

Serenades of a Pied Piper

Review Essay by John Attarian

All nations are capitalist democracies or will be soon. History as a process of ideological conflict and institutional revolution is ending; the major issues have been settled; our prospect is peace, trade and consumption. So argued Francis Fukuyama, then a researcher in Soviet politics at the RAND Corporation, in his 1989 essay “The End of History?” The resulting controversy made him famous as a seminal minstrel of globalization.

The celebrated *The End of History and the Last Man* followed. Pessimism, the fruit of this century’s wars and genocides, is outdated, Fukuyama argues. Latin American and southern European authoritarian states, the former Soviet Union, and eastern Europe have gone democratic. Indeed, “liberal democracy, the doctrine of individual freedom and popular sovereignty,” is the only valid ideology left. Nonexistent before 1776, democracy is sweeping the world — evidence of a “fundamental process” dictating “a common evolutionary pattern for *all* [his italics] human societies.”

Is history, then, a flow of events in one direction? Yes, Fukuyama maintains, invoking the philosopher Hegel and his disciple Alexandre Kojève, who posited a Universal History of evolution of government toward achievement of free, democratic societies, at which point history would stop.

Two motors drive this linear History. One is scientific and technological progress. The need to adopt new technologies to match new weapons required by other powers forces societies to industrialize, and to

“rationalize” their cultures and institutions so as to facilitate this. Economic development does likewise. Capitalism has outperformed all rivals, and some countries’ prosperity leads others to embrace free markets.

History’s other driver is human nature. Like Hegel, Fukuyama argues that man has not only animal needs but a desire for “recognition” — he wants others to acknowledge him as a human being, a moral agent who through free choice can override the determinism of physical creaturehood, hence has dignity. When History began, the primal “first men” battled for recognition. The winner became the “master”; the loser a “slave” without recognition, treated as the master’s tool. Aristocratic

societies had an inherent “contradiction” — all men wanted recognition, but only some got it. The slaves’ resentment culminated in the American and French Revolutions and the advent of democracy. The slaves’ desire for recognition drives economic development, too. They develop a work ethic and seek to master physical existence, hence create technology, which has its own powerful determinist forces. Democracy resolves the foregoing contradiction by granting equal, universal recognition. Since no other form of governance does so,

democracy is the endpoint of political evolution. Economic development strengthens the democratic trend, because industrialization requires education and other social modernizations, which “appear to liberate a certain demand for recognition that did not exist among poorer and less educated people.”

Democracy’s triumph promotes peace. The “realist” school of foreign policy, seeing each state as a potential threat to all the others, is obsolete. Wars began as “a struggle for recognition among states, which is the original source of imperialism.” Having supplied recognition, democracies tend to be peaceable and nonimperialist, and don’t fight one another.

The End of History and the Last Man

by Francis Fukuyama

New York: The Free Press, 1992

418 pages

\$24.95 hardcover, \$15.00 paperback

The Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Capital

by Francis Fukuyama

New York: The Free Press, 1999

354 pages, \$26.00



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But will people be satisfied with universal democratic capitalism? Fukuyama cites Nietzsche's prophecy that a banal existence of peaceful consumption would spawn the "last man," a spiritless cipher. But craving ideals and intensity, people will rebel at a boring life of "masterless slavery" and "rational consumption."

Quite right — but these points were explored far more profoundly by thinkers Fukuyama ignores: Dostoevsky (*Notes From the Underground*), D.H. Lawrence (*Lady Chatterly's Lover*), Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*) and Russell Kirk (e.g. *A Program for Conservatives*). Acknowledging that some people will want superiority, not equality, he tries to argue the problem away by claiming that democratic capitalism provides adequate outlets for this desire — business, politics, sports — and asserts that liberal democracy is humanity's "best possible solution." He concludes by leaving open the question of History ending.

Seemingly, this is a virtuoso effort of scholarship and thought. Fukuyama's ambitious argument, erudition, sweeping philosophy of history, and oracular pronouncements create an impression of profundity and mastery of his subject. Actually, they mask a sinister morass of confusion and intellectual dishonesty, and an even more sinister purpose.

