

European International Studies Association (EISA)
in cooperation with the University of Catania

9th Pan-European Conference on International Relations
23 – 26 September 2015, Giardini Naxos, Sicily, Italy

Panel

The Realist Tradition in IR

Paper

The IR enlightenment revisited:
Realism as a distinctively German tradition

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Introduction

Realism is definitely the most misunderstood approach in the discipline of (I)nternational (R)elations.¹ Already the founding father was aware of this. In the preface of the third edition of *Politics Among Nations (PAN)* in 1960, Hans J. Morgenthau (1904-1980) writes:

I find solace in Montesquieu's similar experience, to bemoan the fate of authors 'to be criticized for ideas one has never held'. I am still being so criticized. I am still being told that I believe in the prominence of the international system based upon the nation state, although the obsolescence of the nation state and the need to merge it into supranational organizations of a functional nature was already one of the main points of the first edition in 1948. I am still being told that I am making success the standard of political action...And, of course, I am still being accused of indifference to the moral problem in spite of abundant evidence, in this book and elsewhere, to the contrary.

Therefore, realism is in need of *reconstruction* and *reinterpretation* by means of *contextualization*. Otherwise, its often neglected critical claim, normative purpose and liberal content gets more and more lost, and its destiny would be a "strange death" just at that moment in history when *classical realism* - the strand of realism which is at stake - makes his comeback in IR, and has an obvious appeal to IR theorists. And otherwise, IR scholars around the globe do not know about the *European* beginnings of their discipline, and consequently lack any knowledge of a European identity of IR which usually is defined as American. Though, the endeavor of rethinking realism is not easy at all. Yet, there is little agreement on what realism *actually* is, and which thinker in IR can really be portrayed as a realist. And even the most prominent figure is interpreted in very different ways: "There is little agreement on the character of his political vision. We now have almost as many Morgenthaus as there are interpreters of him, and he has been presented as everything from an arch-conservative to a critical theorist" (Bell 2009: 8). Scheuerman does not befriend the label *realism* to portray Morgenthau, which for him is a "misnomer" (2007: 506). Scheuerman labels Morgenthau an „uneasy realist“ (2009: 1-7). Nevertheless, in order to come to terms on what realism actually was and is, and who is a realist, it is useful to be as clear as possible about the *origins* and the historical, political, intellectual and biographical *context* in which realist thinking has emerged and henceforth evolved (the *evolution* and *transformation*), about limitations and

¹ In his book *The Realist Case for Global Reform*, Scheuerman introduces a chapter "Why (Almost) Everything You Learned About Realism is Wrong" (2011: 15-38); see also Behr/Heat 2009.

opportunities of realism, and about how classical realism differs from neo and neoclassical approaches within the realist tradition in IR. The recent debate on the beginnings (and ends) of our discipline in the special issue “The End of International Relations Theory” in the *European Journal of International Relations* (2013) is an important step into the direction of reconstructing and contextualizing realism. William’s inspiring article *In the beginning: The International Relations enlightenment and the ends of IR theory* (2013) is also an argument for rethinking *realist figures* in IR who once have produced a tradition, and who reproduce and transform it in specific context.

This paper is a pleading for returning to the roots of realism and its main figures, and the role both play in the founding of the discipline IR. And it is an argument for contextualizing IR theory. In doing so, we can remediate the ongoing misunderstandings and myths of ‘conservative’ realism as either a rationalist theory, or a guidance for crude and war-prone Realpolitik, or a bulwark against idealism and liberalism lacking any sense of democracy, ethics and morality, and global reform (see Scheuerman 2011: 15-38). And we can uncover supposed ‘American’ realism as a distinctively *German* and *liberal* rooted tradition in IR with a striking and notable *critical* and *normative* purpose. In this paper, I do not address Morgenthau’s well known work on US foreign policy, and I do not reread the mostly forgotten international lawyer (see Jütersonke 2010; Koskenniemi 2002). Rather, I focus on his either unknown or overlooked work on American democracy and active republican citizenship, and his - in the literature on the supposed conservative realist founder - ignored attitudes towards the responsibility of an intellectual, namely critical scholarship, political engagement and moral courage, and speaking truth to power. Morgenthau can only be truly understood if and when the almost forgotten German years in his birthplace Coburg, and his time at the universities of Munich, Berlin and Frankfurt (1904-1932) and in exile in Geneva, Paris and Madrid (1932-1937), and the roots which spawned his realist thinking are reconsidered – roots on which Morgenthau unfortunately kept silent after his emigration (Frei 2005, Lebow 2011) for different personal, academic and political reason (which couldn’t be addressed here), and thus caused most of the misunderstandings of realist thinking himself. My thesis is that Morgenthau’s *liberal realism* was his lifelong attempt to deal with his European experiences and *German history*, and to draw *realist lessons* from the fatal past for a better future of liberal western democracies and societies, foreign policy and international politics, and IR as an enlightenment project. Below, I provide the field arguing why we should reconstruct and contextualize IR theory (**I.**). Following, I refer to the ‘IR

enlightenment' as an intellectual and political context in which realist thinking has evolved between the 1920s and 1940s (II.). Finally, I present a few aspects in Morgenthau's work to uncover the 'German thinking' (Golo Mann) of a critical, liberal and normative realist (Reichwein 2013), and to introduce some aspects of a so far untold story about Morgenthau's part in the IR enlightenment (III.).

I. Why we should *reconstruct and contextualize* IR and “uneasy realism”

Since the end of World War II, IR is mainly described as an *American(-dominated)* discipline within the social sciences. Following Hoffmann's famous landmark article *An American Social Science: International Relations* (1977), many scholars have adopted and employed the notion of American hegemony in their meta-studies of the discipline. In other words, the American IR imaginary constituted a social life-world, as it prescribed the realm of meaning upon which the institutional and intellectual order of the discipline IR had been shaped for many years.² Consequently, what realism actually means, was, and still is, mainly defined by American realists (R. Gilpin, J. Mearsheimer, R. Schweller, S. Walt, or K. Waltz). Neoclassical realism is a very illustrative example for this tendency. This new approach within the realist tradition in IR is defined by US scholars as an American theory to analyze the foreign policies of great powers in different eras and regions (see Lobell/Taliaferro/Ripsman 2009; Rose 1998; Schweller 2008). American neoclassical realists primarily stress the insight of Waltz's theory, and introduce neoclassical realism as an enhanced version of American-styled neo-realism (see Toje/Kunz 2012: 5-10). Accordingly, structural, neoclassical realism and classical realism are introduced and presented by US as well as by European scholars as a rationalist theory on power guiding strategic and geopolitical US foreign policy during³ and after the Cold War (Lobell/Taliaferro/Ripsman 2009; Mearsheimer 1990, 2001; Schweller 2008). As another consequence of the dominant image of an American approach, classical realism was, and still is, misinterpreted as a rationalist, conservative, anti-liberal, Schmittian theory without any sense of morality and democracy⁴. Realism more and more runs the risk of losing its liberal origins and content, its

² Holsti 1989; Kahler 1993; Legro/Moravcsik 1999; for a critique of US hegemony in IR-argument, see Crawford/Jarvis 2001; Smith 2000, 2002; Wæver 1998; Turton 2015. For an overview of how international theory is described between the 1940s and 1990s, see Smith (1997) and Wæver (1997).

³ See Brzezinski 1996; Craig 2003; Myers 1997, 1999; Nobel 1995; Smith 1981, 1986.

⁴ See Franke/Herborth 2007; Guzzini 2004; Hall 2011; Kaufman 2006; Koskeniemi 2000, 2002; Meyer 2001; Tickner 1991; Wrightson 1996.

critical claim and normative purpose, and its European identity. There is no better example for this than Morgenthau's liberal realism.⁵

The surprising narratives of IR as an American discipline - and US realism

However, these widely accepted and shared narratives of a postwar American discipline IR and realism, which both have been founded in the aftermath of WW II, are surprising. Surprising, because the discipline actually has its roots in Europe after WW I. The first professorship on IR, the *Woodrow Wilson Chair on international politics*, was institutionalized in 1920 in Aberystwyth, and British Sir Alfred Zimmern was the first professor. As Hall/Bevir and the contributors in the special issue on *Traditions of British International Thought* in *The International History Review* (2014) work out, the intellectual and political history of IR goes back to Britain in the 19th century and the interwar period. It goes back to the tradition of liberal internationalism and realism as well as to Marxism and geopolitics. And it goes back to British thinkers such as Norman Angell, E.H. Carr, Leonard Hobhouse, Halford J. Mackinder, Bertrand Russell, Zimmern, or German Friedrich Hayek either abandoning and condemning Wilson's liberal internationalism and interventionism, or explaining the failure League of Nations, or justifying British colonialism, nationalism and the British Empire, or thinking about the future of liberalism and capitalism in times of crisis (see also Ashworth 2011; Holthaus 2014).⁶ And in *Radicals and Reactionaries in Twentieth Century International Thought*, Hall (2015) and contributors are moving beyond Anglophone thinkers and mainstream traditions, leaving the realist-idealist divide behind. Rather, they introduce European radicals of the interwar period such as German conservatives, British Socialists, Italian and French fascist and imperialists, and radical ideas on international order.

