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# **Pouvoir, Puissance, and Politics: Hans Morgenthau's Dualistic Concept of Power?**

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## **Abstract:**

Hans Morgenthau's concept of power is widely debated among scholars of International Relations. Superficial accounts present Morgenthau's concept of power in the Hobbesian tradition as a means of self-preservation; however, more thorough investigations demonstrate Morgenthau's psychogenic and praxeological understanding. By referring to Sigmund Freud and Max Weber, such accounts identify Morgenthauian power as the ability to dominate others. This article contributes to this discourse by demonstrating that Morgenthau separated power into two dualistic conceptualisations. Although analytically Morgenthau worked with a concept of power understood as domination, normatively – in reference to Friedrich Nietzsche and Hannah Arendt – he promoted a concept of power that focused on the will and ability to act together. Elaborating this dualistic concept has wider implications for current International Relations because it reminds scholars to be self-reflexive. In addition, it is argued that a Morgenthauian scholarship helps scholars to gain a more profound understanding of depoliticising tendencies in Western democracies.

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Hartmut Behr, Peter Wadey, and the audience of the New Voices Seminar Series at the Newcastle University for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this article. I also would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive and engaging comments.

Power is one of the constitutive characteristics of politics that sets it apart from other social realms; in addition, Hans Morgenthau considered it to be one of the ‘perennial problems’<sup>2</sup> of politics which is why he repeatedly turned to questions of power. While the academic engagement with Morgenthau was to a certain extent based upon his status as a doyen of International Relations<sup>3</sup> – a status that required other scholars to distinguish their work from Morgenthau’s – it was also the interest in his contribution to this discourse on power that fostered the study of his work. Early assessments of Morgenthau’s concept of power were largely depreciative, arguing it would be unscientific: a perception that demonstrates the different understandings of the purpose of a theory. Whereas Morgenthau was firmly rooted within the hermeneutical tradition of Continental European philosophy, his commentators often shared a different understanding of a theory. For them, a theory was supposed to explain political events by putting them into a teleological framework.<sup>4</sup>

Contrastingly, current assessments provide a more nuanced picture of Morgenthau’s concept of power. By carefully analysing Morgenthau’s intellectual relationships with other scholars, we know that his concept of power cannot be understood without considering the intellectual environment that had shaped his thought during the Weimar Republic. Michael Williams, Hans-Karl Pichler, as well as Stephen Turner and George Mazur expounded that Morgenthau developed his concept of power in close congruence to Max Weber.<sup>5</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>2</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, ‘Reflections on the State of Political Science’, *Review of Politics*, 17:4 (1955), p. 434 and *Politics in the Twentieth Century. Volume I. The Decline of Democratic Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Stanley Hoffmann, ‘An American Social Science: International Relations’, *Daedalus*, 106 (1977), p. 44; David Fromkin, ‘Remembering Hans Morgenthau’, *World Policy Journal*, 10:3 (1993), p. 81; and Robert J. Art, ‘Hans J. Morgenthau: The Visionary Realist’, in Christian Hacke et.al. (eds), *The Heritage, Challenge and Future of Realism: in Memoriam Hans J. Morgenthau (1904-1980)* (Göttingen: V & R, 2005), p. 77.

<sup>4</sup> For example: Benno Wasserman, ‘The Scientific Pretensions of Professor Morgenthau’s Theory of Power Politics’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 13:1 (1959).

<sup>5</sup> Hans-Karl Pichler, ‘The Godfathers of “Truth”: Max Weber and Carl Schmitt in Morgenthau’s Theory of Power Politics’, *Review of International Studies*, 24:2 (1998); Michael C. Williams, *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Stephen P. Turner, ‘Hans J.

empirically, Morgenthau agreed with Weber's tripartite division of power. However, Christoph Frei, Ulrik Enemark Petersen, and Mihaela Neacsu demonstrated that Morgenthau did not simply rephrase Weber, but his thought was also strongly influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Robert Schuett asserted that the influence of psychoanalysis on Morgenthau should not be underrated, as his concept of power draws on Sigmund Freud, too.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the important discoveries this discourse has achieved to date, insight into Morgenthau's concept of power remained limited due to their analytical focus on one specific intellectual relationship. This limitation even caused interpretational inconsistencies by establishing erroneous connections, as happened to Turner and Mazur.<sup>8</sup> To avoid this problem, the present article proceeds differently. It discusses Morgenthau's concept of power from a conceptual history point of view. It is not interested in intellectual relationships *per se*, but aims to understand Morgenthau's usage of power through putting it into the intellectual context in which Morgenthau developed his thought. To establish this context, Morgenthau's major published and unpublished works, ranging from his earliest contributions to Weimar jurisprudence to his latest pieces on politics and ethics, are considered.

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Morgenthau and the Legacy of Max Weber', in Duncan Bell (ed), *Political Thought and International Relations. Variations on a Realist Theme* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Stephen Turner and George Mazur, 'Morgenthau as a Weberian Methodologist', *European Journal of International Relations*, 15:3 (2009).

<sup>6</sup> Ulrik Enemark Petersen, 'Breathing Nietzsche's Air: Morgenthau's Concepts of Power and Human Nature', *Alternatives*, 24:1 (1999); Christoph Frei, *Hans J. Morgenthau. An Intellectual Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001); and Mihaela Neacsu, *Hans J. Morgenthau's Theory of International Relations. Disenchantment and Re-enchantment* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Robert Schuett, 'Freudian Roots of Political Realism: the Importance of Sigmund Freud to Hans J. Morgenthau's Theory of International Power Politics', *History of the Human Sciences*, 20:4 (2007). Schuett repeats this argument in his recent monograph: *Political Realism, Freud, and Human Nature in International Relations. The Resurrection of the Realist Man* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Turner and Mazur interpreted Morgenthau's mentioning of *Standortgebundenheit* to be referring to Weber. However, the concept of *Standortgebundenheit* was introduced by Karl Mannheim to German sociology. See: Turner and Mazur, 'Morgenthau as a Weberian Methodologist', pp. 487-8.

This analytical focus provides a wider perspective on Morgenthau's concept of power and it can thus be argued that Morgenthau understood power as a psychogenic and intersubjective condition of politics.<sup>9</sup> Power cannot be acquired through an endogenous accumulation of financial means and/or weaponry, but through the interaction of people. Depending on the intention of this interaction, Morgenthau envisaged two dualistic forms of power. In his first American monograph, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, he worded it figuratively: 'Man is the victim of political power by necessity; he is a political master by aspiration.'<sup>10</sup> These two forms of power were most meticulously elaborated in Morgenthau's European writings in which he distinguished between *Macht* and *Kraft* and *pouvoir* and *puissance*, respectively.<sup>11</sup> It is argued that Morgenthau understood *pouvoir* as the ability to dominate others (as seen in the *animus dominandi*). For Morgenthau, in times of nation-states, this was the prevailing form of power in human interaction, which is why it is termed empirical power here, whereas *puissance* signified the intention to wilfully act together to create a life-world in consideration of a common good (normative power).

