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## Man and the New Science of Politics: Hans Morgenthau and Eric Voegelin in America

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### Introduction

Among the major questions and problems in Hans Morgenthau’s oeuvre, there are quite a few which figure prominently also in the writings of Eric Voegelin. The two thinkers seem to share a general “parallel theoretical interest”, as Morgenthau himself noticed in a letter to Voegelin in 1953.<sup>1</sup> Although this casual remark apparently did not lead to a deeper conversation between them or even to a substantial mutual consideration of their major writings, it may still deserve closer inspection. While there are obvious differences between Morgenthau’s and Voegelin’s major concerns and the breadth of their philosophical scope and historical framework, they do share a number of common topics. Both thinkers were convinced, to begin with, that political science and theory, in order to be able to properly understand its subject matter and to live up to its political and intellectual responsibilities, must assume an uncompromisingly realist perspective.<sup>2</sup> In line with this realist accent, both strongly argued, furthermore, for a historical and an anthropological foundation of political science.<sup>3</sup> And both shared a distinctly critical perspective on the positivist epistemological and methodological foundations and the “scientific” underpinnings of modern social sciences. Besides these common topics and

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1 Morgenthau, Hans J. (1953), ‘Letter to Eric Voegelin’, 10th June (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Container 60); see also Rösch (2014: 6).

2 This is not to ignore that there are, of course, important differences between Morgenthau’s “classical” and Voegelin’s “spiritual realism”. On the latter see Gebhardt (1981). **On HJM see**

3 On the anthropological foundations of Voegelin’s political theory see Braach (2003); on the significance of anthropological arguments in Morgenthau see Morgenthau himself (1930); also Williams (2004).

concerns, finally, it is also the similar “transatlantic” socio-cultural context in which both reflected on their theoretical questions when writing their major studies in the 1940s and the following decades, which makes their comparison particularly interesting. Written by two émigré scholars who were trying to locate themselves within, and to make sense of, the cultural environment of post-War American society and academia, both authors’ writings reflect their peculiar situation inhabiting two sometimes crucially different semantic and cultural contexts.

In the following we argue that a parallel consideration of some of the common topics both authors dealt with and of their common intellectual background can help to shed light on their intentions, styles of theorizing, and self-perceptions as political thinkers. When read in comparison as two critical, sometimes deliberately polemical, but also genuinely self-reflective oeuvres, Morgenthau’s and Voegelin’s writings turn out to represent two partly similar, partly different understandings of realist social critique and, in more personal terms, of the social and intellectual role of the émigré as a scholar and a social critic in a time of intellectual and political crisis. To bring out the similarities and differences between their positions, the problem of modern scientism can serve as an exemplary topic, because both authors’ reflections on this subject matter are closely connected with their self-perceptions as critical thinkers and more or less explicitly related to their personal background as émigré scholars. Before we focus on these questions in the second and third sections below, we first examine this background itself. To this end, a comparison of Morgenthau’s *Scientific Man and Power Politics* and Voegelin’s *New Science of Politics*, two classical representative texts of émigré scholarship in the USA in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, can serve as a starting point.

### **The Émigré Experience**

Morgenthau’s *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* was developed from a lecture on “Liberalism and Foreign Policy” that he gave in 1940 at the New School of Social Research in New York as part of a lecture series on *Liberalism Today* and appeared in 1946, one year after he received tenure at the University of Chicago. The monograph demarcates the beginning of Morgenthau’s career in the United States, to which he had emigrated nine years earlier. The text also reflects Morgenthau’s place between two academic cultures: his language in *Scientific Man* partly stems from, but also tries to leave behind, his European academic socialization and to adjust to the

American cultural environment – a task which was obviously not accomplished easily and posed some difficulties. Although essential parts of the text were written already in Germany before Morgenthau’s emigration, the book clearly reflects his bewilderment about American political and academic culture and, as he perceived it, its cheerful and naïve optimism about the betterment and progress of politics, society, and humanity in general. Due to this background, *Scientific Man* is in large parts written in the style of a pamphlet; it is an attempt to hammer home certain philosophical positions—positions that were largely unpopular in the U.S. social sciences in the 1940s (and later). More expressively than his later and more influential books, *Scientific Man* articulates essential aspects of Morgenthau’s intellectual self-perception, his understanding of his own role not only as a philosophically inspired political scientist, but also as a public critic of his time and “his” societies, both in Europe and America.

Voegelin’s *The New Science of Politics* ([1952] 2000) goes back to a series of lectures held at the University of Chicago, hence at Morgenthau’s home university, in the summer 1951. It appeared a year later in the prestigious Walgreen Foundation Lectures series, the same series in which also Leo Strauss’ *Natural Right and History*, Robert Dahl’s *A Preface to Democratic Theory* or Hannah Arendt’s *The Human Condition* were originally published. In the book Voegelin unfolds a neo-classical and genuinely realist theory of representation which focuses on the crucial role of certain speculative anthropo-ontological cultural narratives and symbolizations within the political self-interpretations of societies and on a determined critique of the peculiar forms which such narratives assume in modern societies.<sup>4</sup> On the basis of a broad analysis of the Western history of ideas from antiquity to the present, the study for the first time presents Voegelin’s renowned thesis that the essence of modernity consists of an immanentist ideology of worldly self-salvation in which a “gnostic” under-current pervading Western history eventually attains social dominance and fully unfolds its politically destructive potentials.<sup>5</sup> The book constituted Voegelin’s reputation as a genuine intellectual voice in political philosophy, and particularly his reputation as a determined critic of modern progressivism and of the self-perception of contemporary science and society. Similarly to *Scientific Man*, the *New Science* in

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4 See Eccel/Godefroy (2016) and Sigwart (2016).

5 On Voegelin’s Gnosticism thesis see Opitz (1999); Hollweck (1999); Vondung (2016); for a distinctly critical interpretation of Voegelin’s thesis see Versluis 2006: 69-84.

large parts uses the pointed language and style of a polemical pamphlet to bring across its uncompromisingly critical message. And also the *New Science*, like *Scientific Man*, conceptually and empirically reflects its author's two-sided Central European and American background.

