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Unlearning Modernity. A Realist Method for Critical International Relations?

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Abstract

Recent re-readings of classical realism in International Relations have demonstrated that in their critique of modernity mid-twentieth century realists put their focus on the development of a (self)critical and sceptical epistemology; a focus that often has been of little concern to other International Relations theories. So far, however, this debate on classical realism has not further elaborated realist methodologies, although this has the potential to make the current theoretical debate more accessible for empirical investigations. To this end, this paper argues that mid-twentieth century realists pursued a method of unlearning. Unlearning is being understood as the critique and moving beyond the modern imaginary which preconditions everyday knowledge and intellectual thought in a dehumanizing way through a learning process based upon the study of classical texts. Examining the work of Hans Morgenthau, and the evocative if generally under-appreciated writings of the Japanese thinker Maruyama Masao, the article argues that unlearning is an important part of critical realist thinking.

Keywords

Classical Realism, International Relations Theory, Japanese Political Thought, Maruyama Masao, Hans J. Morgenthau, Unlearning

Since the publication of the English translation of Christoph Frei's (2001) biography of Hans Morgenthau, classical realism has experienced a revival in International Relations (IR). Common textbook-knowledge has been challenged by demonstrating that realism and neo-realism stem from different intellectual backgrounds and pursue different political agenda, as expounded in Michael Williams's (2005) wilful, Brent Steele's (2007) reflexive, Seán Molloy's (2010) rhizomatic, and William Scheuerman's (2011) progressive readings of realism. Classical realism cannot be understood as a theory in a grand, universalistic sense because it lacks the rigid ontological premises to construct such a theory. However, classical realists stand for a revival of a democratic citizenship in global public spheres through the promotion of scepticism, (self)criticality, and intellectual humility (Scheuerman, 2011; for the case of the United States, see Tjalve and Williams, 2015a; critical Beardsworth, 2011).

In critically reflecting on dehumanization caused by modernity and the subsequent depoliticisation in democracies, well-known realists like Morgenthau, and important if under-appreciated figures like the Japanese thinker Maruyama Masao¹ aimed to refocus politics, both academically and practically, on its 'human essence' (Karube, 2008: 84; Hom and Steele, 2010: 272). In doing so, they pursued similar ambitions as critical theorists because they challenged the rationalist reduction of individuals and communities that still characterizes much of current American IR-scholarship, for omitting emotional and non-rational components which profoundly influence political actions. It is only recently that IR-scholarship (cf. Solomon, 2012; Molloy, 2013; Ross, 2013; Troy, 2015) has returned to this aspect of realist thought and gradually its potential to enrich contemporary theorizing is being acknowledged.

Common to all recent readings of realism is the argument that their critique of modernity stems from an affinity with critical theory and it provides an important addition to contemporary IR-theorizing because it focuses on epistemological questions of scepticism and self-reflexivity, rather than operating from a predetermined ontology (cf. Wendt, 1999: 90). So far, however, little effort has been made within this debate to further elaborate realist methodologies. This lacuna is unfortunate because, as much as realist epistemologies help to rejuvenate contemporary IR-discourses, a reconsideration of their methodologies might lift the current debate from its theoretical vantage point and make realism more accessible for empirical investigations. To this end, this paper argues that realism promotes an approach to (international) political theory that stresses the importance of *unlearning*.

Realist unlearning is to be understood as an attempt to re-establish the human as a wilful actor in the current world political order and as a creator of life-worlds. Realist unlearning is, therefore, not the attempt to forget, but a learning process to free oneself from the modern imaginary that preconditions everyday knowledge and intellectual thought by opening up new spaces to imagine a different reality. To make this case, the article engages with the work of two realist scholars from disparate cultures, with the goal of showing that unlearning should not be understood as a “Western” knowledge-imposition on a partly “Non-Western” context, but reflects similar discussions in Japanese humanities (Ōe, 2012: 45-9). Unlearning, therefore, is a method common to realist thought globally, and represents realism’s ambition to criticize and transcend modernity by returning to classical, pre-modern thought. In the case of Morgenthau, this ambition can be seen in his continuing interest in Aristotle (Lang 2007). Even more revealing is the lesser-known case of Maruyama, who argued that ‘American political thought projects its future as an extension of the present’, whereas Maruyama’s political thought ‘projects its future as an extension of the negation of the present society’ (Yabuno Yūzō in Ehara, 2005: 64).²

To provide evidence for this argument, this paper discusses unlearning by relating it to critical theory, focusing on the work of Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse. In doing so, it first investigates the concept of modernity and how realism distinguishes itself from it. This is important because Morgenthau has been frequently treated as a modernist, and Maruyama is commonly presented as a modern thinker in Japan, even though each reveals different understandings of modernity in East Asia and the West. The following three sections discuss the procedure of realist unlearning. First, the spatio-temporal conditionality of knowledge that provided Maruyama and Morgenthau with the epistemological framework to instil the assumption of imagining a different reality. Second, alienation in a phenomenological sense, which gives both scholars the possibility of imagining a different reality. Finally, this paper concludes by analysing the last step of realist unlearning: rupture, as the process of imagining a different reality.

