

Interpretation

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Discussion

The End of History?

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The thesis of Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man*¹ is simple and bold: modern liberal democracy, democracy as it has developed in the West, especially in the past two centuries, marks the end of history in the sense of being both its final stage and its final cause. The defining feature of "democracy," as he uses that term, is popular sovereignty (p. 43). The defining feature of "political liberalism" is the formal guarantee and protection of basic individual rights (p. 42). With liberal democracy so understood, humanity has attained the goals of its millennial struggle for the political order that is just, satisfying and stable; and because it is, it tends to unite mankind, or at least to reduce the conflicts caused by geographical, national and religious differences. There is therefore every reason to expect that it will be adopted the wide world over within the foreseeable future. Its superiority to the "historical alternatives available to us" is, at least in principle, universally acknowledged: even tyrants feel compelled to call their rule "democratic." With the collapse of Soviet Communism it faces no serious external threat. The most urgent question now is whether it is equally safe from internal threats. What are its problems and its prospects?

Fukuyama's argument is as bold as his thesis: Nature, and in particular human nature, is the standard of political action and judgment. Modern liberal democracy conforms to human nature as closely as a political order can conform to it; it is therefore just, satisfying and stable; and therefore it is the completion and the fulfillment of history.

The two guiding premises of this argument are: that the account of the soul and of the just city which Plato has Socrates present in the *Republic* is essentially true (p. 337); and that the whole of human history is the history of the actualization—and modification—of this Platonic understanding of the soul and of the corresponding just political order (p. 138). In his view, the Idea of history as the gradual actualization of man's humanity was first sketched by Kant, but it remained for Hegel to work it out fully. His project is therefore perhaps best described as an effort to reconcile Plato's understanding of the

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soul and of the just city with Hegel's understanding of history as the actualization of man's humanity, culminating in "the modern state"—Fukuyama's "liberal democracy." What is most distinctive about his enterprise is, then, not either his "Platonism" or his "Hegelianism," but his attempt to reconcile the teachings of Plato and of Hegel.

Fukuyama fully acknowledges, in his text as well as in his notes, that his understanding of Plato and of the history of political philosophy is in very large measure mediated by the teaching of Leo Strauss (and more particularly of some of his students and students' students), and that his understanding of Hegel is in very large measure mediated by the teaching of Alexandre Kojève. He could not have chosen better guides. Strauss and Kojève are the most outstanding and influential contemporary thinkers to have modeled their thinking on the thinking of Plato and of Hegel respectively. Their classical debate, ostensibly about tyranny but in fact about the irreconcilable differences between the teachings of Plato and of Hegel regarding the relationship between philosophy and politics, serves as the immediate background for his reflections.² Even the title of his book echoes that debate: on the one hand Kojève's vision of "the end of history," and on the other Strauss's charge that there is no difference between that vision and Nietzsche's harrowing evocation of the "last man."

In the *Republic*, Socrates initially distinguishes three parts of the soul: desire (*epithymia*), spiritedness (*thymos*), and reason (*logistikon*).³ Desire manifests itself primarily as appetite and acquisitiveness. Its first movement is to affirm, to approach, to appropriate. Spiritedness manifests itself primarily as anger, indignation, self-assertion, pride and shame, but also as vanity, vindictiveness, cruelty. Its first movement is to deny, to recoil, to reject. Reason is both the end and the means of rule over the other two parts. The primary object of desire may be said to be the care and concern for bodily goods, security and possessions; and the primary object of spiritedness, the care and concern for nonbodily goods, honor and independence. When desire and spiritedness so understood are compared, desire appears calculative, petty, slavish; and spiritedness passionate, grand, noble. Dominance of one or another part of the soul will make for a corresponding human type or political regime: Achilles and Oedipus are embodiments of spiritedness, as are the Thracians, Scythians and northern peoples generally.⁴ On this account of the soul, being just is to have each part of one's soul doing its job well with a view to their common good; a just city is a city that provides suitable scope for the exercise of all three parts of the soul, and in which their corresponding human types do their jobs well with a view to their common good. Such a soul and such a city would be just "according to nature" because they conformed to what Socrates' interlocutors in a dialogue devoted to justice agreed is the nature of the soul. A moment's reflection suggests that this must be a provisional account of the soul, dictated by specifically—and narrowly—political considerations.⁵

It is in terms of a simplified version of this simple schema that Fukuyama organizes his argument and his account of history.

History is set and kept in motion by two “mechanisms,” to use the term which he adapts from Kant (p. 71 et passim):⁶ the “mechanism of desire,” and the “mechanism of recognition” (pp. 144, 174–80, 189, 198, 204f.); in other words, the desiring and the spirited parts of the soul are the moving principles of history. Although he claims to take the whole of history for his province, Fukuyama devotes most of his attention to modern times. For

. . . it is precisely if we look not just at the past fifteen years, but at the *whole scope of history*, that liberal democracy begins to occupy a special kind of place. While there have been cycles in the worldwide fortunes of democracy, there has also been a pronounced secular trend in the democratic direction. . . . Indeed, the growth of liberal democracy, together with its companion, economic liberalism, has been the most remarkable macropolitical phenomenon of the last four hundred years. (Pp. 47f.)

The past four or so hundred years is also the period during which the “mechanism of desire” has come to assume unprecedented dominance. It owes that dominance in large measure to the power placed at its disposal by modern natural science. Modern science marks a turning point in the history of the race comparable only to the transition from the life of nomadic hunter-gatherers to the life of sedentary farmers. Modernity is irreversible (pp. 72f.).