In terms of the disciplinary history of political science, both books are part of the phenomenon of European émigré scholarship in the United States in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. This peculiar discourse not only substantially shaped the American and international theory debates of the time (see Söllner 1996; Gunnell 1993), but in turn arguably also influenced the perspectives of those scholars participating in it. The position of the émigré posed unusual challenges, pragmatic as well as intellectual ones. It required some kind of intellectual self-localization within the new social and political environment and an idea of how to actively relate to this environment as a scholar, in terms of conceptual language, criteria of relevance, and theoretical self-understanding. What kind of intellectual role was there to play for a European émigré within US society and academia? What kind of theoretical questions did the “American experience” raise if perceived from the perspective of the European émigré? Which contributions, both to the dominant scientific discussions in the US academic community at the time as well as to the major problems occupying the American public in general, could be derived from the émigrés’ European academic background and from their immediate experiences with totalitarian movements and regimes?

The problem of how to reflect upon and answer these questions pervades the discursive field of émigré scholarship. Its margins may be marked out, as John Gunnell suggests, by the opposite exemplary cases of Paul Lazarsfeld on the one hand who, understanding himself as a positivist, “had found himself uneasy in a European atmosphere ‘dominated by philosophical and speculative minds’” and for whom, as a consequence, “assimilation” to the American social sciences “was in many respects relatively easy”; and Theodor W. Adorno on the other hand, whose Marxist theoretical orientation and emphasis on a fundamental “critique of culture” proved to be barely compatible with American society and social science (Gunnell 1993: 183 f.). As Gunnell’s characterization indicates, the attitude towards the academic field in the US, particularly towards the theoretical and methodological foundations of the scientific mainstream within the social sciences, and especially within American political science at the time, is a decisive factor in the process of the émigrés’ intellectual self-localization. And while

the émigrés “were hardly monolithic”, there still is “a striking uniformity across a broad spectrum of the émigré experience and perspective that was in sharp conflict with the values of American social science” (Gunnell 1993: 185).

Where can Morgenthau and Voegelin be placed within this field? To which extent did their attempts of intellectual self-localization within émigré scholarship influence their realist perspective in *Scientific Man* and the *New Science*? In the case of Morgenthau’s book, this influence is quite obvious. It is discernible, for instance, in the study’s peculiar style of argumentation. While *Scientific Man* addresses many significant themes, such as political ethics and questions of reason, rationality, and science, the book is not a profound philosophical discussion of them. This is puzzling, especially for an author whose preceding writings had addressed similar questions in much greater depth and who, in these writings, devoted much time to conceptual and terminological differentiations.<sup>6</sup> This raises questions about the purpose of the work and Morgenthau’s intention and self-localization.

Morgenthau was fully aware of the explosive nature of many of his arguments, critical as they were of positivist scholarship in IR that was dominant at the time in the US and especially at the Political Science department at Chicago that was a positivist hub of the discipline. As he wrote in a letter in 1946, he was relieved that the book appeared *after* he got tenure because he assumed that he would never have obtained tenure after its publication (Morgenthau 1984). To understand the book, one should remember that at the time of its writing Morgenthau was experiencing a deep cultural shock from his move from Europe to the United States and was still haunted by the trauma of his European experiences.<sup>7</sup> In America, moreover, he found himself caught between the epistemologies of European humanities and their *geistesgeschichtliche* traditions and American positivism. This was the same kind of positivist political thinking and scholarship that Morgenthau had already experienced in Vienna and that he had heavily criticized in his *Habilitation* (1934) with regard to Hans Kelsen’s “pure theory of law”<sup>8</sup> and German *Staatsrecht* in the Weimar Republic that he was familiar with from his studies at the

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6 Published and unpublished, in German, French, and English. This terminological and conceptual thoroughness is most explicit in his doctoral and post-doctoral (“Habilitation”) thesis and two unpublished manuscripts written in German; see Morgenthau (1929, 1930, 1934a, b).

7 See hereto also the paper by Felix Roesch in this volume, his analysis of Morgenthau’s “Erschütterung der Seele” as well as Morgenthau’s odyssey through Europe to flee the anti-Semitism and the Holocaust in Europe.

8 Morgenthau (1934a), Jütersonke (2010).

universities of Munich, Frankfurt, and Geneva. Now he was encountering it again, but on a much larger scale—in a United States that had just emerged victorious from World War II and was at the height of its political and military power.

There are comprehensive studies of Morgenthau's intellectual influences;<sup>9</sup> what can be learned from these is the major influence of European intellectual thought on his work, particularly the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud. His stark opposition to Carl Schmitt and Hegelianism is also well-documented. More immediately, there was Reinhold Niebuhr, whom he met in Chicago in 1944 and with whom he formed a life-long friendship. These, as well as the lack of influence of Max Weber (there is almost no mention of Weber in his entire oeuvre and none in *Scientific Man*), can be inferred from his published and unpublished writings, his references, and his private notes and correspondence.<sup>10</sup>

Having witnessed the fall of Weimar Germany, Morgenthau was convinced that positivism could not deal with, much less negotiate, *political* questions for which he regarded the individual human being as the ultimate ontological reference. It was exactly this “human factor” (as he called it some years later in his *Six Principles of Political Realism* (see Behr/Rösch 2012: 38-42)) that positivism ignored and, much worse, *deliberately deleted* from political science. Ultimately, Morgenthau believed, this would lead to de-politicization and political apathy of the sort deeply implicated in the fall of the Weimar Republic and the rise of National Socialism.<sup>11</sup> And now he observed similar tendencies in the country that would be responsible

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9 Amstrup (1978), Barkawi (1998), Brown (2007), Cesa (2009), Frei (2001), Koskenniemi (2000), Lang (2007), Molloy (2002), Molloy (2009), Rice (2008), Scheurman (2007b), Schuett (2010), Tjalve (2008), Turner and Mazur (2009), Wong (2000).

10 Morgenthau was sometimes ignorant of bibliographical precision in his references as well as sloppy when it came to historical details – a painful experience that I and my co-editor Felix Roesch had to undergo when editing his 1933 book “La notion du politique” and preparing the first English edition of this book (as *The Concept of the Political*). Nevertheless, his references allude to his self-awareness and self-consciousness. On the other hand, Morgenthau was a ‘paper saver’ (Frei, 2001: 4), and a shell that had hit Morgenthau’s apartment in Madrid in 1936 did not destroy his papers, which he only got back after years to his great relief as he confessed to Rafael Altamira on 5th March 1945 (HJM-Archive 3). His private notes and correspondence are a valuable source to reconstruct his political thought; we also find here no significant reference to Max Weber.