Ethics of Responsibility: Realism’s Critique of Modernity

Arguing that modernity’s perils were one of the reasons why scholars sought shelter under a realist umbrella requires acknowledging that their understanding and criticism of modernity was manifold and diverse (Galston, 2010: 386). Despite this diversity, realism’s critique of

modernity not only accepts an overlapping past, but realism provides possibilities to fulfil Shalini Randeria's (1999: 91-2) agenda to acknowledge a common future in all its spatio-cultural facets. Normatively, realism, therefore, helps to overcome the "Western" focus of IR-theorizing. An examination of Maruyama's thinking helps us to understand this potential. In Japan, Maruyama had to deal with an understanding of modernity that rested on different parameters in comparison to the modernity his coeval Morgenthau experienced. Maruyama (1986: 44-54) identified modernity as 'directional' in the sense that it was perceived as a linear, predetermined process, which had abruptly begun with the arrival of the *Kurofune* (black ships) of the American expedition under Commodore Matthew Perry into Edo Bay (present-day Tokyo Bay) in 1853. Since then, Japanese intellectuals interpreted modernity as a "Western" enforcement of its civilizational standards. Particularly since the beginning of Japan's imperialist expansions with the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), which culminated in the invasion of Manchuria (1931), modernity was discussed with suspicion and academic efforts were undertaken to 'overcome modernity' (Maruyama, 1974: xxx). Growing up during the relatively democratic Taishō-period (1912-1926) and experiencing its radical decline into 'ultra-nationalism', Maruyama (1989) objected to efforts to overcome modernity. His *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan* was in part a critical reflection of arguments brought forward by the imperialist fraction of Japanese scholarship. This critique is one of the reasons for Maruyama's popularity in Japan (Thomas, 2001: 17; Igarashi, 2006: 206), considering him to be a modernist because he repeatedly argued that Japan has never been modern, since it had yet to establish a functioning democracy (Koschmann, 1989: 125; Hanneman, 2007: 488).

However, this does not imply that Maruyama would have endorsed directional modernity. Like Morgenthau and similar to members of the Frankfurt School, he criticized modernity for establishing what can be best described in Cornelius Castoriadis's (1987: 145) words as an "imaginary" that

'gives a specific orientation to every institutional system, which overdetermines the choice and the connections of symbolic networks, which is the creation of each historical period, its singular manner of living, of seeing and of conducting its own existence, its world, and its relations with this world ... [It is the] source of that which

presents itself in every instance as indisputable and undisputed meaning, the basis for articulating what does matter and what does not.'

The imaginary marks the interplay between representation and the represented because it is a 'category designed to link the cognitive, legal and affective elements we use to envisage and make sense of the world', as Judith Bessant (2014: 34) contends. The imaginary is established among people in a communicative effort within a specific spatio-temporal context; it constitutes social life-worlds, prescribing the realm of meaning upon which socio-political orders are shaped. This constitution of life-worlds takes place through 'aesthetic markers' (Hom and Steele, 2010: 286), meaning-determinants that restrict people's imagination of society, as they historicize and dictate trajectories for knowledge-construction.

In modernity, Morgenthau saw these aesthetic makers evidenced in two developments. First, the modern imaginary depoliticised the public sphere, as institutionalized universal markers refrained people from imagining different realities. Morgenthau (2004: 36) referred to them as 'cultural blinders' that had a particularly devastating effect on the eve of World War I. In an unpublished manuscript, Morgenthau (1930: 15-40) critically reflected on Germany's masculism, which he argued had spurred the war. Second, Morgenthau criticised the modern imaginary for its reification of reality through a bureaucratisation that did not encourage socio-political alterations. Shortly after his emigration, Morgenthau (1938: 5) argued that this development had led to a misguided perception of democracy, though he did not elaborate on this further. Later, Morgenthau (1964: 1391-8; 1975: 78) revisited this claim, arguing that a new 'scientific elite' exerted influence on governments in their political decision-making. Unable to understand the knowledge-power relations behind these decisions and lacking the expertise to question them, the public experienced democracy not as a collective construction of reality through an antagonism of interests, but as an increasing bureaucratization that furthered the disappearance of the political realm. With his critique of modernity, Morgenthau accorded with Frankfurt School scholars, who brought forward similar concerns. Horkheimer, for example, identified this development as an 'administrated world' (Goebel, 2013: 203), while for Marcuse (2002) modern societies had turned 'one-dimensional'. Like Morgenthau, who relied in his critique on Arendtian terms of *homo faber* and *animal laborans* (Rösch, 2013), Marcuse implied with one-dimensionality

that humans had lost their ability to act as a critical corrective to the socio-political *status quo*. The rise of consumerism and an ever more coordinated bureaucratic apparatus had deprived them of being able to explore their intellectual and physical creativity. As a consequence, people live in a 'happy consciousness' (Marcuse, 2002: 79), as they are unable to imagine a different socio-political reality.