It is, of course, not so much modern science, “the discovery of the scientific method by men like Descartes, Bacon, and Spinoza in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (pp. 72, 56f.), that has transformed every aspect of human life, as it is the decision to enlist science in the relief of man’s station and estate, in short, technology (p. 131). Fukuyama virtually ignores the difference between science and technology throughout most of his argument. Perhaps one reason why he chooses to ignore it is that he wants to keep his discussion resolutely political. Indeed, regardless of what may be the status of science in and of itself, it plays a role in modern political society primarily in the form of technology (pp. 80f.). In particular, modern society decisively depends on technology for military security (pp. 73–76, 127) and for the economic benefits that accrue to it from the conquest of nature (pp. 76–80). In short, it depends on technology for survival and for material well-being. Nations are therefore, so to speak, forced to submit to “the logic of modern advanced industrialization” which, in turn, forces them to adopt “economic liberalism” or capitalism. According to the dominant view, economic liberalism sooner or later forces them also to adopt at least a measure of “political liberalism”; by and by the “rational” structures and practices of economic and political liberalism weaken national, religious and cultural divisions, and gradually but inexorably economic and political liberalism becomes a worldwide phenomenon. Fukuyama rejects this familiar account of the rise of liberal democracy. The “mechanism of desire” and the “economic rationality” or “rational choice” models of politi-

cal conduct that are based on it fail to account even for capitalism (pp. 223–34), and they fail utterly to account for conduct and choices that are not strictly speaking economic, but political in nature (p. 135). He goes to considerable lengths to show that economic liberalism is perfectly compatible with illiberal political structures, and that therefore considerations other than strictly economic ones must guide the political decision to establish democracy, or any other properly speaking political decisions.

Fukuyama holds Hobbes and Locke, “the founders of modern liberalism” (pp. 185f., 153, 154, 157, 159), directly responsible for the tendency to reduce political choices and conduct to the “mechanism of desire” or to economic rationality. Hobbes and Locke are the founders of modern liberalism in that they made equal natural rights the basis of the political association. Fukuyama adopts the interpretation of their natural rights teaching according to which they play on the fear of violent death to scare spiritedness into settling for mere equality of rights. On this interpretation, their teaching is based on little more than an appeal to “man’s lowest common denominator—self-preservation” (p. 157). This interpretation deliberately denigrates the nobility of the modern liberal project: to secure every human being’s inherent dignity, and to provide a political bulwark against man’s inhumanity to man (consider p. 261). It denigrates it by systematically conflating the motives to which Hobbes appeals in his effort to persuade even the meanest capacity to do the right thing, with what he regards as the right reason for doing the right thing.⁷ The device is transparent. It is not surprising to find critics of liberal democracy resort to it. It is surprising to find Fukuyama adopt it. For he proclaims himself a champion of liberal democracy—“the best possible solution to the human problem” (p. 338)—and he nowhere so much as hints at how he thinks liberal democracy could have arisen independently of Hobbes’s and Locke’s natural-rights teaching. Be that as it may. He concludes that the founders of “Anglo-Saxon liberalism” decisively tilted the balance between the desiring and the spirited parts of the soul in favor of the desiring part (p. 185). They deliberately denatured the soul and its master passions, and constructed an entirely new human type, economic man or the bourgeois.⁸

Fukuyama has nothing but contempt for the bourgeois. The bourgeois is man with his spiritedness eviscerated, and rendered incapable of the passions, the needs, the aspirations and the deeds that reach beyond material goods.

The man of desire, Economic Man, the true *bourgeois*, will perform an internal “cost-benefit analysis” which will always give him reason to work “within the system.” It is only thymotic [spirited] man, the man of anger who is jealous of his own dignity and of the dignity of his fellow citizens, the man who feels that his worth is constituted by something more than the complex set of desires that make up his physical existence—it is this man alone who is willing to walk in front of a tank or confront a line of soldiers. (P. 180; cp. pp. 145, 160f.)

But there is no turning back. Primitive forms of life “may in certain respects be more humanly satisfying” (p. 77),” but the changes which modern science and technology have wrought in our lives and in our expectations are irreversible, if only because they have placed at our disposal riches beyond the dreams of avarice.

. . . few of those comfortable residents of developed democracies who scoff at the idea of historical progress in the abstract would be willing to make their lives in a backward, Third World country that represents, in effect, an earlier age of mankind. (P. 130; cp. p. 85)¹⁰

The happy few who might be willing to make their lives in an earlier age of mankind would not affect the course of events. Even a nuclear war or a nuclear winter that spares any part of mankind, must inevitably also spare at least the memory of modern science and of the promises of modern technology.

And as long as a stake is not driven through that vampire’s heart, it will reconstitute itself—with all of its social, economic, and political concomitants—within the space of a few generations. (P. 127; cp. pp. 71f., 82–88, 336)

The outburst, with its comparison of modern science and technology to a vampire, is uncharacteristic of Fukuyama. As a rule he models his attitude toward liberal democracy on that of Tocqueville and of Kojève (pp. 310, 311) or, for that matter, of Hegel who, after all, borrowed the line “world history is the world court of judgment” which he made so famous, from a poem entitled *Resignation* (p. 137).

By contrast, Nietzsche “rages” (p. 311) at what he saw as the dehumanizing effects of liberalism and of the swelling tide of democracy. If early Anglo-Saxon liberalism may be said to favor desire to the virtual neglect of spiritedness and of all but a strictly instrumental reason, Nietzsche may be said to go to the other extreme, and to favor spiritedness to the virtual neglect of desire and of reason. He sweeps aside the claims of the body, of equality, of rights and of the common good. Although Fukuyama’s thinking is deeply influenced by Nietzsche’s criticism of modernity, he rejects, “for now,” Nietzsche’s “hatred of liberal democracy” (p. 314).