11 See Morgenthau’s *Concept of the Political* where this is strongest; also to Fritz Ringer and the problem of the Weimar Mandarins (Ringer 1969); also this anti-positivist argument is similar to, but much earlier than, however, completely ignored by post-structuralist authors, see e.g. Ekins (1999).

for securing a postwar settlement—a prospect that disquieted him profoundly,<sup>12</sup> especially as he was personally relieved to have found a new home in the United States after fleeing the Holocaust.

One can compare, then, the disruption and inner conflict evident in *Scientific Man* with the unsettling experience of critical theorists coming from Frankfurt to Los Angeles and encountering American consumerism (of which Marcuse's 1964 book *One-Dimensional Man* may be the starkest expression).<sup>13</sup> Similar to the Frankfurt theorists, Morgenthau argued against the political naïveté of idealism and liberalism<sup>14</sup> in that both theories ignored or downplayed the influence of interests and power in politics and were blindly optimistic about the progressive betterment of political society and human beings. There are several other works by Morgenthau that make these arguments and that are more reflective and profound than *Scientific Man*.<sup>15</sup> However, *Scientific Man* most clearly, explicitly, and fiercely communicates his various fears about these issues.

Voegelin not only shared many of Morgenthau's early scholarly interests, for instance, a marked interest in the philosophical and epistemological tradition of German "Geisteswissenschaft" and a distinctly critical interest in the German and Austrian discourse on the foundations of "Staatslehre" in general and in the work of his teacher in Vienna Hans Kelsen in particular.<sup>16</sup> He also shared Morgenthau's critique of the idealistic traits particularly dominating the Anglo-American liberal discourse at the time. His account of the post-War situation was strongly influenced by his personal experience with European totalitarianism, especially National Socialism.<sup>17</sup> As a consequence of this experience, Voegelin had attained an astute awareness of the dangers and aggressiveness of totalitarian ideologies and a resolute readiness to fight any kind of ideological worldview, no matter whether right- or leftwing. This anti-ideological attitude on the one hand resulted at times in oversensitive exaggerations and a

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12 See here most explicitly in *Scientific Man*, Chapter One, 'The Challenge of Fascism', p.6 onwards.

13 Morgenthau's later oeuvre follows Marcuse with regard to consumerism, modernity, nuclear weapons (the 'political-industrial-military complex' more widely), and mass society (see, for example Morgenthau 1973, 1977).

14 Morgenthau is politically committed to the idea of liberal society and liberalism (see Hall 2011), but criticized liberal idealism as an epistemological position. More on this, see Behr (2013) and Behr/Roesch (2012).

15 Like "Positivism, Functionalism, and International Law", 1940; "The Limitations of Science and the Problem of Social Planning", 1944; "The Scientific Solution of Social Conflicts", 1945; "Reflections on the State of Political Science", 1955; "Modern Science and Political Power", 1964.

16 See Voegelin (1925; 1927; 1932).

17 See more elaborately Sigwart 2005: 187 ff.

lack of differentiation in Voegelin's assessments of current developments. On the other hand, it enabled him to sharply identify the problematic tendencies of the *zeitgeist*, especially those latent affinities between the totalitarian mass ideologies and some distorted variants of radical progressivism which prevailed in many Western societies.

To be sure, Voegelin's perspective on the Anglo-American democratic societies and their political cultures in general was clearly positive. Contrary to Morgenthau and to most other émigré scholars, Voegelin was already well acquainted with the American society's political and academic culture when arriving in the US in 1939, due to two years he had spent at American universities as a Rockefeller fellow in the 1920s.<sup>18</sup> This early American experience, and particularly the experience of the profound differences between the American and the European (especially the German and Austrian) societies and cultural self-perceptions, was not only a source of irritation, but also and above all a source of intellectual inspiration for Voegelin. In retrospect, he considered this early American experience and the insight "that there was a world in which (the) world in which I had grown up was intellectually, morally, and spiritually irrelevant", to be of the utmost importance for his scholarly career. "That there should be such a plurality of worlds had a devastating effect on me. The experience broke for good (at least I hope it did) my Central European or generally European provincialism without letting me fall into an American provincialism." (Voegelin 1989: 32) Consequentially, the American tradition of thought, especially authors like William James, John Dewey, George Santayana, and John R. Commons, although Voegelin's account of them was often critical, became important sources of inspiration which he already in the 1920s merged with his reading of European social and political philosophy and which he incorporated into the development of his own understanding of political theory.

The *New Science*, written some twenty years later and demarcating an important step within this intellectual development, is written in the same European-American spirit. At the same time, the book also reflects the social and scientific situation at the time of its publication and Voegelin's specific position within it, which was different from that of his early first encounter with American culture. Similar to Morgenthau's *Scientific Man*, the *New Science*, being Voegelin's first major monograph written in English and published in the US, can be seen

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18 On Voegelin's early intellectual biography see Sandoz (2000), Cooper (2009), Sigwart (2005).

as the real beginning of his scholarly career in the United States after his emigration and the beginning of his “growing reputation” as an internationally recognized author (Hollweck 2007: 3 f.). The book is the result of a rather long working process the beginning of which can at least be dated back to the late 1930s when Voegelin, right after having arrived in the U.S., started writing a *History of Political Ideas*. The aim of this project which occupied Voegelin for more than a decade was to write a comprehensive introductory textbook with the potential to compete with George Sabine’s standard *History of Political Theory* (1937)<sup>19</sup> and to serve as an entry ticket to US academia. Instead of accomplishing this aim, the project resulted in a vast, highly original, but overall loosely composed and fragmentary manuscript of some thousand pages. Due to various substantial shifts of Voegelin’s philosophical perspective, the manuscript remained unpublished.<sup>20</sup>

The *New Science* draws from this material, summarizes the theoretical position which Voegelin had reached by 1950, and pointedly articulates its critical implications. Instead of rendering the originally intended introductory textbook which would meet the demands of the US academic and college market, however, Voegelin’s efforts with the *New Science* had resulted into something quite different. Rather than a textbook, the study is an intellectually engaged, highly critical and often deliberately polemical pamphlet which, much like Morgenthau’s *Scientific Man*, was primarily intended as a calculated intellectual provocation of the US academic discourse at the time, despite the fact that it still carried the subtitle “An Introduction”.

