



Morgenthau, Law and Realism

OLIVER JÜTERSONKE

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Although widely regarded as the ‘founding father’ of realism in International Relations, this book argues that Hans J. Morgenthau’s legal background has largely been neglected in discussions of his place in the ‘canon’ of IR theory. Morgenthau was a legal scholar of German-Jewish origins who arrived in the United States in 1938. He went on to become a distinguished professor of Political Science and a prominent commentator on international affairs. Rather than locate Morgenthau’s intellectual heritage in the German tradition of *Realpolitik*, this book demonstrates how many of his central ideas and concepts stem from European and American legal debates of the 1920s and 1930s. This is an ambitious attempt to recast the debate on Morgenthau and will appeal to IR scholars interested in the history of realism as well as international lawyers engaged in debates regarding the relationship between law and politics, and the history of International Law.

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For my parents,

Elke and Manfred J. Jütersonke

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Preface

Why another monograph on Hans J. Morgenthau? That question, perhaps posed by many picking up this book, is indeed a legitimate one. Ever since his rise to fame in the 1950s with his textbook, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, plenty has been written on the ‘realist theory of international politics’ advocated therein. Revolving around the notion of the (national) ‘interest defined in terms of power’, Morgenthau’s work was for decades part of the standard repertoire of practically every introductory course in the field of International Relations, in both the anglophone world and beyond. Moreover, his outspoken views on Vietnam, nuclear deterrence and Middle East peace made Morgenthau a known quantity in foreign policy and media circles. Hans Morgenthau was, in many respects, one of the leading public intellectuals in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s.¹ The multitudinous secondary literature and commentary on the man and his ideas bears testimony to this status.

In short, the present text is a reaction to a recent revival, starting in the late 1990s, of the work of Morgenthau in the academic field of International Relations. With the Cold War over and the global cards reshuffled towards asymmetric warfare and invisible enemies, scholars began looking around for inspiration from the ‘classics’ to fill the apparent void left by a body of theory that was perceived as being of decreasing utility for the twenty-first century. Hans Morgenthau was one of those rehabilitated. Rereading the texts, his work appeared much more sophisticated than the crude

¹ He is not to be confused with his namesake Henry Morgenthau Jr (1891–1967), who served in Franklin D. Roosevelt’s administration and is best known for his 1944 ‘Morgenthau Plan’ of wanting to deindustrialize and partition post-war Germany into a series of agrarian statelets.

power politics privileged by standard interpretations of his thought, instead offering avenues for addressing issues of morality and ethics in debates on the global war on terrorism, for instance. Such normative considerations, it was argued, tended to be occluded by the more scientific neo-realist approaches that had originally replaced Morgenthau's 'human nature realism'. Yet while this revival of Morgenthau's work is undoubtedly merited and represents, as a whole, an important contribution to the 'disciplinary history' of the relatively new field of International Relations, it continues to mystify why the legal origins of Morgenthau's thought remain unstudied. Before rising to fame at the University of Chicago, Morgenthau was an aspiring legal scholar trying to make a name for himself in Frankfurt, Geneva, Madrid, New York and Kansas City. Bar a number of fragmentary exceptions, the recent literature on Morgenthau has not deemed it worthwhile to formulate – and elaborate upon – the fact that the realist thought of one of its 'founding fathers' was derived from debates that arose in the 1920s and early 1930s as a reaction to the predominant formalist norm-positivism of German and American legal theory. While these intellectual origins have been recognized, and expressed, by a number of scholars in the field of International Law, the consequences of such insights have yet to resonate in International Relations theory.

In a nutshell, Morgenthau's legal formalist heritage incited him to make repeated calls for greater emphasis on the 'reality' of international legal norms, a reality reflected in the restricted scope and weak normativity of the system of sanctions offered by international dispute settlement mechanisms and institutions. His popular American works published in the 1940s and 1950s constitute an attempt to make the convictions he held about the nature of law compatible with his new, non-legal audience. Morgenthau the émigré jurist faced the dual challenge of addressing a readership that was versed in a different literature and used different cultural reference points, and of having to move from the field of Law to Political Science. Works such as *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* or *In Defense of the National Interest* cannot be understood without taking this institutional and ideational setting into account.

