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By promoting a greater understanding of the values and conditions that ensure peaceful relations among nations, CRIA hopes to contribute to a better life for people everywhere.

WORDS & DEEDS IN FOREIGN POLICY

Kenneth W. Thompson



FOUNDED IN 1914
BY ANDREW CARNEGIE

The Council on Religion and International Affairs
170 East 64th Street, New York, NY 10021



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Fifth Morgenthau Memorial Lecture
on Morality & Foreign Policy

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Introduction

The Council on Religion and International Affairs, founded by Andrew Carnegie in 1914, presents the annual Morgenthau Memorial Lecture in honor of the memory of Professor Hans J. Morgenthau, who was a member of the CRIA Board of Trustees for over twenty years, until his death in July 1980. CRIA initiated an annual lecture series in 1979, and Professor Morgenthau delivered this first CRIA Distinguished Lecture on Ethics and Foreign Policy. In 1981, the lecture series was renamed to commemorate the contribution Professor Morgenthau made not only to CRIA but also to the study of ethical problems of foreign policy.

Professor Morgenthau once summarized his view of the international condition as follows: "The great issue as I saw it then and still [see it] today is between a crusading foreign policy which is ideologically oriented and a realistic foreign policy emphasizing national interest in terms of a nation's power vis-à-vis other nations." This assessment still remains true for those who support "realism" in foreign policy.

Because of the importance of "realism" in Morgenthau's world view, it may be worthwhile to consider his definition in more detail. "The main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power," Morgenthau wrote.

This concept provides the link between reason trying to understand international politics, and the facts to be understood. It sets politics as an autonomous sphere of action and understanding apart from other spheres, such as economics (understood in terms of interest defined as wealth), ethics, aesthetics, or religion. Without such a concept a theory of politics, international or domestic, would be altogether impossible, for without it we could not distinguish between political and nonpolitical facts,

nor could we bring at least a measure of systemic order to the political sphere.*

The fifth annual Morgenthau Memorial Lecturer, Kenneth W. Thompson, stands at the forefront of the "realist" ranks in carrying on the Morgenthau tradition. Among Professor Morgenthau's army of students, Professor Thompson is the only one who collaborated with the master in a substantive way, jointly editing *Principles and Problems of International Politics* in 1951. Thus, it was appropriate that Professor Thompson edited the revised sixth edition of Morgenthau's classic, *Politics Among Nations*, in 1985.

Professor Stanley Hoffmann of Harvard University, in reviewing this sixth edition in *The Atlantic* of November 1985, observed that "the fact that [Morgenthau] studied, practiced, and taught law in Europe made his influential textbook *Politics Among Nations* . . . even more remarkable. For it was a declaration of war on the legalistic and moralistic tradition that had prevailed in American foreign policy. What Morgenthau offered as an alternate was 'realism'—a highly ambitious effort both at theory and policy advice. . . ."

A letter from Secretary of State George P. Schultz to Professor Thompson on November 15, 1985, offered this assurance:

I would like to congratulate you on the publication of the sixth edition of *Politics Among Nations*. It is hard to exaggerate Hans Morgenthau's influence on postwar thinking in the field of international relations. His basic text has provided a solid intellectual foundation for a generation of students of foreign policy.

You are uniquely qualified for the task of ensuring that this landmark text remains up-to-date following Professor Morgenthau's death. I am pleased that you took on this project, and I will assign your revised edition a prominent place in the library I am building for future secretaries of state.

CRIA is also obligated to Professor Thompson for launching the Ethics and Foreign Policy Lecture series which is held at leading

* Morgenthau, Hans J. 1985. *Politics Among Nations*. 6th ed., rev. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

colleges and universities around the country. Papers presented at the first series, held in 1982 at the University of Virginia under Professor Thompson's leadership, have recently been published as *Ethics and International Relations*, the second volume in CRIA's Ethics in Foreign Policy series. The first volume in this series, *Moral Dimensions of American Foreign Policy*—also edited by Professor Thompson—collected lectures and essays previously published by CRIA on the subject of ethics and foreign policy.