As such, however, the study did receive broad attention, and not only in the professional political science discourse, but even in the general public. According to an influential review in *Time Magazine* in March 1953, the book, by offering “a fascinating explanation of the modern intellectual crisis” and a “quest through the history of Western thought for the culprits responsible for contemporary confusion”, was immediately applicable for an engaged journalistic critique of “current events”, such as the current state of the Cold War, the erroneous US foreign policy in Korea or towards the U.S.S.R. in general, the problem of McCarthyism, and

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19 See Voegelin’s juxtaposition of his hermeneutic methodological principles with those applied by Sabine in Voegelin ([1944]2000): 162 ff.

20 It is published now in the volumes 19-26 of the *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*.

the overall failure of the U.S. “in explaining itself to the world”, due to its propagandists’ inclination “to talk about automobiles, bathtubs and pop music” instead of “the great truths of Western culture” and “the institutions of freedom that reflect those truths”.<sup>21</sup> In reading the *New Science* as an immediate intervention in the U.S. political debates of the day, while clearly giving it a conservative political spin, the quoted *Time* review set the tone that dominated large parts of the general reception of the book and its author, both in the U.S. and internationally. Such a deliberately “loose, truncated”<sup>22</sup> and synoptic reading is undoubtedly oversimplifying and misrepresents the complexities of the *New Science*’s more substantial philosophical arguments. That it nonetheless quite accurately catches important implications of the book is suggested by the fact that Voegelin himself was surely surprised by, but also approved of this immediately practical perception of his study. In his letter to *Time Magazine* responding to the review Voegelin notes:

“I would not have thought that my *New Science of Politics* would attract your attention. It is a severely theoretical work, and it makes no concessions to popularity. That a magazine which is meant for the general readers should try to mediate problems of such complication is indeed extraordinary. And I can only compliment you on your courage. Moreover, your attempt has been splendidly successful. You have seen what probably not too many will see, that the theoretical propositions are applicable to the concrete questions of our time ... I am sure your article will help even professionals in the field of political science to understand the pragmatic value of my analysis.” (Voegelin 1953: 8)

This comment quite accurately reflects Voegelin’s multi-layered motivation, especially regarding his critical intentions. As to the general public, the *New Science* may be more accessible than Voegelin’s comment is ready to concede, although his surprise about the public attention it received was surely sincere. Still, the study offers itself not only for a “popular”, but also for a “partisan” reading, its broad historical perspective and philosophically demanding language and

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21 The quotations are from the Article “Journalism and Joachim’s Children” in *Time*, 9 March 1953: 57 and 60.

22 *Ibid.*

argumentation notwithstanding. The *New Science* is undoubtedly written in the style of a pamphlet and meant as a public intervention aiming at imminent developments and social phenomena which Voegelin held to be of crucial importance for the present situation.<sup>23</sup> With its combination of an uncompromising critique of modern progressivism, idealism, and scientism with an equally uncompromising plea for a theoretical revival of the classical tradition of political philosophy, the *New Science* turned out to be perfectly applicable especially for promoting conservative causes in the heated American public debates and controversies of the early 1950s.

The study is much less accessible, on the other hand, in terms of its genuinely scientific integrability or academic accessibility, as it were. In this respect, Voegelin had apparently more or less completely abandoned his original intention. Regarding his relation to the US academic discourse, by 1950 he had obviously decided, as the *New Science* clearly indicates, to interpret and play the role of the émigré scholar in terms of polemical confrontation and intellectual provocation rather than in terms of disciplinary integration and constructive critical dialogue. The reference to the “professionals in the field of political science” quoted above is more telling and actually more equivocal than it might appear at first sight. It singles out a group of readers from whom Voegelin surely expected resolute rejection rather than immediate approval. For Voegelin, the epochal intellectual crisis he diagnosed in the *New Science* was not confined to Central Europe, but affected also the Western democracies. And the academic field, particularly the professional social and political science discourse in the 1950s, was surely one of the major segments of society where the symptoms of this crisis were most clearly discernible for Voegelin, also in the US.

Among the major targets of his criticism were, similar to Morgenthau’s, the new variants of scientism allegedly dominating U.S. political science at the time. Although it is not as elaborately addressed in the *New Science* as in *Scientific Man*, the critique of modern scientism also for Voegelin served as a major theoretical battlefield on which the role of the émigré scholar and the critical confrontation with the scientific mainstream in US academia it implied was to be enacted. In both cases, a closer examination of this field can therefore help to further clarify the way in which both thinkers understood this role. Above all, it can clarify to which

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<sup>23</sup> See especially the final chapter of the *New Science* (Voegelin [1952] 2000: 220 ff.)

extent and in which sense this understanding in both cases is interwoven with substantial theoretical reflections of fundamental philosophical questions. Finally, it suggests, that Morgenthau's critique, when compared with Voegelin's, tends to neglect certain political implications of the problem of scientism and is therefore not fully aware of the power dimensions *of* and *within* the scientific movement itself.

### **The Critique of Scientism**

It is safe to say that while *Scientific Man* is a polemic writing of mainly assertive and insisting character, other early writings of Morgenthau are more informative on the theoretical foundations of his critique of scientism as we find in those writings more elaboration of this position.<sup>24</sup> These are in line with his main propositions in *Scientific Man* and hence we can formulate that his critique of scientism emerges from and culminates in a European understanding of political science as *Erfahrungswissenschaft*. From this position he then criticizes – in a quite undifferentiated way, as most of the reviewers of *Scientific Man* have, too, stressed<sup>25</sup> – *all* philosophical positions that would build their ontological, epistemological, and methodological apparatuses on *a priori* positions that are neither grounded in historical studies or human experience and the interpretation of both respectively. This relates to three philosophical commitments which Morgenthau dismisses as they were underpinned by scientific assumptions about universality and objectivity of knowledge and political agency.<sup>26</sup>

First, he is critical with a rationalist approach a la Descartes's "*Cogito ergo sum*" to overcome the confinements of human knowledge through the construction of knowledge of the external world out of ostensibly indubitable principles possessed inherently by the mind itself. This kind of rationalist knowledge would pretend its invulnerability to any kind of scepticism and is supposed to represent the basis of all further knowledge and derivations about the world. Morgenthau promotes a position that is critical with this epistemological paradigm and

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24 See above footnote 6; also Morgenthau (1940, 1944, 1945).

