



THE END OF HISTORY AS THE ULTIMATE STORY

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Abstract: *PEOPLE CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT STORIES. WHERE YOU FIND A SMALL GROUP, THERE IS A STORY THAT HOLDS IT TOGETHER. HUMANKIND HAS LONG SINCE MOVED BEYOND THE STAGE OF KINSHIP-BASED SOCIAL COHESION. GROUPS ARE LARGER, THEIR MEMBERS DON'T KNOW EACH OTHER OR HAVE ANY CONNECTION BEYOND STORIES ABOUT THEMSELVES, WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN, WHAT THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY WILL BE. THESE STORIES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF PEOPLES, THE SOURCE OF GROUP VALUES AND IDENTITY. THE MOST ATTRACTIVE STORY IS THE END-OF-THE-WORLD, ESCHATOLOGICAL STORY. ALL RELIGIONS HAVE IT, AND WE CAN HARDLY SPEAK OF A RELIGION UNLESS WE ATTACH TO IT A STORY OF THE ENDLESS END. IT WAS ONLY WHEN PHILOSOPHERS STOLE THE IDEA THAT THE GREAT SYSTEMS WERE BORN, WHICH ARE STILL BEING DISCUSSED CENTURIES LATER.*

Keywords: *HISTORY, RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY, IDEOLOGY, LIBERALISM, MARXISM,*

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Science evolved only when it succeeded in discovering the immutable laws of nature. The sciences became uncontroversial from the moment they mastered the mathematical apparatus and the laws of nature gradually became formulas. We know, for example, that a chemical reaction, which has become a mathematical formula, will always be the same, that the force of gravity or the speed of light are eternal constants, we understand the complex life of a hive of bees or a family of orang-utans, which have behaved in the same way since the beginning and will not change until the end of the world. But it's not so clear how things are with humans. Historians and anthropologists are constantly surprising us with information proving that this species has changed its behaviour, its way of life, from one era to another. If an orang-utan were to study us, as we study them, it would conclude that over the last millennia it is more than one species, not the same human. What makes our species so different, so lacking in constant rules of life and behaviour, so lacking in those unchanging laws that would make it at least understandable? The answer has always been suspected: man is governed by a non-material entity, more powerful than the physical matter of which he is made - thoughts. We know that we think, when we think and what we think, we know that thoughts lead us back from the paths trodden



by our fathers, but we hope that our sons will follow the known paths. Thought is immaterial but it becomes matter through word when from the lightning bolts of the heart stories are made. We know that thoughts and stories always change the world, but humans have always claimed to tell the ultimate story: scientists and philosophers have created complex systems that encompassed the world and man in the fabric of their ideas, prophets have created religions with the same claims. Nor did some grasp that the world does not end in a religion or philosophical system. New thoughts come and new stories are woven, people believe them too, forget the stories of their fathers and tread unknown paths.

Mankind has always believed in stories. The history of our culture is the history of stories about people, gods, places and things. The power of stories has given birth to a special category of people and at least a few noble occupations: poets, writers and priests. The most incredible stories have spoken of gods and become religions.

The most incredible stories were actually the most believed.

Man as a social being has managed to remain in society only because he has believed in stories, and the key word of his sociability is to believe. Man believes and trusts. Man is a trusting being and social relationships are based on trust. All other social beings base their social relationship on knowledge and recognition, i.e. groups stick together and are tightly knit because its members know each other, especially since in the animal world groups and mutual knowledge are based on kinship.

The human group is different: the group is much larger, its members rarely know each other directly, we always tend towards a global society, towards universality, and it is out of the question that the members of any society should know each other. Only common social values and the belief that everyone shares the same values are sufficient. Social values to be recognised by as many people as possible have a founding story behind them, a simple story that is accessible to all and that people believe in because it tells them something about themselves.

Founding stories have become religions, and each religion is the story of the universe from beginning to end. Everything about man is finite, life is finite, the world and the things man knows are finite, even imagination is finite. Religion tells the story of a world with a beginning and an end. We recognize a religion when the story speaks of the end and the unimagined mystery beyond the end. Thus, the Old Testament prophets always spoke of the divine punishment that will come at the end, Jesus Christ himself spoke of the end of the world, and the end of the world is the descent of the kingdom of heaven to earth after 1,000 years. Christians waited in vain for a thousand years to pass and to know the Lord and were consoled when the prophesied end did not come because they did not understand the mysterious meaning of the divine story, but they did not abandon the story.