In order to disentangle Morgenthau's dualistic concept of power, this article proceeds in three steps. First, since Morgenthau viewed power as a psychogenic condition, Morgenthau's localisation of power in human nature is elaborated by discussing the drives that he considered to be the fundamental characteristics of human action. Second, this

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<sup>9</sup> In an early manuscript Morgenthau called power to be of 'durchgehende[r] Geistigkeit' (absolute intellectuality). See: Hans J. Morgenthau, 'Über die Herkunft des Politischen aus dem Wesen des Menschen', 1930 (Container 151, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC), p. 43.

<sup>10</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* (London: Latimer House, 1947), p. 153.

<sup>11</sup> Morgenthau, 'Über die Herkunft des Politischen aus dem Wesen des Menschen', p. 9; *La Notion du "Politique" et la Théorie des Différends Internationaux* (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1933); and 'Über den Sinn der Wissenschaft in dieser Zeit und über die Bestimmung des Menschen', 1934 (Container 151, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC), p. 33. There is no evidence why Morgenthau only negligently defined his concept of power in his English writings. One explanation might be that the term "power" in English entails empirical and normative components as power can be used to describe any human effort to achieve a specific end. In German and French, power is more narrowly defined. See: Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 27.

article discusses Morgenthau's empirical concept of power – *pouvoir* – and finally the kind of power normatively suggested by Morgenthau – *puissance* – is elaborated in order to contrast it from the empirical notion. The concluding remarks provide an outlook on the implications Morgenthau's dualistic concept of power has for contemporary International Relations. First, it reminds scholars that understanding world politics not only requires considering the context of the research object in question, but this contextualisation also needs to be applied to the concepts which are being used in the process of understanding world politics. Second, it is argued that a Morgenthauian inspired scholarship helps us to gain a more profound understanding of the current depoliticisation in modern democracies.

### **Power and Human Nature**

In order to demonstrate that Morgenthau pursued a psychological definition of power, we have to refer to his earliest European writings. In an unpublished manuscript from 1930, *Über die Bestimmung des Politischen aus dem Wesen des Menschen (The Derivation of the Political from the Nature of Man)*,<sup>12</sup> Morgenthau noted that human action is determined by 'the impulse of life striving to keep alive, to prove oneself, and to interact with others.'<sup>13</sup> Hence, for Morgenthau, there are two fundamental drives: the drive for self-preservation (*Selbsterhaltungstrieb*) and the drive to prove oneself (*Bewährungstrieb*).<sup>14</sup> It is this latter drive that is central to Morgenthau's concept of power.

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<sup>12</sup> This manuscript was Morgenthau's first attempt to further conceptualise the political; a study which he had announced in his doctoral thesis the year before (See: Hans J. Morgenthau, *Die internationale Rechtspflege, ihr Wesen und ihre Grenzen* (Leipzig: Robert Noske, 1929), p. 72). Morgenthau provided a more substantial elaboration with *La notion du "Politique"* in 1933. The English translation of this book was recently published and I will refer to this translation throughout the rest of the article: Hans J. Morgenthau, *The Concept of the Political*. Edited by Hartmut Behr and Felix Rösch (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Morgenthau, 'Über die Herkunft des Politischen aus dem Wesen des Menschen', p. 5 (my translation).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

At the time Morgenthau was writing this manuscript in Frankfurt, he was employed as a clerk in Hugo Sinzheimer's law office. His work with Sinzheimer brought him into close intellectual contact with members of the Institute for Social Research, in which the discipline of psychoanalysis was well received.<sup>15</sup> Library tickets from the Frankfurt University suggest that Morgenthau closely studied Freud at that time, too.<sup>16</sup> Following Robert Schuett, this engagement explains why Morgenthau drew upon Freud's ego and sexual instinct in his elaboration of these two human drives.<sup>17</sup> Despite Morgenthau's later attempt to downplay the effect that Freud had on his understanding of human nature, his almost identical reasoning demonstrates Morgenthau's intellectual indebtedness.<sup>18</sup> Freud noted that 'I took as my starting-point a saying of ... Schiller that "hunger and love are what moves the world".'<sup>19</sup> In Morgenthau's manuscript we find a similar passage:

'If the striving for the preservation of one's life is caused by a deficiency, he is ... a child of hunger. If he is striving to balance or avoid a lack of energy, then this striving to prove oneself is caused by a surplus of energy seeking release. This finds ... one of its most characteristic expressions in love.'<sup>20</sup>

Although Morgenthau considered the drive for self-preservation (hunger) to be the more fundamental of the two because the preservation of one's life is the central concern for humans, it is of minor importance for a political analysis of Morgenthau's concept of power.

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Gay, *Freud. A Life of our Time* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1988) and William E. Scheuerman, 'Realism and the Left: the Case of Hans J. Morgenthau', *Review of International Studies*, 34:1 (2008).

<sup>16</sup> Container 151, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>17</sup> Schuett, 'Freudian Roots of Political Realism', p. 59.

<sup>18</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, 'Fragment of an Intellectual Autobiography: 1904-1932', in Kenneth W. Thompson and Robert J. Myers (eds), *Truth and Tragedy. A Tribute to Hans J. Morgenthau* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1984), p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Volume XXI. The Future of an Illusion. Civilization and its Discontents and Other Works* (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), p. 117.

<sup>20</sup> Morgenthau, 'Über die Herkunft des Politischen aus dem Wesen des Menschen', pp. 5-6 (my translation). Similar: Schuett, 'Freudian Roots of Political Realism', p. 59.

Morgenthau informed his readers that '[t]he desire for power ... concerns itself not with the individual's survival, but with his position among his fellows once his survival has been secured.'<sup>21</sup> Therefore, as mentioned, central to Morgenthau's concept of power is the drive to prove oneself (love)<sup>22</sup>, and it cannot be understood in the Hobbesian tradition as a means of self-preservation for which Morgenthau has become unjustly criticised.<sup>23</sup> This criticism occurred, even though a more careful contextualisation argued the converse,<sup>24</sup> and Morgenthau publicly repudiated this connection to Hobbes. In a letter to the editors of *International Affairs*, Morgenthau criticised Martin Wight for having drawn this analogy.<sup>25</sup> Two aspects of the drive to prove oneself deserve to be further elaborated, as they influenced Morgenthau's conceptualisation of power.

First, only when the drive to prove oneself affects other people, it becomes political. For Morgenthau, the intention of this drive was to make oneself aware of one's own life and thereby establish an awareness of one's strengths and capabilities. The self manifests itself only through the other, which is why this drive finds its expression itself in games, arts, science, and even relationships. '[E]verywhere where the human being strives to show

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<sup>21</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, p. 165.

<sup>22</sup> For a detailed discussion of the relation between love and power, see: Ty Solomon, 'Human Nature and the Limits of the Self: Hans Morgenthau on Love and Power', *International Studies Review* 14:2 (2012).