He turns instead to Hegel’s political teaching. It provides the sober mean between the Anglo-Saxons’ bourgeois and Nietzsche’s over-man. Hegel’s teaching, but especially that teaching viewed in the light of Kojève’s brilliant and influential interpretation of the renowned “Master-Slave” struggle for recognition (*Anerkennung*),¹¹ can be seen as an attempt to restore the balance between the parts of the soul by returning spiritedness to its rightful place without denying desire its full due. Hegel-Kojève’s teaching¹² thus provides a “deeper” and a “nobler” (pp. 145, 199f.) moral-political psychology than the moral-political psychology of Anglo-Saxon liberalism. In Fukuyama’s view, Hegel-Kojève’s

“struggle for recognition” so closely corresponds to Socrates’s “spiritedness” that he frequently uses the two expressions interchangeably (pp. 165f., et passim). In the struggle for recognition men assert and objectify their freedom, their “capacity for moral choice” and self-legislation, but also, in the final analysis, their being in every respect “radically *un*-determined by nature” (pp. 146, 149–52). The need and desire to assert and to objectify our freedom, and to have others freely recognize it, is constitutive of being human (p. 152), and to be denied recognition, to be an Invisible Man (p. 176), is to be denied one’s humanity. We need and desire not only security and material gratification, we also need and desire to assert our sense of our worth, and to have it recognized and confirmed by others (pp. 164–66, 167). That need and desire spur us to our greatest efforts and achievements. They override economic and all other considerations of narrow self-interest.

Fukuyama vividly conveys Hegel-Kojève’s insistence that one is not properly human unless one risks one’s life or is at least prepared to risk it, and that to try to save life and property at all costs is slavish. He repeatedly singles out for particular emphasis Kojève’s remark that the struggle for recognition is a struggle for an idea or, as he puts it, “for pure prestige” (pp. xvi, 143, 147, 148, 152, 155). To risk one’s life for pure prestige is to assert oneself and to seek recognition as something more—or at least as something other—than exclusive concern with one’s body, with avoiding death and gratifying one’s appetites.

Kojève’s account of the struggle for recognition owes much of its power to the fact that he moved it squarely to the center of political life. He holds that the struggle for recognition is the principle of all properly political choices and actions. It is re-enacted with every serious attempt to negate—or to preserve—a given state of affairs, and no such attempt can be regarded as serious if it does not involve at least the readiness to risk bloody battle and death in the name of an idea (or ideology), Kojève’s “pure prestige.” Fukuyama adopts Kojève’s thesis: “the mechanism of recognition” is *the* mainspring of history. In particular, “the mechanism of recognition” accounts for the choice of equal rights, that is to say of political—as distinguished from economic—liberalism, in other words of liberal democracy properly so called.

Kojève’s account of the struggle for recognition was transparently political in a more immediate sense as well. He left no doubt in his audience’s mind that “now,” in the mid-thirties when he was delivering his famous lectures on Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, the man who most fully embodied humanity by risking his life for an idea was the revolutionary fighting for what he, Kojève, called the “universal and homogeneous state.” Regardless, now, of precisely how he conceived of this “universal and homogeneous state,”¹³ he thought its actualization imminent. And with its actualization history would end. The universal and homogeneous state would mark the end of history precisely because it would be “universal,” everyone recognizing everyone, and hence everyone

being, and being recognized as free; and “homogeneous,” that is to say classless, and hence everyone being, and being recognized as also equal. For all practical purposes, “everyone’s recognizing everyone as free and equal” is equivalent to the recognition of men’s “natural rights.” Fukuyama is therefore surely right to maintain that, at least on this decisive point, “Anglo-Saxon liberalism” and Hegel-Kojève’s political teaching may, for all practical purposes, be said to agree (pp. 199–204).¹⁴

For Hegel, and for Kojève, “history,” in the strong sense they attach to the term, refers to the millennial struggle to achieve political modes and orders that secure everyone’s recognition as free and equal. Once such modes and orders have been instituted, history proper ends. There would be no political obstacles left to negate. And hence no more ideas (or ideologies) worth dying—or living—for. Everyone would be “satisfied.” In a famous Note to the second, 1960, edition of his *Introduction*, Kojève described post-historical life as the global victory of consumerism—in other words of Fukuyama’s “economic man” or “bourgeois”—conceivably “ennobled” by such strictly formal ceremonies of “pure prestige”—he now calls it “snobbishness”—as tea-ceremonies and ritual suicides.¹⁵ For Kojève history ends as Hegel had said societies perish, for want of significant external threats or of internal contradictions to be overcome, in short from complacency and boredom.¹⁶

Fukuyama had argued that modern liberal democracy is best understood as Anglo-Saxon liberalism ennobled by German Idealism. That is, of course, what German Idealism had claimed for itself, and it is what accounts for much of the recent revival of interest in the moral-political teachings of Kant, Hegel and even Fichte and Schelling. He had most particularly turned to Hegel-Kojève’s “struggle for recognition” for help in restoring a passionate, public-spirited readiness to strive, to risk and to sacrifice, as a counterpoise to what he considers Anglo-Saxon liberalism’s pusillanimous self-seeking. Yet as his account unfolds, it appears that the outcome of the Hegel-Kojève reform falls far short of what he had expected of it. According to Kojève and, in Fukuyama’s judgment, according to Hegel as well, the struggle for recognition ends with an *embourgeoisement* at least as dreary as that in Hobbes’s or Locke’s civil state. Fukuyama does not ask himself whether that outcome may not at least in part be due to some flaw in his schema: Hobbes/desire, Hegel/spiritedness. He does not ask himself whether the affinities between Hobbes’s teaching and Hegel’s may not reach much deeper than their differences. Although he notes that Hegel-Kojève’s struggle unto death for recognition is a generalized version of Hobbes’s state of nature as a state of war of all against all (pp. 146f., 154), he fails to note that the resolution of Hegel-Kojève’s struggle, “recognition” of all by all, is a generalized version of the resolution of Hobbes’s war of all against all, the social contract: both seek the grounds for intersubjective consensus.¹⁷ And even assuming that Kojève’s “pure prestige” really is nobler than Hobbes’s “vanity” or “vainglory,” and that Hegel’s, and perhaps even Kojève’s liberal-

ism really does ennoble Anglo-Saxon liberalism, the fact remains that it presupposes it.¹⁸ Fukuyama's sharp contrast between Hobbes and Hegel, and with it his entire synoptic effort is threatened by what might be called the Trojan Horse Effect: one throws open the gates to some few sparkling and apparently self-contained insights, only to find oneself surrounded by one's enemy's fully armed host.