Many philosophers have had a religious vocation talking about the end of the world. They were trying to create a new story for people to believe in that would replace myth. Only the most incredible story remained the myth, the divine story, and people did not abandon it for plausible stories with the flavour of reason or scientific proof.

I'm not saying people were wrong to choose a religion's story, I'm not saying the story is true, nor that it's false. In general, history has shown us that all stories are false, that one by one they were abandoned when people stopped believing them and embraced a new story. They were only abandoned because people stopped believing them.

The rule I want to come back to is that we recognize the story behind a religion because it not only describes the beginning, the genesis, but it also gets to tell us what the end of the story we are caught up in will be.

Summing up, we discover a religion from the tendency to include the end in the story, the moment when things come to an end, when you have nothing more to do, something remains definitive, and as a rule, either good wins in its battle with evil and evil disappears from the world, or evil or its personification is exiled somewhere from which it cannot return, and the kingdom of God



descends and spreads everywhere. It is not by chance that this simplistic summary brings to mind the story of a human conquest, a war of the enemy worlds in which the vanquished is undeniably the evil one, and the good of the victors will embrace with its generous arms the tame world of the vanquished.

We would be surprised to see how many philosophers or scientific conceptions have this claim to the religious story. They are essentially religions even if they hate the Christian God or any other God. They hate him because they feel he is a real enemy who, first of all, must be eliminated. Their story wants to replace myth and become myth, to be repeated as a mantra. For example, Marxism speaks frantically of an end of the world in which the class consciousness of the proletariat will be dominant and will impose communism, a society similar to the anarchists' projections in which there is no longer even any need for law and order organs because that social consciousness raised to the highest level makes each of us behave exemplarily in a perfect state like the Kingdom of God descended to earth. No wonder the Marxist thinkers and afterwards the Communists had a problem with religion because they felt it as a competitor to their story. They had created a story with all the features of religion and which was supposed to replace religion, explain the whole world, rewrite history, interpret social relations and economic relations and predict the end of the world, the end of history when communism was universally established. It was an effort of the whole of human civilisation, which over tens of thousands of years of its existence has travelled the difficult road, and now, at the end, will be able to reach its destination in perfect condition, the end of history, where time stands still and mankind plunges into a social bliss of no return: communist paradise. But the communist story has ceased to be believed. People left it and the worlds created or imagined all fell at once.

Throughout the 20th century the elites "have formulated three grand stories that claimed to explain the whole past and to predict the future of the entire world: the fascist story, the communist story, and the liberal story. The Second World War knocked out the fascist story, and from the late 1940s to the late 1980s the world became a battleground between just two stories: communism and liberalism. Then the communist story collapsed, and the liberal story remained the dominant guide to the human past and the indispensable manual for the future of the world – or so it seemed to the global elite." (Harari, 2018, p.17).

Almost all of human history is one of oppression and lack of individual freedoms. Liberalism fills the human need for freedom by promising prosperity, individual freedoms, equal rights, political rights. Liberal doctrine establishes for all that they can govern themselves according to their own will and opinion, that it cannot be challenged, even if it is based only on their own pleasure or feelings. The liberal story has been a success story: wherever it has been believed it has created prosperity, freedom and peace. Fields of war have been replaced by parks full of happy children, violence by rights, fear by trust.

" Countries that join this unstoppable march of progress will be rewarded with peace and prosperity sooner. Countries that try to resist the inevitable will suffer the consequences, until they too see the light, open their borders and liberalise their societies, their politics and their markets. It may take time, but eventually even North Korea, Iraq and El Salvador will look like Denmark or Iowa.

In the 1990s and 2000s this story became a global mantra. Many governments from Brazil to India adopted liberal recipes in an attempt to join the inexorable march of history. Those failing to do so seemed like fossils from a bygone era. In 1997 the US president Bill Clinton confidently rebuked the Chinese government that its refusal to liberalise Chinese politics puts it 'on the wrong side of history'" (Harari, 2018, p.18).