This book does not offer a radically different reading of Morgenthau that necessarily challenges existing, standard renditions of his thought. To be sure, those looking for instances of a

rather crude realism that posits international politics as being a pure struggle for power waged by self-interested actors will have no trouble finding such statements in Morgenthau's writings. What I am interested in, however, is fleshing out *why* and *on what basis* Morgenthau came to take on the views that he did. As the following chapters will attempt to show, answering these questions requires a more accurate contextualization of the legal debates Morgenthau was engaged in prior to becoming the advocate of power politics for which he is remembered.

Writing another biography of Morgenthau is not the purpose of this monograph. Although being informed by, and at times drawing on, unpublished material from the Morgenthau archives in Washington, New York, Oxford and Geneva, this book does not attempt to give an exhaustive overview of Morgenthau's thought, his work, or of the man himself. It does not deal critically with the reception of *Politics Among Nations* in subsequent conceptualizations of scientific, structural and neo-realist approaches in International Relations theory. It does not analyse the reception of Morgenthau's realism in US foreign policy circles, and his influence on the likes of George F. Kennan and Henry Kissinger. It does not engage with Morgenthau's strong denunciation of the Vietnam War and the policies of the Johnson administration, and it does not address his at times contradictory views regarding nuclear weapons. What this monograph sets out to do is elaborate on the claim that a revival of Morgenthau's thought is neither particularly interesting nor an added value to the disciplinary history of International Relations if it continues to occlude the law debates within which his ideas were shaped.

The argument of the book can be boiled down to a number of central assertions. First, the Morgenthau remembered in the field of International Relations and in US foreign policy circles is the Morgenthau of the 'six principles of realism'. These were added, upon consultation with his editors, at the beginning of the second edition of *Politics Among Nations* in 1954 to make the book sell better (which it then did). Neither the first edition, nor anything else Morgenthau had written up to that point, contained elements of what was subsequently declared to constitute a 'realist theory of international politics'. Second, what Morgenthau originally meant

by 'realism' was the introduction of a dose of 'reality' into the way inter-state disputes were conceptualized. The dominant doctrine of positivist legal formalism detracted from focusing on the underlying distribution of power inherent in any international dispute, and thus also on the empirical enforceability of international legal norms. Third, Morgenthau's use of the term 'legalism' did not imply that international law was irrelevant to the study of international relations, but that it was pernicious to uphold a formalist legal doctrine that was only instrumentalized to suit the requirements of one or more superpowers seeking to depoliticize their underlying claims to ideational supremacy.

Acknowledgements

Writing a monograph is inevitably a somewhat lonely endeavour, perhaps even more so when the subject matter requires digging through archives and hunting down obscure references – rather than, say, engaging in anthropological field work on youth gangs in a Central American suburb. Important are thus those relatively rare moments of ‘coming up for air’, when certain individuals agree to listen to or read what must have often constituted nonsensical snippets of an argument that was probably as unclear to me as to those on the receiving end of the narrative. My three mentors who regularly put up with this were Keith Krause, Peter Haggemacher and Martti Koskenniemi, whose words of critique and encouragement, and unbelievable patience, shepherded me over the finishing line. It is to them that I owe the greatest thanks.

Much of the argument of the book revolves around hidden dialogues and implicit influences of one sort or another. The difficulties of pinning down such exchanges are once again apparent when reflecting on the list of scholars I myself was privileged enough to have had conversations with on a variety of aspects related to this monograph. Reconstructing the complete list would be impossible, but I would particularly like to mention and thank George Abi-Saab, Michael N. Barnett, Andrea Bianchi, Thomas J. Biersteker, Curt Gasteyger, Richard Ned Lebow, Joel H. Rosenthal, William E. Scheuerman, David Sylvan, Kenneth W. Thompson, Daniel Warner and Michael C. Williams for their comments, suggestions and encouragement.

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Finally, my gratitude goes out to my family, friends and colleagues, who, each in their own way, made the writing of this book possible. It could not have been achieved without you all.

Note on the text

While having also consulted the personal Morgenthau papers in the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, the files of the Academic Assistance Council at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and various institutional dossiers at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, all the unpublished material cited in the following chapters can be found in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC. The collection, entitled *Hans J. Morgenthau Papers*, is divided into numbered containers and will be referenced as ‘HJM-Container 110’, for instance, in the footnotes.