Kojève's bleak view of the end—in the sense of the final cause and fulfillment—of history, led Strauss to challenge him to explain how it differs from Nietzsche's chilling evocation of the "last man" who "invented happiness and blinked."¹⁹ Kojève declined the challenge. Fukuyama announces in the very title of his book that he takes it up. He proposes to show both that Kojève is right in asserting that we are at the end of history, and that he may be wrong in his bleak vision of it, that liberal democracy *is* the last stage of history, and that it *can be* its fulfillment. It can be its fulfillment only if "the end" does not entail the neglect and atrophy of spiritedness. It does not have to entail it. For virtually the only ambition liberal democracy does not tolerate is the ambition to be tyrant (p. 320), and while Anglo-Saxon liberalism enervates spiritedness, Hegelian liberalism can energize it. Fukuyama believes that while on the Anglo-Saxons' account, rights and respect for dignity are simply given, "natural," on the Hegel-Kojève account of them, rights and respect for dignity might be said to be earned (e.g., pp. 174, 294, 205).²⁰ The Hegel-Kojève account of earned recognition might therefore be said to allow for universal equal rights *and* unequal recognition of the spirited few more readily than does the Anglo-Saxons' teaching. It might thus be said to remain more faithful to the distinction between different human types and the different kinds of recognition which they seek and deserve. Hegel once illustrated that difference by glossing the old saying that no man is a hero to his valet, "not because the hero is not a hero, but because the valet is a valet." It would seem that in Fukuyama's judgment perhaps the greatest merit attaching to Hegel-Kojève's "recognition" is that it can also do justice to the morality of the "heroes," to their quest for earned recognition in proportion to desert.

In order to distinguish between the two kinds of recognition, Fukuyama adopts the Greek terms *isothymia* for the quest and the claim to equal recognition of equality, and *megalothymia* for the quest and the claim to unequal recognition of earned inequalities. When he criticizes Anglo-Saxon liberalism, he is criticizing what he regards as an excessive emphasis on "isothymia"; and what he calls for a restoration of spiritedness to public life, he is calling for greater scope and rewards for "megalothymia," for fuller recognition that it is both noble and useful to strive to be a "hero," and to be recognized as one. Since the claims of the two forms of spiritedness cannot—and ought not—both be satisfied fully, the balance between them is always and necessarily unstable. How well that balance is maintained will ultimately determine the strength and stability of liberal democracy (pp. 292f.). Fukuyama's book is dedicated to the

proposition that nothing is more urgent than the effort to preserve or to restore that balance. For if that effort succeeds, liberal democracy will prove to be not only the last stage of history but also its fulfillment, and Strauss's—or Nietzsche's—challenge will have been met.

The gravest present threat to maintaining a satisfactory balance between “isothymia” and “megalothymia” is “relativism,” the lack of a shared conception of human nature, or the outright denial that such a shared conception is possible or desirable. Relativism is most commonly justified by appeals to history, to the changes in our ways and our conceptions of ourselves from time to time and place to place. Fukuyama argues that such appeals owe what persuasiveness they may possess to the failure to understand that history *is* human nature actualizing itself, that its full actualization is modern liberal democracy, that, in other words, liberal democracy is “the end of history,” and that “the end of history” clearly puts an end to (historical) relativism, leaving nature as the sole, universal standard (p. 338). Or so it would seem. After all, according to the prevailing view, the distinctive excellence of liberal democracy is that it, better than any other regime, accommodates the endless variety of ways, attitudes and beliefs, that this variety, and hence relativism, is of its very essence, and that its defining virtue is tolerance. According to this view, the appeal to human nature threatens at least in principle limits to tolerance, and would therefore be undemocratic. Fukuyama easily shows the incoherence of this view. Regardless of how tolerant a liberal democracy may be, it necessarily rests on some form of mutual “recognition,” and hence on some shared conception of who properly qualifies as a partner in recognition. Beyond a certain point, disagreement about what it means to be a human being threatens even the most liberal of democracies (p. 332).

Still, a political society's shared conception of human nature is one thing; human nature may be something else entirely.

The appeal to (human) nature, the attempt to restore (human) nature as *the* standard for political judgment and conduct (pp. 137–39, 288f.), is without a doubt the most distinctive, the most ambitious and the most difficult to understand feature of Fukuyama's argument. The most startling form which that attempt takes is the claim that modern liberal democracy actualizes in deed—“in reality” (pp. 337, 338)—as fully as it can be actualized in deed, Socrates's pattern “in speech” of the city that is just according to nature because it best conforms to the nature of the human soul (p. 337). The claim is most immediately startling because one would not expect Socrates or Plato to rank modern liberal democracy high, let alone highest in the hierarchy of regimes. Nor is it a regime which anyone has ever deduced from their premises and principles. Most generally, in Socrates's just city the citizens are wise or virtuous; in modern liberal democracy the citizens' wisdom and virtue is replaced by insti-