Professor Thompson has had a distinguished career in the educational world, having served as vice president of the Rockefeller Foundation and as professor of political science at Northwestern University. He is currently director of the White Burkett Miller Center of Public Affairs and Commonwealth Professor of government and foreign affairs at the University of Virginia. His honorary degrees include those from Notre Dame University, Bowdoin College, and Saint Olaf College. His prolific writings on international affairs include an award-winning book, *Winston S. Churchill's World View*, which was published in 1983.

I would like to take this occasion to express our appreciation to those who made contributions to the Morgenthau Memorial Endowment Fund to assure that these memorial lectures will become a permanent part of CRIA's institutional program.

Robert J. Myers
President, CRIA

Words and Deeds in Foreign Policy

by Kenneth W. Thompson

On his return from the Geneva Summit with Mikhail Gorbachev in November 1985, President Ronald Reagan spoke of the need to measure results by comparing words and deeds. Secretary Gorbachev made a similar statement, explaining that the conference would be judged not by the words of the leaders but by the fruits of their efforts. Hans J. Morgenthau, whose life and work we commemorate on this occasion, recognized the distinction between words and deeds at a more fundamental level, rooted in "the moral dilemma which faces man on all levels of social action." Man seeks to obscure and conceal this inescapable dilemma at the heart of political action and does so in three significant ways. Together they constitute an escape from domestic and international politics.

First, "the most common escape, especially in the United States, [is] moralism, that is, the substitution of what is popularly believed to be moral principles for the rules of politics." Moralism is the subordination of all of politics and morality to a single moral principle, for example, freedom or equality, order or justice, security or cooperation. Moral principles are indeed present in foreign policy as in politics, and are manifested in the civilizing influences of law; morality and mores; and restraints on expediency, cruelty, and violence. However, moral principles are realized or approximated not as isolated objectives but within circumstances of time and place. Principles are filtered through the perceptions and requirements of man, politics, and, finally, the nation-state. According to Morgenthau (1962), the first filter is man, who "cannot help sinning when he acts in relation to his fellow man," and for whom the struggle for power "implies the denial of what is the very core of Judeo-Christian

morality—respect for man as an end in himself,” while the second filter, politics, can never be “free of the taint of egotism which, as selfishness, pride, or self-deception, seeks for the actor more than is his due,” and through which the actor “takes the power drives of others for what they are or worse” but “closes his eyes to his own aspirations for power, which appear . . . different and nobler” (318–19). The third filter for principles is the nation-state or nationalism, which paradoxically is, “together with Marxism, . . . the last great original contribution the West has made to the political thought and practice of the world,” and at the same time both a major source of political anarchy and, in some respects, a mockery of political morality (Morgenthau 1962, 181). Moralism is an escape from political morality. To paraphrase Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, morality—in contrast with moralism—is the search for what is right in politics amidst a maze of conflicting moral and political principles.

The second way man seeks to conceal the moral dilemma is through utopianism, whether of the Left or the Right, which transforms ordinary struggles for social and political ends into fanatical crusades for quasi-religious goals. In the name of an absolute good, utopianism provides a moral facade for the most unscrupulous policies. Ruthless power operates behind a screen of presumably ideal ends. Stalin denounced a journalist who compared him with Napoleon, saying the latter had no coherent historical end which justified the use of amoral means. When Lady Astor questioned him on the morality of the slaughter of five million kulaks, Stalin responded by asking about the unredeemed killing of millions in the two world wars for no socially legitimate end.