25 *Scientific Man* received wide reviews in important history, law, philosophy, economy, and political science journals, some of which were devastating (such as Nagel 1947) and even those who were in agreement with Morgenthau's main arguments (such as Frank 1948) dismissed his polemic style, overgeneralisations, and radicalness; see also Graubard (1948); Anderson (1947); Simon (1947); Fainsod (1947); de Visme Williamson (1947); Briggs (1947); Bryson (1947); Desch (1947); Gooch (1947).

26 See for further discussions also Behr (2013); Holt et al. (1960); Lebow (2003); Scheurman (2007).

its *a priori*, experience-independent claims and assumptions about the world. Political realism in Morgenthau is hence an anti-Cartesian position which recognizes the mind-independent existence of an empirical world and human agency within this world.

Second, Morgenthau is also averse to an empiricism which would base knowledge and beliefs about the (political) world on merely sensually conceived impressions and which would rely, in its assertions about the existence, constitution, and character of the world, on (ostensibly) mind-independent, *data bruta* – that is, methodologically on quantification and measurement of social and political phenomena – built on the hope that through inductive logic there may be some kind of spill-over from data collection to knowledge and meaning.

And third, Morgenthau's epistemology, because it recognizes the mind-independent, however spatio-temporally qualified status of things real, "strips mind of its pretensions, but not of its value or greatness ... Realism dethrones the mind, [and at the same time] recognizes mind as chief in the world" (Alexander, 1960: 186). We here further recognize an anti-idealist position against the belief in a "world in which there exist only minds ... According to [this theory] ... the world of objects capable of existing independently of a knower ... is ... rejected" (Holt et al., 1960: 154–5). Politically speaking, and in sharp contrast to Morgenthau's position, idealism would presume the fabricability and shapability of the world and the calculation and planability of political strategies therein without, as he argues, taking into account to a sufficiently high degree the concepts of power, interest and morality and the "factual", but empirically divergent, constellations, which these concepts make cognizable.

In his dismissal of all three positions, Morgenthau is quite uncompromising as he fiercely argues that all attempts that do not operate on an *erfahrungswissenschaftliche* foundation would depoliticise, dehumanise, and degenerate politics and the study of politics through abstract and technocratic formula.<sup>27</sup> Finally, he regards scientism as destroying the foundations of humanity and promoting the illusion of progress through social engineering, according to Morgenthau characteristic for US social sciences and positivism of his time and for Western modernity more generally.<sup>28</sup> *Erfahrungswissenschaft*, on the opposite, recognizes perennial forces that penetrate political reality, but require for their understanding context-specific explanations and

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<sup>27</sup> See especially chapters V and VI in *Scientific Man*; also Morgenthau *On the state of political science* (1955).

<sup>28</sup> See hereto more specific Morgenthau (1944).

hermeneutic methods. This becomes most obvious in a discussion of power, interest, and morality that Morgenthau pursues throughout his oeuvre, i.e. also in *Scientific Man*, that is, however, most prominently conducted in his 'Six Principles of Realism' (2<sup>nd</sup> edition and onwards in *Politics Among Nations*).

He here argues, and this nicely summarizes the meaning of *erfahrungswissenschaftlich* as a historiographic and interpretivist approach to political science, that power, interest, and morality would be the most helpful and appropriate concepts to study politics, but that their meaning would run the whole remit of human societies historically and culturally. Thus, the concepts are epistemologically universal, but ontologically they take on very different meanings across human history and cultures.

These are the major aspects which together form the more substantial theoretical background of Morgenthau's critique of scientism as articulated in *Scientific Man*. They show that this background mainly consists of *epistemological* reflections on the peculiar form of knowledge and insight which according to Morgenthau is constitutive for a truly realist political science but widely neglected, misunderstood or twisted in progressivism and scientism. In order to fully understand Morgenthau's perspective, however, it is necessary to bring out more clearly the significance of one of the conceptual emphases of Morgenthau's argument that were just mentioned, namely the conception of power underlying his critique of scientism. A closer consideration of this aspect renders the surprising insight that Morgenthau, although he stresses the significance of power as a social and political factor, does not really focus on power as an analytical concept of his critique, i.e., on the power of knowledge itself. Moreover, the concept of power he applies in *Scientific Man* turns out to be a grossly simplified, reduced version of the more differentiated conception he puts forth in some of his earlier German and French writings. As a consequence, Morgenthau particularly fails to bring out the immediately political implications of the epistemological emphases of his critique of scientism and their inherent connection with phenomena of power and domination. This analytical gap of his critique clearly comes to the fore when we juxtapose his account of scientism with Voegelin's analysis.

In Voegelin's interpretation, scientism "has remained to this day one of the strongest gnostic movements in Western society" (Voegelin [1952] 2000b: 192). In an article on *The*

*Origins of Scientism* published in 1948 in *Social Research*, one of the major journals publishing émigré scholarship at the time (see Gunnell 1993: 180), Voegelin most pointedly articulates his critique of this movement. The article deals with the formation of physics as a modern scientific discipline as it unfolded historically in the discourse among Isaac Newton, some of his followers and some of his philosophical critics. According to Voegelin, Newton's theory of physics, or more precisely, a peculiar interpretation of it is one of the disciplinary places of origin of scientism. His analysis of this process anticipates a number of aspects of the conceptual framework of Thomas Kuhn's ((1962]2012) classical study on the history of modern epistemology and applies them in terms of a radical critique of scientism. Voegelin argues that during the discursive formation of physics as a discipline, certain theological underpinnings of Newton's perspective were transformed into the constitutive dogmas and functional theoretical taboos of the new science. On the basis of this theologico-scientific transformation, some of Newton's scientific conceptions successively attained the function of unquestioned core premises of the new "paradigm" of physics as a "normal" science (to use the Kuhnian terms). Above all Newton's concept of "absolute space", which at first had served as a philosophically rather weak and merely heuristically justified assumption, was turned into the core assumption of physics as a scientific discipline (Voegelin 1948: 467 ff.).

