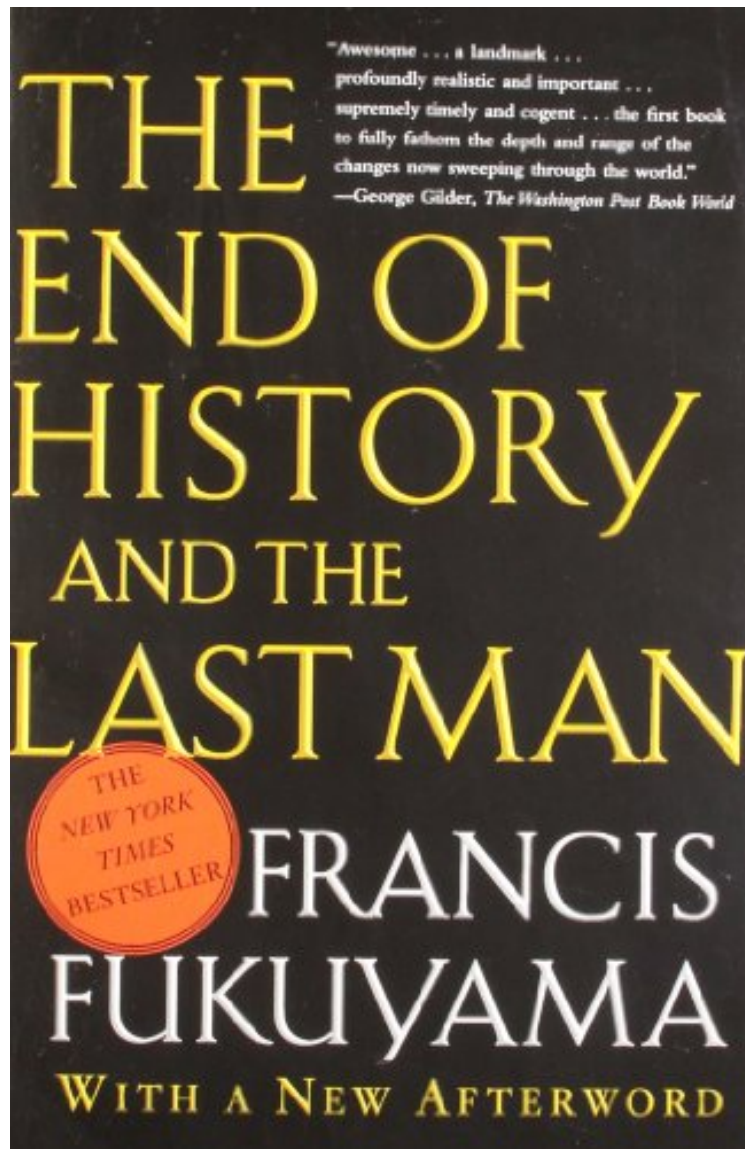


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The End of History and the Last Man

Francis Fukuyama

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Ever since its first publication in 1992, *The End of History and the Last Man* has provoked controversy and debate. Francis Fukuyama's prescient analysis of religious fundamentalism, politics, scientific progress, ethical codes, and war is as essential for a world fighting fundamentalist terrorists as it was for the end of the Cold War. Now updated with a new afterword, *The End of History and the Last Man* is a modern classic. Ever since its first publication in 1992, *The End of History and the Last Man* has provoked controversy and debate. Francis Fukuyama's prescient analysis of religious fundamentalism, politics, scientific progress, ethical codes, and war is as essential for a world fighting fundamentalist terrorists as it was for the end of the Cold War. Now updated with a new afterword, *The End of History and the Last Man* is a modern classic.

From Publishers Weekly History is directional, and its endpoint is capitalist liberal democracy, asserts Fukuyama, former U.S. State Department planner. In a broad, ambitious work of political philosophy, he identifies two prime forces that supposedly push all societies toward this evolutionary goal. The first is modern natural science (with its handmaiden, technology), which creates homogenous cultures. The second motor of history (which the author borrows from Hegel) is the desire for recognition, driving innovation and personal achievement. Fukuyama's main worry seems to be whether, in the coming of what he considers a capitalist utopia, we will all become complacently self-absorbed "last men" or instead revert to "first men" engaged in bloody, pointless battles. Several of the countries that he christens capitalist liberal democracies--Turkey, the nations of South America--are in fact either oligarchies or police states, and his contention that liberal democracies do not behave imperialistically flies in the face of world and U.S. history. Nevertheless, this self-congratulatory book will probably be popular and widely discussed, like Fukuyama's 1989 National Interest essay, "The End of History?" Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Fukuyama, then deputy director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, first presented this thesis in the foreign policy journal National Interest (Summer 1989), where it attracted worldwide attention. He argues that there is a positive direction to current history, demonstrated by the collapse of authoritarian regimes of right and left and their replacement (in many but not all cases) by liberal governments. "A true global culture has emerged, centering around technologically driven economic growth and the capitalist social relations necessary to produce and sustain it." In the absence of viable alternatives to liberalism, history, conceived of as the clash of political ideologies, is at an end. We face instead the question of how to forge a rational global order that can accommodate humanity's restless desire for recognition without a return to chaos. Fukuyama's views conveniently present the international politics of the present administration. History disappears very early on in the narrative, to be replaced by abstract philosophy. This essay made into a book is pretentious and overblown, though it offers some grounds for speculation. Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 9/1/91.- David Keymer, SUNY Inst. of Technology, Utica Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus s In 1989, The National Interest published "The End of History?" by Fukuyama, then a senior official at the State Department. In that comparatively short but extremely controversial article, Fukuyama speculated that liberal democracy may constitute the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution" and hence the "final form of human government." Now Fukuyama has produced a brilliant book that, its title notwithstanding, takes an almost entirely new tack. To begin with, he examines the problem of whether it makes sense to posit a coherent and directional history that would lead the greater part of humanity to liberal democracy. Having answered in the affirmative, he assesses the regulatory effect of modern natural science, a societal activity consensually deemed cumulative as well as directional in its impact. Turning next to a "second, parallel account of the historical process," Fukuyama considers humanity's struggle for recognition, a concept articulated and borrowed (from Plato) by Hegel. In this context, he goes on to reinterpret culture, ethical codes, labor, nationalism, religion, war, and allied phenomena from the past, projecting ways in which the desire for acknowledgement could become manifest in the future. Eventually, the author addresses history's presumptive end and the so-called "last man," an unheroic construct (drawn from Tocqueville and Nietzsche) who has traded prideful belief in individual worth for the civilized comforts of self-preservation. Assuming the prosperity promised by contemporary liberal democracy indeed come to pass, Fukuyama wonders whether or how the side of human personality that thrives on competition, danger, and risk can be fulfilled in the sterile ambiance of a brave new world. At the end, the author leaves tantalizingly open the matter of whether mankind's historical journey is approaching a close or another beginning; he even alludes to the likelihood that time travelers may well strike out in directions yet undreamt. An important work that affords significant returns on the investments of time and attention required to get the most from its elegantly structured theme. -- Copyright 1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.