

History is not over (yet)

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October 29, 2021

RESPONSIBILITY GOES VIRTUAL: LESSONS FROM COVID VACCINE PATENTS

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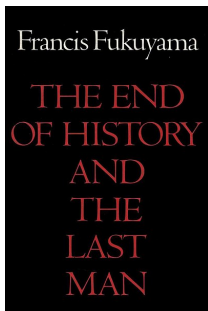


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The End of History (1992)

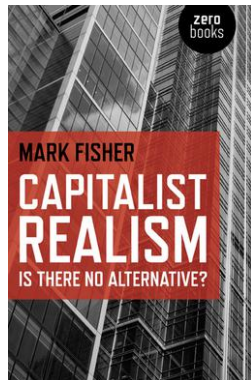


- "The success of **(liberal) democracy** in a wide variety of places and among many different peoples would suggest that the principles of liberty and equality on which they are based are not accidents or the results of ethnocentric prejudice, but are in fact discoveries about the nature of man as man" (p. 51)
- "the basic terms of the universal **capitalist economic culture**" i.e. "a substantial degree of economic competition" and "letting prices be determined by market mechanisms" (pp. 96-97)



Or: Capitalist Realism

"...if we are now at a point where **we cannot imagine a world substantially different from our own, in which there is no apparent or obvious way in which the future will represent a fundamental improvement over our current order**, then we must also take into consideration the possibility that History itself might be at an end" (F. Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p. 51)



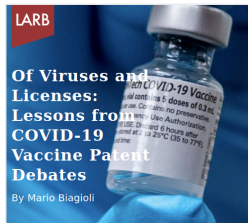
The future? Just an administrative question!

No hope, no sacrifice are needed: the future ✕ used to be now

In our grandparents' time, many reasonable people could foresee a radiant socialist future in which private property and capitalism had been abolished, and in which politics itself was somehow overcome. Today, by contrast, **we have trouble imagining a world that is radically better than our own**, or a future that is not essentially democratic and capitalist. Within that framework, of course, many things could be improved... (F. Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p. 46)



The world is going to be perfect (but not yet)



"Crucially, this unusually powerful innovation ecosystem is not presented as primarily driven by individual entrepreneurs-inventors with a nose for "disruptive" solutions but by an army of investors with plenty of capital to quickly carpet-bomb whatever new disease entity will come our way until "we've hunted the virus into extinction'."

"Leave patent protections alone because they "will save lives later"."



Just neoliberal rhetoric?

- The world order is objectively knowable, even in its diachronic process
- Since we know the law of history, we can make irrefutable predictions on the future
- We are, therefore, able to argue for the sacrifice of current patients, by embracing a kind of diachronic utilitarianism, for the sake of the (patent) system fulfillment, with its load of future patients.



Augustine, Sermones, ed. Denis, XXIV, 11

Thus the world is like an oil press: under pressure. If you are the dregs of the oil you are carried away through the sewer; if you are genuine oil you will remain in the vessel. But to be under pressure is inevitable. Observe the dregs, observe the oil. Pressure takes place ever in the world, as for instance, through famine, war, want, inflation, indigence, mortality, rape, avarice; such are the pressures on the poor and the worries of the states: we have evidence of them We have found men who grumble under these pressures and who say: "how bad are these Christian times!" ... Thus speak the dregs of the oil which run away through the sewer; their color is black because they blaspheme: they lack splendour. The oil has splendour. For here another sort of man is under the same pressure and friction which polishes him, for is it not the very friction which refines him?



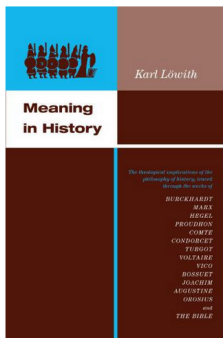
An experiment in secularization

Augustine dealt with history as a history of salvation, beyond history as we know it. But let's try to secularize his argument, by attributing to ourselves the providence point of view:

- 1 we can infer a meaning and an end in the "pressure" of ~~the world~~ the current economic order
- 2 such a knowledge is beyond discussion because depends on ~~Revelation~~ science
- 3 criticizing such an order is ~~blasphemy~~ ideology
- 4 some people deserve to run away through the sewer, for the sake of a fulfillment shifting unendingly towards the future



From the end of the world to (a future of) earthly happiness



1949

The future is the "true" focus of history, provided that the truth abides in the religious foundation of the Christian Occident, whose historical consciousness is, indeed, determined by an eschatological motivation, from Isaiah to Marx, from Augustine to Hegel, and from Joachim to Schelling. The significance of this vision of an ultimate end, as both finis and telos, is that it provides a scheme of progressive order and meaning, a scheme which has been capable of overcoming the ancient fear of fate and fortune.



Dying of improvement, while waiting for the future

A doctor who consoled his patients from one day to the next with hopes of a speedy convalescence, pledging to one that his pulse beat better, to another an improvement in his stool, to a third the same regarding his perspiration, etc., received a visit from one of his friends. "How's your illness, my friend," was his first question. **"How should it be? I'm dying of improvement, pure and simple!"** (I.Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, VII, 93)