Fukuyama's key concept of "desire for recognition" is incredibly sloppy. He equates it with, among other things, man's "need to place *value* on things," starting with himself, and men's desire "to assert themselves over other men." To place value on things is to give them meaning; surely our desire for meaning goes beyond recognition. Wanting to *dominate* others is not equivalent to wanting their *recognition*. Indeed, all these things obviously differ from one another. For all his pretensions to profundity, Fukuyama is anything but rigorous.

Moreover, he contradicts himself. If the demand for recognition "did not exist among poorer and less educated people," then History's motor would never have started, since the primal "first men" by definition had no education or wealth at all.

Fukuyama drips falsifications of history. For example: Nationalism is "a specifically modern phenomenon, the product of industrialization and the democratic, egalitarian ideologies which accompanied it." In fact, it was visible in the Roman Republic and Tudor England. German nationalism was aroused by Napoleon's brutal occupation of Germany, not by

industrialization, democracy or egalitarianism. Wars have many causes besides recognition, such as population pressure and migration; the *Völkerwanderungen* of the Huns and Germans spawned the invasions and wars that destroyed the Roman Empire. Fukuyama's claim that democracies are peaceful and non-imperialistic is belied by the bellicosity and imperialism of the 19th century's greatest democracies: America and Britain — witness the popular Mexican, Civil, Spanish-American, Crimean

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and Boer wars.

These are stupid mistakes, but since Fukuyama cannot be this stupid, the only other explanation is tendentiousness, warping facts to fit agenda. Likewise, he frequently employs the polemical device of all-or-nothing loaded alternatives. Perhaps the worst is his reductive bipolar "lordship and bondage" model of pre-democratic societies, with only a few "masters" and everybody else "slaves" denied "any recognition of their humanity whatsoever." His philosophy of history leans on this model. Yet it is untenable. In pre-modern Europe, merchants, guilds, universities, the Church, and other groups and institutions had jealously guarded rights and prerogatives enabling them to secure recognition for their members. The Church's leavening influence won at least some recognition of lowly persons. Even literal slaves were sometimes recognized; many masters, from ancient times on, educated and freed them. Fukuyama's model is whoppingly counterfactual, and surely he knows it. He stacks the cards elsewhere, too, especially regarding the intellectual competition, such as Lockean liberalism and

foreign policy “realism.”

These malefactions are deliberate: Fukuyama is not merely *describing* but *advocating* global convergence on democratic capitalism, which he sees as the ideal. Moreover, for him, the only “rational” recognition is “universal and equal,” applying to “all human beings.” A “nationalist state,” restricting citizenship to members of “a particular national, ethnic or racial group,” manifests “*irrational* [his italics] recognition.” Since “rational” and “irrational” are usually laudative and pejorative terms, respectively, which one he endorses is obvious. “Nationality is not a natural trait,” he says, and “The distinction between one human group and another ... is an accidental and arbitrary by-product of human history.” It must follow that for him only a world state, offering universal, equal recognition, is fully “rational.”

Humanity is being homogenized by technology, economics, and equal recognition — yet is resisting by reasserting cultural identities. Thus one sees “a curious double phenomenon: both the victory of the universal homogeneous state, and the persistence of peoples.” One implication is that History’s end necessarily means the obliteration of peoples — a prospect which does not disturb Fukuyama. Since distinctions between groups are “accidental and arbitrary” and only “universal equality” is “rational,” it follows that we would, ideally, exist as interchangeable ants.

Indeed, profound contempt for humanity pervades this book. “Above all,” Fukuyama says, man craves recognition: “his own sense of self-worth and identity is intimately connected with the value that other people place on him. He is, in David Riesman’s phrase, fundamentally ‘other directed.’” Man, then, is an empty suit, a nobody who becomes a somebody only when others say he is (“recognize” him as dignified), hence desperately wants them to do so. How such a sorry creature *has* a dignity to be recognized goes unexplained, apart from an arbitrarily-asserted, unexplained freedom to make moral choices. A Christian would argue that we are dignified by being made in God’s image and likeness, and given free will by Him, but Fukuyama brusquely dismisses Christianity as “just another slave ideology,”

“untrue in certain crucial respects,” and “based on myth.”

