

NOTES ON THE “END OF HISTORY” RE-THINKING THE PRESENT AS HISTORICITY

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Abstract. *In the post-1989 world, the “end of history” established itself as the ideological frame of the neo-liberal condition. This ideology can also be described with the expression “to put an end to history”, so that people, societies, and individuals become convinced that there is no other possible world than the existing one – in other words, that they believe that reality exhausts possibility, that being and possibility are coextensive, and that the future can be nothing but the present projected in the region of the Blochian “not-yet”. Therefore, it is necessary to think again about the present as history, so that one can find its own dimension in the historical becoming, and outline in perspective the sense of a possible, alternative future.*

Key words: *Fukuyama, end of history, liberalism, Marx, Gramsci.*

“One of the commonest totems is the belief about everything that exists, that it is “natural” that it should exist, that it could not do otherwise than exist”.

A. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks

In the context of a period, characterized by economic fanaticism – displayed as eternal, incorrigible and, lastly, as the End of History – there can be no place for any aspect of the future, for transformative praxis, for the ontological category of possibility and historicity. For this reason, the ideological logic of the spirit of our time must continuously demonize these four reciprocally linked aspects, in order to impose, in the imaginary the eternal present of imperfect but irreparable and inescapable Capital. Therefore, Capital cannot be referred to as a historical result, but as a natural condition from which any plan of escaping is not possible. The End of History, a sense of necessity, an omnipresent present, a

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frustrating sense of impotence: these are the salient features of today's ideology. The *ordo oeconomicus* of our current historical phase is characterized by its absolute-totalitarian essence, because it has conquered the world, reaching – in Hegel's own words – the conformity *in actu* with its Comprehension. If in the pre-modern societies the dimension of the past was hegemonic and in the modern ones that of the future, today's postmodern outlook is flattened onto the present, with no real possibility of change.

The widespread removal of historicity seems to be the ultimate ideological platform from which to naturalize the capital as an inescapable destiny: to remove its historical determination, and to take it away from Becoming, which could lead it to its decline, or just to another future. The transition to the eternal present is grounded on the suppression of dialectic elements that, in the past, made a conflict for an alternative tomorrow possible.

Just like the removal of historicity, the loss of class consciousness is an essential function of the new absolute-totalitarian capitalist order: it is perceived by the oppressed and the oppressors as an unmoving destiny, and furthermore, as a natural reality. The loss of historical sense is a permanent feature of contemporary thinking. The latter proclaims, apparently in a plural way, only one truth, that of a single thought and its goal: the glorification *sub specie mentis* of the present. This can be found in several deeply differentiated schools of thought: from the Postmodern (which makes History a mass of unrelated events) (Harvey 1990) to Analytic philosophy (for its removal of the "history factor" from philosophical thinking) (Marcuse 1964), always finding in the frayed theorem of the End of History their benchmark.

Even the most apparently incompatible positions reveal themselves to be secretly supportive of an anti-historical stand. Their common background can be defined as the transit from what Nietzsche called "abuse of History" (Nietzsche 1874), into the contemporary "abuse of Anti-History", which aims to definitely quit historicity. It is quite clear that the End of History's axiom, such as the formula of "Globalization", is a bearer of intrinsic ideological value. Thus, the end of history axiom holds a program, largely shared by today's culture. We could summarize it with the motto "let's get it over with history". Thus, peoples, societies and individuals become convinced that they will not have another world other than the existing one.

The End of History theorem has a strategic function similar to The Short Century formula. In both cases, the two notions emphasize the ending of two realities, the Twentieth Century and the historical dimension. Their unconscious desire is to leave the unresolved Age of Extremes issues: inequality and wars among classes, peoples and nations. It is as if, with the early ending (1989) of the last century, these contradictions disappeared, or just became physiological. The ghost of communism that materialized in the twentieth century carried three positive functions. Not even the obscene Stalinist crimes could hide them. First, communism made been the biggest historical attempt to overtake the capitalist mode of production on a global scale, functioning as "*kathekon*" (Schmitt 1950), the braking force (*Aufhalter*), or in Schmitt's words the *Nomos of the Earth*. It has also represented the most radical attempt of the entire western history to overthrow the balance of power by the lower classes, establishing their political, economic and cultural supremacy.

Finally, twentieth-century communism made a global diarchy possible, which represented the possibility of thinking about another model of society. Even with its macroscopic limits, the presence of the Soviet Union showed how capitalism was not the only possible world (D'Orsi 2009). It was the rebuttal of the naturalness of the western way of production and

being. It is not by chance that after the fall of the Berlin Wall the naturalization of Capital turned into a *Capitalismus sive Natura*.

Once any dialectic oppositions in the capitalist regime disappeared, the braking force of communism failed, the bourgeois *Unhappy Consciousness* disappeared and the revolutionary pathos of wage slaves faded, the Capital could fully correspond to its concept, without any residual forces that threaten its overall reproduction. It does not aspire to anything but to preserve itself, demonizing the possibility of a different future, immediately dismissed as undemocratic, totalitarian and as a restorer of the worst experiences of the twentieth century. The triumphant "spiritual animal kingdom" can thus assert itself as the only-possible-world because it is naturally given. The End of History, apraxia and desertification of the future are the quintessential expression of the historical scenario after 1989.