Similarly, Maruyama (1974: 171) experienced the modern imaginary as the tempocentric, depoliticising *Kokutai*, which was imposed after the Meiji Restoration (1868). The *Kokutai* as an aesthetic marker argued that the *Tennō* (Japanese emperor) is a direct descendant of the sun-goddess *Amaterasu* (Maruyama, 1988a: 45), whose divine ancestry put the emperor at the middle of a stratified society based around concentric circles (Sasaki, 2012: 38-40). The *Kokutai* determined the societal position of each individual depending on his/her proximity to the *Tennō*. It thereby discouraged the public from critically questioning political decisions by taking 'a reified present and extrapolat[ing] this back in time to render all history amenable to transhistorical, universalist analysis' (Hobson and Lawson, 2008: 430). This means that, by *a priori* determining the *Tennō*'s rule as virtuous, 'a system of irresponsibility' (Maruyama, 1966a: 87) was established, which allowed Japanese rulers to justify their political decisions as being elements of inevitable, pre-determined historical processes that obstructed any evolving antagonism as heresy.

The modern imaginary came into being during the Meiji Restoration when it replaced the *Tokugawa Bakufu* (shogunate). Similar to the Enlightenment in Europe, it promised a world of liberation. However, this presented a series of dilemmas that resonated with many realist assessments of modernity. As Scheuerman (2012: 456) notes, for Morgenthau, '[m]odernity ... was structurally vulnerable to moral decay' because it neither considers questions of morality nor emotions. To counter this development, Morgenthau (cf. 1962; 1972; 1973; 1974) aimed to re-humanize the political sphere because, in the words of Stephen Toulmin (1990: 40), 'part of our humanity is to accept responsibility for our bodies and feelings; and we must do so, even if we cannot always keep these things under complete control.' The resulting 'this-worldly transcendence' (Barshay, 2005: 131) dismisses political ontologies for their essentialism based upon naturalistic, religious, or rationalist characteristics and encourages negotiable, collective identity-constructions that are affected by their surrounding life-worlds and that have an effect on them. This 'radical indeterminacy' (Williams, 2005: 116) fuels realist (self)reflexivity and scepticism by acknowledging spatio-

temporal contingencies of political order as well as oneself and accepting that 'restraint is the most reliable means to limit excesses' (Hom and Steele, 2010: 279). In this respect, Morgenthau considered the (self)critical encouragement of the public to be one of the primary scholarly tasks.

Maruyama also aimed to counter these depoliticising elements by promoting a system of subjectivity. *Shutaisei* was Maruyama's attempt of putting responsibility for one's life-world back into the hands of the Japanese public (Barshay, 1998: 299; Sasaki, 2012: 63-6). Any belief in a natural or historical determinism, in which people are merely objects in a higher order, needs to be replaced by an understanding of reality that is in flux because people are subjects that have the ability to create reality (Maruyama, 2007: 22; also Bellah, 2010: 52). This takes place in what Morgenthau (2012: 123-6) called 'spheres of elasticity', where people collectively formulate their interests in a public sphere and compete for their fulfilment. This constantly affects and alters the composition of the public sphere, which in turn influences people's interests. In this antagonistic process, people experience their subjectivity and learn to take responsibility for their interests and accept their consequences. For both scholars, ensuring these spheres was a prerequisite for democracies to prevail which is why they attempted to free themselves from the dehumanizing modern imaginary (Maruyama, 1997: 47) through unlearning.

For realists, criticizing the modern imaginary does not entail the promise of a yet another imaginary of continuous progress. However, it equally does not mean to dismiss imaginaries altogether (Hom and Steele, 2010: 296). Rather, in agreement with Horkheimer (Goebel, 2013: 201) imaginaries are for Maruyama and Morgenthau thought-constructs necessary to establish reality because they give meaning to spatio-temporal emptiness (Han, 2009: 51-2). But their aesthetic markers need to correspond to each other because otherwise they turn into merely additive, dehumanizing blinders in Morgenthau's sense. Therefore, realists intend to provide a sphere of possibilities to imagine other imaginaries in an undirected process. This potentially leads to better life-worlds, as the intention of Maruyama and Morgenthau was to make all human interests heard in this process in order to avoid the indifference of a random coexistence in which people would not be able to feel and take responsibility for their life-worlds. To help establishing such a sphere of possibilities, mid-twentieth century realists pursued unlearning.

Unlearning in Maruyama and Morgenthau's realism can be characterized as a *Renaissance* approach (Hanneman, 2007: 495). In contrast to Daniel Levine's (2013: 96) recent interpretation of realism, neither scholar intended to conserve the political and intellectual *status quo* of modernity. Instead, each sought to use classical thought to overcome its dehumanizing tendencies and encourage people to become life world-creating individuals who take responsibility for their actions (Karube, 2008: 163). There is, therefore, nothing nostalgic (Levine, 2013: 102) about unlearning; it is not a world-renunciation, but the wilful engagement with one's life-worlds. To achieve this aim, both scholars argued to free oneself from the modern imaginary (Morgenthau, 1966: 10-11; Terzani, 1990: 218; also Sasaki, 2012: 100; Williams, 2013: 652) in order to be able to imagine and eventually construct different political realities.