tutions designed to make for wise and for virtuous outcomes (e.g. p. 317). Fukuyama fully recognizes this shift, and he might argue that his efforts to rouse spiritedness to strive for earned recognition, honor and at least a civic form of virtue, are guided by Socrates's just city (pp. 304–7). How far do they really conform to it? Earned recognition is recognition in proportion to merit. Merit implies standards discovered or set by reason; or, as Socrates puts it, spiritedness ought to be subordinated to reason (pp. 164, 337). Fukuyama's effort to reanimate spiritedness might therefore appear also to be an effort to restore reason to a more authoritative ruling position. But he does not restore reason to a ruling position. Nor does he have spiritedness conform to standards discovered or set by reason. On the contrary. He holds that it is spiritedness, not reason, that sets the standards. Spiritedness "invests objects with value" (p. 165; cp. pp. 162f.).²¹ In other words, he goes far beyond simply insisting on the need for noble lies. He regards spiritedness as the cause not only of passionate attachment to "values," but of the "values" themselves. Spiritedness, and not reason, determines the rank of beings, goods and goals. If that really is his settled view, then his efforts on behalf of spiritedness can only serve to promote the relativism and nihilism which it is his stated aim to combat.

Indeed, reason proper, noetic reason, plays no role in Fukuyama's account of the soul or of the city. He considers only two of the three parts of the Socratic soul, and he nowhere discusses their order or hierarchy.

In what sense, then, does Socrates' account of the soul and of the just city serve as Fukuyama's standard? Very near the end of the book, after briefly summarizing what Socrates says about the just soul and the just city, he observes:

By this standard, when compared to the historical alternatives available to us, it would seem that liberal democracy gives fullest scope to all three parts [of the soul]. (P. 337)

The "historical alternatives available to us" appears to be a silent reference to the position adopted by Strauss:

It would not be difficult to show that liberal or constitutional democracy comes closer to what the classics demanded than any alternative that is viable in our age.²²

Fukuyama's entire book is designed to refute that position.

Two short paragraphs later he states his own, definitive view without qualifications:

. . . liberal democracy in reality constitutes the best possible solution to the human problem." (P. 338)

The blunt "in reality constitutes" has replaced the open-ended "the historical alternatives available to us, it would seem." When the two statements are set

side by side, it is striking how categorically Fukuyama rejects the possibility that there might ever have existed in the past, or that there might ever exist in the future a regime that corresponds more closely to the Socratic-Platonic standard which he claims as his own, than does modern liberal or constitutional democracy. He gives no reasons for this sweeping judgment. One is therefore left to speculate about what they might be. The form in which he casts his entire argument would suggest that he rules out the possibility that a closer approximation to the Socratic-Platonic model might have existed at some time in the past because, before the introduction of technology, desire or appetite could not be fully satisfied; and that he rules out any closer approximation to the Socratic-Platonic model in the future because technology, once it has been introduced, will forever remain an uneliminable given (pp. 226f.). In other words, virtue is ineffective. But then, technology minimizes the need for virtue, even if it does not altogether eliminate it.

The categorical

. . . liberal democracy in reality constitutes the best possible solution to the human problem. (P. 338)

is also striking for its unqualified assertion that “the human problem” admits of a single “best possible” solution, and that that best possible solution is a political solution. It is hard to conceive how that assertion could be reconciled with the *Republic*’s analogy of the cave, or, for that matter, with Hegel’s quest for the “rose of reason in the cross of the present.”

As Fukuyama frequently notes, modern liberal democracy stands or falls with universal equal rights or recognition, what he calls isothymia. Even granting that the quest for outstanding achievement and recognition, his megalothymia, somehow corresponds to what Socrates calls spiritedness (thymos), what does the liberal democratic recognition of equal rights (or the respect due to the inherent dignity of human beings qua human beings or qua “ends in themselves”) correspond to in Socrates’s account of the soul and of the just city? The very fact that Fukuyama felt compelled to introduce such a cumbersome un-Platonic term as isothymia indicates the problem clearly enough. And as he himself points out, neither the Anglo-Saxon liberals nor Hegel thought that Socrates-Plato had allowed for what they called rights and (subjective) freedom.²³ Now, Fukuyama, characteristically, wants to maintain both the Hegelian *and* the Socratic-Platonic position. In agreement with Hegel, he asserts that Socrates-Plato failed fully to understand what they called “spiritedness,” and that it remained for Rousseau and German Idealism to understand it, and to call it by its correct name, “freedom” or, in some of its manifestations, “history” (pp. 337, 149f., 152). In agreement with Socrates-Plato, he asserts that Rousseau and the German Idealists failed fully to understand that what they called “freedom” or, in some of its manifestations, “history,” is really an aspect of (human) nature (p. 207). In other words, he claims to understand Socrates-

Plato and Hegel-Kojève better than they understood themselves. *What* he proposes to do is clear enough: to reconcile “nature” and “freedom” or “history,” “Socrates-Plato” and “Hegel-Kojève.” *How* he proposes to do so is rather less clear.

He comes closest to stating his argument in the following brief and obscure passage.

The mere fact that human nature is not created “once and for all” but creates itself “in the course of *historical time*” does not spare us the need to speak of human nature, either as a structure within which man’s self-creation occurs, or as an end-point or *telos* toward which human historical development appears to be moving. (P. 138, cp. p. 207)

The two unidentified quotations in this passage are drawn from Kojève’s review of Strauss’s *On Tyranny*. Kojève does not speak, there or anywhere else, about “human nature.” He speaks, rather, about a somewhat amorphous “human reality.”²⁴ Still, Fukuyama charges, he simply cannot escape an at least tacit appeal to a determinate, enduring human nature.