⁵ To be honest: Another reason for a missing European realist tradition and identity in IR is that European scholars who describes themselves as realists working *in* that tradition (B. Devlen, A. Hyde-Price, H. Mouritzen, A. Toje, A. Wivel), or as commentators who work *on* the realist tradition in contemporary IR in a more or less affirmative or critical manner (F. Berenskoetter, B. Buzan, A. Freyberg-Inan, T. Knutsen, N. Guilhot, S. Guzzini) are somewhat unaware of each other and therefore, use books on realism, as defined mainly by American realists. In German IR, 'conservative realism' is a kind of 'forbidden theory about wishful power politics', and what Gilpin (1996) says seems to hit the nail on the head: "No one loves a political realist". A most welcome exception are Freyberg/Harrison (2009), Toje/Kunz (2012) and the *Morgenthau Connection* (Germans H. Behr, A. Reichwein and F. Roesch, Suisse C. Frei and O. Jütersonke, British S. Molloy, R. Shilliam and M. C. Williams, Danish V. S. Tjalve including American scholars N. Lebow and W. Scheuerman) doing research on the history of realism and its main figures, primarily Morgenthau.

⁶ Ashworth (2007) has elaborated the foreign policy agenda of the British Labour Party between 1919 and 1945. And he introduces European geographers as one of the first scholars "mapping a new world" by doing interwar study of International Relations from a geopolitical background (2013).

Also the widely accepted and shared narrative of a postwar American realism as a theory in social sciences which has been founded in the aftermath of WW II is surprising. Surprising, because realism is a ‘distinctively European tradition’ (Knutsen 2012) with a very long history from Machiavelli via Bismarck and Morgenthau to English School members such as Martin Wight. Morgenthau was a liberal Jewish German international lawyer who started his distinguished career at Frankfurt University in the 1920s, and who spend the first three decades of his life in Europe. These narratives of American realism are all the more surprising when considering the fact that most of the later “American” realists have been European émigrés such as Czech Jewish social scientist Karl W. Deutsch, German Jewish international lawyer John Herz, or Suisse international lawyer Arnold Wolfers (Stirk 2014; Söllner 2014).

But, things are changing in the last ten years. In order to challenge what seemed to be a state of fact, and to intervene in the social constructed reality of IR and realism, in recent years, numerous calls have been made to offer alternatives to the perceived American intellectual monopoly in IR, and American ‘tragic’ interpretations on what realism is, or should be in Mearsheimer’s eyes (2001, 2005). Some scholars rethink and trace back the European history and development of the academic discipline IR after WW I as such.⁷ A few European neoclassical realists incorporate insights of the ‘practical wisdom’ (Toje/Kunz 2012: 8) and ‘philosophical tradition’ (Sterling-Folker 2009) of Raymond Aron’s, Carr’s, and Morgenthau’s classical realism by bringing the state, statesman and domestic and cognitive factors such as ideology, nationalism and perception back (Battistella 2012; Reichwein 2012; Toje/Kunz 2012: 1-16). And new types of literature on European approaches in IR and on realism in the *intellectual history and sociology of the discipline-format* have emerged.⁸ Others rediscover and reconsider classical scholars in IR, and introduce realist *figures of international thought* (Wæver 1997), primarily Morgenthau, but also Carr and Herz.⁹ Another step in that direction is Rösch’s book on *European Émigré Scholars* (2014) and ‘knowledge transfer’ from Europe to the US, and the influence of European thinkers (Hannah Arendt, Carl

⁷ Ashworth 2002, 2006, 2014; Schmidt 1998, 2002; Schmidt/Long 2005; Thies 2002; Wilson 1998.

⁸ See Knutsen (2012) and Sterling-Folker (2009).

⁹ Behr/Roesch 2012; Bell 2009; Cox 2000, 2001; Craig 2003; Frei 2001; Hacke/Kindermann/Schellhorn 2005; Jütersonke 2010; Koskenniemi 2002; Lang 2004; Lebow 2003; Mazur 2004; Molloy 2006; Neacsu 2009; Pedro 2011; Puglierin 2011; Reichwein (2013); Rohde 2004; Rösch 2015; Scheuerman 2009; Schuett 2010; Shilliam 2009; Tjalve 2008; Troy 2013; Williams 2005a,b, 2007a.

Friedrich, Waldemar Gurian, Herz, Hans Kelsen, Morgenthau, Franz L. Neumann, Max Weber, Wolfers) on the foundation of IR.¹⁰

Against “historical forgetting” in IR – towards *contextualization* of theory

Admittedly, it is not wrong to argue that IR was founded and established as a *scientific* and *professionalized discipline* in the US after WW II (see also Knutsen 2012: 25/26; Williams 2013: 648), or to argue that some strands of realism (the structural and the neoclassical one) are indeed very American. But, it would be wrong to suggest that IR and realism have *started* in the US in 1945, and it would be careless to forget the European prehistory, and the European influence. The roots of IR rather goes back to the interwar period, when European émigrés (beside IR scholars Theodor W. Adorno, Arendt, Arnold and Berthold Brecht, Albert Einstein, Erich Fromm, Max Horkheimer, Hans Jonas, Kelsen, Karl Löwenstein, Herbert Marcuse, Neumann or Leo Strauss) had arrived in the US, found job positions at New School for Social Research, the City College or Columbia University in New York, at Chicago University, or in Harvard, Yale and Princeton, and began to establish an academic and political agenda.¹¹ These stranded émigrés sarcastically labelled themselves „Hitler’s gift to America“ (Spörl 2003: 144; see also Krohn 1993), and they built a community in exile which was characterized by a deep feeling of being a ‘refugee’ and ‘conscious pariah’ (Arendt 1978; see Behr/Rösch 2012: 3-14), a sense of being European, and also a deep nostalgia for Europe: “Each member [...] could respond to a quotation from Goethe with a quotation from Heine, who knew Herman fairy tales“ (Young-Bruehl 1982: XIV). Also Guilhot located the ‘invention’ of IR discipline, and the birthplace of realism, to the US at the beginning of the Cold War era. But, as controversial this argument is, Guilhot and the contributors to his *The Invention of International Relations Theory: Realism, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the 1954 Conference on Theory* (Guilhot 2011; see also Guilhot 2015, 2008 and Greenberg 2015) are aware of two things: First of all, the European (pre)history of this intellectual project. And secondly, they emphasise the motives and aim of a distinguished group of postwar thinkers by arguing that all members of the Conference (Morgenthau, American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, Walter Lippmann, or German Jewish Paul Nitze) constituted a bulwark standing

¹⁰ Although these thinkers (some of them being portrayed as Americans, because most of them became US citizens after emigration) and their ontological as well as epistemological traditions have so far received little attention and have been marginalized in Anglophone IR, they were of high significance for the establishment and development of the discipline.

¹¹ See Ash/Söllner 1996; Fleming/Baylin 1969, Kielmansegg et.al. 1995; Neumann 1953; Rösch 2014.

against the emerging hegemony of American social sciences by rejecting a scientific empiricism and rationalism with a behavioural and strategic bias by which liberal approaches in the US of that time were characterized (see also Rossinow 2012):

The organization was an early advocate of scholars who opposed the idea of a ‘science’ of politics, pursuing, for the sake of disciplinary autonomy, a vision of politics as a prerational and existential dimension that could not be ‘solved’ by scientific means. As a result, this nascent theory was more a rejection of behavioral social science than the birth of one of its specialized branches. (Guilhot 2011: Introduction)

They were united by their resentment toward the methodological imperialism of the behavioural revolution. They considered the promise of an empirical science of politics an illusion: for them, politics was not entirely rational and could not be comprehend by scientific rationalism. (Guilhot 2011: 129, cited according Williams 2013: 651)

For Guilhot, scholars like Morgenthau considered rationalist behavioural science as “repudiation of politics”, and “the realist vision of politics was the idea that policy making should not be the preserve of rationalist experts, but of men of judgment”, and in this sense, this group of postwar thinkers was looking for “alternative vision of politics and scholarship”, and the whole enterprise “emerged as a normative statement on what political science should be” (Guilhot 2011: 129/130, cited from Williams 2013: 659). But, nevertheless, Guilhot ultimately accuses realism for being an “elitist and conservative tradition” (ibid.; see also Franke/Herborth 2007 and Wrightson 1996).

In his article on the IR enlightenment, Williams picks up some of Guilhot’s arguments (but not the one about conservative realism or elitism) (2013: 655). Williams discusses his thesis that the beginning of professional IR after two world wars, the failure of the League of Nations, Great Depression, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust was the methodological, theoretical *and deeply political* enterprise of a group of distinguished European émigrés (later call themselves, or becoming realists). And their aim was to *rescue liberalism* from its rationalism, its ideology and moralism leading to radical forms of liberalism such as “illiberal liberalism” and neo-conservatism (see Desch 2007; Reichwein 2011; Williams 2007b), and its naïve blindness and illusions concerning the assumed harmony of interest (see Carr 1939: 42-61) and the power of international law to resolve conflicts among states (Carr 1939: 62-83, 159-190), but instead concerning the dominant role of diverging interests, conflicts, and power in (international) politics. The members of this group instead wanted to renew the

liberal tradition in IR and to reform liberal politics as an *intellectual and political project* for the future of Western liberal democracies and societies, responsible and prudent US foreign policy, and peace in international politics in the nuclear era (Williams 2013: 648; see II.).