<sup>23</sup> Examples are: Erik Ringmar, *Identity, Interest and Action. A Cultural Explanation of Sweden's Intervention in the Thirty Years War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 50 and Erhard Forndran, 'Grenzen des Realismus. Zu Erklärungsversuchen internationaler Beziehungen. Teil II: Zur Reichweite realistischer Argumentation', *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft*, 7:1 (1997).

<sup>24</sup> For example: Robert C. Good, 'The National Interest and Political Realism: Niebuhr's "Debate" with Morgenthau and Kennan', *Journal of Politics*, 22:4 (1960), p. 612; A. J. H. Murray, 'The Moral Politics of Hans Morgenthau', *Review of Politics*, 59:1 (1996), p. 84; Frei, *Hans J. Morgenthau*, p. 127; Michael C. Williams, 'Why Ideas Matter in International Relations: Hans Morgenthau, Classical Realism, and the Moral Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization*, 58:4 (2004), p. 634; Yutaka Miyashita, 'From International Law to International Morality, or was Hans J. Morgenthau a Realist before the Exile?', *Bulletin of Niigata University of International and Information Studies*, 12 (2009), pp. 134-5; and Seán Molloy, 'Hans J. Morgenthau Versus E. H. Carr: Conflicting Conceptions of Ethics in Realism', in Duncan Bell (ed), *Political Thought and International Relations. Variations on a Realist Theme* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 97-101.

<sup>25</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, 'Dilemmas of Politics', *International Affairs*, 35:4 (1959), p. 502.

“what he can”<sup>26</sup> is the drive to prove oneself its origin. It is entirely directed to gain and increase pleasure; in particular, challenging situations promise its highest surplus since they require overcoming obstacles by mastering non-routine situations.<sup>27</sup> Such situations assure one’s identity because they promise the appraisal of others.<sup>28</sup> However, only when, in these interpersonal relationships, the drive to prove oneself takes an explicit interest in humans, it becomes political, as the following quotation from *Science: Servant or Master?* demonstrates:

‘Thus the scholar seeking knowledge seeks power; so does the poet who endeavours to express his thoughts and feelings in words ... They all seek to assert themselves as individuals against the world by mastering it. It is only when they choose as their object other men that they enter the political sphere.’<sup>29</sup>

Second, human existence was for Morgenthau characterised by tragedy, as Richard Ned Lebow<sup>30</sup> asserts. This tragedy is a result of an excessiveness of the drive to prove oneself; the potential gain of pleasure and the objects to which that gain is directed are without limit.<sup>31</sup> In his doctoral thesis, Morgenthau remarked that all questions are applicable to this drive as they ‘are seized at random, irrespective of the actual content.’<sup>32</sup> As a result, an individual can aspire for satisfaction and pleasure; however, because of the drive’s limitlessness, such aspirations will never be achieved. In Morgenthau’s eyes, very few came close to achieving the pleasure principle. The love of Don Juan, Icarus’s striving for the sun,

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<sup>26</sup> Morgenthau, ‘Über die Herkunft des Politischen aus dem Wesen des Menschen’, p. 6 (my translation).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 26-7.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 31-2.

<sup>29</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?* (New York: New American Library, 1972), p. 31.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics. Ethics, Interests, and Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), chapter 6 and ‘Tragedy, Politics and Political Science’, in Richard Ned Lebow and Toni Erskine (eds), *Tragedy and International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). Also other scholars suggest this aspect; for example: Mark Chou, ‘Morgenthau, the Tragic. On Tragedy and the Transition from Scientific Man to Politics Among Nations’, *Telos*, 157 (2011).

<sup>31</sup> Morgenthau, ‘Über die Herkunft des Politischen aus dem Wesen des Menschen’, p. 70.

<sup>32</sup> Morgenthau, *Die internationale Rechtspflege*, pp. 126-7 (my translation).

and Faust's thirst for knowledge are such examples. More than a decade earlier, Morgenthau also included the imperial aspirations of Alexander the Great and Napoleon Bonaparte.<sup>33</sup> However, these were exceptions, and all of their aspirations failed. *Vanitas* is the leitmotif in the narratives of Don Juan, Icarus, and Faust, and Alexander and Napoleon also paid the price for their attempts to create an empire. Morgenthau elucidated a further tragedy in the drive to prove oneself in that its extreme limitlessness gets into conflict with the drive for self-preservation. Eventually, this conflict could endanger one's life and the lives of others.<sup>34</sup>

Subsequently, locating power in human nature, by characterising it as a constant urge of ideational self-realisation within interpersonal relationships, allowed Morgenthau to conceive a praxeological conceptualisation of power, in terms of its socio-political utilisation. For Morgenthau, as soon as people interact, power is created, and attempts to eradicate it are pointless; rather, attention needs to be paid on what kind of power is established. Morgenthau argued that power in its empirical form (*pouvoir*), that is, the ruthless and egoistic pursuit of the drive to prove oneself (the *animus dominandi*), allows for the depoliticisation of social life, as politics is reduced to an institutionalised understanding, whereas power in its normative form (*puissance*) establishes the political, as it enables people to pursue their interests and work together for a common good.

### **Pouvoir: Morgenthau's Empirical Concept of Power**

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 71; 'The Evil of Politics and the Ethics of Evil', *Ethics*, 56:1 (1945), p. 13; and *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, p. 166.

<sup>34</sup> Morgenthau, *Die internationale Rechtspflege*, pp. 75-7 and Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents and Other Works*, p. 117.

Morgenthau argued that in modern democracies, power was predominantly generated in the form of the *animus dominandi*: 'the desire for power'<sup>35</sup> and the lust for the domination of people. As illustrated in Morgenthau's statement, 'je constate simplement ce que je vois',<sup>36</sup> he had to deal with this concept *analytically*, since socio-political developments in modern societies had reduced power to a tool for domination.

Modern societies had voided people of their metaphysical foundation. Various unpublished manuscripts from the 1930s, in which Morgenthau elaborated on the reasons and effects of this dehumanising development, suggest that the dehumanising effects of this void concerned Morgenthau greatly.<sup>37</sup> But also in later years, Morgenthau expressed his disquiet as evidenced in *Science: Servant or Master?*.

The exact circumstances of these socio-political developments do not have to interest us here, as they have been further elaborated elsewhere.<sup>38</sup> For the argument of this article, it is merely important to recall that ideologies had gained momentum in the nineteenth century with the rise of nationalism, liberalism, conservatism, and socialism, and climaxed in the early twentieth century in fascism and communism. Morgenthau paid particular attention to nationalism, as its principle of sovereignty provided nation-states with the means to enforce homogeneity domestically through the institutionalisation of education,

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<sup>35</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, p. 165.

<sup>36</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, 'Positivisme mal Compris et Théorie Réaliste du Droit International', in Silvio A. Zavala (ed), *Colección de Estudios Históricos, Jurídicos, Pedagógicos y Literarios. Homenaje a D. Rafael Altamira* (Madrid: C. Bermejo, 1936), p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, 'Der Selbstmord mit gutem Gewissen. Zur Kritik des Pazifismus und der neuen deutschen Kriegsphilosophie', 1930 (Container 96, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC); 'Über den Sinn der Wissenschaft'; and Hans J. Morgenthau, 'Kann in unserer Zeit eine objektive Moralordnung aufgestellt werden? Wenn ja, worauf kann sie gegründet werden? Kennwort: Metaphysik', 1937 (Container 112, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC).