Hence, unlearning as *learning by freeing oneself from traditions* dismisses ontological *a prioris*. Although Morgenthau (1955: 434; 1962: 19) repeatedly spoke about 'perennial problems' of politics and Maruyama (1988b) introduced the musicological concept of *basso ostinato* into his political thought for similar reasons, these concepts do not imply trans-historicity, but rather a spatio-temporal conditionality, as each community and each generation have to find ways to deal with them anew. In this sense, their concepts stress that societies are constructed through a continuation of *nows* that are shaped through processes of constant change. To build up such a cognizance, both scholars believed unlearning to be fruitful because in its return to classical thought, unlearning would not foster foundationalism. Rather, it acts as a temporal dislocation to be able to contextualize the modern imaginary, critically reflect on oneself and one's position towards it, and to 'challenge the thriving forces behind the multiple phenomena' (Maruyama, 1988a: 68, author's translation) of reality.

Karl Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge

For both scholars a significant intellectual stimulus was the work of Karl Mannheim. It informed their own theorizing and formed the epistemological framework for unlearning. While the influence of Mannheim on Morgenthau has been a source of some dispute, it is well evidenced in the case of Maruyama. In his seminal *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, Maruyama (1974: xxvii) acknowledged the importance of Mannheim's work and this relationship has occupied a prominent role in academic discussions since (cf.

Sasaki, 2012: 71-2; Kakuta, 2012: 366), with Andrew Barshay (1992: 381-2) noting that Maruyama saw Mannheim as 'decisively important' in developing his own approach to political thought.

Of particular importance for realism's view of unlearning has been Mannheim's (1985: 78-9) spatio-temporal conditionality of knowledge. For Mannheim, this conditionality implied that knowledge construction takes place in specific thought places shared by people with a common socio-economic and intellectual background during a specific period of time. In these spaces, Mannheim (1985: 6-7) argued, people develop a common thought style. Knowledge thus does not evolve in historical processes based upon immanent laws, but it is dependent upon factors of being. These context-specific factors are influential determinates of the realization, content, and meaning of experiences. Morgenthau summed this aspect up neatly. In his words, 'political thinking is ... "*standortgebunden*", that is to say it is tied to a particular situation' (1962: 72-3; emphasis in the original) and this spatio-temporal conditionality of knowledge leads to an aspectual structure (*Aspektstruktur*) which Maruyama (1974: 216) also referred to as a 'frame of reference'. For Mannheim, this aspectual structure indicated that within a specific thought style common perspectives evolve that influence the perception of objects, which in turn affects the process of knowledge construction. For both, the study of Mannheim's work had two implications, which provide the epistemological ground for the phenomenological and methodological elements of unlearning: first, both were influenced by the assumption of the perspectivity of knowledge, and, second, both argued for the conditionality of reality.

Accepting that knowledge is socially constructed and determined by its creators' perspectives put Maruyama and Morgenthau in opposition to claims of absolute objectivity. Maruyama, for example, argued that contextualizing political thought 'includes the problem of translating words, [which] necessarily involves the rejection of universalistic theories of historical stages of development' (in Kakuta, 2012: 366). This is one reason why both scholars became disenchanted with Marxism in their youth and why particularly Morgenthau (1944; 1947) brought forward almost polemical attacks against behavioralism in his first years in the United States. Yet despite their criticism of absolute objectivity, neither disavowed objectivity *per se*. Rather, both scholars considered objectivity in perspectivist terms (Behr and Rösch, 2012: 44). Perspectivist objectivity is established in a hermeneutical process in which the research object is analysed through clearly defined concepts

(Morgenthau, 1959: 129). These concepts not only help to distinguish features of an object, but these features can only be recognized as such through concepts. For this reason, both argued that concepts cannot have a fixed meaning but are epistemological tools that help scholars to approach reality by analysing and categorizing its elements. The meaning of these concepts, however, depends upon the specific historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts of the object and the objectifier and consequently changes.³ Furthermore, also the works of Maruyama and Morgenthau themselves have to be viewed as 'historically and politically contingent' (Behr, 2010: 215). With their work, both scholars did not aim to produce grand theories, but in a self-reflexive process expressed criticism of the rising nationalism during the first half of the twentieth century, which both considered to be one of the major dehumanizing aspects of modernity (Morgenthau, 1966: 8; Maruyama, 2007: 55).

This latter aspect led both scholars to endorse a second element in Mannheim's sociology of knowledge: the conditionality of reality; an element that Williams (2005: 6) discussed as 'relationality'. Neither Maruyama, nor Morgenthau accepted reality as naturally given or historically determined. Looking at political thought of the *Tokugawa Bakufu* during the height of World War II demonstrated to Maruyama that reality is socially constructed and supported him in his criticism of Japanese nationalism (Barshay, 1992: 383). Confucianism in which reality was perceived as naturally given was called into question by Ogyū Sorai and his disciples who promoted a 'logic of invention' (Maruyama, 1974: 222). Through this logic, they urged the *Shogun* to overcome the social crisis that existed at that time in Japan and re-establish a feudal society. Arguing that Ogyū 'brought forth a demon whose actions he was unable to control' (Maruyama, 1974: 238; also Igarashi, 2002: 201-2), Maruyama found reassurance that equally the *Kokutai* was socially constructed and could be changed by people in a collective process. After World War II, Maruyama (1966a: 251-3) called this aspect 'fiction', referring to Georg Simmel, and brought forward an understanding of reality that made an even stronger case for human agency in politics than the assumption of the social construction of reality. Reality with its socio-political institutions is not only collectively constructed through human interests, but the term fiction indicates that these reifications of reality are merely virtual agreements of people that can only exert a dominating influence upon them as long as they accept them (Koschmann, 1989: 131-2; Sasaki, 2012: 62). Constructing reality as a series of fictions, enabled Maruyama to help re-empowering people