Francis Fukuyama (see: Fukuyama, 1992) brings to our attention a new end of history. He really invents this idea of the end of history and, armed with all the previous ends, proclaims the last end:



the liberal one. The communist regimes had fallen, and the communist narrative, this secular religion, was no longer believed. The new story to be told is the liberal story. It had been an old story for hundreds of years, but the world had told many stories at once, and the liberal story lacked the end of the world. That's why Fukuyama adds the end of history to the liberal story. In his view, liberalism is the best that man could think of in terms of economics and social organisation. Political regimes of all kinds have fallen one by one and now that they have all been proven false we have reached the moment of the end of history when we all realise that the liberal story is the only true one and that after it mankind can no longer invent another story because it is no longer possible. We will all sink into the bliss of liberal abundance and feel that it is useless to look for another story. This ending has the sadness of depression in it, it is devoid of drama, of emotion, it is a technical ending, like a draw that satisfies no one, but the teams have calculated that this is how they have the smallest losses. Fukuyama writes at the end of his work: "The end of history will be a very sad era. The struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one's life for a purely abstract ideal, the global ideological struggle that highlighted daring, courage, imagination and idealism will be replaced by economic calculation, endless technical problem-solving, environmental concerns and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer needs. In the post-historic period there will be neither art nor philosophy, only perpetual care for the museum of human history. I feel in myself and see in those around me a strong nostalgia for the times when history existed... Perhaps it is precisely this prospect of centuries of tedium at the end of history that will make history begin again."

For Fukuyama, neither religious fundamentalisms nor nationalisms have a future because all ideologies are melting in the face of liberal prosperity. Even China, in his view, will give up ideology for the sake of the dollar.

F. Fukuyama is far from original. Apart from the fact that eschatological stories have always existed, "Karl Marx also had a similar vision, considering that history would end with the realization of the communist utopia and the resolution of all previous contradictions. History as a dialectical process with beginning, middle and end was an even older idea, belonging to Hegel who also saw in the Battle of Jena the end of history." (<http://filosofiepebega.blogspot.com/2013/02/fukuyama-sfarsitul-istoriei-autorul.html>)

"However, since the global financial crisis of 2008 people all over the world have become increasingly disillusioned with the liberal story. Walls and firewalls are back in vogue. Resistance to immigration and to trade agreements is mounting. Ostensibly democratic governments undermine the independence of the judiciary system, restrict the freedom of the press, and portray any opposition as treason. Strongmen in countries such as Turkey and Russia experiment with new types of illiberal democracies and downright dictatorships. Today, few would confidently declare that the Chinese Communist Party is on the wrong side of history. The year 2016 – marked by the Brexit vote in Britain and the rise of Donald Trump in the United States – signified the moment when this tidal wave of disillusionment reached the core liberal states of western Europe and North America. Whereas a few years ago Americans and Europeans were still trying to liberalise Iraq and Libya at the point of the gun, many people in Kentucky and Yorkshire have now come to see the liberal vision as either undesirable or unattainable. Some discovered a liking for the old hierarchical world, and they just don't want to give up their racial, national or gendered privileges. Others have concluded (rightly or wrongly) that liberalisation and globalisation are a huge racket empowering a tiny elite at the expense of the masses. In 1938 humans were offered three global stories to choose from, in 1968 just two, in 1998 a single story seemed to prevail; in 2018 we are down to zero. No wonder that the liberal elites, who dominated much of the world in recent decades, have entered a state of shock and disorientation. To have one story is the most reassuring situation of all. Everything is perfectly clear. To be suddenly left without any story is terrifying. Nothing makes any sense. A bit like the Soviet



elite in the 1980s, liberals don't understand how history deviated from its preordained course, and they lack an alternative prism to interpret reality. Disorientation causes them to think in apocalyptic terms, as if the failure of history to come to its envisioned happy ending can only mean that it is hurtling towards Armageddon. Unable to conduct a reality check, the mind latches on to catastrophic scenarios. Like a person imagining that a bad headache signifies a terminal brain tumor, many liberals fear that Brexit and the rise of Donald Trump portend the end of human civilisation." (Harari, 2018, pp.18-19)

I said earlier that all the stories turn out to be untrue. Time gnaws away at them and, in the end, people stop believing them and abandon them, but they only abandon them when a new, more convincing story is told that must also contain an incredible ending. We ask ourselves now: do we have a new story? Are the nationalisms that dig at the root of the liberal story the new story and the new religion of the world? or is it globalism or religious fundamentalism or the belief that some nations, ethnicities or races must disappear? We don't know the answers to any of these questions, we don't know what the direction of humanity is, but if we look into history the most incredible story, the one we least expect, the one that scares us the most, the one that terrifies us and overturns the world order, is the story that will be believed and that will have the force of a new religion for which people will die and in whose name they will kill.



1/2021

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