While Kojève claimed he had no trans-historical standard by which to measure the adequacy of human institutions, the desire for recognition in fact constituted such a standard. *Thymos* [spiritedness] was in the end for Kojève a permanent part of human nature. The struggle for recognition arising out of *thymos* [spiritedness] may have required an historical march of ten thousand years or more, it was no less a constitutive part of the soul for Hegel than for Plato. (P. 207)

Kojève rejects that argument. The only criterion which recognition of all by all needs to satisfy is the strictly formal criterion of noncontradiction. Universal mutual recognition fully satisfies that internal—not “trans-historical”—criterion. Universal mutual recognition is necessarily also equal recognition. Kojève therefore speaks of his end-state as *universal* and *homogeneous*. His formula, “the universal and homogeneous state,” can be understood as a variant of Kantian universalization. *Unequal* recognition, Fukuyama’s megalothymia, cannot be similarly universalized, and hence cannot be reduced to a strictly formal criterion; any more than—and for the same reason that—the justice of Plato’s *Republic*, or any other form of distributive justice can be universalized. That is, of course, why Kojève’s end-state is so vulnerable to the charge that it is peopled by Nietzschean “last men.” Be that as it may. Fukuyama never directly considers Kojève’s argument for a strictly formal resolution of “internal contradictions.” Instead, he consistently argues that “the-end-of-history” necessarily entails an appeal to transhistorical human nature: A given political order may plausibly be said to mark the end of history if (1) we cannot think of an essentially different and better political order; (2) the given political order is free of

essential internal contradictions, that is to say of contradictions which it cannot resolve on its own terms; (3) it conforms to human nature and satisfies all parts of it (pp. 46, 70; 136f., 290ff.). He fully recognizes that his first criterion, that we cannot think of a fundamentally better political alternative, is inconclusive at best;²⁵ and he believes that the second criterion, the absence of fundamental internal contradictions, can only be satisfied by reference to the third criterion: the question whether a given state of affairs is or is not rent by a contradiction between, say, the claims of equality and of freedom or of “isothymia” and of “megalothymia,” can only be answered by reference to “trans-historical”—“non-historicist”—“human nature” (pp. 136–39, 290).

How, precisely, does he understand these expressions? For the most part he holds that “nature,” without qualifications, is what modern natural science says it is (pp. 72, 352f.)—although he also makes the extraordinary claim that “. . . nature is fully capable of biting back in the form of nuclear weapons or HIV viruses” (pp. 317, 324f., 298). Be that as it may. “Human” nature, by contrast to “nature” without qualifications, most emphatically is *not* what modern natural science says it is (pp. 296–98, et passim). Fukuyama never mentions, let alone discusses his equivocal use of “nature” and the problems to which it gives rise, problems which led Kojève to eschew all references to “human nature” and to seek, instead, a strictly formal solution to the problem of recognition. He does, however, on one occasion offer a characterization of nature that eludes these difficulties: “nature” is the standard by which we decide what does and what does not count as “history” (p. 138). On this view of it, “nature” is “trans-historical” by definition; and only by definition. For, as he immediately adds, it is a “variable” standard.²⁶ But if “nature” is a variable standard, then it is just as inconclusive a criterion for deciding that a given political order marks the end of history as is the fact that we, here and now, cannot think of an essentially better alternative. Indeed, both criteria are inconclusive for the same reason.

By and by Fukuyama tacitly—but none the less clearly—concedes as much. In his very last paragraphs he abandons his appeal to transhistorical human nature in favor of a strictly cishistorical, “provisional”—the earlier “variable”—consensus about human nature.²⁷ He is, as it were, forced to abandon it by his equation of Socrates-Plato’s “spiritedness” with Hegel-Kojève’s “recognition” (consider note 17 below). Yet by abandoning it, his version of the end-of-history argument—and hence his refutation of historicism—simply collapses. He had sought to overcome historicism by, as it were, capping history with transhistorical (human) nature. But a “trans-historical (human) nature” that proves to be no more than a provisional consensus cannot be invoked to resolve disagreements between competing provisionally plausible accounts, for example between his own conception of human nature and the feminists’ conception of it (pp. 137f.) or, for that matter, between Anglo-Saxon liberalism’s concep-

tion of it and Hegel-Kojève's. It can therefore also not be invoked to dispose of historical relativism; or to settle the question of which, if any, state of affairs marks "the end of history."

It should not really be surprising to find strains at various critical points of Fukuyama's theoretical construction. Most of them can be traced to his effort to reconcile positions which, once again, prove to be irreconcilable, "nature" and "history," "Plato" and "Hegel." What is surprising is that he should have thought it necessary to elaborate such an ambitious construction in the first place. It is not evident that he needs it in order to make his main theoretical point, that "desire," especially in the form of acquisitiveness, differs in nature from "spiritedness" or the quest for honor and for recognition. Nor is it evident that he needs it in order to explore his primary political concerns: how best to balance the competing claims of equality and liberty; and how to shift the emphasis from the dominant, Anglo-Saxon understanding of liberal democracy to his own, qualified Hegelian-Kojévian understanding of it, in order to energize the public spiritedness which liberal democracy requires but for which it can, in his view, not make a sufficiently rousing case on the dominant Anglo-Saxon model (pp. 215; 148, 222, 316, 329, 332–34). His effort does, however, most impressively illustrate and embody the public-spiritedness, the intellectual and moral discipline and breadth which Hegel attributed to the public servants he called "the universal class" because of their devotion to the common good.

NOTES

1. New York: The Free Press, 1992. All otherwise unidentified page references throughout the present essay are to this edition.

2. Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny: Including the Strauss-Kojève Correspondence*, Revised and Expanded, ed. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth (New York: The Free Press, 1991), pp. 88–94 (and see especially p. 125, n.59), pp. 158–63, 189–92, 196–99.

3. Plato, *Republic* IV, 439D–441C; see also *Timaeus*, 69D–73A, *Laws* IX, 863B–869E, and XI, 935A–936B; contrast *Phaedrus*, 246A–B.