<sup>38</sup> Felix Rösch, 'The Human Condition of Politics: considering the Legacy of Hans J. Morgenthau for International Relations', *Journal of International Political Theory*, 9:1-2 (2013).

the re-interpretation of history, and the standardisation of an official language.<sup>39</sup> Generally, the rise of ideologies concerned Morgenthau because they restricted human drives and stripped people of their true capabilities. Elaborating on these consequences, Morgenthau further argued that ideologies leave people in mediocrity because their abilities are restrained into a bureaucratised order which supports the ideology and hinders free and reflective thinking.<sup>40</sup>

For Morgenthau, in an ideologised environment, the drive to prove oneself had to exhaust itself in the form of the *animus dominandi*; dehumanisation inhibits the ability for people to realise their potential and actively hinders them from contributing to the creation of their life-worlds. Morgenthau's terminology reveals that this empirical concept of power rested on Weber's well-known definition of power. Weber defined power as 'the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests.'<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Morgenthau provided a similar definition in *Politics Among Nations*. He remarked that '[p]olitical power is a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised. It gives the former control over certain actions of the latter through the impact which the former exerts on the latter's minds.'<sup>42</sup> However, reducing power to a lust for domination meant that interpersonal relationships were conflict-driven, and the potential for aggression was constantly looming. To hinder the outbreak of violence domestically,

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<sup>39</sup> Jack Snyder, 'Tensions with Realism: 1945 and after', in Nicolas Guilhot (ed), *The Invention of International Relations Theory. Realism, the Rockefeller Foundation and the 1954 Conference on Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 58.

<sup>40</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, 'The Social Crisis in America: Hedonism of Status Quo', *Chicago Review*, 14:2 (1960). Equally: 'Letter to Bryon Dobell', 9<sup>th</sup> July 1968 (Container 43, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC).

<sup>41</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretative Sociology. Volume I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 53.

<sup>42</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), p. 32.

nation-states had to assertively erect moral, societal, and/or legal restraints, which Morgenthau examined in his post-doctoral thesis *La Réalité des Normes*.<sup>43</sup> Without such restraints, the existence of nation-states could be threatened.

Yet, on the international level, there would be at best moral restrictions to hinder people from seeking to fulfil their lust for domination. But these restrictions were also eliminated through the ruthless employment of ‘cultural blinders’<sup>44</sup> by nation-states, which encouraged people to pursue their lust for domination on the international level. By identifying with the nation-state, especially during times of crisis, people could satisfy their lust by receiving a share of the power a nation-state acquires on the international scene.<sup>45</sup> For Morgenthau, one of these cultural blinders was the fetishisation of masculinity, as he argued that this was one of the causes for the outbreak of World War I.<sup>46</sup> World War II and the Shoah were additional personal experiences for Morgenthau which demonstrated the devastation this lust can create.

Morgenthau also borrowed the consequences of this conceptualisation of power for the international level from Weber. In *Politics as a Vocation*, which, according to Robbie Shilliam, Morgenthau read enthusiastically,<sup>47</sup> Weber noted that ‘[w]hen we say that a question is “political” ... we always mean the same thing. This is that the interests involved in the distribution or preservation of power, or a shift in power, play a decisive role in resolving

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<sup>43</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *La Réalité des Normes. En particulier des Normes du Droit International. Fondement d’une Théorie des Normes* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1934). This point is also raised in: Seán Molloy, ‘Realism: a Problematic Paradigm’, *Security Dialogue*, 34:1 (2003), p. 83.

<sup>44</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Political Theory and International Affairs. Hans J. Morgenthau on Aristotle’s The Politics*. Edited by Anthony F. Lang Jr. (Westport: Praeger, 2004), p. 36.

<sup>45</sup> Schuett, ‘Freudian Roots of Political Realism’, pp. 61-6 and William E. Scheuerman, *Hans Morgenthau. Realism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), pp. 37-8. A critical discussion of this point is provided in: William E. Scheuerman, *The Realist Case for Global Reform* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), pp. 49-53.

<sup>46</sup> Morgenthau, ‘Der Selbstmord mit gutem Gewissen’.

<sup>47</sup> Robbie Shilliam, ‘Morgenthau in Context: German Backwardness, German Intellectuals and the Rise and Fall of a Liberal Project’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 13:3 (2007), p. 312.

that question.’<sup>48</sup> Morgenthau’s biographer Frei ascertained that he already referred to these strategies in a footnote in his doctoral thesis, but only in *La Notion du Politique* did he become explicit.<sup>49</sup> Power ‘can aim to maintain acquired power, to increase it, or to manifest it.’<sup>50</sup> Another 15 years later, in his seminal *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau equally noted that ‘[a]ll politics ... reveals three basic patterns ... either to keep power, to increase power, or to demonstrate power.’<sup>51</sup> Indeed, Morgenthau devoted a good deal of *Politics Among Nations* to the meticulous analysis of these different forms of empirical power. This intellectual congruence of Morgenthau and Weber, in their understanding of empirical power, led numerous scholars to comment on Morgenthau as an apologist of power politics.<sup>52</sup>

However, *Politics Among Nations* cannot be read as a theory of international politics because Morgenthau argued that a theory, which aims ‘... to reduce international relations to a system of abstract propositions with a predictive function,’<sup>53</sup> is ahistoric. For this reason, theories, which neglect the specific contingencies that had led to political events neither improve the theoretical understanding of international politics nor are they useful as guidelines for political action. Morgenthau did not rule out the possibility of developing a theory of international politics, but its scope would be limited because no theory could consider all the potential historical contingencies.<sup>54</sup> *Politics Among Nations* also does not lend itself as evidence for the foundation of a Morgenthauian *Realpolitik*, but recent

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<sup>48</sup> Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures. Science as a Vocation. Politics as a Vocation* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004), p. 33.

<sup>49</sup> Frei, *Hans J. Morgenthau*, p. 130 and Morgenthau, *Die internationale Rechtspflege*, p. 59.

<sup>50</sup> Morgenthau, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 106.

<sup>51</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 52.

<sup>52</sup> Examples are: Tarak Barkawi, ‘Strategy as a Vocation: Weber, Morgenthau and Modern Strategic Studies’, *Review of International Studies*, 24:2 (1998); Pichler, ‘The Godfathers of “Truth”’; and Turner, ‘Hans J. Morgenthau and the Legacy of Max Weber’.

