continued, is "the moral example it has presented to the rest of the world." Morgenthau had already developed this theme more elaborately in his book, *A New Foreign Policy for the United States*. With an unabashed patriotism, rare among America's internal critics these days, he described the high self-consciousness in which the United States established itself and undertook the role as "model for the world." He pointed to the perils in this role as it subtly shifted to that of "missionary for the world" and then as "crusader" ready to impose its goals on the world "with fire and sword if necessary." But he affirmed the basic soundness of the original purpose.

When Morgenthau examines the corruption of the American heritage, he employs all the caustic realism that he has characteristically used in exposing the ideologies by which men veil their struggles for power. But in describing the origins of this country and in recalling it to its moral heritage, he is strikingly the idealist.

Certainly Morgenthau's anger over American actions in Vietnam is a moral anger. In a letter to *The New Republic* (January 7, 1967) he describes a conversation with a friend who in Vietnam had watched a prisoner dying as a consequence of treatment in an interrogation center. Morgenthau does not simply comment in terms of *Realpolitik*; he thinks this sort of behavior is evil.

I find Morgenthau far more attractive because of his undisguised ethical concern. What I must ask is whether his famed realism does not require some criticism of a romanticized conception of America's origins. Several decades ago Charles Beard analyzed the economic motives hidden under the ideological idealism of the Founding Fathers. Beard's judgments have been contested but not totally refuted. More recently and more painfully some of our black historians have emphasized the sordid strain in our national history that has been concealed in most white historiography. Such information, which constitutes grist for Morgenthau's realistic style of analysis, is curiously submerged in his recent idealism. The paradox, I repeat, is more intriguing than any simple coherence; and the man who is both realist and moralist is more attractive than a man who is one alone. Yet one must ask how the two impulses co-exist and interact.

To make a point, I have exaggerated. I have pulled apart constituent elements in a subtle dialectic. No damage has been done. Morgenthau will reweave the intricate pattern many times and with many variations. He knows that his two worlds of truth and power are "ideal types" and that concrete reality is always complex. "The two worlds are not only separate from, and potentially intertwined with each other, they are also hostile to each other. Truth threatens power, and power threatens truth." (*The New Republic*, November 26, 1966.) Within those complex relationships many shifting relationships are possible.

The most frequent relationship may be described in terms of the self-defeating quality of ideological misperception. Power, to function effectively, needs a true apprehension. Yet it resents truth. Therefore it distorts truth to serve its own ends. But its distortions trap it in self-deceptions that defeat it.

Thus Morgenthau writes of the "blindness of power," of its "faulty perception of reality," of the "sin of pride" that stifles dissent, of the false "moral standards" that constitute "roots of our failure in Vietnam." He can say that for national leaders "objective reality is replaced by an artificial one which is attuned to the policy."

It is for this reason that realism cannot be even realistic without the moral qualities that can correct distorted perception. For the same reason Morgenthau the realist and Morgenthau the moralist can co-exist, not in simple harmony, but in a tension that makes this remarkable man the more rewarding for all who know and read him.

Today Hans Morgenthau is asking America to be what, by his own realistic judgments, no country can fully be. Perhaps that is what every prophet and patriot must ask. It is significant that a political analyst should ask it in the awareness that without moral cleansing and recovery there can be no accurate awareness of reality and no clear determination of policy.

In *A New Foreign Policy for the United States* Morgenthau maintains that "in the formulation and conduct of foreign policy, the intuition of the statesman rather than the knowledge of the expert will carry the day." He likewise states that survival in the nuclear age requires a radical transformation "of traditional moral values, modes of thought, and habits of action." Thus Morgenthau, the political scientist, continues to tell us that there can be no political science without political intuition and political ethics.