Introduction: Morgenthau in America

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Hans J. Morgenthau is generally considered to have been a political realist and the transmitter of continental *Realpolitik* into American letters. But he has also been claimed as an idealist, as a constructivist, and as an ethicist. Some of these claims make sense if we understand that Morgenthau was trained as a lawyer in the German historical tradition. Others can be made sense of if we understand that—self-consciously a "European"—he was continuously adapting his ideas to an American audience and, in the process, being socialized into an American experience. The essays in this roundtable illustrate the "Americanization" of Morgenthau.

The "Morgenthau in America" project was inspired by the English translation of Morgenthau's 1933 *La Notion du "Politique"* (*The Concept of the Political)*, undertaken and edited by Hartmut Behr and Felix Rösch, which appeared in 2012. That text, requiring extensive editorial annotations and with a truncated concept of the political, is somewhat obscure to the Anglo-Saxon reader and stands in sharp contrast to the bold, articulate, and crystalline presentation of politics as the quest for power that appeared fifteen years later in *Politics Among Nations*. At that point Morgenthau had been ten years in America, the most recent four at the University of Chicago, in a department dominated by the behavioral approach of Charles Merriam, the doyen of American political science and advisor to presidents.

To those of us who have contributed to this roundtable, it seemed inconceivable that Morgenthau's American experience had not in some way affected his thinking about politics, his theoretical ambitions, and his conceptual framework. The project was initiated at the 2013 International Studies Association conference in San Francisco, for which a panel on "Morgenthau in America" was organized,

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with each presenter addressing one of Morgenthau's major works, from *Scientific Man* to his Vietnam writings. The initial findings made it clear that a process of evolution had occurred in Morgenthau's thinking and that the major stages had to do with his ambitions as a public intellectual determined to bring the political wisdom of Europe to an America enthralled (not permanently, he trusted) with scientific rationalism. It was also clear, however, that in the process he himself was forced to take on some American attitudes, not least in order to make his ideas palatable in a gradually less alien political culture.

The reader will recognize our method as "ideas in context." It eschews general influences over long time spans, including intellectual influences, in favor of close attention to text, intent, and immediate context—in Morgenthau's case, political and institutional. Of influences, there can be no doubt: Niebuhr, Thompson, and E. H. Carr appear, often in their own words, and others (arguably Weber and problematically Carl Schmitt) can be inferred from the formulations themselves. These influences are evident in the texts, appearing and disappearing as appropriate to the argument of the time. This method does not elicit an essential Morgenthau but rather a theorist grappling with a variety of problematics at different times who returns to the same intellectual roots but with different perspectives and purposes. The following essays highlight the major stages in the evolution of Morgenthau's political ethics.

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