Reinhold Niebuhr, who Morgenthau considered the most important American political thinker since Calhoun, warned that the communist utopia and all its accompanying illusions made “communism more dangerous rather than more evil.” Its illusions enable Communists “to pose as the liberators of every class or nation . . . and to exploit every moral and political weakness . . . as if they had the conscience of civilization in their keeping” (Niebuhr 1953, 36–7). Responding to those who would equate communism and nazism, Niebuhr countered that nazism had never gained control of Poland or China from within. Ironically, the claim of virtue that rests on communist utopianism is largely belied in practice. Yet it was communist illusions—in contrast with the brute power of nazism—that captivated certain Polish, Czech, and Chinese leaders; Western idealists and intellectuals; and,

later, Asian and African leaders. Reflecting on the sources of its power, Niebuhr added: “it is not unfair to suggest that the attractive power of communism for so many idealists is due to a general utopian element in our culture which fails to acknowledge the perennial moral contradictions on every level of historical advance” (Niebuhr 1953, 37–8).

Utopianism passes over the endless empirical tasks that the improvement of society demands. It offers an escape from politics, translated by Marxists as the irresistible march of history and not as “the slow boring of hard wood.” All utopianism expresses itself through prophets promising transformations of man and society and proclaiming salvation—whether from the Left or the Right.

The third and final expression of the escape from politics comes from those who “equate and identify political success with moral superiority, thus seeking to eliminate the gap between the moral ideal and the facts of political life” (1962, 137). Professor Morgenthau characterized this tendency as the most dangerous form of political escapism because power “is glorified as the source of all material and moral good, and those transcendent concepts by which power must be tamed, restrained, and transformed are denied an independent existence” (1962, 317). Hitler personified this outlook when he said, “In questions of foreign policy, I shall never admit I am tied by anything.” If Hitler’s view is the hard version of the escape from politics through which power and success are invoked as ultimate ends, pharisaism, especially among idealists and religious people, is a soft version through which outward signs of well-being are equated with inner virtue. Reacting to this trend, Niebuhr repeatedly condemned those who sought to make a success story out of the message of the cross.

Niebuhr told the story of two men, one of whom accounted for all his material success by the fact that he had tithed since his youth. The other man was a grocer named Adam Denger, young Niebuhr’s first employer, who extended credit to unemployed miners in Lincoln, Illinois who later left without paying their debts. Niebuhr’s biographer writes (Bingham 1961, 62): “Mr. Denger kept believing that God would protect him if he did what was right. But God let Adam Denger go bankrupt and his young assistant [Niebuhr] grew up to preach against sentimentality and reliance on special providence,” choosing as his text: “For He makes his sun rise on the evil and the good and sends his rain on the just and the unjust.”

Hans Morgenthau went further and identified the success ethic as a latter-day form of totalitarianism. Success in a limited area is made an ultimate good. The ideal was identified with success in Mussolini's claim that under fascism the trains ran on time. More important for Americans: "The Western democracies have widely accepted the Fascist standards without knowing it. They, too, tend to equate and identify political success with moral superiority..." (Morgenthau 1962, 316-17).

Moralism, utopianism, and the success ethic lend themselves to the primacy of words over deeds, externals over essences, rhetoric over policy. The question is whether certain peculiarly American habits and conditions buttress and support the tendency to espouse words over deeds and to gravitate toward these three perspectives. We know that faith in the word has deep roots in the American religious and political tradition. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God," we read. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville perceived that "religion... holds her sway... much less as a doctrine of revelation than as a commonly received opinion" (1961, 11). Historically, Americans were disposed by custom to accept the word. Looking ahead, Tocqueville prophesied that "faith in public opinion will become a species of religion [in America]... , and the majority its ministering prophet" (Tocqueville 1961, 12). Sanctity would surround not the words of the farsighted leader, but of the majority of the people—*vox populi*—and in the skillfully orchestrated appeals of leaders who would echo popular hopes and fears.

For Tocqueville, the causes of this American predisposition were many-sided and complex. One cause was the addiction of Americans to general ideas, which exceeded that of either the French or the British. "The chief merit of general ideas is that they enable the human mind to pass a rapid judgment on a great many objects at once; but... the notions they convey... cause the mind to lose as much in accuracy as it gains in comprehensiveness" (1961, 14-15). Broad notions of man and God serve mankind in realms such as popular philosophy and religion, but they also demonstrate, especially in politics, the insufficiency of abstractions. The best corrective for the defects of general ideas is to make the subject a part of the daily practical occupation of a people. However, what if the experience to which general ideas pertain is remote, as it is with foreign policy?