<sup>53</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics in the Twentieth Century*, p. 65.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69. See as well: Seán Molloy, ‘Truth, Power, Theory: Hans Morgenthau’s Formulation of Realism’, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 15:1 (2004), pp. 6-7.

scholarship argues that *Politics Among Nations* has to be viewed as ‘historically and politically contingent’<sup>55</sup>, in other words spatially and temporally conditioned. Indeed, a closer examination demonstrates Morgenthau’s intention to write a counter-ideology to nationalism and fascism, rather than a theory as he acknowledged in the preface.<sup>56</sup> Correspondingly, the concept of power, as Morgenthau understood and presented it in *Politics Among Nations*, was the empirically dominant version in an ideologised world; normatively speaking, however, he fundamentally opposed an understanding of power that was reduced to an unhindered lust for domination. In an academically much referred letter to Michael Oakeshott<sup>57</sup>, written shortly after the first issue of *Politics Among Nations* was published, Morgenthau argued that ideologisation had reduced the creative abilities of humans and left them intellectually unaware of their actual capabilities to create their life-worlds, which is why ‘[m]an is tragic because he cannot do what he ought to do.’<sup>58</sup> This explains why Morgenthau was initially reluctant to re-issue *Politics Among Nations* as evidenced in his month-long correspondence with his editor Robert Shugg at Alfred Knopf. However, the rise of the Cold War eventually convinced Morgenthau that the age of ideologies was far from over and *Politics Among Nations* had yet to serve its needs as he

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<sup>55</sup> Hartmut Behr, *A History of International Political Theory: Ontologies of the International* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 215. More on *Politics Among Nations*: Seán Molloy, *The Hidden History of Realism. A Genealogy of Power Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), pp. 82-85.

<sup>56</sup> *Politics Among Nations* was only later transformed into a textbook because of the lack of textbooks on International Relations at that time, its unprecedented success, when numerous American colleges and universities adopted it as the textbook for their undergraduate courses on International Politics, and the insistence of Morgenthau’s publisher Knopf. To adjust *Politics Among Nations* more to the requirements of a textbook the “Six Principles of Political Realism” were added to the second edition. See the correspondence in Container 121, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

<sup>57</sup> For example: Richard Ned Lebow, ‘The Ancient Greeks and Modern Realism: Ethics, Persuasion and Power’, in Duncan Bell (ed), *Political Thought and international Relations. Variations on a Realist Theme* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 37; Oliver Jütersonke, *Morgenthau, Law and Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 139; and Nicholas Rengger, ‘Tragedy or Scepticism? Defending the Anti-Pelagian Mind in World Politics’, in Richard Ned Lebow and Toni Erskine (eds), *Tragedy and International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 57.

<sup>58</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, ‘Letter to Michael Oakeshott’, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1948 (Container 44, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC).

repeated the assessment he had given to Oakeshott in a different letter almost 15 years later.<sup>59</sup>

### **Puissance: Morgenthau's Normative Concept of Power**

Normatively, Morgenthau aspired for a different kind of power. He reasoned that '[t]o say that a political action has no moral purpose is absurd' because 'political action can be defined as an attempt to realize moral values through the medium of politics, that is, power.'<sup>60</sup> *Puissance*, the form of power he argued would be the defining factor in politics, is, therefore, not characterised by domination. Rather, people are empowered to act together, through the alignment of their antagonism of interests, in order to create their life-world through self-determination.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, although Ty Solomon is right to argue that Morgenthau's concept of power is more than the *animus dominandi* side of the drive for self-preservation, he is mistaken to believe that 'power can only construct a façade of union.'<sup>62</sup> In short, whereas *pouvoir* is ultimately a negative concept, with *puissance* Morgenthau achieved a positive concept of power.<sup>63</sup>

### *Amor Fati and Amor Mundi*

Morgenthau found intellectual stimulation in Nietzsche for his positive concept of power, which is an expression of Morgenthau's deep-rooted humanism, or what Hannah Arendt

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<sup>59</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, 'Letter to Richard S. Cohen', 4<sup>th</sup> October 1962 (Container 10, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC).

<sup>60</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics in the Twentieth Century*, p. 110.

<sup>61</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, 'Power as a Political Concept', in Roland Young (ed), *Approaches to the Study of Politics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), p. 75.

<sup>62</sup> Solomon, 'Human Nature and the Limits of the Self', p. 211.

<sup>63</sup> This optimism is also acknowledged in Richard Ned Lebow's recent 'German Jews and American Realism', *Constellations*, 18:4 (2011).

would have called *amor mundi*<sup>64</sup>. In order to love the world, people had at first to embrace their destiny, Nietzsche's *amor fati*<sup>65</sup>. For Nietzsche, this embracement is the initial recognition of the eternal recurrence – a concept that contradicted any teleological life-stories, and is epitomised in Nietzsche's nihilistic concept of time and space. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche noted that '[e]verything goes, everything returns; the wheel of existence rolls forever. Everything dies, everything blossoms anew; the year of existence runs on forever ... Everything departs, everything meets again; the ring of existence is true to itself forever.'<sup>66</sup> Morgenthau was convinced that if people understood this initial aimlessness and meaninglessness, they would understand that modern societies' ideologisation had deprived them of their ability to construct their own life-worlds and that they would consequently develop and use their actual abilities.

Nonetheless, Morgenthau was also aware that this nihilism of life can be, at least in the beginning, disappointing to humans, since it 'offers with each answer new questions, with each victory a new disappointment, and thus seems to lead nowhere. In this labyrinth of unconnected causal connections man discovers many little answers but no answer to the great questions of his life, no meaning, no direction.'<sup>67</sup> Countless combinations of actions and reactions provide a myriad of eternally recurrent moments, which evolve without pre-prescribed purpose or aim. However, Nietzsche's concept does not imply surrendering to the nihilism of life, but overcoming it. In a later work, Nietzsche accentuated that '[t]he unalterable sequence of certain phenomena demonstrates no "law" but a power

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<sup>64</sup> Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt. For Love of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 324.

<sup>65</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science. With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 157.

<sup>66</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for Everyone and No One* (London: Penguin, 1969), p. 234.

<sup>67</sup> Morgenthau, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, p. 176.

relationship between two or more forces.<sup>68</sup> People do not have to agonise about these returning moments, but they can choose to affirm and endorse them. This is the *amor fati*, the embracing of one's destiny. Endorsing such recurrences means relating the initially meaningless moments to oneself and, thereby, by altering them ever so slightly, transform them into significant situations. Such a positive attribution enables people to overcome their surrounding nihilism, since, as the literary theorist Lee Spinks mentions, they recognise that 'life is an eternal movement of becoming.'<sup>69</sup>

However, accepting the *amor fati* not only is disappointing at the beginning, but it also denotes a dolorous affair, because it causes, in György Lukács's words, 'transcendental homelessness.'<sup>70</sup> As such, people yearn for the transcendental shelter of ontological security<sup>71</sup> which ideologies provide with a carefree, clearly structured life through standardised conceptions of reason, virtue, justice, and even pity and happiness. But people pay a high price for this ontological security as their subjectivity is being negated. Only when they accept their fate they can become an *Übermensch*. Lately, Neacsu reasoned that this Nietzschean concept provided Morgenthau with the ideal for what is required to arrive at a positive connotation of power.<sup>72</sup> The recognition of the eternal recurrence, and concurrently the renunciation of an ideologised life through encyclopaedic knowledge, and the ability to intellectually alienate oneself from one's life-world enable an understanding of

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<sup>68</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 336.