Voegelin stresses that this Newtonian concept of space, although it was philosophically untenable already at the time of its original formulation, served as the unquestioned premise of the scientific discourse up until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when it was finally corrected by Einstein. What Voegelin's genealogy primarily tries to bring to fore, however, are not merely these epistemological fallacies and unquestioned dogmas in the early development of modern physics, which add some interesting aspects to Morgenthau's identification of the epistemological characteristics of scientism. More importantly, Voegelin exceeds this analysis of scientism's problematic epistemology by examining its immediately social and political implications, or more precisely by examining the contra-intuitive manner in which the epistemological aspects of the story are intimately related to "the social relevance of scientism as an intellectual attitude" (Voegelin 1948: 464).

According to Voegelin, the process and constellation of early physics as an emerging modern scientific discipline must be understood as a social and political phenomenon, as

entailing a practical logic which cannot be contained to the disciplinary field of physics or any other kind of scientific discipline, not even to the academic field in general. The scientific logic is an inherently expansive logic which unfolds dynamics that effect society as a whole. It is this “social relevance” of the diagnosed Newtonian epistemological fallacies which turns scientism into a highly dynamic movement with far reaching political consequences, and which makes “the advance of science after 1700 (...) the most important single factor in changing the structure of power and wealth on the global scene” (Voegelin 1948: 485). Since this “advance of science” is not merely a scientific, but also a social and political development, its consequences are highly ambiguous. It is accompanied by the general victory of “utilitarian rationality” as the socially dominant form of reasoning and eventually by the “cancerous growth” of this utilitarian rationality in society in which “the rational-utilitarian segment is expanding so strongly in our civilization that the social realization of other values is noticeably weakened” (Voegelin 1948: 486).

But why did “what Newton had to say in his definitions of space” have such an “immeasurable effect on the formation of political ideas” (Voegelin 1948: 493) and so “profoundly affected the political and economic structure of the western world” (Voegelin 1948: 484)? According to Voegelin, it is precisely the epistemological and philosophical weakness of certain scientific assumptions which are the “sources from which the movement draws its strength”. During the transformation of Newton’s physics into Newtonian scientism, “a process which we may call the transfer of pathos from a special pursuit to the existence of man” (Voegelin 1948: 490), the epistemological fallacies, so Voegelin’s argument, reveal their genuinely political functionality; they turn out to be necessary fallacies, because they serve as the crucial political “sources of scientific effectiveness” (Voegelin 1948: 464). In other words: The scientific worldview’s lack of philosophical plausibility is but a symptom of its inherent priority on popular effectiveness and applicability in terms of discursive power.

Insofar as the scientific worldview claims to be of “paradigmatic” value not only in science, but in society at large, it reveals itself as a political rather than a scientific or philosophical movement. The “prototypical result of a theoretical victory for the philosopher and a social victory for the scientist” (Voegelin 1948: 464) which the debate between the early Newtonians and their critics had, sheds light for Voegelin not only on a surprising outcome of a

theoretical debate, but, more importantly, on the general “relations between power and the advance of science” (Voegelin 1948: 484) and hence on the socially and politically repressive undercurrent of scientistic progressivism. It reveals an immediately practical logic of power and domination and the idea of an ever closer interconnection between knowledge and power as the core principle of scientistic epistemologies. Seen from this perspective, the “scientific revolution” of scientism turns out to primarily be a social and political phenomenon from the start, a quest for power and domination rather than for truth and knowledge: “The advancement of science and the rationality of politics are interwoven in a social process that, in the perspective of a more distant future, will probably appear as the greatest power orgy in the history of mankind” (Voegelin 1948: 486; see also 488).

When seen against the background of this pointed thesis of a power-oriented epistemology and a practical logic of domination by knowledge and discourse as the core principles of scientism, it is fair to say that Morgenthau’s critique of the same intellectual movements neglects important aspects of the problem. His work does deliver an analysis of power in politics, but does not link power to knowledge and/or knowledge movements, i.e., concretely to the movements he so vehemently criticized in *Scientific Man*. As a consequence, he does not point explicitly to the political and academic power games *of* and *within* these movements. He occasionally alludes to these problems or at least touches upon the question of the reasons for the “social effectiveness” of scientism,<sup>29</sup> but without elaborating these questions. While Morgenthau’s plea for a power-oriented political theory was aimed against the unrealistic naïvety of the various idealistic and progressivist movements he criticized, he himself seems to have overseen the close connection between the epistemological emphases of his critique with certain power phenomena, and therefore also the latent but crucial role of power within these very movements (a role which was only concealed by their allegedly naïve, optimistic rhetoric).

This neglect may be no mere coincidence, but rather the result of a surprisingly narrow and simplified conceptualisation of power itself which Morgenthau applied in *Scientific Man* – a

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29 See, for example, Morgenthau 1946: 19 f., 29, 35 f., 53 ff. Likewise, we find an important reference to the sociology of knowledge of Karl Mannheim and an argument in Morgenthau (in 1955) for a culturally situated form of knowledge analysis and knowledge production; from both it would have been a possible step to conclude the power of knowledge and to a sociology of the power of knowledge.

simplification, by the way, which was to become the conceptual model for his further works. As noted above, *Scientific Man's* origins go back to a talk Morgenthau gave in 1940, just seven years after publication of his French book, *La Notion du "Politique"*.<sup>30</sup> Why is this important? Because, simply and bafflingly, in *Scientific Man* and in *all* further English writings, published and unpublished, Morgenthau ignores the important distinction that he meticulously made in *La Notion du "Politique"* between "pouvoir" and "puissance"—that is, between an analytical, empirical concept of power as domination and a normative concept of power as the capability to act and to enact something politically.<sup>31</sup> What were two cautiously distinguished concepts just a few years earlier became conflated into one term, the English "power," and this despite the possibility of expressing this distinction in English (as the word "puissance" exists in the English language). Even if not commonly used, the word was available to Morgenthau, especially since he wrote using an English dictionary in the first years after his arrival in the United States.<sup>32</sup> Still, in his English writings Morgenthau omits and ignores this terminologically and philosophically important distinction that he learned primarily through his reading of Nietzsche, who distinguished between *Macht* and *Kraft*.