Another cause of the Americans' penchant for generalities is the

ethos of a society whose goal is equality. Tocqueville described this kind of society:

Most of those who live at a time of equality are full of an ambition at once aspiring and relaxed: they would fain succeed brilliantly and at once, but they would be dispensed from great efforts to obtain success. These conflicting tendencies lead straight to... general ideas, by aid of which they flatter themselves that they can figure very importantly at a small expense, and draw the attention of the public with very little trouble (1961, 19).

A further cause is the universal tumult and the conflict of jarring interests endemic to a democracy: "Every one is actively in motion: some in quest of power, others of gain." Men seldom indulge in meditation and in fact hold it in scant esteem. "The man of action is... obliged to content himself with the best he can get... He has... to rely on ideas which he has not had leisure to search to the bottom... and, in the long run, he risks less in making use of some false principles, than in spending his time in establishing all his principles on the basis of truth" (Tocqueville 1961, 50-51).

As early as the first half of the nineteenth century, observers noted an inflation of the language of general ideas in the social and political order. Thus Tocqueville noted that "Americans, who generally treat of business in clear, plain language, devoid of all ornament, and so extremely simple as to be often coarse, are apt to become inflated... They then vent their pomposity from one end of a harangue to the other..." Furthermore, in the political realm, men's "ideas are all extremely minute and clear, or extremely general and vague: what lies between is an open void" (1961, 93).

What was observed by Tocqueville has culminated in the late twentieth century. To the present, middle principles and proximate goals are absent from the political scene. Television puts a premium on one-liners and complex issues encapsulated in thirty-second film clips. Political campaigning throws up promises of such glittering generality that few can possibly be implemented as policies after an election. President Jimmy Carter asked his aide Stuart Eizenstat to keep two checklists, one of fulfilled promises and another of unfulfilled promises. A more realistic approach may be that of the politician who

answered the question, "What about your promises?" by replying, "Tell them I lied."

Ideological politics has dominated the last three presidential elections, to say nothing of the war of words between East and West in foreign policy. The heightened ideological conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States and the increased stridency of rhetoric on both sides could imperil peace and any relaxation of tension. In the nuclear age, where thermonuclear conflict is unthinkable, words become surrogates for military actions. Yet we would be mistaken to assume that words may not provoke deeds of grave consequence, especially in an uncertain and deteriorating political situation.

This leads to another distinction between words and deeds. Words divorced from responsibility constitute a recurrent problem on the American political scene. For policymakers and intellectuals, the distinction between an opinion and a decision is apparently difficult to accept. The realm of the thinker is one of opinions, concepts, and general principles. Since Plato, the world of the philosopher has been understood to consist of contemplation, meditation, and transcendence. As William James said, the philosopher's purpose is to encourage men "to make an unusually stubborn attempt to think clearly." The philosopher king stands above and outside the battle; he is expected neither to rule or reign nor to judge the day-by-day tactics of those who do. Instead, he subjects the opinions of intellectuals to a process of continuous re-examination and review. When history proves the thinker wrong, he can respond by simply saying, "I goofed," and then recast, reformulate, or reorganize his views, sometimes forming his own revisionist school of thought. From a public policy standpoint, he is seldom if ever required to live with the consequences of his views.

By contrast, policymakers live in the world of decisions. For the best and the brightest, and for those less inspired, there can be no escape from the consequences of a decision. No matter how often those who helped chart the American course in Vietnam may attempt to explain or excuse or justify the policies of the 1960s and 1970s, the Vietnam War, with its awesome consequences at home and abroad, remains part of the stream of American history. Sturdier officials will not shrink from acknowledging responsibility; others discover they had been critics all along.