The problem of how we learn and teach and do research on IR is not whether we locate the birthplace of IR as a discipline and/or realism in the US after WW II, or whether there was a ‘First Debate’ between realists and idealist or not (see Conclusion). The real problem in IR is that only a few scholars doing research on the history of our discipline (or some historians being interested in the roots of IR) know about the European prehistory, or the role émigré scholars did play in the US, or the realist project ‘IR enlightenment’ (Williams 2013: 647), or the broader historical, political and academic contexts in which IR traditions have emerged and evolved. Williams warns of “historical forgetting” which, for him,

represents one of the most debilitating errors of IR theory today, and overcoming it has significant implications for how we think about the past and future development of the field. In particular, it throws open not only our understanding of the place of realism in IR, but also our vision of liberalism. For while the ‘liberal realism’ of the IR enlightenment has been largely overlooked, the liberalism that defines large parts of the field today is precisely the form of liberal rationalism that the IR enlightenment opposed – not in order to destroy liberalism as an intellectual and political project, but to save it. I the beginning, these ends or goals defined IR theory as a substantive political project. (Williams 2013: 648/649)

To sum up, what Guilhot, Rösch, and Williams all introduce, and what we need is the next step of an ongoing *contextualization* of the realist (and Williams would add: the liberal) traditions and figures in IR. What Frei argues for Morgenthau can be argued in general:

Morgenthau was far more than an advocate of power politics. A full appreciation of his nuanced version of realism cannot be gained, however, without easy access to his early European writings and an accurate understanding of the context in which they were written. Despite some initial steps in that regard, much work remains to be done.¹²

Why rereading classical realists?

¹² Frei in his introduction to Behr’s and Rösch’s Translation (Behr/Roesch 2012) of Morgenthau’s *La Notion du ‘politique’ et la théorie des différends internationaux* (1933).

Given so many biographical and theoretical re-readings and reinterpretations of Carr, Herz, or Morgenthau and their work, all presenting another ‘hidden dialogue’ (Scheuerman 1999), ‘thinking partnership’ (Rösch 2013) or ‘hidden history’ (Molloy 2006), Schuett asks:

When will the proliferation of Morgenthau studies end, one might ask. [...] We have seen so many re-readings over the last decade. [...] What do we do with Morgenthau? Likewise, what do we do with realism? The mostly critically inspired engagements with Morgenthau seem to have excavated a notion of realism that is, again, so nuanced that realism means too many different things, to too many different people, at too many different times. Gone are the days when it was possible to find a common substratum of all *realist* international political thought – unfortunately so; for the danger is that, once we start to disperse realism into too many pieces, we end up with a pile of broken glass that not many contemporary IR scholars and policymakers will be too keen to touch. (2012: 134)

Schuett answers himself: “Misunderstood as Morgenthau was, he would surely approve of all endeavors trying to fully come to terms with his realism, even if this leads to continuing intellectual battles within, without, and at the edges of the realist tradition” (2012: 135). And one aspect of coming fully to terms with realism is to reread Morgenthau in the *IR Enlightenment context*.

II. The IR enlightenment revisited

The thesis that some European thinkers in the US started a political movement claiming to rescue liberalism, and prepare Western democracy for the postwar era, goes back to Ira Katznelson (2003). She speaks of “political studies enlightenment with a normative purpose”, namely “to secure a realistic version of the Enlightenment” (2003: 3). The members of this academic group (Arendt, Robert Dahl, Charles Lindblom, Karl Polanyi) were European émigrés

whose biography had placed them perilously close to Europe’s abyss joined others fortunate enough to have been protected by distance to defend liberality and systematic thought while insisting the tradition of Enlightenment required a new realism, a good deal of repair, and much fortification. Constituting a distinctive approach (...), these historians and social scientists understood that a simple reassertion of liberal modernism had

become radically insufficient. It is their common commitment to this challenge, as well as their choice of history and social science as instruments that bind these figures together. (2003: 5)

According to Katznelson, the achievements of this group was, first of all, looking deeply into the limits of the Enlightenment (they had learned about in school and at university), exposing instead the radical evil, desolation, barbarism and slavery in the world, irrationality and ideology in modernity. Secondly, these intellectuals ruthlessly name the weaknesses of liberal mass societies and the rise of extreme and violent nationalism at the Left and the Right as a product of a distinctive liberal modernity. And after all, these European émigrés declare the need for a new realism to overcome the crisis of classical liberalism and democracy, and to stop anti-liberal policies confronting a seemingly stable, liberal and enlightened American society and politics. In other words, this political studies enlightenment-movement aimed for *making liberalism and US democracy ready for the future*, not the world safe for US democracy, as Wilson's doctrine tried to do – and failed. And the member of that group used political theory, or concepts, as 'political instrument', or 'intellectual weapon' (see Morgenthau 1962d).

Williams picks up Katznelson's idea of a political studies enlightenment project (2013: 650-655). Stating that this approach of a *contextualization* does not include any IR scholar, Williams widens the lenses by arguing that there was an 'analogous IR enlightenment'. According to Williams, the aim of Americans (Niebuhr, Nitze, whose ancestors are from Magdeburg in Germany, and Lippmann, a son of German Jewish émigrés) and European émigrés (which all were innately liberals, or had at least been socialized by liberals) who became American citizens (Herz, Morgenthau, Deutsch) was to institutionalize a discipline called IR. But, as Williams stresses again and again, the aim of advocates of the realist tradition in IR was *neither* the assertion of realism against liberalism, or opposition to liberalism, or even to discredit and destroy liberalism. *Nor* was it defeating idealism by teaching the hard but simple lessons and 'truth' of Realpolitik to a naively liberal American audience, or prepare the US for the Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union and other communist states. This is what Jütersonke (2010: 175-191), Koskenniemi (2000, 2002) and Söllner (2014, 1987; see also Mills 1958) argue in view of Morgenthau, *PAN* and his supposed "cultural assimilation", or "a-culturation" (Söllner 1987: 243-245), and "Americanization" (Jütersonke 2010: 182-189). Unfortunately, this is and was always a

widely shared interpretation of Morgenthau. Also Jewish émigré and later founder of political science in West-Germany, Ernst Fraenkel, Austrian historian (and Morgenthau's student and later colleague at Chicago University) Gerald Stourzh, or German historians Fritz Fischer and Golo Mann all have argued that the conservative realists, primarily Morgenthau, who had taught Machiavelli's and Meinecke's doctrine of the 'Staatsräson' (*reason of state*) (Meinecke 1957; see Haslam 2002 and Wong 2000), and the importance of a balance of power within a Westphalian state system as the one and only lesson to be drawn from bitter European history, all had great influence on generations of postwar students at the universities and think tanks, state institutions and the public realm in the US. All these 'former liberal' scholars or politicians would have become 'later realist' conservatives thinking or acting in terms of power, the national interest, and strategic calculations because of an 'indoctrination' through Morgenthau and other realists in the 1940s and 1950s. German philosopher Helmut Kuhn goes one step further, and accuses Morgenthau to be responsible for the "revisionism of the American tradition of Wilson's idealism and liberal internationalism" by means of his affirmative understanding of the values of reckless power politics at the expense of international law, institutions, and democratic standards (see Radkau 1971: 219/220).

Indeed, taking Morgenthau's *PAN* or his first articles in the US on the 'national interest' (Morgenthau 1951b, 1952a), he sometimes *appears* as the nostalgic and backward-oriented conservative when he points out the stability of a balance of power-configuration in a Westphalian state system, and celebrate the European concert of power of the 18th and 19th century as an example for diplomacy and trust among European leaders which all had been destroyed by liberal as well as totalitarian statesman such as Napoleon, Wilson, Neville Chamberlain and Hitler (Morgenthau 1948: 13-68). But, quite contrary, classical realism was, and is, neither conservative, or even anti-liberal, nor was and is the realist critique of liberalism designed to repudiate liberal values and principles of the Enlightenment such as equality, freedom, human rights, and social justice. IR in general was constituted by complex controversies over what liberalism is, why it has failed, and how it can proceed in the future for the benefit of mankind. And realism in particular was engaged in assessing the knowingly accepted and unintended disastrously consequences of modernity and mass politics (and extreme forms of mass violence) in liberal democracies, and in discerning good and evil. In other words, classical realism was, and still is, in fact the defence of a particular - non-rationalist, non-ideological, non-moralistic and not any longer self-satisfied - kind of liberalism (Williams 2013: 647, 660). Although the members of political and IR

enlightenment movement saw the future of the US, and American democracy and liberalism, and prudent US foreign policy as key issues in academic as well as in political terms, because the US had become their new home and provide them with security and wealth, and although these members shared the belief that the US was central to any hope of for the future of liberal politics and theory, it is obviously in how far all of them have engaged with their European/German experience in the interwar period, and in how far they linked their hope for the future with the lessons of their own lives and of history.