We suspect that a continuation of this differentiation would have enabled Morgenthau to link his sociology of political power to a sociology of (the power of) knowledge and hence to include those aspects into his perspective which were emphasized by Voegelin. Instead, the conceptual collapse of "pouvoir" and "puissance" into merely "power" signals, however wrongly, an only *realpolitik*-dimension in his thinking, and such he was wrongly received by the majority of US political science. This leads us back to the personal background of Morgenthau's as well as Voegelin's critique.

### **Self-Localizations**

Our argument thus far can be summarized first in the thesis that both authors formulated their critique of scientism from a perspective that was inspired by their émigré experience, and

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30 English as *The Concept of the Political* (2012).

31 Morgenthau utilizes the distinction in his German writings, foremost his PhD thesis, where he writes about "Macht" (in the meaning of "pouvoir") and "Kraft" (as "puissance"). For an excellent discussion of both concepts of "power," see Rösch (2014); also Morgenthau, "Love and Power."

32 Correspondence between the author and Morgenthau's daughter, Susanna, and son, Mathew, in 2010 and 2011 during the preparation of *The Concept of the Political*.

second in the conjecture that while Voegelin's critique of scientism is majorly founded on a historical sociology of knowledge that is aware of the political power of knowledge, Morgenthau presents "only" a sociology of (political) power that does not explicitly link political power to knowledge. This lack of analytical depth and awareness in Morgenthau may have its reason in his abandonment of a differentiation of the concept of power between "pouvoir" and "puissance" that he carefully distinguished in his German and French writings while he collapsed both dimensions into the one term of "power" in his English writings. Against the background of these findings, it may be possible to sketch some traits of how in turn the differences between Morgenthau's and Voegelin's understandings of scientism, especially the different depth in their analyses of the relation between knowledge and power, also influenced or is reflected in the way they perceived and enacted their personal positions as émigré scholars.

It is quite obvious that Morgenthau's reception in the United States was particularly colored by his concept of power. Usually, the IR narrative holds that, as a "Realist," he would have conceptualized power as a bellicose, aggressive, and, if need be, canny domination (here, a certain reading of Machiavelli's *Prince* is often mistakenly associated with Morgenthau<sup>33</sup>). The reception and influence of his work in general and of *Scientific Man* in particular might have been quite different had he continued to conceptually contrast the two types of power outlined above. And one can easily imagine very different trajectories in IR theory in general, and in the scholarship on Morgenthau's political thought more specifically, had he made this distinction—one which he admits in private correspondence he should have made.<sup>34</sup>

As to his self-perception and self-localization as a scholar, it almost seems as if his conceptual neglect of the connection between power and knowledge is reflected in his personal relation to the academic field and in the course which the reception of his work took. Regarding the latter, Morgenthau was made the founder of a paradigm in IR theory which in its further development left behind most of those conceptual and theoretical questions which he had emphasized as crucial aspects of his understanding of political realism. It would surely be going

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33 Morgenthau's reading of Machiavelli can indeed be seen in "The Machiavellian Utopia," *Ethics* 55, no. 2 (1945), pp. 145–47; on Machiavelli, see, among others, Behr, *A History of International Political Theory*, ch. II.2.1.

34 Letter to Michael Oakeshott, May 22, 1948 (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Container 33).

too far to interpret his complaints about certain miss-readings of his texts during this process as naivety about academia as a power field. But there is not much published evidence that Morgenthau perceived his role as an émigré scholar, too, in terms of academic power games among schools and camps of thought, competing over influence and resources, trying to establish themselves against others, and at times also promoting peculiar political interests and worldviews.<sup>35</sup>

Voegelin, in contrast, seems to have been fully aware of the fact that his critical analysis of the power-oriented epistemologies of scientistic movements had immediately practical implications for his role as an academic in general and as an émigré scholar in particular. He seems to have consciously decided to simply reject to seriously participate in what he perceived as academic power games and as the kind of politicization of scholarship which his analysis indicated as a major symptom of the intellectual crisis. Instead, he chose to enact the role of the critic in terms of self-distancing and provocation, at times thereby approaching the attitude if not of a general “cultural”, then at least of some kind of a “scientific pessimism”. His historical analysis from 1948 outlined above, for instance, ends with a deeply pessimistic diagnosis of the current situation. He stresses that scientism’s “destructive effects defy repair in any visible future” (Voegelin 1948: 490) and concludes:

“That in the end, through Einstein, the foundations of physics were revised (...) is an important event in the history of science, but it has, for the moment at least, no visible social or political importance. The damage of scientism is done. As a philosophical friend aptly phrased it, the insane have succeeded in locking the sane in the asylum. From this asylum no physical escape is possible; as a consequence of the interlocking of science and social power, the political tentacles of scientistic civilization reach into every nook and corner of an industrialized society; and with increasing effectiveness they stretch over the whole globe. There exist only differences, though very important ones, in the various regions of the global asylum with regard to the possibility of personal escape into the

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<sup>35</sup> We do have, however, some utterances by him in private correspondence that indicate critical awareness of respective institutional dynamics as in the above referenced letter to Michael Oakshott, but also to Karl Gottfried Kindermann, then professor on international relations at the University of Munich.

freedom of the spirit. What is left is hope – but hope should not obscure the realistic insight that we who are living today shall never experience freedom of the spirit in society.” (Voegelin 1948: 494)

This radically pessimistic diagnosis – which, by the way, shares astounding conceptual parallels not only with Kuhn’s later historical epistemology, but also with Michel Foucault’s analyses of the relation between power and knowledge in modernity<sup>36</sup> – articulates the results of a theoretical analysis of broad tendencies within long historical developments and processes. But it can surely also be read in more personal terms, as articulating Voegelin’s perception of his time and personal environment and of his position within it. It undoubtedly reflects traits of his genuine interpretation of the émigré scholar’s position from which the *New Science* as a public intervention is written. From this interpretation’s perspective, American society and academia might have been primarily perceived by Voegelin as a region within the global asylum which provided, in contrast to most other regions, most favorable possibilities of “personal escape into the freedom of the spirit” – a difference of the utmost importance from Voegelin’s point of view, and surely one of the most valuable traits for him of the émigré existence.