The harsh realities for the decision maker begin with determining whether an issue presents a question for American foreign policy, and

if so, what that question is. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said of a former national security adviser: "He has more answers than there are questions." Policymakers must ascertain the facts surrounding a problem by drawing on the best human and material resources without becoming captive to them. In boxing the compass of alternative actions (including the action of doing nothing) the decision maker needs to weigh consequences that are all too often shrouded in fog. From past policies and traditions and from an unfolding legacy of thinking on foreign policy, he derives general principles, but these principles may, with changing factual situations, produce conflicting results. Of the decision maker's task, former Secretary of State Dean Rusk has written: "He is aware that every moderately important problem merges imperceptibly into every other problem. He must deal with the question of how to manage a part when it cannot be handled without relation to the whole—when the whole is too large to grasp" (Rusk 1963, 66-7). He must do so, in the words of another former secretary, Dean Acheson, with the hounds of time snapping at his heels.

Throughout much of American history, contributions to the theory and practice of politics have tended to reflect the division between thought and action, words and deeds. The Founding Fathers may be a conspicuous exception to the pattern of intellectuals contributing new ideas and opinions and policymakers contributing decisions and actions. Throughout most of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, this pattern by and large prevailed. Little noticed has been the shift which took place from the 1950s to the 1980s.

In the 1950s, the important contributions to foreign policy and especially to normative political thought were by individual scholars, few if any of whom were associated directly or unqualifiedly with social and political movements. Hans J. Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, George F. Kennan, Walter Lippmann, Clinton Rossiter, Daniel Boorstin, and others wrote as individuals and inspired new thinking on political morality and values. In the 1980s, the individual has been swallowed up in social and political movements, especially on the Right and Left. Influential thinkers stake their future in organized groups of neo-conservatives, neo-liberals, Moral Majoritarians, or groups identified with similar political movements. Often spearheading these movements are ideological turncoats, disappointed academicians, politically ambitious editors and columnists, and men and women who have a passion not for anonymity but for

notoriety. In this milieu, normative and political theorizing takes on a self-conscious political cast, much as it did in earlier decades when supporters and opponents of economic planning, the United Nations, and arms control organized themselves for political action. Whereas moral and political philosophy has been viewed for centuries as primarily the province of individual philosophers, in the 1980s it has, to a considerable extent, become a political action movement. Solidarity of viewpoint now overrides the search for truth, and colloquia now serve more as strategy caucuses than as forums of open discourse.

This far-reaching change has gone largely unnoticed, as has the substitution of tactics for theorizing and of political dogma for the search for truth, perhaps because the influence of the media is all-pervasive, and because some leading columnists use their influence to set themselves up as judge and jury. Groups generate their own standards, for example, by equating morality with crusading anti-communism; they oppose those who refuse to join what tend to become churches or cults. The "high priests" of these groups denounce those whose outlooks are different, engage in rhetorical overkill, and fall just short of administering inquisitions when they level harsh judgments on other thinkers. Such groups demand extreme policy measures without accepting responsibility for bringing such policies to fruition; they praise and condemn as if they were part of the constitutional and political process. They are moralists in policymakers' clothing without any thought or intention of doing the policymakers' hard work. Freed of all responsibility for consequences, these latter-day moralists, who may be the era's immoralists, denounce those who try, but fail, to implement impossible objectives.

In such a climate of opinion, much that characterized the work of Professor Morgenthau has been brushed aside, including careful study of the obstacles to wider normative perspectives. For those on the Right today, the search for such a wider perspective is considered defeatist, as it was for those on the Left yesterday. Today, only the lack of faith in a single dogmatic view is seen as standing in the way of the progress of a new "chosen people." For example, the prophets of the new interventionism would ride roughshod over those who point out the restraints that national sovereignty imposes on the realization of any global vision. Curiously, critics of Wendell Willkie's and Barbara Ward's global village have overnight become apostles of a new universalism that would remake the world in our image through

strength and by an act of national will. Crusading nationalism becomes the ultimate moral principle, provided it is *my* nationalism.