Aufklärer: Arendt, Herz, and Niebuhr

In the history of political theory and IR, there are various examples for this: Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951); Herz' *Political Realism and Political Idealism* (Herz 1951); or Niebuhr's *The children of light and the children of darkness* (1945). Arendt, in a nutshell, introduced a liberal understanding of democracy, pluralism, and politics in the US. Against the background of her European experience with fascism, anti-Semitism and forced emigration, she reflected on the human condition of politics in times of dehumanization, technologisation and bureaucratisation (Arendt 1958; see Behr/Rösch 2012: 3-46; Rösch 2013a, b), and she warned of nationalism, ideologisation of a small but highly influential elites and depoliticisation of the mass leading inevitably to totalitarianism and terror (Arendt 1951, 1953, 1958).¹³ Arendt thereby presents a critical engagement with the nature of the modern state and state action, radical evil in human mankind, and an elaborated critique of modernity and mass politics in Western democracies – and she reminds us that a republic is extremely susceptible for ideology and totalitarianism, and extremely fragile (see Behr/Rösch 2012: 11-14). Niebuhr's critique of liberalism was aiming for shorn liberal politics of its 'utopian' elements and a powerful call for an 'realistic liberalism' which is up to liberals and realist themselves: "There is, in short, no reason why the errors of Enlightenment should continue to bedevil 'progressive' political movements, and why 'liberalism' should be identified with illusions about human nature and history" (Niebuhr 1955, cited according to Williams 2013: 652). Herz contrasted a 'utopian idealism' and a „power-oriented and violent realism“ (Herz 1959: viiii-xii). As Carr and Morgenthau did, he worried about the failure of liberal idealism in the sense of John Stuart Mills and Immanuel Kant, which for him was symbolized by the violation of international law and the principles of the League of Nations in

¹³ For Arendt in IR, see also Klusmeyer 2005, 2009; Owens 2009, 2007.

the 1930s through imperialist and revisionist Germany and Japan, and fascist Italy. And Herz worried about a correspondingly one-sided ethical victory of a Machiavellian and anthropological realist power politics arguing in a logic of the *animus dominiandi* (see Schuett 2010). Herz accused the adherents of a ‘war-prone conservative European realism’ such as Henry Kissinger and Morgenthau (standing in the tradition of Meinecke, Bismarck, and Heinrich von Treitschke) of abandoning their liberal values and instead advocating a crude and reckless power politics as a realist lesson of both world wars in order to dominate postwar academic and political circles at universities and in state institutions in the US, and thereby influencing the Cold War political agenda in the US (Herz 1951; see also Jütersonke 2010 and Radkau 1971: 221). As a consequence, these ‘opportunist realists’ had caused realism’s bad reputation as a ‘cynical theory on power politics’. In the *Preface* of his *Political Realism and Political Idealism*, which he had written between 1945 and 1947, but which was published not until 1951, Herz writes:

When the book was conceived we were in an era of somewhat greater hopefulness, free, as we were, from the bane of fascism and planning for a brave new united world. It seemed then appropriate to ask how new the better world would be, and to stress the “power facts” slightly more than the “liberal ideal”. Since then the pendulum has swung to the other side. Not only has the power phenomenon found a host of able literary analysts, but the public in the major countries, has become almost cynically ready to accept the situation, almost too pessimistically resigned, or even swashbucklingly resolved, to play the power game. This applies also to America. There is thus ground for recalling and reemphasizing the other side of the picture: The liberal ideal, to which a policy of Realist Liberalism must remain committed lest it degenerate into unmitigated, power-glorifying, force-obsessed Political Realism. This book, it is hoped, will not be misunderstood as advocacy of “power politics” in the cruder sense. The human cause will be lost if the liberal ideal is forgotten, even as surely as it is lost if left to the utopian Political Idealist (1951: v)

In other words, Herz obviously calls for a ‘Realist Liberalism’ (1951: 200-225, 226-252) which reflects the role of power in (international) politics as well as the importance of liberal values and humanitarianism, international institutions and international law (see Stirk 2008, Sylvest 2010), and which balance ‘idealist Utopia and realist reality’ (see also Booth 2008; Hacke/Puglierin 2008). Furthermore, he claimed for remembering critical scholarship, and he

warned against warfare in the atomic age, and asked for a responsible and prudent US foreign policy (Herz 1959) which was also on the top of Aron's liberal realist agenda (Aron 1962, 2003).¹⁴ Lebow portrays Herz as a transatlantic „synthetic thinker“, combining old European and new American experiences, and he labels Herz' approach as „middle ground between *Realpolitik* and idealism“, and a „liberal variant of realism“ (Lebow 2011: 558).

III. The untold story: Morgenthau and the IR enlightenment

We are intellectual street-fighters. So if we don't make clear
on which side of the barricades we stand, we have failed.
(Morgenthau to Arendt)¹⁵

And Morgenthau? His liberal realism is a very good example for what IR enlightenment does mean, and he contributed a lot to this academic and political movement during his career. Finally, I present only a few aspects in Morgenthau's work to uncover his 'German thinking', and to introduce at least some aspects of a so far untold story about his part in the IR enlightenment – a story which is worth to be continued. Morgenthau's first book in the US, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* (1946), has so often been, and still is, misread and misinterpreted as a realist critic of liberalism. Quite the contrary, *SM* is a realist critic of a certain - rationalist, ideological, moralistic, self-righteous, blind and naive - *kind of* modern Western liberalism (see also Scheuerman 2007); a liberalism adhering to the belief in the Enlightenment promises of progress, peace, and the reign of reason of mankind, the power of international law and the problem solving capabilities of rational economic, social and other sciences, and the belief in a 'historical and moral mission' of making the world safe for Western democracy – if necessary by sword; a liberalism including nationalism, imperialism, and revisionism, and leading to an ideological driven, nationalist and revisionist foreign policy; a liberalism which has no against revisionist states (see Davidson 2002, 2006; Ringsmose/Rynning 2008) but a policy of 'Appeasement' (Morgenthau 1952b). In other words, *SM*, and also *PAN*, are Morgenthau's agenda of a *liberal realism* in IR; a liberal realism by which scholars in social and political science, and IR, as well as foreign policy

¹⁴ But also Morgenthau wholeheartedly warns against nuclear warfare during the Cold War (Morgenthau 1950, 1970a and his various articles in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*; see also Rosenthal 1991; Scheuerman 2009: 135-164).

¹⁵ Morgenthau in a letter to Arendt, dated 5 June 1969; see Arendt-Papers No. 8721, Arendt-Center, Oldenburg/Germany, cited according to Rohde (2005: 50).

actors can deal with the insuperable laws of power politics and to limit its destructive consequences (such as imperialism, nationalism, and war) by means of a balance of power between states in a pluralistic international order; an order based on state equality and the right of self-determination and the legitimacy of the national interests for all nations as key moral principles, and on diplomacy and prudent foreign policy made by responsible statesmen to solve and deal with conflicts (see Morgenthau 1951a). This is why Morgenthau has written chapters in the first edition of *PAN* (published in 1948) on power and ‘the limitations of power’, namely on the national power, the balance of power, morality and international law, and diplomacy, and this is why he introduced his *Six Principles of Political Realism*, and his idea of the ‘*the moral, prudent and rational statesman*’ in the second edition of *PAN* (1954: 3-13). Or, to put it in Lebow’s (who was a former student and later colleague of Morgenthau in Chicago and New York) words, realism, since Thucydides and the Greek Tragedy, is an ongoing attempt to live and think somewhere between *Kulturpessimismus* (the dark side of human being, the radical evil in the world) and *Fortschrittsoptimismus* (the Enlightenment, progress, and peace), and to combine both in order to deal with ‘tragedy in politics’ (Lebow 2005). According to Lebow, also Morgenthau is a ‘synthetic thinker’, combining his fatal European and his American experience. The former means WWI, the failure of Weimar and the collapse of the League of Nations, anti-Semitism and destructive nationalism, loss of job position at university and labour court in Frankfurt, forced emigration, the rise of Nazi Germany, WW II and the Shoah. The latter means emigration and a new personal and academic homeland including intellectual freedom, stable democracy based on a checks and balance system of democratic institutions, pluralism and republican values, and economic welfare all enabling citizens to take part in political activism, to refer on guaranteed civil rights, but also to fulfill duties such as political engagement, or to raise one’s voice against anti-liberal tendencies and threats such as McCarthyism, racism, and social injustice (Lebow 2011: 556-558):

Morgenthau rejected his earlier intellectual milieu, a process that began while he was still in Germany and accelerated in Geneva and the United States. In the course of his life in the United States, he moved away from extreme rejection of the Enlightenment, characteristic of his first decade of exile, to a more nuanced and increasingly optimistic view of the role reason could play in the world. His writings on international relations and American politics reflect this trajectory. (Lebow 2011: 555)

In his worth reading article *German Jews and American Realism*, Lebow concludes that later US 'liberal idealist' Morgenthau has changed his attitudes towards pessimism and optimism and progress in politics, and that his "new optimism was based on his renewed belief in the power of experience and reason to serve as engines for progress" in the US (2011: 556).