<sup>69</sup> Lee Spinks, *Friedrich Nietzsche* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 131.

<sup>70</sup> György Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel. A Historic-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*, (London: Merlin Press, 1963), p. 41.

<sup>71</sup> Ontological security is understood here in Anthony Giddens's sense. Ideologies furnish people in their yearning to give meaning to the social world and establish their identity within it not only with the ontological framework that allows them to do so and thereby gain security, but there is also a reification of the ideology through social structures and institutions. Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Reality. Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), p. 375.

<sup>72</sup> Neacsu, *Hans J. Morgenthau's Theory of International Relations*, p. 99.

knowledge-power relations, how they are temporally and spatially conditioned, and consider their influence on society.

The *Übermensch* epitomises the ability to recognise *and* the will to overcome the surrounding nihilistic world. Through self-restraint, self-assurance, and self-reflection, one is able to refer the ever-recurrent moments to oneself. Morgenthau argued, in congruence with Nietzsche, that this would create meaning and eventually identity. Therefore, Morgenthau viewed *puissance* as the ability to create an identity that is not achieved through distinction from otherness, but in togetherness through one's own will. It is for this reason that Morgenthau deplored the absence of the qualities of an *Übermensch* in *Science: Servant or Master?*:

'[t]his meaningless and aimless activity may convey the superficial appearance of an abundant dynamism trying to transform the empirical world. In truth, however, it is not the pressure of creative force but flight from his true task that drives man beyond himself through action. In the intoxication of incessant activity, man tries to forget the question posed by the metaphysical shock. Yet, since the noise of the active world can drown out that question but cannot altogether silence it, complete oblivion, which is coincident with the end of consciousness itself, becomes the unacknowledged ultimate aim.'<sup>73</sup>

Achieving the stage of an *Übermensch*, through the ability to create one's own identity, is total liberation since '[w]illing liberates: that is the true doctrine of will and freedom.'<sup>74</sup> It liberates people from the reactionary forces of ideologies that control the constructions of life-worlds, through enforcing ostensibly eternal dichotomies, in order to affirm the *status quo* because such dichotomies do not have universal meaning; rather, they are created to

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<sup>73</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, pp. 48-9.

<sup>74</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 111.

legitimise cultural habits and policies.<sup>75</sup> Morgenthau's refusal of such simplifying dichotomies is stipulated in a letter from 1968 in which he located the reason for the student protests of the 1960s within this ideologisation because it obstructed people to participate in the political arena.<sup>76</sup> Morgenthau saw politics as a social realm, in which people would (and should) not have to succumb to structural obligations manifested in dichotomies of good and bad, right and wrong, or friend and enemy, for which Morgenthau had criticised Carl Schmitt.<sup>77</sup> Rather, *puissance* enabled people to follow their interests and participate in the creation of their own life-world.

This liberation through meaning-attribution is epitomised in an at first glance peculiar, yet in its peculiarity very forceful example: death. Questions of death concerned Morgenthau throughout his career. References are to be found in his earliest unpublished manuscripts, such as *Suicide with a Good Conscience*, and in his last academic contributions, such as *Science: Servant or Master?*. In the latter study, Morgenthau claimed that even death is a form of liberation. Certainly, death 'is the very negation of all men experiences as specifically human in his existence: the consciousness of himself and of his world, the remembrance of things past and the ambitions of things to come, a creativeness in thought and action that aspires to ... the eternal.'<sup>78</sup> Still, Morgenthau argued that, even for humans who disapproved of religious discourses of eternity or ideological promises of immortality, death would signify no end of liberation. In their efforts to actively give meaning to life, they leave pieces of reminiscence behind through which people have an influence on their life-worlds even after their death. Furthermore, even death itself can become a liberating

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., pp. 84-6.

<sup>76</sup> Morgenthau, 'Letter to Bryon Dobell'.

<sup>77</sup> Morgenthau, *The Concept of the Political* and 'Einige logische Bemerkungen zu Carl Schmitt's Begriff des Politischen', 1934-1935 (Container 110, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC).

<sup>78</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, p. 144.

experience since – by committing suicide with a good conscience – people master their biological death by choosing the place, time, and even the tenor of their own death.<sup>79</sup>

To summarise so far, on his way to establish a positive connotation of power, Morgenthau relied primarily on his ‘Jugendliebe’ (adolescent love): Nietzsche.<sup>80</sup> It was the study of Nietzsche’s work that enabled Morgenthau to conceptualise power as the ability and will to discern. To understand the nihilism and to overcome it by attaching value to initially insignificant moments – hence, by alluding one’s surrounding world to oneself – the will to power finds its expression. Nietzsche remarked that ‘[m]an first implanted values into things to maintain himself – he created the meaning of things, a human meaning ... Only through evaluation is there value: and without evaluation the nut of existence would be hollow.’<sup>81</sup> Morgenthau used this ‘psychological factor ... the will to power’<sup>82</sup> by arguing that, as a *homo faber*, one embeds ‘his biological existence within technological and social artefacts that survive that existence. His imagination creates new worlds of religion, art, and reason that live after their creator.’<sup>83</sup>

### *Power as the Ability to Act*

As Morgenthau’s diction in *Science: Servant or Master?* indicates, for the final step in elaborating *puissance* Morgenthau is concordant with Arendt. In his manuscript on metaphysics, he moved on from Nietzsche because he had realised that Nietzsche’s will to power only accentuated the individual, but ignored social relations *and*, more importantly, did not provide answers for what *kind* of society these relations constructed. Like the

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., pp. 144-5.

<sup>80</sup> Christoph Frei, *Hans J. Morgenthau. Eine intellektuelle Biographie* (Bern: Paul Haupt, 1994), p. 102.

<sup>81</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 85.

<sup>82</sup> Morgenthau, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 106.

<sup>83</sup> Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, p. 146.

sociologist Georg Simmel, with whose work Morgenthau was well acquainted,<sup>84</sup> Morgenthau did not endorse Nietzsche's view of a pre-existing reality which considered the will to power and its achievement as the highest ethical value in itself. Rather, the will to power has to be implemented for the achievement of the common good, since 'there is nothing more senseless for the human conscience than a morale which is indifferent to the dissolution of human society.'<sup>85</sup>

Contrastingly, the 'thinking partnership'<sup>86</sup> with Arendt enabled Morgenthau to consider the effects of power for a society at large. Despite the importance of this thinking partnership for Morgenthau's concept of power (*and* indeed to his entire world-view), it still awaits a more comprehensive elaboration. Christoph Rohde rightfully contends in his monograph on Morgenthau that his concept of power was influenced by Arendt, but only comes to this conclusion after giving a lengthy analysis of Morgenthau's intellectual indebtedness to Nietzsche and Weber.<sup>87</sup> Patricia Owens also recently earned merits for elaborating Arendt's ethic of reality and for making her accessible to current realist scholarship, but her focus on Arendt did not allow her to further elaborate this intellectual relationship.<sup>88</sup> The most thorough elaboration on Arendt and Morgenthau to date was provided by Douglas Klumeyer. In his discussion of Arendt's, Morgenthau's, and George Kennan's stance on the Shoah, he showed that, despite their similar life-trajectories (in the case of Arendt and

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<sup>84</sup> Georg Simmel, *Philosophie der Mode. Die Religion. Kant und Goethe. Schopenhauer und Nietzsche. Gesamtausgabe Band 10* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), pp. 361-2 and Frei, *Hans J. Morgenthau*, p. 100.