By contrast, Morgenthau and Niebuhr argued that liberty, while a norm and regulative principle essential to defining political morality, could not be sufficient in itself—it fell short of being the absolute political norm. In the aftermath of World War I, national self-determination, an international expression of freedom, became an absolute in the creeds of certain Western statesmen, but the price it extracted was high. It proved a double-edged sword. It led to the breakdown of the European economy by obscuring the harmonizing role of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In addition, Hitler invoked national self-determination in absorbing the Sudeten Germans. History teaches that statesmen must weigh both national self-determination *and* the requirements of the social and economic order. They cannot cling to one grand, simplifying dogma. As with the goal of universal communism, a single moral purpose like freedom or national self-determination may seem to explain everything in a kind of fairyland description of a complex world, but it actually confuses and distorts the hard realities found along the route to a better world.

In search of a standard for evaluating the relationship between words and deeds, opinions and decisions, or political thought and action, we return to Professor Morgenthau. For him there was no escape from politics nor from the necessity for political philosophy. Yet he maintained that the ultimate dilemma of politics is that neither philosophy nor action can free the statesman from the "inescapable tension between reason and experience, between theoretical and practical knowledge." The primacy of politics requires that "the gap between the general propositions of political philosophy and the concrete measures of political action must be bridged not by the logical deductions of a utopian rationalism but by the trial and error of political experience" (1958, 381). As Morgenthau explained,

the philosopher, that is, the political thinker, knows more than the king, that is, the political actor, ... [but the philosopher] cannot act according to his knowledge. The king, even if he knew all the philosopher knows, would still not know for certain what action the concrete situation requires. No theoretical knowledge but only the experience of acting can teach him that. Yet even that experience will teach him only how to avoid the

repetition of yesterday's blunder, not how not to commit a new one tomorrow (1958, 381).

In contrast with today's pundits, Morgenthau understood the need for that peculiar combination of detachment from and awareness of "the concrete, burning, controversial political problems" of the day. He challenged himself and other political thinkers to find "the moral courage to pit one's independent knowledge of what is true in matters political and of what needs to be done against what the crowd believes and wants" (Morgenthau 1958, 377). He was as exacting in judging statesmen he respected, such as Henry Kissinger and Dean Acheson, as he was in judging those he mistrusted, including John Foster Dulles and Cordell Hull. (It is said that Kissinger's success tempted Morgenthau to think that he too might have been secretary of state. I saw little evidence of such aspirations. When he was called on to be a consultant to the secretary, he explained the appointment as Kissinger's attempt to silence him, not as proof of his belated recognition as a policy adviser.) His activist role as a critic of the Vietnam War left him with mixed emotions. He carried scars from public debates with official spokesmen, such as McGeorge Bundy and Zbigniew Brzezinski, as from earlier, less political debates on world issues which had caused some personal discomfort, like those with Niebuhr and James Warburg. As much as he was ready to take up the cudgels in great debates on international relations theory, Morgenthau was never a political combatant. The question we must ask is why.

An answer can be found, I would suggest, not through psychoanalyzing Professor Morgenthau, although in his "Fragment of an Intellectual Autobiography: 1904-1932" he hints at early personal experiences that shaped his mission and sensitivities. Rather, we should take him at his word on what constituted his professional calling. In September of 1922, at the age of eighteen, he wrote that he faced a choice between two types of activities. He described the first as that in which men "sow and harvest, save and consume . . . and become rich," activities which he saw as endlessly repetitive and "oriented towards the satisfaction of physical needs and the requirements of the moment" (1977, 2). The young Morgenthau found this sphere of action unsatisfying saying, "Most certainly I did not want to become a run-of-the-mill lawyer" (1977, 1). He identified the other type of activity not with accumulating material gains but with serving a higher cause. He looked within himself and saw signs for the future. He

discovered a guide for his life in Goethe's autobiography *Poetry and Truth*, which reads: "our desires are presentiments of the abilities that lie within ourselves, harbingers of what we shall be able to accomplish." Years later he looked back and described his early resolve as choosing "to make of his life . . . something that would survive him" as was the case with those who plant trees and lay out flowers and shrubs testifying to posterity. Toward the end of his life, he summarized the core principle of his life's work by saying: "What remains is a searching mind, conscious of itself and of the world, seeing, hearing, feeling, thinking, and speaking—seeking ultimate reality beyond illusion" (1977, 17).

