



The authors, however, are on less firm footing when they attempt to apply their legal analysis to present day environmental politics in the last section. Their narrow focus locates law and policy regimes as operating primarily within a common law culture, and only peripherally acknowledges other influences. This is a Euro-centric view that loses considerable power as it moves beyond the continent and into an ever-increasingly global environmental politics. A good case has been made by a wide range of 'Green' political theorists that environmental law has strong cultural, social, and political qualities that dilute its effect as it moves beyond its initial boundaries. Similarly, critical environmental policy studies suggest that legal prescriptions are modified, and sometimes redefined, by internal institutional politics, external community politics, and the malleable nature of discourse.

Specific criticisms of the limits of this book should not be exaggerated. The authors make an admirable effort to cast new light into a key aspect of environmental politics, and largely succeed in connecting threads of ideas about nature and human relationships by weaving together 400 years of common law history into a seamless web of environmental thought and legal regulation. It is a timely and important thesis because it brings together philosophy, political theory and environmental politics in a way that should raise questions and encourage new ways of thinking about these subjects as a connected whole. It also offers insights into how we have constructed and may yet reconstruct our collective relationships with nature.

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### **The Tragic Vision of Politics: Ethics, Interests and Orders**

Richard Ned Lebow

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Political realism has never been an easy position to define, or to defend. In public discourse, it exhibits a definitional flexibility that often leads to crude ideological manipulation and banal partisanship. In International Relations, where 'Realism' stands as one of the theoretical pillars of the field, it has in recent years been reduced to little more than a general concern with 'power



politics', or to a narrowly defined structuralist and rationalist vision that presents international anarchy as the determining condition of world politics.

From its opening chapter envisioning Richard Nixon in hell, Lebow's *Tragic Vision of Politics* seeks to reassert the depth and 'wisdom' of political realism as a sophisticated tradition of social, political, and ethical analysis, and to recapture it from the sterile caricatures to which it has today largely been reduced. Challenging realpolitik on its home turf, he argues that a recognition of the relationship between ethics, interests, and orders lies at the heart of realism, that it is 'impossible to formulate interests intelligently outside some language of justice' (p. 16), and that a humanistic realist tradition that understood these facts is as relevant today as it was 2,500 years ago.

At the heart of the book lies a reinterpretation of three key thinkers: Thucydides, Clausewitz, and Morgenthau. Each is frequently portrayed as an unimpeachable representative of the Realist tradition, and commonly invoked by contemporary Realists in support of their claims that international politics are inevitably dominated by power politics. Lebow seeks both to challenge the use to which these thinkers have been put, and to use them as the basis for a renewed vision of realism. These treatments are subtle and illuminating. Clausewitz emerges as a sophisticated thinker struggling with the military implications of social and political modernization, who warned of the dangers generated by these transformations, and who would have done so even more powerfully had he lived to complete *On War*. Similarly, Hans Morgenthau is rescued from the severely caricatured view often thrust upon him by contemporary supporters and critics, and re-emerges as a sophisticated social analyst with a sharp and subtle ethical sensibility.

But it is the two chapters on Thucydides that are the undoubted high-points of this sweeping treatment. In opposition to those who see Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War as an enduring illustration of the 'security dilemma' that dominates world politics, Lebow develops an account of Thucydides as concerned with the breakdown of the overarching order — the *nomos* — of the Greek world, where the dynamism of Athens presented not just a challenge to the material power of other city-states, but challenged the entire structure of norms, values, and identities upon which the system was built. The complex and subtle account that Lebow develops here provides a sweeping challenge to standard presentations of Thucydides' classic history in International Relations, and should change fundamentally the way in which the field discusses its significance for thinking about world politics.

The intent of these historical reconstructions is not just scholarly, for Lebow claims that this Realist tradition is of direct and perhaps increasing relevance for both the theory and practice of international relations today. Drawing upon his analysis of the Greek world, he argues that true *hegemonia* is based on cooperation and consent, and requires a clear understanding of the existing



norms and conceptions of justice and order underpinning the international system. The US today, he argues, is showing 'evidence of breaking free from traditional constraints that served its interests so well in the past' (p. 310), and while the US continues to see its actions in terms of *hegemonia*, much of the rest of the world increasingly sees them as domination. American policy today, he suggests, shows increasing signs of a *hubris* that Thucydides might easily have recognized and warned against.

In this context, Lebow's study is as timely as it is subtle. Realism continues to be the dominant rhetoric of policy-making (and of much of academic International Relations), and not just in the United States. By recovering a more sophisticated form of Realism, one of the most significant achievements of *The Tragic Vision of Politics* lies in its potential to challenge facile claims often made in the name of Realism itself, and to provide a foundation for a more properly realistic approach to the challenges of contemporary politics.

This is a book that deserves the widest possible audience: it should be at the top of the list for students of politics and International Relations. Philosophically sophisticated, historically erudite, and compellingly argued, *The Tragic Vision of Politics* represents one of the most significant contributions to International Relations and political theory of recent years. While it is today all too common to refer to works as 'landmark' studies, this is a book that deserves the title.

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### **Michael Oakeshott on Hobbes: A Study in the Renewal of Philosophical Ideas**

Ian Tregenza

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In analysing Carl Schmitt's *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, the main challenge for an interpreter would probably be to convince the reader that this work by Schmitt provides an insight into Hobbes's *Leviathan* and not simply a window on Schmitt's political thought.

In analysing Michael Oakeshott's writings on Hobbes, the challenge that Tregenza sets for himself is somewhat different: he aims at convincing the reader that these writings by Oakeshott do not simply contribute to and enrich