In terms of active practical self-localization, this peculiar kind of freedom may be reflected, for instance, in a certain serenity Voegelin demonstrated especially in his relation to the academic community surrounding him, an attitude which often resulted in an ironic, sometimes almost a philosophical caricaturist’s perspective.<sup>37</sup> This ironic, somewhat

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36 These parallels regard not only the astute focus on the conceptual implications of the modern understanding of „space“ (see Foucault 1984) and the close relation between knowledge and power especially in modern science (see, for a summary of Foucault’s perspective on this relation, Rouse 2003), but also the pointed critique of the „scientific-utilitarian dream“ of a prison- or asylum-like organization of modern society which Voegelin, like Foucault, finds most clearly articulated in the work of Jeremy Bentham (Voegelin 1948: 494, Fn 48).

37 The most expressive articulation of this attitude can be found in a letter Voegelin wrote in 1976 to the organizer of a behaviorist conference at the University of Southern California on “the ethics of behavior control” to which he had also invited Voegelin, who at the time was fellow at Stanford University. According to the invitation letter the conference focused “on voluntary, reversible, non-addictive methods of producing ‘artificial’ happiness, goodness, and increased human capacity through chemical and electrical stimulation of the brain, biofeedback, sleep and memory enhancement, operant conditioning etc.” and on the attempt to “produce genuinely new insights and ideas regarding the technologies of experience and behavior control and their legitimate use by individuals in a democratic society.” Voegelin’s response a few months later expresses his gratitude for the opportunity to witness “behaviorists in action” and contains a highly ironic, partly even sarcastic eight page experience report. The report sketches quite the same constellation as his historical analysis of the “Origins of scientism” three decades earlier, including the diagnoses of a fundamental “reductionist fallacy” as the constitutive premise of the scientific

equanimous attitude did not suggest complete “inner emigration”, as it were, as the logical consequence of the émigré’s position. To the contrary, it did imply specific obligations regarding the social role of the critical political thinker.<sup>38</sup> Realistically perceived, however, among these obligations, according to Voegelin, the integration of his work into the mainstream of the academic discourse could not have the highest priority. They rather entailed the duty to seize the freedom of the émigré’s position for critical intellectual provocations, to think and write, maybe, for a more or less “distant future” or, as his motto to the *New Science* puts it, to let posterity “know we have not loosely through silence permitted things to pass away as in a dream” (Voegelin [1952] 2000b:76), and to otherwise contribute to the potential revival of a “science of substance” (Voegelin 1948: 463) which Voegelin, despite his pessimism, considered to have a real chance in some “regions” of the contemporary scientific discourse.<sup>39</sup>

In the case of Morgenthau, these commitments show a lifelong continuity and coherence and indeed one may speculate whether he – very much opposite to Voegelin who was certainly the more serious and profound thinker – has given up to communicate his philosophical positions to US academia and public, even if in the form of polemical provocations, especially after mainly negative reviews of *Scientific Man* in the first years after its publication,<sup>40</sup> and rather focused his work from the 1950s onwards mostly on commentaries on US foreign and domestic and international politics. At least we do not observe new philosophical findings and positions in his work after his theoretically most productive period in the 1940s and 1950s.

We can thus observe that *Scientific Man*, despite all its ambivalences, is significant as a review and critique of the political–philosophical landscape of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as of the discipline of International Relations during this time. Classical realism—for which Morgenthau was the most prominent voice—was arguably *opposed to* what became

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worldview, of the merging of knowledge and power as its epistemological core principle, its protection against critique by discursive “tactics of prohibiting the use of philosophical language”, and the inevitable outcome of a “more or less abject submission of the representatives of Western intellectual and spiritual culture to the demands of the ideologists”. (Henry Clark to Eric Voegelin, December 3, 1975, in: Voegelin Papers, Hoover Archive at Stanford University, Box 9, Folder 17.) Eric Voegelin to Henry Clark, February 21, 1976 (ibid.).

38 See also Gebhardt (1997).

39 On these regions and Voegelin’s understanding of “substantive science” see Voegelin 2007: 142 ff. and 193 ff.

40 See above footnote 26.

mainstream IR theory.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Morgenthau both anticipated and antedated many important commitments that became popular and that would be emphasized many years later in “poststructuralist” IR.<sup>42</sup> Third, vital impulses for the foundation of American IR came about more in terms of how Morgenthau was perceived and (mis)read, rather than from what he actually said and wrote.<sup>43</sup>

Regarding their concrete practical consequences, both Morgenthau’s and Voegelin’s ways of personal interpretation and enactment of the role of the émigré scholar had ambiguous results. Obviously, neither Morgenthau’s nor Voegelin’s intellectual interventions turned out to be appropriate to successfully negotiate or build bridges between a European *geistesgeschichtliche* orientation and US social sciences. Their uncompromising and polemical reactions to the behaviourist and positivist currents in US academia themselves contributed to defeat the purpose of such a constructive synthesis, if it ever was on their mind and objectively possible. In the end, it was not them who decided about the peculiar way in which their thought was integrated into the broader academic discourses. Both works were often instrumentalised to foster intellectual ends and projects which surely did not completely correspond to their own major concerns, interests and theoretical priorities. Voegelin’s attempts to resist to be made an icon of a rather narrow political conservatism were only partly successful, and in effect often had the result of a certain marginalization of his oeuvre, despite its general recognition as an eminent, classical contribution to 20<sup>th</sup> century political philosophy. Morgenthau was made a classic in IR theory ‘for the wrong reasons’ and as such often reduced to a quotable academic figure. Both did not decide to be read this way. But it is fair to say that both, in their peculiar modes of intellectual self-localization, in a way unwillingly helped to prepare the ground for these kinds of intellectual cooption. This, of course, does not hinder a fresh reading of their works and a reconsideration of the most substantial of their theoretical contributions. To the contrary.

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<sup>41</sup> Here it appears that Morgenthau got celebrated (as well as critiqued) by many for the wrong reasons; see Behr/Roesch 2012: 29/30.

<sup>42</sup> See here Ashely (1981), Behr/Roesch (2012), Levine (2013).

<sup>43</sup> With regard to this, see his letter to Michael Oakshott from May 22, 1948, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Container 33) as well as Behr (2009, 2010).

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