Why do his words appear so quaint and old-fashioned, partaking more of the old world than of present-day America? Perhaps they leave this impression because of the decline of the idea of the independent intellectual. In reaction against the stereotype of the European and, more particularly, the German intellectual, we gravitate in one or the other of two directions, asking relevance or rigor of those we celebrate as leaders of thought and inquiry. Demanding relevance, we turn for policy guidance to political thinkers and writers who prepare candidates for presidential debates, without questioning the effects of political partisanship and advocacy on their analysis and judgment. By comparison, over the course of some eight presidential elections, Professor Morgenthau's friends often speculated about his political allegiances; he never abandoned objectivity, even with those he admired. He could say of his last President, Jimmy Carter, that he could not remember any President whose goals he found more congenial but whose political practice he found more inept and ineffective. As for rigor, the retreat from "concrete, burning, controversial problems" by behavioral and quantitative social science troubled Morgenthau when he wrote *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, published in 1946, and again when he published *Science: Servant or Master?* in 1971. There is significance in the fact that the major manuscript he left unpublished dealt with Abraham Lincoln, whose political greatness remained somewhat of a mystery to Morgenthau, transcending behavioral analysis.

Morgenthau's mission is revealed in his volumes of collected essays. In *Dilemmas of Politics* and a three-volume work, *Politics in the Twentieth Century*, he turns to political thinkers, not actors, to understand the decline of political thought and practice in the West. In *Dilemmas of Politics*, he criticizes Harold Laski for lapsing into

“the shopworn clichés of progressive journalism” (1958, 347) and for measuring “some political systems by the ideal, others by the attainable, and thus obtaining the political conclusions that he prefers to obtain” (1958, 346). He also indicts E.H. Carr for having “no transcendent point of view from which to survey the political scene,” cautioning that “whoever holds seeming superiority of power becomes of necessity the repository of superior morality as well. Power thus corrupts, not only the actor . . . but even the observer . . .” (1958, 357). He finds Bertrand de Jouvenal guilty of glorifying medieval monarchy and damning modern democracy by juxtaposing the constitutional theory of the one with the political practice of the other—an exercise Communist writers repeat in seeking to prove that true democracy exists in the Soviet Union and not the United States. He credits Arnold Toynbee with restoring historical imagination. But he consigned Toynbee to be an inevitable failure in scientific history because “the deeper we move from the world of nature into the world of man . . . the more we find the objectivity of empirical science qualified by the ever-narrowing limits of common perspective. . . . In the sciences of man the rational core, common to all science, is diminished, obscured, and distorted by the inevitably partial perspective of the observer” (Morgenthau 1958, 370). He pays tribute to Walter Lippmann for seeking to restore the public philosophy and for attempting to “apply the perennial truths of politics to the political world for the dual purpose of understanding it and of solving its problems” (1958, 380). But he reminds Lippmann “how much more ambiguous and involved the relations between reason and politics are than is suggested by this simple rationalistic fault” (1958, 380).

Whatever differences Morgenthau had with these five political thinkers, it is to them and not to political actors or pundits that he turned for celebration and illumination. In the late twentieth century, we might do well to look in similar areas for understanding of words and deeds in foreign policy.

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CRIA PUBLICATIONS

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Truth and Tragedy: A Tribute to Hans J. Morgenthau
Kenneth Thompson and Robert J. Meyers, Editors
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