<sup>85</sup> Morgenthau, 'Kann in unserer Zeit eine objektive Moralordnung aufgestellt werden?', p. 88 (my translation).

<sup>86</sup> Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, p. XV.

<sup>87</sup> Christoph Rohde, *Hans J. Morgenthau und der weltpolitische Realismus* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2004), p. 98.

<sup>88</sup> Patricia Owens, 'The Ethic of Reality in Hannah Arendt', in Duncan Bell (ed), *Political Thought and international Relations. Variations on a Realist Theme* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Morgenthau), the Shoah became only central to Arendt's political thought.<sup>89</sup> However, Klusmeyer also tells the reader little about their strong conceptual congruence.

In order to elaborate their similar conceptualisation of normative power, we have to turn to Arendt's study *On Violence* from 1970.<sup>90</sup> As the late publication date of Arendt's study would indicate, this is not to argue that Arendt copied Morgenthau's concept or vice versa, but the term "thinking partnership" signifies that both were intellectually rooted in Continental European humanities. This intellectual background, in combination with their academic and personal exchanges, fostered similar understandings of power.

For Arendt, '[p]ower corresponds to the human ability not just to act but act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together.'<sup>91</sup> Power signifies the consent of people to temporarily come together in collective speech and action, in order to create institutions, laws, and norms.<sup>92</sup> For Arendt and Morgenthau, power was not a means, but was an end in itself, which explains that both scholars distinguished between power and violence.<sup>93</sup> This distinction is epitomised in Morgenthau's stance towards the aforementioned student protests. He argued that violent outbreaks were a consequence of the disempowerment of students. In other words, they protested against their inability to contribute to the creation of their life-worlds, an inability caused by the ideological affirmation of the *status quo*.<sup>94</sup>

Correspondingly, as recent scholarship has argued, violence is a potential consequence

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<sup>89</sup> Douglas Klusmeyer, 'Hannah Arendt's Critical *Realism*: Power, Justice, and Responsibility', in Anthony F. Lang Jr. and John Williams (eds), *Hannah Arendt and International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) and 'Beyond Tragedy: Hannah Arendt and Hans Morgenthau on Responsibility, Evil, and Political Ethics', *International Studies Review*, 11 (2009).

<sup>90</sup> Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, pp. 424-5.

<sup>91</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1970), p. 44.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51; Hannah Arendt, *Denken ohne Geländer. Texte und Briefe* (Munich: Piper, 2005), pp. 92-3; Morgenthau, *Die internationale Rechtspflege*, p. 51; and *The Concept of the Political*, pp. 106-7. See as well: Williams, 'Why Ideas Matter', p. 645.

<sup>94</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, 'But are they allowed to do that?', *Christian Science Monitor*, 19<sup>th</sup> July 1968, p. 9.

when *puissance* is absent and it is a characteristic of *pouvoir*. Power is only legitimised through collective action as Morgenthau, like Arendt, clearly distinguished in *Politics Among Nations* between legitimate power (*puissance*) and illegitimate power (*pouvoir*).<sup>95</sup>

For Morgenthau, power was an end since only through its achievement is it possible to create a good life for humans in a society.<sup>96</sup> The good life, which is directed to acquire a common good (*bonum commune*), 'is a life that is led by justice, which is also indicated by the general conception of politics ... that the philosophy of politics is really a subdivision of ethics.'<sup>97</sup> Admittedly, this definition is murky. In a letter from 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1958, Morgenthau was more explicit about the meaning of a good life, yet it is still a basic and broad definition. It was now defined as 'the preservation of life and freedom in the sense of the Judeo-Christian tradition and ... of Kantian philosophy.'<sup>98</sup> About 20 years later, Morgenthau largely repeated this definition in one of his last public lectures.<sup>99</sup> Certainly, criticism of Morgenthau for not further investigating this kind of sociation is legitimate. Nevertheless, the absence of a clearer definition of the good life in Morgenthau's work demonstrates that it was, like so many of his concepts, flexible, in which particular content was based on the compromise of the involved peoples' interests.<sup>100</sup> Morgenthau argued, by referring to Karl Mannheim's *Standortgebundenheit*<sup>101</sup>, that, because of the temporal and spatial conditionality of knowledge, concepts do not have a pre-inscribed absolute meaning and/or

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<sup>95</sup> Rohde, *Hans J. Morgenthau und der weltpolitische Realismus*, p. 98 and Owens, 'The Ethic of Reality in Hannah Arendt', p. 110.

<sup>96</sup> Morgenthau, *Political Theory and International Affairs*, p. 30.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>98</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, 'Letter to Edward Dew', 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1958 (Container 17, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC).

<sup>99</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Human Rights and Foreign Policy* (New York: Council on Religion and International Affairs, 1979), p. 25.

<sup>100</sup> Another example for the flexibility of Morgenthau's concepts is his understanding of the national interest, as remarked in: Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, p. 245. This conceptual flexibility repeatedly caused academic discomfort and particularly Morgenthau's concept of power was criticised as not being scientific enough. See, for example: Robert O. Keohane, 'Realism, Neorealism, and the Study of World Politics', in Robert O. Keohane (ed), *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 10.

<sup>101</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 72-3.

scope. As a result, Morgenthau cannot be seen as having an *a priori* concept of the good life, but acknowledged that people may have different understandings of it. Merely, the integrity of human life and dignity were considered by Morgenthau as its basic elements upon which a 'sphere of elasticity'<sup>102</sup> has to be established. For Morgenthau, this public sphere enables the development of a common good. The antagonism of interests could take place freely and peacefully in this sphere because it allows people aligning these interests. In this context, the task of political leaders is to have a broad *telos* in mind, since they have to support this alignment by considering all these interests while leading communities towards the achievement of the common good. Morgenthau noted in one of his lectures on Aristotle: '[t]he virtue of a good ruler is identical with a good man. Because the good ruler, having to preside over a human society of which all human beings are members, must promote ... the telos of man as such.'<sup>103</sup>

From this follows that power was for Morgenthau, like Arendt, a collective affair that enables people to constantly construct their life-worlds by forming societies as temporal manifestations of the common good. People achieve these manifestations through the alignment of their antagonism of interests. It is people's wilful construction of the life-world that makes Morgenthau's concept of power an expression of his *amor mundi*.

## **Conclusion**

From this discussion of Morgenthau's dualistic concept of power, we can draw two conclusions which are of significance for International Relations.