So in Fukuyama’s ideal post-historical world, people would be soulless, egalitarian human ants, tame ciphers preoccupied with their bodies, guzzling economism’s output and living vicariously through the exploits of the entrepreneurial, political and entertainment elite.

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The End of History and the Last Man, then, is a manipulative polemic masquerading as scholarship, an insidious attempt to sell globalization, the obliteration of nations and peoples, and the reduction of humanity to docile labor insects in one global anthill — in short, one of the most evil books of recent years. Fukuyama cobbles up a pretentious, untenable philosophy of history, decked out in

ponderous, pseudoprofound Hegelian claptrap, to make globalism’s Brave New World appear inevitable, the wave of the future. All this is unbearably turgid, tense prose, in which the argument keeps getting lost in laborious examination of specific points such as environmentalism and Asian authoritarianism.

Fukuyama’s master, Hegel, was a disciple of Immanuel Kant, and regarding Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, Ayn Rand once wrote that “if you want to propagate an outrageously evil idea (based on traditionally accepted doctrines), your conclusion must be brazenly clear, but your proof unintelligible,” a mess that will “paralyze a reader’s critical faculty” with non sequiturs, irrelevant digressions, “meticulously lengthy proving of the obvious, and big chunks of the arbitrary thrown in as self-evident.”¹ It goes for Fukuyama, too.

He does make one revealing, damaging admission, like an ominous rumble of a kettledrum amid the triumphalist trumpeting. Democracy is “not particularly good at resolving disputes between different ethnic or national groups.” Its efficacy varies inversely with diversity. “In fact, it fails precisely when the diversity of a society passes a certain limit.”

What’s eating him? Immigration and its Balkanization of Western countries are conspicuously absent from Fukuyama’s analysis. Given its colossal importance, immigration receives astonishingly — and tellingly — short shrift: *three paragraphs*

acknowledging that it will create tension between the historical and post-historical worlds eventually “perhaps more troublesome” than oil, but adding that stopping immigration will be hard, because post-historical countries “have had difficulty formulating any just principle of excluding foreigners that does not seem racist or nationalist,” thereby violating “universal principles of right,” and because immigration is needed to meet labor shortages.

But by Fukuyama’s own admission, overmuch diversity is democracy’s ruin. Immigration-spawned Balkanization, then, is a reef likely to rip the bottom out of history as it sails toward its final, globalist berth. Apparently he sees the problem, but hopes it will disappear if denied:

*As I was going up the stair,
I met a man who wasn't there.
He wasn't there again today.
I do so wish he'd go away.*

Shorter, shallower, and less ambitious, *The Great Disruption* examines “social capital” — shared values or norms enabling people to cooperate — and its importance and origins, by investigating the “Great Disruption” of the developed countries (America, Canada, Western European nations, Australia, and Japan) from the mid 1960s to early 1980s; a profound social deterioration involving rising crime, disorder, divorce and illegitimacy; a dis-prizing of marriage; and a decline of fertility to subreplacement levels.

Using charts, Fukuyama documents this disruption. He rejects common explanations: poverty and inequality (the disruption occurred in prosperous countries, including egalitarian Scandinavia); greater wealth and security (behavior changed more radically for the poor); bad government social policies (the middle class unraveled too); and a broad cultural shift (plausible, but doesn’t explain the disruption’s timing).

Rather, Fukuyama invokes economic determinism. Developed economies were shifting from manufacturing to information. This substituted mental for physical labor, “thereby propelling millions of women into the workplace” and undermining the traditional view of the family. Contraception and other medical advances made family and reproduction less significant. The individualism of markets and laboratories “spilled over into social norms.” This determinism is untenable; nobody was

forced to contracept. It is also laughably reductive: so much for ideas and beliefs, such as a libertinism and feminism.