The other Morgenthau: In defence of US democracy

Indeed, there is another, critical, liberal, and to some extent idealist, Morgenthau. As we already know, on the top of Morgenthau's academic and political agenda, he - like his alter ego Arendt and his doctoral thesis supervisor Hugo Sinzheimer - criticised pure empiricism, rationalism and ideology, and a solely functional and rational jurisprudence and social science without a sense for the political, or social forces within human life and society (see Sinzheimer 2008; 2009: 11-39). Morgenthau reflected on 'the political' and the human condition of politics in times of dehumanization, technologisation and bureaucratization (Morgenthau 1930, 1933; see Behr/Rösch 2012: 15-33, 34-46). In his books, journal articles and public statements in magazines, newspapers and TV, he warned against ideologisation of the more and more powerful elites, and depoliticisation of the more and more powerless or uncritical, apolitical mass (Morgenthau 1946, 1960b, 1970). Thereby, Morgenthau presented a critical engagement with the nature of the modern state, with power, authority and leadership within the state, and with the radical evil in human mankind, and he offers an elaborated critique of modernity and mass politics in Western democracies including nationalism, racism, social crisis, new forms of 'feudalism', 'despotism' and 'totalitarianism'. His focus was on the US in the 1960s and 1970s under the Johnson- and Nixon-administration in light of Watergate and race riots after Martin Luther King's death.¹⁶ Morgenthau's either unknown, or overlooked, or neglected book *The Purpose of American Politics* is maybe the most striking example of his concern about (US) democracy and (Western) liberalism, but also its achievements, namely a relatively stable, peaceful wealthy and prosperous society in most of the Western democratic states. In other words, Morgenthau's work on US democracy in light of his fundamental critique of Wilsons liberal internationalism (Morgenthau 1951a; see Reichwein 2013: 69-86) and the Vietnam War (Morgenthau 1965, 1968, 1975)¹⁷ was both: It was a critique of the pitfalls of liberalism, the weaknesses of US democracy and the perils of

¹⁶ See Morgenthau 1960b, 1960c; 1962a-c; 1966; 1967b; 1970b, 1970c; 1972a,b; 1973; 1974.

¹⁷ For excellent summaries of Morgenthau's opposition against Vietnam War, and all his pragmatic, rationalist, ethical/moral and democratic arguments, see Rafshon (2001), Reichwein (2013: 87-128, 371-396), See (2001) and Zambenardi (2010).

an ideological driven foreign policy (in Central and Latin America, in Indochina or elsewhere) in a name of any 'historical mission' or 'moral purpose' (Morgenthau 1967a, 1975, 1977). And it was a keen and passionate defence of the potentials and future of US democracy, and, at the same time, an insistent call for *political reforms* in America, and a new, prudent and responsible US foreign policy. Morgenthau claimed for a foreign policy in the name of the 'national interest' (Morgenthau 1951b, 1952a, 1969), but based on moral as well as democratic principles such as non-interventionism, the right of self-determination of every nation, and the rules of diplomacy; a foreign policy which enables the US to pursue its national interest in order to achieve and save power and security and its place in the world, *and* to save democracy within the US. Realizing the constitutional principle of '*equality in freedom*' at home to *all* American citizens and strangers in the US, but also for all states in the pluralistic international sphere (Morgenthau 1960b: 3-42, 293-341; see Myers 1995; Reichwein 2013: 371-396; 2015) was what Morgenthau defined as America's *moral and historical purpose*. For him, the core of America's *self-understanding*, and *moral attractiveness* which makes the US an *example* was: "For this nation, along among the nations of the world, was created for a notable purpose: to achieve equality in freedom at home, and thereby set an example for the world to emulate" (Morgenthau 1965: 65). Morgenthau was convinced about *America's exceptionalism*, and its democratic values - but *not* to be spread around the globe by sword in the name of 'democracy promotion abroad' or 'nation-building' against the will of other free nations, but to realize and achieve democratic principles of equality, freedom and social justice to the people *at home* – and for those nations in the world who want to be like the US:

The very plausibility of the American purpose and the possibility of its achievement were from the beginning dependent upon the objective conditions of American existence [...]. American principles [...] could plausibly be held up as a model for others to emulate only if conditions elsewhere were not totally different from those prevailing in the United States. Even in conditions not completely dissimilar, American principles could apply only as ideal guideposts, not as blueprints to be imitated to the letter. America was not a paradise to be duplicated elsewhere, it was a paradise open to all who wanted to enter it. It was a light to attract strangers, not as a flame to be spread throughout the world, that America fulfilled its purpose. The Statue of Liberty is indeed its proper symbol. (Morgenthau 1960b: 109)

Morgenthau accused Wilson and the advocates of an interventionist liberal internationalism, and the proponents of the Vietnam War such as Kissinger, McGeorge Bundy and Zbigniew Brzezinski (Morgenthau 1960b: 104-110; Stoessinger 1984) to gamble with America's achievements and moral power resources which Nye (2004) and others in IR today call *soft power*:

America came to lose much of that peculiar moral attractiveness which throughout its history set it apart from all other nations" (Morgenthau 1975: 516):

No civilized nation can wage such a war without suffering incalculable moral damage. [...] And it is particularly painful for a nation like the United States - founded as a novel experiment in government, morally superior to those that preceded it - which has throughout its history thought itself as performing a uniquely beneficial mission not only for itself but for all mankind. (Morgenthau 1968: 33/34)

And Morgenthau was quite aware of contradiction between the wishful role of America as a luminous example for the world to be emulated, and the state of US democracy which for him made political reforms in the US so urgent. And he was quite aware of the contradiction between America's 'historical mission' in the name of mankind, and its foreign policy of pattern bombing: "The champion of the 'free world' is protecting the people of South Vietnam from communism by destroying them." (Morgenthau 1968: 34). Given the portrait of the supposed conservative power theorist lacking any sense of democracy and ethical standards, one question raises: *how* can Morgenthau's critique of US foreign policy, and his concern but also his **defense of US democracy** be explained? On which understanding of power, democracy, and morality does it base? What are the origins of his realist thinking?

Realism as a distinctively German tradition in IR

My relationship to the social environment is determined by three facts: I am a German, I am a Jew, and I have matured in the period following the war. (Morgenthau 1922)¹⁸

My argument is that Morgenthau's work on American democracy, and his attitudes towards the responsibility of an intellectual can only be truly understood if and when the almost

¹⁸ Morgenthau in one of his essays in school titled *Was ich von meiner Zukunft erhoffe, und worauf sich diese Hoffnung gründet* (September 1922), cited from his *posthumous* published *Fragment of an Intellectual Autobiography* (1984: 1).

forgotten or overlooked German years, and his time in exile, and the roots which spawned his realist thinking are reconsidered. Unfortunately, this is not an easy endeavor, and a real challenge for his interpreters, because “Morgenthau was protective of his personal life, and questions about his German past were taboo“ (Lebow 2003: 219. Morgenthau did everything to conceal his German origin and his various intellectual backgrounds (Adorno, Arendt, Horkheimer, Kelsen, Karl Mannheim, Carl Schmitt, Sinzheimer, Weber). In the introduction of the book *The Germans talk back* (written by the German revisionist Heinrich Hauser), Morgenthau (who was asked by the publisher because he was German and an expert of European history) writes “we, the Americans” and “they, the Germans”, and differs between „the philosophy of this German“ and „our own philosophy“ (1945a: xvi):

Every people has talked back to other people at various times. It is the way in which a nation becomes aware of its own individuality, as well as of the individuality of other [...] Thus it ought not to surprise us that the German talks back. It will surprise only those who still hold the blind and naïve prejudice of the Victorians that all the right people everywhere conform to one pattern, their own, and that it is their duty to carry the blessings of middle-class normality to the rest of the globe. We know, or ought to know from our own national experience, how self-defeating such an attitude toward other peoples is; for we have tried to make the world safe for democracy by assuming that all peoples would think and act like Americans once the fetters of autocratic government were removed and democratic institutions established. When the German nationalists talked back in the ‘twenties we refused to listen. When Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito talked back, ever louder and ever more menacing, we heard only what we wanted to hear – the hurt voices of some misunderstood gentlemen whose grievances might even be just. (Morgenthau 1945a: xv)

Throughout the eight pages, Morgenthau makes the reader believe that he would be an American. When Morgenthau wrote *on* Germany’s past, he did it *as* American. Söllner argues that Morgenthau had cultivated a „highly lofty we the Americans-style“, that he was „celebrating the American nation“, and “identifies himself with the US” (1987: 263). And Morgenthau didn’t make any references to his former German and French work on international law, power, and *The Political* in his US work. But nevertheless, it is obvious that

his thinking is what Golo Mann calls “very German” (see Radkau 1971: 219)¹⁹, even though Mann reduces Morgenthau to Meinecke and Machiavelli which is not the whole story. And Morgenthau himself has written some texts on his German and Jewish background (Morgenthau 1961), and he used many historical analogies (Morgenthau 1972c) in his critique of US foreign policy and his discussion of US democracy, and some more or less explicit references to German and European history (Morgenthau 1948, 1952b). And he leaves us with a treasure – his *Fragment of an intellectual biography* and an Interview (1984).