Unless otherwise stated, all translations from German and French are my own. Where an English translation of the text does exist, yet I felt the need to translate the original text slightly differently, I have added ‘my translation, OJ’ to the reference. In a few instances, when the original wording is crucial, I have included the German or French text so that the reader may have a direct comparison.

Although significantly rewritten since, a few sections of [Chapters 2, 3 and 6](#) first appeared in Jütersonke, ‘Hans J. Morgenthau on the Limits of Justiciability in International Law’, *Journal of the History of International Law*, 8:2 (2006), pp. 181–211, and in Jütersonke, ‘The Image of Law in *Politics Among Nations*’, in M. C. Williams (ed.), *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans J. Morgenthau in International Relations* (Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 93–117. A few lines of two earlier review articles published in the journal *Cooperation and Conflict* – Vol. 40 (2005), pp. 233–41 and Vol. 41 (2006), pp. 463–9 – can also be found in [Chapter 1](#). Thanks go to Brill Publishers, Oxford University Press and SAGE Publications for their permission to draw on this material.

1 Hans J. Morgenthau in International Relations

The benefits to be had from transcending standard renditions of realism as being about crude inter-state power politics have recently been the subject of much debate. After having been proclaimed defunct at the beginning of the 1990s, efforts are now being undertaken to unearth the rich tradition of classical realism that has been lost to the scientific approach of subsequent structuralist, neo-realist approaches and the consequent fragmentation of the tradition.¹ Under the influence of rationalist social science, so the story goes, the European realism taken across the Atlantic by the likes of Hans J. Morgenthau (1904–80) had been transformed into an approach that was no longer based on anthropological foundations revolving around the innate drive for power in human nature, but on rational action expressed in empirical correlations and abstract models. Today, in a time in which a single superpower wages a War on Terror against a largely unidentifiable enemy, the gap between normative (US) foreign policy and International Relations theory is seen by many to be wider than ever before. Robert Kaplan's *Warrior Politics*, Robert Kagan's *Of Paradise and Power*, and Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman's *Ethical Realism* are just three popularistic examples of calls to revert the focus back from scientific theory construction to the 'art' of the realistic statesman, in an effort to link practical politics with ethical principles.²

1 S. Guzzini, *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold* (London: Routledge, 1998).

2 R. Kaplan, *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2002); R. Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003); A. Lieven and J. Hulsman, *Ethical Realism: A Vision for America's Role in the World* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2007).

In the academic field of International Relations, there has been a comparable attempt to reinject the ethics of statecraft into the debate. Echoing earlier work by Greg Russell and Joel H. Rosenthal, Richard Ned Lebow's *The Tragic Vision of Politics* and Michael C. Williams' *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations* both challenge the adequacy of contemporary International Relations theory and call for a return to some of the fundamental underpinnings of realist thought.³ Lebow argues that neo-realist theory ignores the importance of justice and the centrality of ethics in foreign policy, thus remaining unaware that it is only through a combination of ethics and interests that order can be obtained. It is not 'hard-nosed egoism' that is most conducive to national security, he claims, but ethical behaviour. A detailed reading of three 'classical' realists – Thucydides, Carl von Clausewitz (1780–1831) and Morgenthau – is used to show to what extent questions of justice played an important role in the formulation of the realist position. Lebow attempts to challenge advocates of *Realpolitik* 'on home turf', by trying 'to persuade readers that ethics are not only instrumentally important, but that it is impossible to formulate interests intelligently outside of some language of justice'.⁴

Michael Williams writes in a similar vein, based on what he calls 'a deep dissatisfaction with the ways in which key figures in the history of political thought have been appropriated in much of International Relations, and the visions of Realism that have been associated with them'.⁵ Based on a reading of Morgenthau, Williams was induced to outline a type of realism, which he calls 'wilful' realism, that not only entails a more accurate interpretation of thinkers linked to the tradition, but one that also highlights 'their profound challenge to contemporary understandings of the Realist tradition and its place in International Relations theory today'.⁶ Williams identifies three defining features of wilful realism: scepticism, relationality and

3 G. Russell, *Hans J. Morgenthau and the Ethics of American Statecraft* (Baton Rouge, LA and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1990); J. H. Rosenthal, *Righteous Realists: Political Realism, Responsible Power, and American Culture in the Nuclear Age* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1991); R. N. Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics: Ethics, Interests and Orders* (Cambridge University Press, 2003); M. C. Williams, *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

4 Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Power Politics*, p. 16.