4. Plato, *Republic*, IV, 435E; cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, VII.7, 1327b 23–1328a 7.

5. For Fukuyama's reading of Plato's political psychology, and most particularly of spiritedness, see Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1964), pp. 110–12; and, among the growing number of subsequent studies of spiritedness, see especially Seth Benardete, "On Plato's *Timaeus* and *Timaeus*' Science Fiction," *Interpretation*, 2(1971):21–63, pp. 55f., "Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*," *The Political Science Reviewer*, 8(1978): 1–20, pp. 9–11, and *Socrates' Second Sailing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 55–58, 94, 98–102; Thomas Pangle in his edition of Plato's *Laws* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), pp. 452–57; see also Steward Umphrey, "Eros and Thymos," *Interpretation*, 10(1982): 353–422; and Laurence Berns, "Spiritedness in Ethics and Politics: a Study in Aristotelian Psychology," *Interpretation*, 12(1984): 335–48. Fukuyama most frequently refers to essays in Catherine H. Zuckert, ed., *Understanding the Political Spirit: Philosophical Investigations from Socrates to Nietzsche* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

6. “The means [*das Mittel*] nature uses to achieve the development of all of its potentialities [*Anlagen*] is . . . men’s asocial sociability [*ungesellige Geselligkeit*] . . .” (*Idea For A Universal History From A Cosmopolitan Point Of View*, Proposition Four; see also Proposition Seven). In this connection, also consider the role Hegel assigns to self-interest and passion in historical development in particular, and, more generally, in what he called “realization” (*Verwirklichung*); e.g. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, vol. 1; Georg Lasson ed. (München: Felix Meiner, 1930), pp. 59–66 (*Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Sibree trans. [New York: Dover Publications, 1956], pp. 20–26).

7. To take but one example, quite at random: According to Fukuyama, “Fundamental to Hobbes’s social contract is an agreement that in return for the preservation of their physical existences, men will give up their unjust pride and vanity. The side of man that seeks to show himself superior to other men, to dominate them on the basis of superior virtue, the noble character who struggles against his ‘human all too human’ limitations, is to be persuaded of the folly of his pride” (pp. 156f.). According to Hobbes, “[t]he force of Words being . . . too weak to hold men to the performance of their Covenants; there are in mans nature, but two imaginable helps to strengthen it. And those are either a Feare of the consequence of breaking their word; or a Glory, or Pride in appearing not to need to breake it. This latter is a Generosity too rarely found to be presumed on, especially in the pursuers of Wealth, Command, or sensual Pleasure; which are the greatest part of Mankind. The Passion to be reckoned upon, is Fear” (*Leviathan*, 14, end, Penguin ed., p. 200). Or again: “That which gives to humane Actions the relish of Justice, is a certain Nobleness or Gallantness of courage (rarely found,) by which a man scorns to be beholding for the contentment of his life, to fraud, or breach of promise. This Justice of the Manners, is that which is meant, where Justice is called a Vertue; and Injustice a Vice” (chap. 15, Penguin ed., p. 207). Hobbes nowhere concludes that, since righteous glory or pride, generosity, nobleness or gallantness of courage and justice are encountered but rarely, they represent “unjust pride and vanity” or “folly,” and should be overridden when and where they are encountered.

8. “The *bourgeois* was an entirely deliberate creation of early modern thought, an effort at social engineering that sought to create social peace by changing human nature itself” (p. 185; cp. pp. 153–61, 184–86, 222).

9. “Locke’s observation that a king in America ‘feeds, lodges, and is clad worse than a day-laborer in England’ neglects *thymos* and thus misses the point entirely. The king in America has a sense of dignity missing entirely from the English day-laborer, a dignity that is born of his freedom, self-sufficiency, and the respect and recognition he receives from the community around him” (p. 174; Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*”, sec. 41).

10. See, for example, Leo Strauss to Karl Löwith, August 20, 1945, in “Correspondence Concerning Modernity,” transcribed and translated by Susanne Klein and George Elliott Tucker, *Independent Journal of Philosophy*, 41 (1983): 113.

11. *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947); *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, A. Bloom ed., J. H. Nichols, Jr., trans. (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

12. “. . . for the purposes of the present argument we are interested not in Hegel *per se* but in Hegel-as-interpreted-by-Kojève, or perhaps a new, synthetic philosopher named Hegel-Kojève” (p. 144).

13. See *On Tyranny*, Editors’ Introduction, pp. xvif.

14. E. g.: “A human being counts as such because he is a human being, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian, etc.” (Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Allan W. Wood, ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], sec. 209; see also sec. 66. However, “[l]iberalism [of the variety which Fukuyama calls “Anglo-Saxon liberalism”], not content with rational rights, with freedom of person and of property, with a political structure and its various civil institutions each of which performs a distinct function, and with having the competent [*die Verständigen*] exercise influence over the people and enjoy their trust, opposes all this in the name of the principle of atomism, of particular wills: it would have everything be done by the people’s express power, and with their express consent. With this formal freedom [*Formellen der Freiheit*], the people prevent any stable structures from getting established. Specific government actions are immediately opposed on the grounds that they are acts of particular wills, and hence

arbitrary. The will of the Many topples the government, and what had been the Opposition now assumes power; but now that it is the Government, it is again opposed by the Many. As a result, agitation and unrest are perpetuated. This collision, this knot, this problem is the juncture at which history currently finds itself, and which it will have to resolve in the times to come" (Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, vol. 4, pp. 932f; for Sibree's translation; see *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), p. 452.

15. *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, 2d ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), pp. 436f.; *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, pp. 150f.; see also Kojève's lecture "Marx est Dieu; Henry Ford est son Prophète," *Commentaire* (Printemps 1980), pp. 131–35.

16. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte, Einleitung: Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, pp. 45f.; Sibree trans. pp. 74f.

17. Yet he appears fully to accept Kojève's utterly anthropologized Hegel, his understanding of recognition as intersubjectivity, and of intersubjectivity as for all intents and purposes replacing reason and (human) nature: in quoting a passage in which Hegel speaks of "Spirit" [*Geist*], Fukuyama glosses: "i.e. collective human consciousness" (p.60). In this context, consider also his acknowledgment and apparent dismissal of the decisive *difference* between Socrates-Plato's "spiritedness" and Hegel-Kojève's "recognition" (pp. 165f.), and the related discussion in endnote 7, p. 364; regarding Hobbes, consider *De Cive* II.1, Annotation.

18. "Hegel undoubtedly takes Hobbes as his point of departure . . . Hegel consciously wants to 'return' to the Ancients ('dialectically,' that is to say by way of 'Hobbes')" (Kojève to Strauss, November 2, 1936, *On Tyranny*, p. 231). Or, as Fukuyama would have it, Hobbes and Locke " . . . anticipate many of Hegel's assumptions . . ." (p. 153).

19. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Zarathustra's Prologue, sec. 5; see Strauss's letters to Kojève dated August 22, 1948, and September 11, 1957, *On Tyranny*, pp. 239, 291; "Restatement," p. 208.

20. " . . . individuals have *duties* towards the state in proportion as they have rights" (Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, sec. 261, cp. sec. 155).

21. Cp. "Thymos or the desire for recognition is thus the seat for what the social scientists call 'values'" (p. 213). Elsewhere he says that according to Socrates *thymos* is "an innately political virtue" (p. 183). It is not clear what that means: is *thymos* a virtue; where does Socrates speak of it as such; is it an innate virtue; again, where does Socrates speak of it as such; and what basis is there in the teaching of Socrates or of Plato for "innate virtue" of any kind? Alternatively, what might "innately political" mean? On another occasion Fukuyama asserts that " . . . Plato argued that *thymos* was the basis of the virtues . . ." (p. 337). Where does Plato argue that; of what virtues: of wisdom, of moderation; and how is Platonic justice or even courage intelligible without those two? Even granting that the virtue Aristotle calls *megalopsychia*—greatness of soul or "proper pride"—is "*thymotic*," he simply does not rank it as "the central human virtue" (p. 370 n.3); it is one of the two complete moral—not "human"—virtues, and for all of his praise of it, Aristotle does not go beyond saying that it *seems* to be a kind of crown of the virtues (*Nichomachean Ethics* 1124a 1f; and consider *Posterior Analytics* II, 13, 97b 15–25).

22. *On Tyranny*, p.194; cf. *What Is Political Philosophy?* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1989), pp. 306f.

23. E.g. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Preface, p. 20, and secs. 124, 185, 260 together with the Additions to them, as well as sec. 279, Addition *i. f.* "Whether any text that has come down to us from the Greco-Roman world (or any Biblical text) ever mentions what can properly be translated as 'human rights,' 'natural rights,' or 'the rights of man,' is doubtful" (Thomas Pangle, "The Classical Challenge to the American Constitution," *Chicago-Kent Law Review*, 66[1990]: 145–76, p. 153; *id.* Thomas Pangle, *The Ennobling of Democracy* [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992], p. 97).

24. The immediate context is Kojève's sharp criticism of Strauss's distinction between philosophy and politics. "The 'cloistered' life, while dangerous on any hypothesis, is strictly unacceptable for the philosopher who, with Hegel, acknowledges that reality (at least *human* reality), is not given once and for all, but creates itself in the course of time (at least in the course of *historical* time). For if that is the case, then the members of the 'cloister,' isolated from the rest of the world

and not really taking part in public life in its historical evolution, will, sooner or later, be 'overtaken by events.' Indeed, even what at one time was 'true,' can later become 'false,' change into a 'prejudice,' and only the 'cloister' will fail to notice what has happened" ("Tyranny and Wisdom," in Strauss, *On Tyranny*, p. 155). Kojève states his objection to human "nature" most succinctly in his letter to Strauss of October 29, 1953, pp. 161f. Instead, he suggests, "on pourrait définir l'homme comme une erreur qui se maintient dans l'existence, qui dure dans la réalité" (*Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, p. 461; cp. p. 432).

25. "... Europe on the eve of the French Revolution looked to many observers like a successful and satisfying social order, as did that in Iran in the 1970s, or the countries of Eastern Europe in the 1980s" (pp. 137, 287–96).

26. "In the end, it would appear impossible to talk about 'history' without reference to a permanent, trans-historical standard, i.e. without reference to nature. For history is not a given, not merely a catalogue of everything that happened in the past, but a deliberate effort of abstraction in which we separate important from unimportant events. The standards on which this abstraction are based are variable. But [no] historian can evade the choice between important and unimportant, and hence reference to a standard that exists somewhere 'outside' of history." (pp. 138f.; cp. pp. 130, 189); see also Kant's regulative "Idea of man" in the Second Thesis of the *Idea for a Universal History*.

27. "... if, over time, more and more societies with diverse cultures and histories exhibit similar long term patterns of development; if there is a continuing convergence in the types of institutions governing most advanced societies; and if the homogenization of mankind continues as a result of economic development, then the idea of relativism may seem much stranger than it does now" (p. 338). And, after comparing history to a long wagon-train, he concludes: "... despite the recent world-wide liberal revolution, the evidence concerning the direction of the wagons' wandering must remain provisionally inconclusive. Nor can we, in the final analysis know whether the occupants, having looked around a bit at their new surroundings, will not find them inadequate and set their eyes on a new and more distant journey" (p. 339).