Morgenthau and the *shadows of the past*: learning realist lessons for the future

Against this background, Morgenthau’s postwar academic work and teaching in the US, his role as an public intellectual and opponent of Wilson’s interventionism, the Vietnam War and US Middle East policy (a further worth knowing aspect and story in Morgenthau’s life which cannot be told here in this paper²⁰), and his political activism and engagement in the US and in Israel was not only aiming at save liberalism and US democracy. And it was not only to save the role of the US as soft power pursuing a prudent foreign policy under the circumstances of the Cold War. Rather, Morgenthau’s liberal realism was his constantly and lifelong attempt, or purpose, to deal with and handle his experiences he had to make during his life and academic career in Germany and Europe in the interwar period. In other words, during his whole life and work in Europe and in the US, Morgenthau tried to draw the right lessons from German history and the past for a better future, and to make his realist conclusions. Conclusions on the role of power as essence of (international) politics and its inevitable consequences; conclusions on the perils of ideology, moralism, and nationalism; conclusions on the dangers of a naive and blind trust in functional and rationalist models in law (he once believed in) and in social sciences (which for him was a *Errfahrungswissenschaft*) presentable to his American audience. Thereby, Morgenthau tried to retain his liberal, to some extent idealistic, thinking, and the result was and is what Lebow calls a ‘synthesis’ between European and American experiences (see also Reichwein 2013: 275-443). This can’t be surprising: Morgenthau himself writes in the *Preface* of the second edition of *PAN*:

¹⁹ Cited according to Radkau (1971: 219). The German historian has written a dissertation on German Jewish émigré scholars and their influence on US policy towards Europe between 1933 and 1945.

²⁰ See Mollov 1996, 2002; Reichwein 2013: 129-145, 397-406.

When this book was written in 1947, it summarized an intellectual experience of twenty years. It was an experience of lonely and seemingly ineffectual reflection on the nature of international politics and on the ways by which a false conception of foreign policy, put into practice by the western democracies, led inevitably to the threat and the actuality of totalitarianism and war. When this book was originally written, the false and pernicious conception of foreign policy was still in the ascendancy. This book was indeed, and could be nothing else but, a frontal attack against that conception. (Morgenthau 1954a: vii)

And against this background, it does not make any sense to introduce Morgenthau as a conservative thinker. And it is not adequate to portray him *simply* as the characteristic ‘disillusioned and disenchanted’ former *Weimar* liberal international lawyer (Williams 2005a), leaving Germany and Europe, and his personal and academic identity, and the roots of his thought behind, and giving up all his belief in the Enlightenment, liberalism, and Western democracy. Quite contrary, Morgenthau’s critique of ‘false’ and his ideas on a ‘prudent’ US foreign policy, and his concern but also defence of US democracy are best understood as the contribution of a liberal realist and actually left Social Democrat supporting Franklin D. Roosevelt’s *New Deal*, sympathizing with the *New Left* and the *Antiwar* and the *Civil Rights Movement*, and publishing in left and liberal journals such as *Dissident*, *Partisan Review* and *New Republik* (see also Lebow 2011; Sinzheimer 2008, 2009) to the IR enlightenment in order to prevent another collapse of liberal democracy, and another the victory of a revisionist foreign policy leading to totalitarianism and war. Moreover, Morgenthau’s part in the IR enlightenment movement can also be interpreted as his tribute to one of his teachers, supporters, and later friends: Hans Kelsen, with whom Morgenthau spent time together in Geneva at the university between 1932 and 1935 (see Frei 2001). Kelsen did not only influence Morgenthau’s early functional understanding of law, but also his sense of the value of democracy, and the moral attractiveness of Western democracy. Some of Morgenthau’s lecture in New York at the New School in the 1970s on Aristoteles and democracy based on “Kelsen’s beautiful statements on democratic theory in his *Vom Wesen und Wert der Demokratie*” (Morgenthau, cited according to Scheuerman 2009: 230)²¹ from 1929 – and Kelsen’s book (see also Kelsen 1955) deal with three principles of Western liberal democracy: equality, freedom, and social democracy and social justice.

²¹ Morgenthau’s manuscripts are published in Lang (2004: 86ff.).

Morgenthau is maybe the best and most illustrative case to show the relation between a person's life and experiences, his academic and intellectual as well as historical and political socialization, and his political and/or theoretical thought which evolved from these contexts. Lebow speaks of the *Identity and IR Theory-thesis* (2011: 560). As examples, beside Morgenthau, he also reminds us of Deutsch, Herz and other German Jewish scholars such as Adorno, Arendt, Fromm, Marcuse and Neumann. What is very obvious is that all these German émigrés have written book in the US in the 1940s and 1950s about the past and their personal experience.²² According to Lebow, another aim of these authors was to prevent nationalism and anti-Semitism, the decline of democracy and economic crisis, and war and genocide from happening again:

For Morgenthau and Herz, and for some other social scientist émigrés, research agendas and identities were co-constitutive. They chose research problems that were substantively important but also critical to developing new and more complex identities for themselves. Their research fed back on the process of identity formation. The life and writings of these three outstanding students of international relations drives home just how much our theoretical understandings of the social world are not only products of the cultures that spawn them but of the personal experiences of the scholars who formulate them. (Lebow 2011: 562)

Another hidden dialogue: Morgenthau, Adorno, and responsibility of intellectuals

Do we now know the real Morgenthau? Since Frei's famous and highly influential pioneer work on Morgenthau (2001), dozens of books and articles on the realist founder have been published (for a nearly complete overview, see Reichwein 2013). In the meantime, many works are on Morgenthau's German years, and the roots and origins of his thinking. Today, we know about the influence of intellectuals such as Weber, Schmitt and Friedrich Nietzsche on young Morgenthau (see Frei 2001; Peterson 1999; Pichler 1998; Williams 2005a,b). And we also know about the former international lawyer writing his dissertation, and his first books and articles on a functional (Kelsen- and Schmitt-styled) and a social (Sinzheimer-styled) theory of international law in the interwar period (Morgenthau 1929a,b, 1934, 1940;

²² See Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), Herz' (alias Eduard Bristler) *Die Völkerrechtslehre der Nationalsozialisten* (1938), Neumann's *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism* (1942) und Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* (1941).

see Jütersonke 2006, 2010; Koskenniemi 2002; Scheuerman 1999, 2008, 2009: 11-39). And we now know about ‘hidden dialogues’ and ‘thinking partnership’ between Morgenthau and Arendt (Behr/Rösch 2012; Rösch 2013a,b), and on Morgenthau’s wholeheartedly defence of US democracy and republicanism (see Lebow 2011; Reichwein 2013; Tjalve 2008; Williams 2005a). But, even we know so much about the ‘uneasy realist’ in the meantime, there are still *untold* stories about the life and work of the “most moral man” (Lippmann, cited according Rosenthal 1991: xv). One is on his *Frankfurt years* between 1927 and 1932. This time period at the beginning of his academic career was crucial for his realist thought – and the lessons Morgenthau had to learn makes us understand what he meant by the responsibility of an intellectual.

Critical scholarship, political engagement, and speaking truth to power

Morgenthau was a radical opponent of US interventionism in Latin and Central America, of Kissinger’s Middle East Policy, and of the Vietnam War on numerous moral, military, political and general intellectual grounds (for a detailed analysis, see Reichwein 2013: 69-152, 371-406, 424-440).). In articles, books, and public statements, he accused Wilson, his followers and Kissinger and his war cabinet of being crusaders, pursuing an ideological driven, irrational, moral untenable foreign policy, violating strategic, moral and democratic principles such as a balance of power, equality of states and the right of self-determination, and in consequence of endangering the US national interest defined in terms of power and security and in terms of America’s moral attractiveness and integrity as a model to be emulated:

Not only did the crusading fervour of moral reformation obliterate the awareness of the United States’ traditional political interest in the maintenance of the European balance of power, to be accomplished through the defeat of Germany. Wilson’s moral fervour had also effects politically disastrous for which there was no precedent in the history of the United States. (Morgenthau 1951a: 27)

Morgenthau disabused Johnson, Nixon and Kissinger what, in contrast, would be a pragmatic, moral, and prudent US foreign policy towards communist states, the Soviet Union, or in Indochina and the Middle East. His *Six Principles of Political Realism* are not just six descriptive ‘laws’ (or self-fulfilling prophecies) about how international politics *is*, but also a prescriptive agenda on how US foreign policy *should be like* (see Reichwein 2013: 407-423):