5 Williams, *The Realist Tradition*, p. 4. 6 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

power politics. Concerned with the politics of knowledge, wilful realism is sceptical of modern empiricism and rationalism, pointing instead to the limits of reason in the construction of political order. Its emphasis on knowledge also makes wilful realism focus on the constructive relational processes of Self and Other, warning against the dangers of slipping into the dualism of self-identification through antithetical opposition to the Other. Lastly, it argues that the sphere of politics is not only about the destructive potential of the struggle for power, but also about the productive possibilities of self-determination and the establishment of common interests. Williams then uses his vision of wilful realism to examine the link between an ethic of responsibility and the national interest, highlighting how such an understanding relates to recent neo-conservative strands in US foreign policy. Referring to the work of Morgenthau, Williams demonstrates how the national interest functions as a self-reflexive, rhetorical device used as an ethical practice for the construction of a politics of limits.

A number of other recent studies have also been exploring the value added of re-engaging with particular facets of classical realism, and Morgenthau is the common element throughout. Worth mentioning here are monographs by Vibeke Schou Tjalve and Seán Molloy. The first offers a synchronic reading of Morgenthau and the US theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1882–1971) in order to develop ‘an ethical and political language for balancing responsibility and humility’ in US foreign policy, one that is akin to the republican sensitivities developed by the founding fathers of the United States.⁷ The second uses a reading of E. H. Carr (1892–1982), Morgenthau and Martin Wight (1913–1972) to ‘restore humanity’ to contemporary conceptualizations of realism by focusing on the inherited language, philosophies and meta-narratives that have ‘contained and constrained’ realism in International Relations theory.⁸ A further interesting monograph recently came from the pen of Robbie Shilliam, who explored the thought of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), Max Weber (1864–1920) and Morgenthau with the aim of illuminating the way these German thinkers tried to

7 V. S. Tjalve, *Realist Strategies of Republican Peace: Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and the Politics of Patriotic Dissent* (New York, NY and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

8 S. Molloy, *The Hidden History of Realism: A Genealogy of Power Politics* (New York, NY and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

reconcile the liberal project with realist thought within an historical context delineated by the problem of ‘alterity’, or ‘the interaction between differentially developed societies’.⁹ Morgenthau also plays a prominent role in Duncan Bell’s recent edited volume exploring ‘realist orientations’ in contemporary (international) political theory.¹⁰

Rediscovering the virtues of classical realist thought, then, has been a popular activity of late, both within narrower theoretical debates in International Relations, as well as in more general narratives about the requirements and prerequisites of sound foreign policy decision-making. Yet because of the inward-oriented means by which the field of International Relations tends to write its own ‘disciplinary’ history, the fact that ‘classical’ authors were writing in different socio-historical and disciplinary mindsets is often occluded. As this book seeks to demonstrate, the German and US legal theoretical debates out of which emerged the ‘realist theory of international politics’, based on ‘interest defined in terms of power’, are the missing context in the case of Morgenthau. Arguably, ignoring or downplaying the legal background on which Morgenthau’s ideas are founded is to the detriment of the stated purpose of rehabilitating the thought of such scholars precisely because of their intellectual richness and analytical depth.

Career prospects for German-Jewish jurists in US law schools were exceedingly limited in the 1930s and 1940s. The result was that many lawyers were forced to switch discipline and take up posts in Political Science, or in the newly created field of International Relations, which at the time spanned courses in international law, international organization, diplomatic history and international politics. Morgenthau was no exception to this trend, eventually becoming the Albert A. Michelson Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science and Modern History at the University of Chicago. This book sets out to show that what Morgenthau and a host of other émigré jurists brought across the Atlantic was not simply Bismarckian *Realpolitik* based on anthropological foundations revolving around the innate drive for power in human nature, but

⁹ R. Shilliam, *German Thought and International Relations: The Rise and Fall of a Liberal Project* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

¹⁰ D. S. Bell, *Political Thought and International Relations: Variations on a Realist Theme* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between law and politics derived from the type of theoretical-historical analysis practiced by German *Staatsrechtslehre*. It is simply misleading to declare that Morgenthau, together with the likes of Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), Leo Strauss (1899–1973) and Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), was one of the most influential refugee ‘political theorists and philosophers’.¹¹ Versed as he may have been in the literature, Morgenthau was not a political theorist, nor a philosopher. The unfortunate result of such generalizations is that potentially very useful appropriations of ‘classical’ thinkers for contemporary purposes are stunted by a lack of engagement with reference points and contexts that lie outside of, in this case, the International Relations sphere. Analysing Morgenthau’s work using the conceptual toolkit of International Relations theory alone, while at the same time calling for a greater emphasis on context, intellectual origins, and a more profound understanding of his thought, does not make for a particular effective – or useful – exercise.