First, it has implications for the sociology of the knowledge of the discipline. It was demonstrated that Morgenthau did not measure power in terms of material or

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<sup>102</sup> Morgenthau, *The Concept of the Political*, pp. 123-6.

<sup>103</sup> Morgenthau, *Political Theory and International Affairs*, p. 91.

technological capacity as it was common among his American academic coevals.<sup>104</sup> He also did not follow exclusively Weber or Freud by promoting a concept of power that fostered socio-political domination, although he analytically dealt with this *animus dominandi* as evidenced most famously in *Politics Among Nations*. Rather, by building upon Nietzsche and in agreement with Arendt, power was for Morgenthau a temporally and spatially conditioned collective affair whose intention it is to transcend the natural limitations of humans if they act on their own. Therefore, this article is a contribution to discerning the complexity of Morgenthau's concept of power – in terms of its intellectual fundament, epistemological framework, and normative outlook – whose misunderstanding originates from the difficulties (sometimes even impossibility) to translate words in their entire cultural, historical, and philosophical meaning. Hartmut Behr and William Bain have convincingly elaborated that without the necessary language skills and knowledge about the Continental European history of thought an analysis of Morgenthau ends in distortion.<sup>105</sup>

To avoid such misinterpretations, an intellectual engagement with Morgenthau requires a contextualisation into the academic culture and intellectual tradition in which his thought evolved. Focusing on the intellectual relationship to one scholar offers the advantage to be able to analyse this specific relationship comprehensively. However, it bears the risk of overemphasising its role for the development of Morgenthau's political thought, and, what is more, it cannot trace this development because his spatial and temporal conditionality of knowledge is reduced to one relation. In the case of previous elaborations of Morgenthau,

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<sup>104</sup> Nicolas Guilhot, 'The Realist Gambit: Postwar American Political Science and the Birth of IR Theory', *International Political Sociology*, 2:4 (2008).

<sup>105</sup> William Bain, 'Deconfusing Morgenthau: Moral Inquiry and Classical Realism Reconsidered,' *Review of International Studies*, 26:3 (2000); Hartmut Behr, 'Misreading in International Relations Theory. Ideologiekritische Anmerkungen zum Realismus und Neo-Realismus', *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft*, 15:1 (2005); and Hartmut Behr and Amelia Heath, 'Misreading in IR Theory and Ideology Critique: Morgenthau, Waltz, and Neo-Realism', *Review of International Studies*, 35:2 (2009).

scholarship rightfully stressed that there is an intellectual congruence to Weber and Freud, but Morgenthau's fundamental opposition to power as *pouvoir* was left unnoticed. Hence, only when we put the concept – in this case power – in the focus of a careful contextualisation is it possible to gain a wider perspective of its meaning and usage, which in turns allows us to ask ourselves if, and how, it is of relevance for International Relations in the twenty-first century.

This leads to the second conclusion to be drawn from the discussion of Morgenthau's concept of power. Envisioning power as *puissance*, Morgenthau, like many other European émigré scholars, stands in the tradition of stressing the human factor of politics.<sup>106</sup> Of course, this refers to Arendt's *The Human Condition*, but Herbert Marcuse, Eric Voegelin, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Waldemar Gurian<sup>107</sup> were also critical of the rising influence of rationalism, empiricism, and idealism in Western democracies and consequently turned against any effort to socially plan the world through measuring and controlling human behaviour. *Puissance*, therefore, helps to face post-democratic tendencies in Western societies.

Post-democracies are characterised by Colin Crouch as states with governments which removed the political from more and more aspects of social life, succumbing them to rationalisation measures. This depoliticisation rests on the assumption that the common good is an objective quantity and the antagonism of interests is not to be carried out in

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<sup>106</sup> This aspect is increasingly of interest for International Relations scholarship, as evidenced in: Chris Brown, 'The "Practice Turn", *Phronesis*, and Classical Realism: Towards a Phronetic International Political Theory', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, 40:3 (2012); Solomon, 'Human Nature and the Limits of the Self'; or Rösch, 'The Human Condition of Politics'. Recently, also the Leverhulme Trust granted a research network with the intention to further examine this aspect: <http://research.ncl.ac.uk/classicalrealism>.

<sup>107</sup> The latter is largely forgotten today in International Relations. However, there was a recent re-assessment of his life and work: Ellen Thümmler, *Katholischer Publizist und amerikanischer Politikwissenschaftler. Eine intellektuelle Biografie Waldemar Gurians* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2011).

democratic processes, but resolved through administrative acts.<sup>108</sup> Chantal Mouffe also argues in this vein by criticising the presumption that conflicts can be resolved through finding a consensus. For Mouffe, following Schmitt, this is presumptuous because ‘[t]he political cannot be grasped by ... rationalism for the simple reason that every consistent rationalism requires negating the irreducibility of antagonism.’ This is the case because ‘... what antagonism reveals is the very limit of any rational consensus [by bringing to the fore the inescapable moment of decision].’<sup>109</sup> Rather, democracies have to ensure that the potentially violent antagonisms are reduced to an “agonism” in which there still exists a dichotomy of otherness, but the conflicting parties accept at least each other’s legitimacy. However, according to a recent study by Frank-Olaf Radtke, the depoliticisation does not only hinder the establishment of agonistic conflicts, but even creates antagonism. In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, White Papers were issued and programs were set up under the catchphrase of a “dialogue of cultures”.<sup>110</sup> The purpose of these dialogues was to establish a cultural consensus within a national context. However, despite good intentions, these institutionalised dialogues failed to establish consensus because they were not conceived as an open process with equal rights. Rather, they were set up with the intention to affirm the *status quo*, in which the immigrating minority has to adopt the regulations of the majority. What is more, these dialogues reduced culture to ethnic-religious otherness and thereby created an irrevocable we-they dichotomy that had not existed before.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Colin Crouch, *Post-Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), chapter 1 and *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), chapter 7.

<sup>109</sup> Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 12.

<sup>110</sup> Examples are: Council of Europe, *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. “Living Together as Equals in Dignity”* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2008) and European Commission, *Highlights of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009).

<sup>111</sup> Frank-Olaf Radtke, *Kulturen sprechen nicht. Die Politik grenzüberschreitender Dialoge* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2011), pp. 12-25.

A Morgenthauian inspired scholarship critically reflects on this depoliticisation in Western democracies by analytically exploring the empirical concept of power (*pouvoir*) and equally asks for a normative invigoration of the political realm. *Puissance* aims to re-establish the political so that people can interact in debates, experience the antagonism of interests, and discuss ways to ensure a common good. These debates, or “discussion[s]”<sup>112</sup>, as Morgenthau called them, can re-empower people because they allow them to wilfully create their life-world together. *Puissance* goes therefore beyond contemporary discussions of depoliticisation. Morgenthau did not conceive the antagonism of interests as a Schmittian inspired dichotomy of friend and enemy, but acknowledges each interest in its own right and positively embraces the creative potential of these antagonisms.

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<sup>112</sup> Morgenthau, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 126.