Political realism contains not only a theoretical but also a normative element. [...] Political realism presents the **theoretical construct of a rational foreign policy**. [...] At the same time political realism considers a rational foreign policy to be a good foreign policy; for only a rational foreign policy minimizes risks and maximizes benefits and, hence, complies both with the moral precept of prudence and the political requirement of success. (Morgenthau 1954a: 7; **A.R.**)

Two points are striking here: First, Morgenthau appears not only radical in his positions and beliefs, but also moralistic, deprecative, self-righteous and also narcissistic. He was also suggestive of being the only man in the universe who knows what is right, and what is wrong. Morgenthau defined double standards concerning morality in international politics and compared his ‘moral’ and realist version of international politics and US democracy versus Wilson’s idealistic and ‘moralistic’ approach (Morgenthau 1951a). He played the role of a moral authority, and moral compass vis-à-vis his colleagues, students (he also instigate them of opposing the Vietnam War), and in the public. And Morgenthau enjoyed his role as a ‘street-fighter’ and ‘dissident’ ‘speaking truth to power’, namely the scheming and intrigues of the Johnson- und the Nixon- administrations. According to Morgenthau (in his *Preface to Truth and Tragedy*, 1970b: v), *speaking truth to power* was another moral principle he had learned from his companion and later friend Kelsen, and Morgenthau took this legacy very seriously during his career. In a lecture in July 1952 in Chicago, he said to his students: “I am here to prevent you from going home with the same illusions with which you came. *This is the purpose of teaching – to confront people with the truth*”.²³ And I a lecture in October 1967 at Columbia University, Morgenthau said to his students: “It is impossible for a man dealing in a theoretical and academic manner with politics to remain silent when those great issues are before the public and before the government” (cited according to Rafshoon 2001: 55). Secondly, during his whole personal life and academic career (which cannot be separated), Morgenthau called for a critical, normative and political social science (as his Frankfurt colleague Karl Mannheim also did; see Behr/Rösch 2012: 3-14; Loader 1997), and the ‘right for dissident’ (Morgenthau 1970d; see also Behr/Rösch 2012: 11-14). For Morgenthau, the realist theory (as any theory in social sciences) was also normative compass and an intellectual weapon:

²³ Chicago lectures „Philosophy of International Relations“, July 30, 1952, in: HJM-Box 81 (cited according to Rohde 2005: 50).

A theory of international relations can perform four different practical functions by approaching political reality in four different ways. (...) It is here that the theoretician of foreign policy must perform the function of an intellectual conscience which reminds the policy makers as well as the public at large of what the sound principles of foreign policy are and in what respects and to what extent actual policies have fallen short of those principles. (Morgenthau 1962d: 77)

But, Morgenthau paid a heavy price for this role as a moral and intellectual conscience. He lost his position as an advisor of the state department, a function he held between the 1940s, when his friend George Frost Kennan had asked him to take this part, and early 1960s (see Myers 1992). He was accused by Kissinger, Bundy and others as a communist and ‘appeaser’ towards communist states (who would also have voted for a ‘policy of appeasement’ towards Hitler), and he was observed by the FBI smuggled agents in Morgenthau’s lecture and private affairs (see Rafshoon 2001). And Morgenthau lost his candidature for the ISA presidential chair in 1970, and the chance to go to Harvard University (Eckstein 1981: 650; Rafshoon 2001: 61). During the decades, Morgenthau had become more and more prominent and influential, and a public intellectual. He was member of numerous political and civil foundations and organisations in the US and in Israel (the *Committee on Soviet Jewry*, the *Keneseth Israel Beth Shalom Congregation*, *Americans for Democratic Action* or *Adult Education Council of Greater Chicago*, or in the *Kurdish American Society* and in the *Armenien American Society*). And he was advisor of different Israeli governments in the 1960s and 1970s opposing Kissinger’s shuttle-diplomacy with the Arab States. But at the same time, Morgenthau became more and more isolated within the realist establishment in the US. But he never surrendered, or changed roles, or truckled to his opponents and enemies. And he never regretted to play the role of a dissident, or moral and intellectual conscience.

How can this be explained? Again, the answer to this lies in Morgenthau’s German experiences. There are several arguments for his behaviour. One is that in the US, in contrast to Germany in the 1930s, Morgenthau was allowed to be critical, and to intervene in politics, and to bash the elite and governments without fearing punishment, or losing his job, or being forced to leave the country. The worst he was befallen was that he was abused as a communist, and that he became more and more isolated. But, for someone who was a victim of anti-Semitism in Germany, who was forced to emigrate, and who had to start a new life in a new world as an underpaid lift boy (see Frei 2001; Lebow 2001; Reichwein 2013: 286-301),

this was the least evil. Another argument is that one of the continuities in Morgenthau's life and work was to take a stand in foreign policy affairs. In the 1920s, he did so in his work on international law and German foreign policy under Stresemann (Morgenthau 1929a,b), and he did so in America on US foreign policy. But, there are two other important reasons for Morgenthau's policy and intellectual interventions.

Morgenthau's dream: Working in the service of a higher cause

The first was Morgenthau's search for meaning and orientation as an academic, his claim to *be political*, and his vision of the future. In his *Autobiographical Fragment*, Morgenthau cited his school essay *Was ich von meiner Zukunft erhoffe* from 1922:

"[...] my hopes for the future move into two directions: I hope for the lifting of the pressure to which I am exposed by the social environment, and I hope **to find a direction and purpose for my future activities**. The latter cannot be realized before the former is fulfilled. [...]. Embittered by loneliness of many years, excluded from all the pleasures of youth, expelled from my Fatherland – I shall be only too easily tempted to lend a willing ear to those ideas of the international struggle against bourgeois society and for the denied human rights. The pressure of anti-Semitism not only leads the mind astray, but it also shatters the foundations of morality. Free, straight personalities grow only in pure, fresh air. [...] It is only this hope that gives me the **courage to engage** in still another hope that is even less firmly founded in reality than the other. I shall soon arrive at a point in my life where I will have to choose between two kinds of activity: One leads to a field where men year in year out, in monotonous rhythm, sow and harvest, save and consume. [...] On the other road, one arrives at a **sphere of action** where men, too, work indefatigably, not in order to accumulate gains and to be able to lead a comfortable life, but in the **service of a higher cause**. [...] Here, too, success is enjoyed, not because of material gain, but by virtue of the deed itself that has brought him a step closer to the achievement of his goal. And after their death they live on in their works. [...] That I shall be able to avoid the other road and follow this one is the other **hope for my future**. This to be able **to work in the service of a great idea**, on behalf of an important goal; to be able to commit every nerve, every muscle and every drop of sweat to a work, to a great task; to grow with the work, to become greater oneself in the struggle with one's betters and then to be able to say at the end: I die, but here remains something that is more important than life and will last longer than my body; my work: that is my hope, worthy of tremendous efforts to realize it, that is my goal worthy to live for and, if need be, die

for. [...]The dreams and hopes of youth are the anticipation and presentiment of what old age provides. "What one desires in one's youth one has in abundance in one's old age."
(cited according to Morgenthau 1984: 1-3; **A.R.**)

The 'purpose', 'higher cause', and 'great idea' were not to become someone fighting against, but Morgenthau's later contribution to IR enlightenment to rescue liberalism and democracy.

The quest for moral courage: resistance against the total nemesis of democracy

The second reason for Morgenthau's policy and intellectual interventions was the *missing positioning* and the lack of willingness to stand upon one's defence of German intellectuals in the Weimar Republic on the eve of Hitler's takeover (*Machtergreifung*), and its consequences in intellectual, political, and human affairs. Looking back to the 1920s and 1930s in his *Autobiographical Fragment*, Morgenthau speaks about a „total nemesis, physical and moral, which totalitarianism can cause“ (Johnson 1984: 363/364). And it was Morgenthau's belief in *moral courage*. In Morgenthau's biography (see Frei 2001; Lebow 2003, 2011; Reichwein 2013), we find many examples for his deep disappointment and frustration about the fact that so many intellectuals refused moral courage, and instead either were willing to collaborate with the Nazi Regime, or kept silent on anti-Semitism, injustice and the 'tragedy of German Jewish Liberalism' (Morgenthau 1961), the obvious moral and intellectual decline, and the rise of fascism following the apparent collapse of Weimar democracy. In his *Fragment*, Morgenthau highlights the meaning of political engagement and moral courage to oppose social injustice within society and politics, and to raise one's voice against authoritarian structures in society, at university, or within the state to prevent totalitarianism. Already in 1922 (1984: 2), young Morgenthau wrote:

Since I am not able to play the role of the suffering martyr and am not, like many others, sufficiently callous and indifferent to bear injustice and humiliation in silence, there remains for me only the struggle against the representatives of this movement. The stronger the pressure from outside becomes the more violent and one-sided will be my reaction to this movement and its representatives, i.e. the intellectual and socially dominant group. I shall find myself in total opposition to that social group, and my intellectual attitude toward them will be purely critical and negative. [...] The moral resistance of people whose sense of honor and justice is day by day tread underfoot is being slowly but fatally crushed ... When I see how little the enemy respects the law,

how he declares me to be without the protection of the law, I easily might be persuaded that in dealing with such an enemy I could likewise dispense with justice and the law.