by encouraging them to take responsibility for their life-worlds, as it allowed imagining different fictions that can be established through unlearning in a process of rupturing modernity's imaginary.

Alienation and the Possibility of Imagining a Different Reality

Although Mannheim was relevant for realist thought, his thinking did not provide answers for Maruyama and Morgenthau about the possibility of such imaginations. Rather, to understand the phenomenological implications of these imaginations, both scholars turned to a concept with whom they have become familiar in following discussions within German humanities: alienation.

Alienation was for Morgenthau and Maruyama (1957) a phenomenological tool to imagine the possibility to overcome the modern imaginary, as it enabled them to get a clear understanding of the dehumanization modernity had caused. As Dermot Moran (2000: 4) points out, this is because phenomenology avoids 'misconstructions and impositions placed on experience in advance, whether these are drawn from religious or cultural traditions, from everyday common sense, or ... from science itself.' Hence, Morgenthau and Maruyama did not employ alienation as an expression of 'non-attachment' to the world, as found, for instance, in Aldous Huxley (Hall, 2013: 10-12) because alienation is not a form of "world-renouncement". Rather, it has similarities with what Arendt (1978: 65-6) had in mind when she used the term 'conscious pariah' to describe the cultural and intellectual differences between Central European, often Jewish émigrés and their American peers. In this sense, alienation is a form of temporary, intellectual detachment through the painful, but wilful engagement with the conditions of one's life-world (Douzinas, 2013: 125). This world-engagement is particularly noticeable in Maruyama, who faced criticism in Japanese academia for his understanding of *Kaikoku* (Dore, 1964: 82; Kersten, 1996: 118-27). With *Kaikoku*, he attempted to increase self-reflexivity through an engagement with the outside world. As Victor Koschmann (1989: 133; similar Kersten, 1996: 13) summarizes this position:

'in order to understand the world, [one] must constantly step outside the secure refuge of inertia and attachment, deconstruct its view of the world, and "render its own perspective fluid." That is, subjectivity must repeatedly establish itself on a new

basis of argumentation, which provides the modicum of autonomy necessary to make judgements.'

Another characterization of alienation can be found in Maruyama's essay on *How do We Learn from the Classics?*, where he contends that

'the meaning of reading and learning from the classics ... lies in isolating oneself from the contemporary world. "Isolation" in this sense is itself a *positive* effort, not an "escape" ... Consciously isolating ourselves from the contemporary atmosphere in which we live enables us to cultivate the ability to observe the panorama of contemporary life "from a distance"' (in Karube, 2008: 161; emphasis in the original).

Alienation by studying classical texts is, therefore, an effort undertaken in solitude. Following Arendt (1953: 303-6; similar Horkheimer, 2013: chapter 3), solitude is not to be confused with loneliness because the latter is generated through the "non-attachment" Huxley was talking about. Indeed, most of the work undertaken in modern societies happens in loneliness, despite being constantly surrounded by other people in a work environment with a high division of labour. However, as people are detached from their labour's result, they cannot claim its ownership. Solitude, by contrast, is a necessary step to engage through one's work with the wider public because the producer takes ownership and encourages discussions through publicly displaying it (Arendt, 1958: 118-9). Maruyama and Morgenthau's alienation is work in solitude. Their reading of classical texts was based on the aspiration to enhance their understanding about world politics, leading to a more informed assessment (Maruyama, 1966b: 598).

Following Arendt's distinction, alienation enables people to become aware of their own subjectivity. This process allows them to establish, formulate, or even call into question their beliefs and interests, which is key for getting engaged in the public sphere. Alienation is, therefore, not an element of unlearning only to be undertaken by scholars, like Maruyama and Morgenthau, but vital for the establishment of a public sphere (Kersten, 1996: 130).