Realism

In general terms, realism implies having a certain, sober outlook on a particular set of circumstances, without being influenced by interests or preferences, or misled by ephemera of one sort or another.¹² Although varyingly employed, realism is a position that can be found in the visual arts, in literature and in various strands of philosophical thought. In political theory, realism is generally identified with an approach focusing on the sources, modalities and effects of power. In International Relations theory, realism posits that international politics involves self-interested actors operating in a self-help system with no overarching authority.

Realism is a relational concept, in that a claim to being ‘realist’ defines itself and is evaluated with regard to an opposing conception

11 As does P. G. Kielmansegg, ‘Introduction’, in P. G. Kielmansegg, H. Mewes and E. Glaser-Schmidt (eds.), *Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss: German Emigrés and American Political Thought after World War II* (Washington, DC: The German Historical Institute and Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 1–8, at 1.

12 See Duncan Bell’s useful discussion of realism in his ‘Introduction: Under an Empty Sky – Realism and Political Theory’, in Bell (ed.), *Political Thought and International Relations*, pp. 1–25, at 1.

that is less realistic, i.e. idealistic or utopian.¹³ This is also reflected in the status of realism in International Relations. In his important book, *The Power of Power Politics*, John A. Vasquez demonstrates empirically that the realist paradigm has indeed dominated the field since the early 1950s, showing how it has guided theory construction, data-making and research.¹⁴ And even if many contemporary theoretical approaches advocated or applied in journal articles or monographs differ sharply from realist assumptions, that fact is made clear precisely in explicit contradistinction to realism. As Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik write, realism remains ‘the primary or alternative theory in virtually every major textbook and article addressing general theories of world politics, particularly in security affairs’.¹⁵

Of course, realism in International Relations is far from anything resembling a coherent and unified theoretical framework: not only is there a temporal split between classical realism (Morgenthau), neo-realism (Waltz)¹⁶ and even postclassical realism,¹⁷ but the literature also distinguishes between the offensive realism of John J. Mearsheimer and Robert Gilpin and the defensive realism of Kenneth N. Waltz, Robert Jervis and others.¹⁸ Yet the overall salience of realist theories has meant that the position and function of realism in International Relations has been the subject of continued discussion, and is part of a discourse on what Steve Smith calls the

13 On this point, see B. S. Chimni, *International Law and World Order: A Critique of Contemporary Approaches* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1993), p. 30.

14 J. H. Vasquez, *The Power of Power Politics: From Classical Realism to Neotraditionalism* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

15 J. W. Legro and A. Moravcsik, ‘Is Anybody Still a Realist?’, *International Security*, 24 (1995), pp. 5–55, at 5.

16 The neo-realism of Waltz is often equated with structural realism, although some leading members of the English School have tried to draw a distinction; see B. Buzan, C. Jones and R. Little, *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1993).

17 See S. G. Brooks, ‘Dueling Realisms’, *International Organization*, 51 (1997), pp. 445–77.

18 J. H. Mearsheimer, ‘Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War’, *International Security*, 15 (1991), pp. 5–57; J. H. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2001); R. Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1981); K. N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979); R. Jervis, ‘Cooperation under the Security Dilemma’, *World Politics*, 30 (1978), pp. 167–214. For an overview of some of the literature on these, and other strands of realism, see G. H. Snyder, ‘Mearsheimer’s World – Offensive Realism and the Struggle for Security. A Review Essay’, *International Security*, 27 (2002), pp. 149–73, at 149–50.