But Morgenthau wasn't unhesitating in condemning those colleagues who, in his opinion, lack any political engagement and moral courage, and instead allow full bent to the development in the late 1920s and early 1930s in Germany:

I was particularly struck and repelled by the contrast between the real political situation in Germany and the futile hairsplitting in which the ordinary members of the *Institut of Sozialforschung* engaged in. The Nazi enemy was standing at the gate, aided and abetted from within, and these intelligent and learned people, the natural enemies and designated victims of Nazism, found nothing better to do than search for the true meaning of one statement of Marx as over against another. (Morgenthau 1984: 14)

In Morgenthau's view, the members of the 'Red Castle' (1984: 13) had condemned capitalism and liberalism and democracy to be responsible for the rise of Nazism (see Hirsch 2014). But these 'hairsplitting' intellectuals neither had answers to the problems and political and social questions of that time, nor did they have the courage to use their prominence, and to resist. This is why Morgenthau was reserved to Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and any Marxist idea and visions of politics – even though Marxism and realism as theories in IR do share a lot of commonalities. But Morgenthau was hard on most of the academia in Germany on the eve of 30. January 1933 and accused many colleagues of ignorance, baseness, or collaboration (1984: 7-9). In this context, Morgenthau told the story of a dinner of lawyers in Munich in 1935 in the house of Professor Karl Neumayer. When telling about the imprisonment and execution of a rabbi, the convened intelligentsia answered: "Don't talk to us about this. We don't mix in politics. It doesn't interest us". For Morgenthau, only three persons did comply on his demand of moral courage and political engagement. One was Mannheim: "On the evening before I left Germany, I attended a lecture at the *Institut* - if memory serves, the speaker was Karl Mannheim - that was dedicated to the proposition of the decisive role 'free-floating intelligence' had to play in the struggle against Nazism" (Morgenthau 1984: 14). The other was Weber, who was not only the rationalist social scientist, but also a political man who had been concerned about how to save Weimar, and who introduced the moral concept of the ethics of responsibility as one of the main characteristics of a politician. In his *Fragment*, Morgenthau writes: "Weber's political thought possessed all the intellectual and

moral qualities I had looked for in vain in the contemporary literature inside and outside the universities“ (1984: 7; see also Williams 2005b). And Morgenthau was also impressed by one of Weber’s followers, Professor Karl Rothenbücher from Munich by whom young student Morgenthau has studied philosophy and sociology in the early 1920s. In 1923, Rothenbücher had published a letter in which he requested the Bavarian government not to collaborate with the rising NSDAP – at the expense of derision, hostilities through anti-Semitic and fascist students, and isolation within his *gleichgeschaltetes* institute until his sudden death in 1934. His whole life, Morgenthau was shocked about what had happened in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s: “It is impossible to visualize the ignorance, confusion, meanness and general moral and intellectual degradation that dominated German public life and upon which the authority of great scholars bestowed a semblance of moral and intellectual legitimacy” (Morgenthau 1984: 8/9). But nevertheless, undeviatingly, he followed the principles of the responsibility of an intellectual, nearly obsessed by one maxim: *Never again*. This is the essence of Morgenthau’s contribution to IR enlightenment.

Conclusion: The ongoing benefits of reconstructing and contextualizing IR

It is time for reconstructing the origins of IR in general, and for reappraising the liberal roots, critical scholarship, and normative purpose of realism in particular. By doing so, students and scholars of IR return to the discipline’s modern foundation during the early and mid-twentieth century, and they are invited to reconsider the contribution of European émigrés labelling themselves as realists to American IR. Instead of summarizing Morgenthau’s liberal realism and contribution to the IR enlightenment, I conclude with some general remarks on the *reconstructing and contextualizing IR theory-agenda* and with an outlook. To study the history of IR is not only an interesting historical exercise for intellectuals in order to get a better understanding of what realism and liberalism actually is, and its evolution over the last decades, or to think about what Morgenthau actually mean with realism, and to tell another and another and another fascinating hidden story. Furthermore, it is a beneficial research project in a threefold manner. First of all, and in general, IR historians and theorists opposing a rationalist political science are encouraged to put the usual trajectories of IR as an American discipline into question. We could uncover and explore the European roots of IR traditions, primarily realism *and* liberalism, that are currently missing within the discipline, and make explicit the European sources of what is commonly referred to as ‘American IR’, and thereby define and strengthen the identity of European IR theory.

Secondly, it stimulates IR scholars to focus on the discipline's sociology of knowledge, and to rethink émigré scholarship in IR (a discussion which in Anglophone IR never really took off), and to do research on what Rösch calls 'knowledge amalgamation' of European émigrés "adjusting their thought in a new environment without renouncing their distinctive European form of scholarship", and as a consequence sharing both the European and American intellectual culture over time (Rösch 2014: 4/5, 8). As Lebow (2011) and (Vecchiarelli Scott 2004) argue, there is something like a "fusion of American and European experience" (Vecchiarelli Scott 2004: 170) in the thinking of émigré scholars who didn't group themselves as a European 'separationist movement', but engage within their new intellectual and personal environment within the US and American peers. This leads to knowledge exchanges (Rösch 2014: 9). Herz', Morgenthau's and Deutsch's realist thinking are illustrative examples for this 'knowledge exchange' (Rösch 2014: 9) and the characteristic *synthesis* of European and American modes of thought (see also Reichwein 2013). IR people doing research on this issue can argue in favour of a European scholarship's influence on the academic circles and political life in the US since the 1930s – and make explicit the point of IR as an "European discipline in America" (Roesch 2014; see also Greenberg 2015).

Thirdly, and most important, new discussions can be provoked whether the so called *First Debate* between idealists and realists between the 1920s and 1940s which are often portrayed as incompatible antipodes (Guzzini 2004; Mearsheimer 2005) really did happen, or whether this actually matters.²⁴ IR people doing research on the realist tradition can trace back the various strands within the realist as a distinctively European tradition, explore its liberal origins and ties with liberalism, and its normative claim, and question the suggested, but inappropriated liberalism-realism divide as a mainstream narrative in current IR debates (Legro/Moravcik 1999; Guzzini 2004; see Williams 2013: 656/657). In light of the IR enlightenment movement and 'self-critical liberal realism' (Williams 2013: 655), it rather can be argued that it doesn't matter whether there ever really was an interwar First Debate between Aron, Carr, Herz, or Morgenthau on the one side, and the 'unknown liberal idealist' (Angell? Zimmern? Hobbes?) on the other. It is much more appropriate to argue that all these liberal (and to some extent idealist) realists debate the opposition and ties between realism and idealism/liberalism, and the dialectics of peace and war, and *Kulturpessimismus*

²⁴ For the debate, see Ashworth 2002, 2006; Thies 2002. Crawford (2006), Schmidt (1998, 2002) and Wilson (1998) argue that the so called First Debate didn't happen, but rather was used by formerly liberal and later realist thinkers as a myth to separate themselves from the liberal community they once had belonged to.

and *Fortschrittsoptimismus* in their own work and thought. Moreover, reconstructing the history of IR discipline in context allows realists and IR theorists working in the liberal tradition to engage critically and seriously with the historical relationship of both traditions – and the evolution of each tradition. Rationalist neo-realists should be inspired to remember the critical purpose and normative strand of realism (Waltz 1990; see also Behr 2010, Behr/Heat 2009 and Kirshner 2012). Liberal IR theory should overcome a denuded and reduced, rationalist neo-liberalism explaining strategic interaction among actors but lacking any sense for the historical roots of the liberal tradition, and any critical and normative reflection (see Reus-Smit 2001).

After all, turning back to the roots of IR, and resuscitating realism is also beneficial for current theorising in IR, and political debates on (international) politics in times of crisis, conflicts, and the danger of war even in Europe (Kirshner 2012; Mearsheimer 2014; Mouritzen/Wivel 2012; Toje/Kunz 2012;). On the top of their agenda, liberal realists in the US in the interwar and postwar era such as Arendt and Morgenthau reflected on the human condition of politics in times of dehumanization, technologisation and bureaucratisation, they warned against ideologisation of the elites and depoliticisation of the mass leading to totalitarianism, and thereby present a critical engagement with the nature of the modern state and state action, radical evil in human mankind, and an elaborated critique of modernity and mass politics in Western democracies. Rethinking this agenda, and the human beings behind which all had been refugees and émigrés, enables IR scholars today to gain a more nuanced understanding about the current crisis of democracy and globalization (see Rösch 2014: 3, Scheuerman 2011) and what it means to be a refugee, or stranger, between two worlds. To deal with and warn against the barbarism of modernity and religion, and anti-liberal politics and the end of democracy, was exactly the motive of that group of *liberal* – critical, normative-oriented – *IR enlightenment scholars* in the interwar period later called, or labelling themselves, *realists*. It should become again the realist rationale and *raison d'être* in IR today, because ideology, nationalism, and conflict are inherent to all politics and societies.

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