Since Maruyama (Avenell, 2010: 85-7; Sasaki, 2012: 160) and Morgenthau (1984: 339-41) were concerned about the political ideologisability of the masses, both became engaged in various forms of adult education, such as the Adult Education Council of Greater Chicago and

the Mishima People's University (Morgenthau Papers, Container 3; Karube, 2008: 174), in order to help people acquire a humanistic education and become citizens who could actively contribute to the public sphere. Becoming aware of one's subjectivity is an essential step towards empathy. Knowing about one's possibilities, abilities, and restrictions allows people to reach out to their life-worlds and get engaged with other people because this allows differentiating one from another and accepting each other in their subjectivity (Maruyama, 1966a: 348). Empathy is also constitutive for Morgenthau's concept of national interest. As Ned Lebow (2003: 245) writes, the national interest was for Morgenthau a 'fluid concept' because it is constituted through all the personal interests within a political community. The task of political leaders is to allocate these interests according to their public support and help formulating a common interest in a democratic process. Wisdom is the key to ensuring that political leaders have the capacity to successfully organize this process. Anthony Lang (2007) and Mihaela Neacsu (2010) rightly stress that wisdom bears morality as one of its major components, but their insistence on experience also refers to the phenomenological aspect of empathy. Allocating various personal interests requires that political leaders are aware of their own subjectivity, have the ability to experience other people in their subjectivity, and accept these interests as contributions to the wider political community. Apperceiving others in their subjectivity through constituting one's own subjectivity makes empathy the foundation for intersubjectivity. This understanding is evidenced in Morgenthau's normative concept of power (Rösch, 2014). Morgenthau understood power not only as physical, material, or financial possibility to dominate others, but particularly as the ability of people to temporarily cooperate in the public realm to achieve a specific end. Power, therefore, requires empathy. The involved people need to know about themselves and their interests, in order to bring in their subjectivity. They also need to be able to accept the subjectivity of others and have the capacity to fit the various subjectivities within the situational context. As stressed in previous discussions of Maruyama's thought (cf. Barshay, 1992: 391; 2005: 126; Sasaki, 2012: 144; Kakuta, 2012: 362), his understanding of democracy rests on similar arguments. For Maruyama (1988a: 148), democracy was fluid and constantly renegotiated among society's members, which is why democracy is characterized by dissent. Maruyama did not accept the permanence of the political *status quo*. Dissent, however, is not to be confounded with violence, as the critical engagement with the positions of others is a sign of empathy for them. For Maruyama and Morgenthau, such intersubjective

exchanges constituted objectivity in the previously discussed sense because they contribute to the formation of people's life-worlds that are in turn perceived as tangible reality. This, however, also demonstrated to both scholars that this tangible reality of modernity rested on the people's perception and consequently can be altered when the dehumanizing effects of reality are being apperceived as such. Alienation was for both, therefore, a necessary condition to imagine the possibility of other realities.

Rupture through Reading Classics

The final step in the elaboration of unlearning illuminates the methodological procedure Maruyama and Morgenthau employed to imagine different realities. In order to free themselves from the existing modern imaginary, hence in order to “*dis-integrate*” the one-dimensionality of modern societies (Marcuse, 2002: 11), both scholars evidenced an understanding of politics similar to that of Alain Badiou, as the ‘prescription of a possibility in *rupture* with what exists’ (in Douzinas, 2013: 88; emphasis added).

Through studying classical texts, both scholars aimed to get insights in order to alter the political *status quo*. Gaining knowledge about the modern imaginary and its underlying knowledge-power relations allowed them to trace the spatio-temporal context of its development.⁴ This is one of the reasons Maruyama was dissatisfied with Japanese post-war political science after it came under the influence of American behavioralism. Furthermore, rupture allows criticizing the modern imaginary by reflecting on its relevance for reality construction and, finally, rupture is ‘future-focused’, as Rikki Kersten (1996: 119) contends, because its intention is to imagine if not help constructing different realities.

Rupture, therefore, cannot be confounded with change, as Kersten's (1996: 123-4) use of the term suggests. Like rupture, change aims to challenge the current political order, but considering the latter's etymological origins demonstrates their differences. Originating from the Latin *cambiare* (to barter), change rests upon the same basic ontological and epistemological assumptions as the political order it aims to challenge. Through changing some of the political order's attributes, certain deficiencies may be rectified, but change does not affect the order's basic assumptions; nor does it intend to because this would involve a critical questioning of one's own subjectivity. Rupture, by contrast, is the attempt to free oneself from these basic assumptions, in order to construct knowledge that allows establishing different political orders. Following Ōe Kenzaburō, rupture was for Maruyama

not only a methodology, rupture even signifies his language, making it an exemplar of a 'tool of dissent', as demanded by Roland Bleiker (2009: 92). This is because Maruyama introduced 'a vivid Japanese prose [through using] the stylistic qualities of ... various European languages' (Ōe, 1999: 21).

With Morgenthau, this is different because the terminology in his American writings does not demonstrate the same care as his European ones. Unlike Maruyama, Morgenthau, therefore, does not offer a powerful visualization of unlearning in his writing style. However, Morgenthau argued for unlearning in several public appearances by discussing the potentially devastating consequences if the capacity to unlearn through rupturing from the modern imaginary were missing. One such example is the Leo-Baeck-Memorial-Lecture he gave in New York in 1961. *The Tragedy of German-Jewish Liberalism* is a critique of liberal German Jews who, following Morgenthau (1962: 248), were unable to realize that the emancipation following the creation of the German Empire were specific historic conditions and 'not the expression of eternal verities'. This belief in the continuous intellectual progress of humanity 'created within German Jewry a psychological predisposition against contemplating any alternative to the favourable and seemingly promising situation which German Jews enjoyed' (Morgenthau, 1962: 250). Morgenthau (1962: 251) experienced himself that in aiming to uphold the socio-political status, which German Jews had gained during the Wilhelmine Empire, most of them did not realize that liberal nationalism was evolving into a racialized universal nationalism. For Morgenthau, most German Jews lacked the ability to unlearn which would have allowed them to understand the political situation at the end of the Weimar Republic.

