

## Riassunto di Morgenthau *mal compris* :

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The intention of this thesis is to investigate the philosophical foundations of Hans Morgenthau's project of political realism. It argues that the intention spanning Morgenthau's writings on political realism, as a response to scientism, is to critique this approach and present a viable "unscientific" alternative. More narrowly, his intention is to critique the possibility of a making politics into an empirical science. This critique of political "science," rests on a denial of the possibility of scientific understandings of human nature and ethics (i.e. normative political action), which are the necessary basis for any theory of politics. To complement this critique of scientism, this thesis will outline and discuss Morgenthau's positive contribution to politics: his realism is an 'unscientific' approach to politics. To do this, this thesis will present Morgenthau's positive account of human nature and a theory of ethics – which will produce a better picture of what an unscientific theory of politics constitutes. Finally, the relationship between unscientific politics and tragedy will be discussed, as these two concepts are intimately related.

### **Thesis Chapter Outline:**

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

Chapter 2: Realism's Critique of Scientism in Ethics

This chapter will develop a critique of the two traditional theoretical ethical poles, deontology and consequentialism, as made by Morgenthau. Morgenthau presents an interesting critique of ethics in *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* that, at minimum, runs parallel to a similar one made in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Ultimately, Morgenthau shows that both deontology and consequentialism suffer from serious practical deficiencies as ethical theories, and rejects both of them for political practice because of this. That is, Morgenthau's critique shows that there are good reasons for political theorists to reject both consequentialism and deontology because, for different reasons, they are both practically insufficient and rely on knowledge that adherents cannot have. Morgenthau suggests that either approach is inadequate when confronted with reality and how actions, ethics, and consequences behave. There must be some second-order guiding principles at stake in the presentation of either consequentialist or deontological logics, which renders them unscientific, if either method is to have any practical value.

Chapter 3: Realism's Critique of Scientism in Human Nature

This chapter will present a critique of "scientific man," also known as *homo economicus*, a theory of human nature deriving in part from economic theory, as the critique was made by Hans Morgenthau. By showing that Morgenthau critiques, rather than endorses, 'scientific man,' this chapter will have a triple significance. It will show that not only have many critical

interpretations of Morgenthau and realism been wrong, but that these were actually concurring with Morgenthau; Morgenthau was making the same critique of rational choice theory that contemporary authors now attempt to use against him, and perhaps his critique even offers some lessons they could learn from for their own critiques of political theories relying on rational choice agency. This chapter will also show that a scientific account of human nature is untenable. By discussing what is wrong with a scientific conception of human nature, this chapter will lay direction for a positive account of human nature, which will be taken up in the following chapter. Finally, this chapter will link Morgenthau's critique into a broader argument against rational choice theory, taking place in contemporary normative philosophy and social theory. It will show that Morgenthau's approach to human nature was on the correct side of a debate that continues today. To that extent, Morgenthau's critique can be read as an early vanguard for the current debates in analytic philosophy about scientism in human nature and the debates in economics about the accuracy and utility of rational choice theory.

#### Chapter 4: Unscientific Human Nature

From the last chapter, Morgenthau's realism holds that there cannot be a 'science' of human nature; human nature is inherently unscientific. This is *not* to say that rational claims about human nature cannot be made, instead a *rational* theory of human nature will deny the possibility of formulating a scientific account of human nature – that is, a rational theory of human nature concludes that human nature is indeterminate and thus inherently unscientific. This chapter will discuss Morgenthau's robust theory of human nature in depth. Drawing on Nietzsche and Freud, Morgenthau constructs a dual sense of human nature – a biological and psychological first nature that is complimented by a social second nature. The interplay of these two natures is of particular importance, and Morgenthau would seek to understand how it was exactly that some of the catastrophes of the early twentieth century were able to arise out of internal conflicts in human nature. This allows him to draw some conclusions about the relationship between society and its constituents, and also to make some allusions about ethics that will be addressed in the subsequent chapter.

#### Chapter 5: Politics as an Art (Unscientific Politics)

Because all social phenomena are rooted in human nature, Morgenthau's political realism concludes that there cannot be a 'science' of political action either; political action and prescription are also inherently unscientific. Likewise, this is *not* to say that rational claims about political action cannot be made, the point is rather than these rational analyses will not be able to yield a theory of political action that determines absolute, universal, and abstract rules of political behavior in the social world. In other words, a rational theory cannot yield abstract laws of political prescription and action that will have any value in determining proper political prescriptions or actions for particular cases. An unscientific understanding of politics preserves the particular nature of phenomena and admits that their nature must be deliberated upon and interpreted rather than mechanically subsumed under abstract universals. From this

understanding, it appears that politics is more akin to art than science, and this categorical distinction is important for correctly understanding political phenomena. To preserve this categorical distinction, Morgenthau's theory of politics is based on the Aristotelian political virtue of *phronesis*. This chapter will identify how Morgenthau articulates this virtue and then describe in greater depth *phronesis* and how this relates to a notion of unscientific politics.

## Chapter 6: The Tragic Understanding of Politics

Unscientific human nature and politics does not make politics a certain determinate affair, by definition, owing both to the nature of politics and the nature of humans. This leads Morgenthau to a particular conclusion about political epistemology: the tragic understanding. From a reading of Nietzsche and an observation of scientific approaches to politics, Morgenthau concludes that the positive valuation of science for determining social action is a symptom of a declining culture. Blind to the limits of scientific understanding, such a society adopts mechanical interpretations of reality that result in *hubris*, a lack of respect for limits of practice, in real political action. This has caused or aggravated real catastrophes. Conversely, the realist's tragic understanding of politics recognizes, from the conclusion that politics is an art and not a science, the limits of understanding reality and the difficulties that result from interpreting reality through aesthetics. This recognition of the limits of knowledge necessarily moderates action by anticipating the rational criterion of what constitutes tragedy: the presence of genuine moral dilemmas; the divide between intent and outcome (known as *peripeteia*); 'fate' in a specific sense that agents are relevantly constrained by externalities that may deny the ideal course of action or solution; theodicy, or the lack of correlation between justice, character, and reality; *hubris* itself, a condition resulting the need to act, despite uncertainty of phenomena and the outcome of one's actions in relation to them. A society which does recognize that these 'tragic' aspects is better capable of anticipating and responding to them.