Even as the social order was crumbling, it was being rebuilt. We are “*by nature* [his italics] social creatures, whose most basic drives and instincts lead them to create moral rules that bind communities.” To show this, he examines, at excruciating length, the prisoner’s dilemma of game theory; biological evidence for cooperation (e.g. among chimpanzees); the changing structure of social relations (modern information technology favors decentralized “spontaneous order,” diluting but not eliminating the old corporate model of rigid hierarchies). This background information is interesting, but also tiresomely reiterates the obvious. For example: rather than benefit both genders equally, the sexual revolution “served the interests of men.” The insidious effect is to lull readers into suspending vigilance, in the belief that Fukuyama is talking good old horse sense.

Capitalism depletes social capital, he admits, but the argument by Fred Hirsch, Daniel Bell and others that capitalism undermines the social order is “extremely one-sided.” Capitalism “also creates order and builds new norms” to replace destroyed ones, and is probably “a net creator of norms and thus a net moralizing force in modern societies.”

But this is mendacious. *Existence* of norms is unimportant; even cannibal groups have norms. What matters is their *content*. The norm of father supporting the family and mother home raising the children is gone, Fukuyama says, and reconstituting it “would not be desirable, even if it were possible.” The new, Fukuyama-approved norm, obviously, is peer marriage with both spouses working and no children, or a few raised by televisions. This may not be good for truly human existence, but serves corporations well. Women are cheap, tractable labor, and vacuous kids make good consumers. Capitalism’s “building new norms” sounds suspiciously like warping the social order to fit corporate agendas.

Fukuyama cites evidence that the disruption is over and that “renorming has already begun”: growth in crime, illegitimacy, divorce, and distrust in the developed countries has slowed or reversed. In America, crime levels have fallen over 15 percent since the early 1990s, divorce rates have peaked, and the share of illegitimate births has stopped growing. But this isn’t saying very

much. Social pathologies have gone from catastrophic to merely disastrous. Some recovery.

It's too early to tell if the problems are over, Fukuyama concedes, but "it is wrong to conclude that we are incapable of adapting socially to the technological and economic conditions of an age of information." He admits that rebuilding social capital is hard and that technology can spawn more change than we can swallow, and ends by arguing that our capacity for social

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reconstruction is our only hope that History's direction will in fact be forward. But overall he is optimistic.

The Great Disruption, then, is a tranquilizer fix by globalization's chief pharmacist. Capitalism and technology can, and did, disrupt the social order, but not to worry — being naturally social, we'll adjust, rebuild social capital, and carry on/ So let globalization rip, let free trade and competition from dirt-cheap immigrant and Third World labor wreck the traditional family, degrade women from homemakers overseeing the soulcraft of their children into crypto-male economic animals, and turn us all into ants in economism's global anthill. We'll get used to it.

His earlier book's insidious approach recurs: a turgid, laborious, digressive text, lots of old news, and such to make an evil conclusion plausible and palatable. And, again, Fukuyama makes an undermining admission. Liberal societies, he observes, provide no moral guidelines beyond tolerance. This was not a problem when societies such as France, Britain and America were culturally, religiously, and ethnically homogeneous. But they have become increasingly diverse and will continue to do so, partly due to "pressures for greater immigration" and permeable borders. So far, creating "a new, civic identity not rooted in either ethnicity or religion" has neutralized these centrifugal forces, but Fukuyama worries whether these "universalistic forms of cultural identity" will weather the assault of multiculturalism going beyond tolerating diversity to promoting it. All this implies something ominous about what mass immigration in this context means for domestic tranquility, but Fukuyama does not notice or deliberately ignores it.

Fukuyama was rocketed to prominence by being useful to globalism's would-be World Controllers. The most important project of the future, Aldous Huxley grimly wrote in his 1946 foreword to *Brave New World*, would be "making people love their servitude." This is the ultimate purpose of Fukuyama's evil books. People who want to live like human beings and not affluent labor insects must study them in self-defense.

NOTE

¹ *The Ayn Rand Letter*, January 29, 1973, p.174.