Yet despite their common strategy of studying classical texts as a form of rupture, Maruyama and Morgenthau were guided by different understandings of modernity. For Morgenthau, the modern imaginary rested on the knowledge-power relations that came into being since the emergence of the Enlightenment, while for Maruyama the time-frame was even shorter. Modernity hardly took hold in Japan prior to the *Bakumatsu*, its forced opening and the following Meiji Restoration that reinstated imperial rule and forcefully modernized Japan. Consequently, Maruyama found his classical texts in the writings of scholars of the *Tokugawa Bakufu*, while Morgenthau looked for his sources primarily in Greek antiquity.

Morgenthau's historical approach to IR enabled him to draw from a wide array of classical sources, but it was particularly Aristotle who had an impact on Morgenthau's thought. Consequently, Morgenthau's reliance on Aristotle has been widely discussed in the discipline (cf. Lang, 2007; Molloy, 2009). Throughout his career in the United States, Morgenthau (2004) lectured on Aristotle's *The Politics* and in doing so he critically reflected on political questions of his time by discussing key Aristotelian concepts. A recurrent theme in these lectures is Morgenthau's (2004: 28, 36-7, 65-6, 78, 84) understanding of the nation-state as a social construct. Focusing on this aspect certainly was spurred by domestic developments in the United States, like McCarthyism, that threatened the political realm, as it undermined democracy, but also by international developments, like the Cold War, in whose course the American liberal zeal turned into hubris and led to the Vietnam War. In demonstrating his students that the nation-state is not a naturally given, essentialist, or historically determined political community, Morgenthau (2004: 21) criticized behavioralism for remaining within the modern imaginary and thereby being unable to provide answers to some of the most pressing questions of the twentieth century. Critically reflecting on the dangers of nationalism, he discussed with his students different means to establish a lasting political realm. His insistence on this realm in which a common interest evolves through public antagonisms of interests takes up much of his lectures and it anticipates critical theorists' construction of community as a communicative, shared mode of being (Shindo, 2012).

Maruyama (1974) pursued similar, but more subtle ambitions. Compiled from journal entries written in the midst of World War II, Maruyama needed to be cautious in framing his critique. However, in the introduction to the English edition, Maruyama (1974: xxxii) disclosed his intentions. Analysing the political thought of feudal Japan allowed Maruyama to understand the argumentation that was used to support the *Kokutai* of Imperial Japan (Ooms and Harootunian, 1977: 526), but it was also an analysis of Tokugawa scholars, who were 'committed to the idea of democracy as a universal value and as an inevitable element of modernization' (Hanneman, 2007: 499). Hence, Maruyama's aim in this discussion was not only to bring forward a critique of the *Kokutai* and the scholars who were providing scientific justifications for it, but also to develop a different political reality.

Studying Tokugawa thought enabled Maruyama to develop an understanding of democracy that rests on a vivid public sphere which bears striking resemblance to Morgenthau's concept of the political. Indeed, Karube Tadashi (2008: 38) remarks that Maruyama urged his

students to encounter difference, as this would allow them to accept other viewpoints not as a threat, but as a necessary condition to establish democratic communities through a communicative engagement with them. Along the lines suggested by William Galston (2010: 397), this type of realism prevents political decision-making from turning into moralism. Opposing viewpoints within a democratic framework are appreciated as valid contributions toward the retention of this framework. Moreover, like Morgenthau, Maruyama moved beyond theoretical discussions, becoming involved in establishing the post-war Japanese democracy and promoting the peace movement (Sasaki, 2012: 106-9). However, perhaps unlike Morgenthau, Maruyama became soon disappointed, feeling that his efforts were in vain (Bellah, 2010: 51).⁵ The Supreme Commandership for the Allied Powers helped Japan to introduce democratic institutions, but left the imperial system untouched which constrained the Japanese public to develop a public sphere.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that mid-twentieth century realists employed unlearning in order to overcome the modern dehumanizing imaginary. The question remains, however, if this method is also of relevance for foreign policy making? Unlearning may indeed have little relevance if politics is reduced to bureaucratic, technical, or scientific adjustments of socio-political life-worlds in order to fortify the political *status quo*. Unlearning does not facilitate the writing of policy briefs or instruction manuals. Rather, unlearning enables to see policy making from an altogether different perspective, in which bureaucratic, technical, or scientific constraints are still considered, but their influence on decision making processes is reduced. In its best senses, unlearning seeks to increase democratic influence on policy, and to produce more humane results of foreign policy processes (for the required rhetoric, see Tjalve and Williams, 2015b).

