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Hans Morgenthau: Politics among Nations Study Guide

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HANS MORGENTHAU: POLITICS AMONG NATIONS

STUDY GUIDE, 2005

Steven Alan Samson

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: INTERNATIONAL MORALITY

Study Questions

1. Identify two errors generally made about international morality. Using as an example the Republic of Venice, illustrate the view that international politics is merely a technique without moral significance. How has the existence and effectiveness of moral restraints been demonstrated in more recent times? (225-26)
2. What was "the German problem?" How did Bismarck and Hitler differ in their approach to resolving it? What made Clemenceau's approach closer to Bismarck's? Historically, what have been the two ways of dealing with such a problem? How did Churchill and Stalin exemplify the alternatives? (226-28)
3. How did the character of warfare change both for combatants and non-combatants following the Thirty Years War (1618-48)? How did the great international jurist, Hugo Grotius, himself exemplify an older moral code? What role has been played by international agreements? What factors contribute to making them effective? (228-31)
4. How did the steps that led to the First World War differ from the advent of earlier wars [think of Bismarck's]? Has the attitude toward war changed fundamentally? (231-32)
5. Why have these moral limitations of the modern age been weakened in recent times? Identify four ways in which war in our time has become total. According to John Westlake, why has it? (232-35)
6. Contrast the (supranational) personal ethics of the international aristocracy associated with the idea of natural law with the collective demands of democracy (such as a parliamentary majority) and national systems of morality. What is the effect of a change in policy-making personnel? Why has "international morality as an effective system of restraints upon international policy [become] impossible?" (235-39)
7. What three factors account for the victory of nationalism (particularism or national ethics) over internationalism (supranational or universal ethics)? *Thought question:* How is the idea that might makes right suggested by the idea that nations "oppose each other as the standard-bearers of different ethical system" with the result that "compromise, the virtue of the old diplomacy, becomes the treason of the new?" When did this "Messianic fervor" become evident? (239-43)
8. How did Woodrow Wilson's war "to make the world safe for democracy" embody the replacement of universal moral rules of conduct by particular moral rules claiming universality? How did the October 1917 revolution in Russia (bolshivism), the isolationism of the 1920s, and National Socialism, further complicate the picture? How do the international issues of our time differ from those of the preceding centuries with its common "system of arts, and laws, and manners?" Where do they lead? (243-45)
9. Is the imposition of the sort of moral particularism represented by Woodrow Wilson

a part of the American tradition? How did Wilson differ from the Founders? What other objections can be made to the Wilsonian conception? What are the two hindrances to a foreign policy integrally committed to the defense of human rights? (245-49)

Review

the German problem

changing attitudes towards war

why universalism died

Hugo Grotius

why war has become total

Founders vs. Woodrow Wilson

international law after 1648

universal vs. particular ethics