

The End of History and the Last Man,
Francis Fukuyama,
New York: The Free Press
Toronto: Maxwell MacMillan, 1992.

The remarkable thing about Francis Fukuyama's new book is not so much the book itself as the unusual splash it has made.

An entirely mild-mannered tract, it grew out of the controversy which followed publication two years before of the writer's essay in the journal, *The National Interest*. This comprehensive version has provoked even more gnashing of teeth. In its initial version the title carried a question mark, and it came without the subsidiary concept, "The Last Man", which has some bearing on the central thesis, but not much.

The book, added now to my library, is one of the handsomest on the shelves, and makes some of the others around it seem shabby - G.W.F. Hegel's *Philosophical History*, for instance. It carried as appendix some 50 pages of footnotes, a 10-page bibliography with 250 titles, and almost 20 pages of index. There is an unmistakable stamp of establishment blessing on this work, and the critical response to it has been close to savage.

These two elements, the publisher's confidence and the critical response, may seem contradictory, but of course they are not. It was apparent from the fact that the essay's first appearance stirred up enough interest to justify what has been called a "colloquium of rejoinders" that a book with a similar title would sell, and sell not one but two earlier scholars: George W.F. Hegel and the more recent Alexandre Kojève, "the French-Russian philosopher who taught a highly influential series of seminars in [Paris] in the 1930s." Fukuyama has good reason to walk cautiously behind them. Hegel, who first proclaimed History ended, thought it had happened in 1806 after the battle of Jena. And while Kojève champions liberal democracy, Fukuyama admits (not in the text itself, but in a footnote on page 351) his more recent mentor admired Stalin, often said so, and saw "no essential difference between the United States, the Soviet Union and China of the 1950s."

A case can be made that this book is all nonsense, and not worth the time and trouble, which can properly be said about Part Five ("The Last Man"), its fundamental arguments all being based on a shaky foundation. But Fukuyama brings more than a few important concepts into his intellectual structure, having found them in the literature. One such concept, central to the Hegel-Kojève reasoning, is what Fukuyama chooses to call thymos, that being the word Plato attributes to Socrates in his book, *Republic*. It means, more or less, "spiritedness," but might more exactly be termed the universal, human hunger for recognition.

Since thymos is so important to his thesis, and inasmuch as the book is really a review of the literature, it is a pity Fukuyama did not find space in his 20-page bibliography for Douglass Adair's succinct lecture of 1964 called "Fame and the Founding Fathers." It says as much in a few pages about the impact of thymos on history as Fukuyama says in his whole book.

Fukuyama makes a feeble attempt to wrestle with the ancient riddle of free will, since man's fundamental sense of dignity (the essential thing his thymos makes him hungry to have recognised) lies "precisely in this capacity for free moral choice." But he persists for only a page or two before admitting he is not sure about free will and so describes it as "something very real and important. Whether or not true free will exists, virtually all human beings act as if it does, and evaluate each other on the basis of their ability to make what they believe to be genuine moral choices."

It is this kind of rough carpentry which first suggested to me the simile of Fukuyama's blindness. But the difficulty with this book is not what he sees only dimly but what he fails to see at all. Unwilling to say himself that History has ended, he reports early that "Kojève claims that we have reached the end of history because life in the universal and homogenous state is completely satisfying to its citizens." That is to say, it is free of any "contradictions," the truth of which some men still want recognized.

FUKUYAMA, following his seeing-eye mentor, refuses stubbornly to be "sidetracked" (Kojève's word for dealing with whatever does not fit his structure) into the obvious realisation that the private ownership of land is the remaining device by which masters control slaves: a relationship fundamental to the book.

He is willing, though, to concede a question: "The problem of the end of history can be put in the following way: Are there any 'contradictions' in our contemporary liberal democratic social order that would lead us to expect that the historical process will continue, and produce a new, higher order?"

Thus it can be said Fukuyama stands ready to be a Georgist, or at least to see the continuing need for an historical synthesis. "We could recognise a 'contradiction'," he concedes, "if we saw a source of social discontent sufficiently radical to eventually cause the downfall of liberal democratic societies."

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The reviewer is editor of *Now the Synthesis: Capitalism, Communism and the New Social Contract*, London: Shephard-Walwyn/New York: Holmes & Meier, 1991.

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