Unlearning attempts to bridge theory and practice. Operating without 'fixed ontological blueprints', as Andrew Ross (2013: 277) rightfully notes, unlearning is realism's method to encourage an epistemological process that critically reflects on the modern imaginary, questions its aesthetic markers, *and* constructively opens different imaginaries. This latter aspect makes realist unlearning a promising addition in enhancing the scope of IR-theorizing. In a threefold process, unlearning allows scholars to encourage imaginations of spaces that enable people to take continuous responsibility for their life-worlds by participating in their

construction. The provision of such 'arena[s] of contestation' (Galston, 2010: 391) is necessary for the establishment of resilient democracies because they do not aim to enforce egalitarianism and, therefore, a statism that reinforces the socio-political *status quo*. Rather, it praises difference and encourages people to engage in argumentative processes of suasion in which people are ensured that their interests are being considered, as interests having a dominating influence on the construction of life-worlds in one situation, may lose their influence to other interests in a different situation. Both, Maruyama and Morgenthau were convinced that the modern imaginary had deprived people of the ability and the will to actively seek responsibility in the construction of life-worlds and that consequently democracies globally face totalitarian threats.

To further visualise the potential of unlearning, foreign policy making has to be understood as a performance. As Shirin Rai (2015: 1181; also Ringmar, 2016: 102) stresses, political performances 'seek to communicate to an audience meaning-making related to state institutions, policies and discourses.' For critical IR-scholars, the audience (the general public) is particularly important, as they argue that realising the performatory character of policy making can entice people to question and eventually rupture violent everyday socio-political practices. However, audiences often read 'performance[s] ... largely with the familiar – what Wittgenstein calls "family resemblances", easily available "dominant" codes rather than those that are unfamiliar and against the grain, which is how power is reproduced' (Rai, 2015: 1189). Drawing on the work of Erving Goffman, Steele (2013: 80) seeks a way out of this conundrum by distinguishing between skills and informants. The former are intellectuals, politicians, or journalists, who act as regular members of the audience. However, skills are clandestinely supporting the performances in order to uphold the political *status quo*. Informants, by contrast, can cause a rupture of everyday socio-political practices. Informants occupy similar positions like skills, but they pretend to be part of the performance. In doing so, they get access to confidential information that allows them gaining a more comprehensive picture about the knowledge-power relations that shape the performance. This information is being shared with the public. Yet, it seems unlikely that informants are sufficient to fundamentally rupture the modern imaginary. The majority of the audience, caught in this imaginary, tends to accept performances, as long as they do not have to fundamentally call "family resemblances" into question because they offer

ontological security. The recent NSA and GCHQ-scandals as well as the Panama Papers evidence this majoritarian apathy.

Unlearning, by contrast, has the potential to transcend this apathy and establish a more democratic policy making. Unlearning calls bureaucratic, technical, or scientific policy performances into question and it repoliticises them. Rupturing the modern imaginary is not aiming to completely overcome imaginaries, as realist scholars accept that imaginaries provide ontological security. Rather, realism asks what kind of imaginary comes into being. In doing so, people regain the power to establish an imaginary that is most beneficial to them at a specific time and place (Ringmar, 2016: 111). Unlearning, therefore, offers the opportunity of widening the actorship of policy performances. In this scenario, performances are dislocated from the stage, as they also take place in the auditorium. Indeed, unlearning dissolves categories of stage and audience because people realise that the constitution of imaginaries is not a bureaucratic, technical, or scientific exercise, as it was symbolised in Japan's former Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), but it is a gradual political process of suasion, in which every citizen can take part. Furthermore, the evolvment of nepotism and clientelism is hampered. Performances are not only denounced by informants, but, through their dislocation from the stage, the number of actors is increased and the development of what Morgenthau called a scientific elite is hindered.

However, there is also a caveat in unlearning's potential for foreign policy making. Aiming to rupture from one's imaginary is not a singular task, but it 'takes a lifetime of practice and study. Its borders are made permeable not by means of prior intellectual or ethnic background, but by means of ... very hard work' (Jenco, 2007: 752-3; also Steele, 2013: 86). It would be, therefore, impudent to argue that unlearning can easily be achieved by everyone, but Maruyama and Morgenthau considered it as their scholarly task to engage in the public sphere and facilitate this process of unlearning for their interlocutors. Hence, despite being a method that requires continuous engagement, unlearning has the potential to recalibrate the parameters of foreign policy making.

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¹ This paper follows the Japanese custom of first mentioning the family name.

² Although this quote is a misrepresentation (Yabuno in an e-mail-conversation 24th February 2013), it is included because it sums up the purpose of Maruyama's political thought very well.

³ Maruyama (1966b; 1986) found a similar objectivity-understanding in the work of Fukuzawa Yukichi who had criticized government officials and scholars for not relativizing the *Kokutai* for its claim of absolute objectivity (Koschmann, 1989: 127-8).

⁴ Igarashi Yoshikuni's (2002: 215) verdict on Maruyama as being an ahistorical scholar is unsubstantiated because rupturing required Maruyama (1981: 518-9) to consider the historical contexts of concepts while using them.

⁵ As indicated in the introduction to *Truth and Power*, later in his life, Morgenthau (1970) also expressed frustration about getting engaged in the public sphere. I am grateful to Michael Williams for bringing this point to my attention.