'self-images' of International Relations theory.¹⁹ A widely accepted characterization of the field of International Relations involves the chronological division of its history into dominant theoretical positions, with the periods of transition marking 'great debates'. Thus one supposedly witnessed the first great debate between idealism and realism in the 1930s and 1940s, and the second between realism/traditionalism and behaviouralism in the 1950s and 1960s. Recently, there has been talk of a third debate between positivism and post-positivism, or what are effectively post-modernist approaches.

The accuracy of such depictions has increasingly been called into question. As Duncan Bell points out, '[e]ven a minimally contextualist reading of the respective periods demonstrates that the "debates" are illusory anachronisms, based on an inaccurate interpretation of the scope, coherence and interests of the field'.²⁰ Indeed, as Peter Wilson has shown, the first great debate between idealism and realism did not actually take place,²¹ and discussion between traditionalists and behaviouralists was confined to a brief exchange of views between Hedley Bull and Morton A. Kaplan in the journal *World Politics* in 1966.²² In short, one can only agree with Ole Wæver that 'the way the discipline [of International Relations] usually reflects its own development falls embarrassingly behind standards developed in sociology of science and historiography'.²³

None of this should really surprise us, however. In its efforts to attain the status of an academic discipline, the field of International Relations has, right from the start, attempted to define its existence through a stringent categorization of its supposed content: no pigeon-holes, no discipline. Debates between seemingly opposing theoretical views are a way of constituting disciplinary knowledge through

19 S. Smith, 'The Self-Images of a Discipline: A Genealogy of International Relations Theory', in K. Booth and S. Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 1–37.

20 D. S. Bell, 'Political Theory and the Functions of Intellectual History: A Response to Emmanuel Navon', *Review of International Studies*, 29 (2003), pp. 151–60, at 154.

21 P. Wilson, 'The Myth of the "First Great Debate"', *Review of International Studies*, 24 (1998), pp. 1–15.

22 H. Bull, 'International Theory: The Case for a Classical Approach', *World Politics*, 18 (1966), pp. 361–77; M. A. Kaplan, 'The New Great Debate: Traditionalism vs. Science in International Relations', *World Politics*, 19 (1966), pp. 1–20.

23 O. Wæver, 'The Sociology of a Not So International Discipline: American and European Developments in International Relations', *International Organization*, 52 (1998), pp. 687–727, at 689.

processes of ‘field construction’ and ‘boundary work’.²⁴ This work is necessarily exclusionist, as it ‘entails the development of both arguments to justify particular divisions of knowledge and the strategies to use in constructing and maintaining them’.²⁵ The result of this is two-fold. On the one hand, the field is depicted as made up of a number of schools of thought, characterized by means of overly simplistic conceptualizations of opposing positions (realism–idealism, for instance). As Richard K. Ashley writes, ‘[e]very great scholarly movement has its own lore, its own collectively recalled creation myths, its ritualized understandings of the titanic struggles fought and challenges still to be overcome in establishing and maintaining its paramountcy’.²⁶ On the other hand, these schools of thought stake out their terrain by establishing themselves as ‘traditions’, through recourse to ‘classical’ authors deemed to have already analysed the relations between political entities in a way compatible with that particular theory of international politics. Whether this was really the case – one need only think of realism’s appropriation of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) – is not the issue. Morgenthau is thus also taken to be part of a realist canon stretching all the way back to Thucydides, with certain transcending themes they supposedly shared forming the basis for realist theorizing.

Part of the current rehabilitation of classical realism, undertaken in good interpretivist fashion, is therefore also the initiation of new debates on how the likes of Thucydides, Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) and Morgenthau ought to be appropriated for the benefit of the ‘canon’, and whether we are doing justice to their work by doing so. There is a growing unease with the way classical authors continue to be claimed by proponents of a particular tradition, with little appreciation for the gaping chasm between standard renditions and a more nuanced, contextualized reading of works considered part of that canon. The following chapters share this unease, not only with standard renditions, but with the apparent unwillingness of many of these ‘new’, ‘contextualized’

24 E. Messer-Davidow, D. R. Shumway and D. J. Sylvan, ‘Introduction: Disciplinary Ways of Knowing’ in Messer-Davidow, Shumway and Sylvan (eds.), *Knowledges: Historical and Critical Studies in Disciplinarity* (Charlottesville, VA and London: University Press of Virginia, 1993), pp. 1–21.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

26 R. K. Ashley, ‘The Poverty of Neorealism’, *International Organization*, 38 (1984), pp. 225–86, at 230.

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