

### Hans J. Morgenthau (1904–1980)

For Hans J. Morgenthau life was an unending search for truth about man, politics, and human destiny. He set out alone in a hostile social environment moving across uncharted ground. His goal, as he defined it, was discovering "ultimate reality beyond illusion." He took no comfort from oracles nor any of the world's grand simplifiers. His vision expressed itself in the "searching mind, conscious of itself and of the world, seeing, hearing, feeling, thinking and speaking"—seeking for light until the end.

He grappled with the most intractable problems: the dilemmas of politics and of conflict. It was his postulate that the harsh realities of the body politic, like physical diseases, yield only to tough-minded analysis and clear-cut diagnosis. Prescription depends on the statesman-physician's understanding of human nature and of the inescapable rivalries among men and nations. Interest and power were his roadmaps, not fanciful notions about political man early transcending himself through reason, virtue, or reform. As nostrums followed panaceas in rapid succession in the postwar pursuit of peace, he was the first to measure them against political experience. Although he remained outside the corridors of power, he spoke more truth about selfish pride and the ambiguities of power than multitudes of practicing politicians in governments and universities who pursued raw power with self-deceit. By prodigious labors, he left a vast and abundant heritage of principles that we have only begun to fathom and to make integral to American foreign policy.

The core of that legacy can be found in rigorous criticism of prevailing national moods and trends which Morgenthau insisted crippled the nation's ability to cope with its most urgent problems. In his earliest writings he challenged not individuals (something he resisted) but popular trends and movements of thought which exalted illusions

such as the belief that science and technology could save us. Rationalism, as the handmaiden of science, looked to reason and technical knowledge to produce easy harmonies of interest. Yet politics was the realm of contingency and incongruity, of the best under the circumstances. From the viewpoint of practical wisdom, the rationally right, the ethically good, and the politically possible were not readily equated. The statesman shapes society *not* by "appeals to reason pure and simple" but by "that intricate combination of moral and material pressures which his art creates and maintains."

If Morgenthau's legacy had been no more than a coherent framework for relating morality and politics and rethinking foreign policy, his contribution would have been enormous. Yet for those of us who were students, friends, and admirers, his heritage is more profoundly personal than philosophical or intellectual. As a teacher, he never rested in the demands he laid on us to try, as the British would say, to get things right. How often a retort like, "a good speech, but you misquoted Cromwell"! By moral example, he taught those he inspired to live with uncertainty, contradictions, and tragedy, remembering the text: "For He makes the sun rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust."

After everything has been said, there remains an element of mystery about his greatness. At the close of a conference in the 1960s Walter Lippmann turned to Hans and said: "How curious you are misunderstood. You are the most moral thinker I know." To that we would add, yes, and forever the example of a courageous and compassionate friend.

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wanted out. Within this climate there arose a strange reversal of values whereby deviance earned official reward.

Now thirty-seven, Arenas has published five books; only his first, *Celestino Before the Sunrise*, was published in Cuba. *Hallucinations*, like *Celestino*, won a second-place prize from Cuba's Union of Writers and Artists. Apparently, however, some critics thought passages ridiculed Castro and so it was never published there. Arenas argues that he does not attack the system directly; since he questions everything, nothing remains sacred.

In July, 1974, Arenas had his clothes and a briefcase filled with his writings stolen while he was at the beach. Reporting this to the police, he was told that he had created a public scandal. Later his lawyer informed him that he was being charged not only with the scandal but with having written antirevolutionary works and publishing outside Cuba without permission. Arenas began to think of ways to leave, but was arrested and put in jail.

His arrest was for the scandal and not any political activity. Consequently, he was sentenced to only thirteen months and put in La Cabaña among other "troublemakers" rather than among political prisoners, whose status and behavior would have been more appealing to him. The noise and violence made life difficult, yet still Arenas created and memorized poetry, stories, and the structure of future novels—all without pen and paper.

Once out of jail, Arenas could find no work. He moved from place to place until a friend found for him an uncomfortable room in old Havana. "I am no longer a writer but an individual who lives roving from place to place, no one can figure out how I live, I don't belong to any group, I am not integrated into the revolution, I am alone, scum."

To get permission to leave Cuba one had to sign a sworn statement indicating that one was "the world's worst." For Arenas it was easy.

All Cubans are required to carry an identity card detailing their history. Arenas's card stated that he did not work and that he had a prison record. Further, the card made no mention of his integration in the revolution. As he puts it: "I was the ideal candidate to get out. I didn't need any special proof—my *carnet* spoke for itself. My *carnet*, which before had been so harmful to me...became my safe conduct pass....In that mass of people trying to get out nobody knew me as a writer. The fact that I was beaten up by the system or just simply forgotten by it became the possibility for my getting out. They may have not wanted me to leave but then ended up authorizing it." On May 9, 1980, Reinaldo Arenas landed in Key West aboard the yacht *San Lazaro*.

Arenas's first and third books are part of a pentology that he hopes will articulate the stages of his life as well as that of Cuban society. *Celestino* in part recounts his life in the country; *The Palace of the Whitest Skunks* (1975) takes place just before the revolution. The next in the five-part series deals with the beginnings of the revolution. It was written clandestinely and sent out of Cuba ("In Cuba, if you haven't gotten the book out of the country, you haven't finished it yet"). Arenas hopes to reconstruct it now. The fourth will deal with the present time. And as to the fifth, he says, "*imaginative...just imagine....*"

Barry B. Levine teaches sociology and edits Caribbean Review at Florida International University in Miami. His book, *Benjy Lopez: A Picaresque Tale of Emigration and Return*, was just published by Basic Books.