All the major issues of our time seem to be related to a single general schema, an ideological framework: the belief in naturalization - and, therefore, in the symmetric de-historicisation - of the existing, claimed to be a natural and eternal fact, and then deprived of its historical and social genesis. This naturalization has precisely its goal in the complete removal of the historical perspective that presents the existing one as the outcome of human activity. Showing the existing one not as historically given, and therefore as natural and eternal, the pervasive ideology of naturalization smuggles as right and irredeemable today's alienated horizon of the universal reification and one-dimensionality of the production and exchange of goods.

Naturalizing the Real is equivalent to idealizing it (assimilating the ought to the being, and the possibility to the reality), on the basis of the ideological dream which tries to persuade us that the existent cannot be different, and that it coincides with the maximum perfection we can aspire to. Therefore, the very alienation with which humanity is affected is naturalized in the same way: human freedom is conceived of just as the freedom of choice among different goods or different lifestyles. There is no way to go beyond the world alienation. The Hayek case is a prime example. Hayek, whom the neoliberal religion never stopped worshipping, defines the cosmos as the “order” produced by market society (von Hayek 1973, 1976, 1979). He defines the “party of life” as the neoliberal program characterized by the dogma of the “unamendable perfection”. Neoliberalism is identified with life, and is justified by the denial of any other feasible possibility.

The polytheistic pluralism of different lifestyles proliferates only into the Weberian “iron cage”, the outstanding metaphor of Capitalism transfigured in an ineluctable destiny: Man is conceivable only as “human capital”. The unhistorical point of view - pretending that there could be a “view from nowhere” (Nagel 1986) - is equivalent to affirming again that this way of living, thinking, producing is the only possible one. So it becomes impossible to think of the future in a different way: that is the secret of the asymbology of our days (Tagliapietra 2013). The fact that the economic nomos does present itself as something eternal, without a beginning or an end, is proved by the fact that financial laws are considered natural disasters, just like earthquakes: something to register and accept.

The social world produced by the human praxis fetishistically transformed itself into a natural reality that is not subject to transformation, a reality that coerces us into conserving and venerating it.

The unpredictable spread hikes, the unmanageable economic laws, the Stock Exchange crashes are social and historic products of human action, “a sensible supra sensible

thing”, to use Marx's syntax, but we are used to considering them natural phenomena, and thus ungovernable. From these considerations comes the twist of critique and historicity: without the latter, the former is impossible.

Critique without historicity cannot show the difference between reality and possibility: paraphrasing Kant, history without critique is blind, critique without history is empty. That is the reason why a philosophy that tries to recover its Socratic attitude must be historical knowledge, as Hegel said (“The history of philosophy coincides with the system of philosophy” /Hegel 1825-1826/). As it is stated in *Being and Time* (§7) “philosophy, even more so if it wants to be critical, can't overlook historicity” (Heidegger 1927). Critique must consider the historical becoming the place where the ideological chains can be broken, history must show how nowadays the particular is smuggled as universal (economic laws as laws of nature).

History remains the *locus naturalis* of critique and praxis. Discovering again the value of the historical view after the postmodern oblivion means rediscovering the category of *possibilitas* as what reality is made of, creating the conditions of an unadaptive praxis. Unlike Nature, whose fundamental ontological category is necessity, history coincides with the space of possibilities – the “sense of possibility” (*Möglichkeitssinn*) of Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (Musil 1930–1942) – capable of creating different configurations of the existent. Historicizing reality means showing its genesis, and its temporal and social nature, putting out of order the ideology apparatus. The human being is, for its essence, a “historical animal”: as it is written in *Being and Time*, “the Dasein, in the foundation of his being, is made of historicity” (Heidegger 1927). The Dasein is possibility: it acts existent, goes beyond itself: the Dasein is Project (*Ent-Wurf*).

The removal of historicity produces alienation, because it deprives man of one of his essential features. The figure of unadaptive praxis is based on the ontological category of be-able-to-be-different, and so on the difference between what there is and what could be. We must think again about the present as historicity, reactivating the *vis dialectica* and the Gramscian “*spirito di scissione*” with it. This is the starting point for allowing the arms of critique to function again, which is the starting point for any political action.

(Translated from Italian by Flavio Tisi and Alessandro Volpe)

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BELEŠKE O „KRAJU ISTORIJE“. PONOVRNO RAZMATRANJE SADAŠNJOSTI KAO ISTORIČNOSTI

Svet posle 1989, kao "kraj istorije" je sebe oblikovao u okvirima ideološkog okvira neoliberalnog diskursa. Takva ideologija može biti opisana kao izraz "dolaženja do kraja istorije" tako da narodi, društva i pojedinci postaju uvereni da više nije moguće da postoji svet koji je do sada potojao, drugim rečima, da je postojanje i mogućnost međusobno ovisno te da budućnost i ne može biti ništa više od sadašnje prezentovanog Blohovog "ne-još. Zbog svega toga neophodno je shvatati sadašnjost kao istoriju tako da je neko u mogućnosti pronaći svoju vlastitu dimenziju u istorijskom postojanju i ocrtaju je u perspektivi moguće, alternativne budućnosti.

Ključne reči: *Fukujama, kraj istorije, liberalizam, Marks, Gramši.*