

○ DESIRING WAR

APOCALYPSE, COMMODITY FETISH, AND THE END OF HISTORY

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This paper argues that the repeated buzzwords ‘history’ and ‘freedom’ in official documents of the Bush administration work to conflate religious and economic desire, as a means of motivating war. Bush’s apocalyptically inflected invocation of a personified history, who calls the U.S. to defend and advance freedom, also betrays a philosophical underpinning that is illuminated through Francis Fukuyama’s explication of the ‘end of history’. This exploration of the religio-philosophical framework for Bush’s public discourse pays attention to the ways in which it mirrors Fukuyama’s ultimately neoconservative, Nietzschean reading of Kojève, in which the Hegelian fight unto death is never quite resolved.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is part of a larger project that seeks to find new metaphors for resisting imperialism that do not simply repeat a violent apocalyptic longing for the destruction of evil. It also comes out of a conviction that the left – marxist, anarchist, and even democrat – must begin to engage religious arguments at some level, even if they are predisposed otherwise. The right has been smart in its long term planning and in its use of religious, philosophical and co-opted leftist rhetoric (Parenti 2003), especially apocalyptic and utopian rhetoric. As some political theorists have argued, it is time for the left to take a more comprehensive view intellectually and strategically in order to counter such rhetoric in the long term.¹

As a first step in this project, then, I look at the convergence of religion and philosophy in the discourse favoured by George W. Bush, in which personified ‘history’ calls the U.S. to guard ‘freedom’ for the world in the face of looming terror. I suggest that by tapping into both a Christian heritage of apocalypse and a truncated version of the philosophy of Hegel and Kojève, this discourse allies religious desire for the end of history with desire for economic freedom, in order to further the U.S. practice of generating war and the interests served by war.² The conflation of religious and economic desire points to an underlying philosophy that values the Hegelian *struggle* for recognition, rather than its resolution. In my view, it is vital to dissect such rhetoric, even if Bush is not re-elected, because it will undoubtedly resurface, as do political figures (and their progeny).

COSMIC ORIGINS AND ENDS FOR MILITARY ACTION

Before looking more carefully at how the rhetoric of history and freedom is used by the Bush administration, let me first indicate how I read the larger apocalyptic framework into which it taps. As I will suggest below, through an apocalyptic framework, military conflict is given cosmic-dressed-as-secular origins (the call of history) and utopic ends (freedom).

The position taken by the Bush administration with respect to the rest of the world clearly falls within the tradition of covenantal, messianic chosenness by God, which, as I've argued more thoroughly elsewhere is both a covenantal and apocalyptic discourse (Runions 2004). Throughout Bush's rhetoric, the nation is chosen to use its military strength in the role of ensuring freedom for the rest of humanity.³ The rhetoric recalls the longstanding tradition of manifest destiny in U.S. nationalism that, as Stephanson argues, 'constitut[es] itself not only as prophetic but also universal' (Stephanson 1995 p. xiii).

The cosmic duty of the chosen nation, as the fight with terror suggests, is battle with evil itself, won through constant surveillance and vigilance. The language used by Bush, of shadowy networks of terrorists in their caves and hiding places, evokes the image of lurking evil, threatening the nation at every turn. The evil terrorists are those who (like Satan, presumably) 'seek to master the minds and souls of others' (Bush 2002d). In the call to root out 'hidden evil' and 'mad ambition' (Bush 2002e), a rhetoric continually demanding surveillance is assimilated to a long standing religious heritage of spiritual surveillance.⁴ This heritage continues, as U.S. officials scrutinize those within and without the nation's borders for any sign of affiliation with 'evil'.

The apocalyptic framing is not subtle in any way, but, perhaps as a weak attempt to broaden the target audience, it is also translated into the secular language of history and freedom. So to give one example among many, in the speech on the first anniversary of 9.11, Bush said, 'I believe there is a reason that *history* has matched this nation with this time. We fight, not to impose our will, but to defend ourselves and the blessings of *freedom*' (Bush 2002d, emphasis mine). 'History' stands as a personified, and apparently atemporal, figure; it stands outside of any temporal or chronological understanding of human life that usually comes under the rubric of history. It is removed from the regular sphere of human activity, in order to act as some kind of higher authority. 'History' seems to be a thinly veiled, secular substitution for 'God',⁵ who chooses and calls the U.S. to its unique, covenantal, and universal mission of protecting the world against apocalyptic terror and destruction.

Compliance with history's calling is promised to result in a future of freedom ('the future belongs to the free' (Bush 2002b), in which peace and justice abound: 'History has called our nation into action. History has placed a great challenge before us: Will America – with our unique position and power – blink in the face of terror, or will we lead to a freer, more civilized world? There is only one answer: This great country will lead the world to safety, security, peace and freedom' (Bush 2002c). The language co-opts the audience into support for the 'one answer' for the future: freedom. At the same time, though rather humorous in the attempt to describe fortitude (not blinking), it signals the importance of surveillance (eyes wide open) in the strategy to promote freedom.

Freedom must not only be defended, it must also be advanced through military power, because it is the ultimate goal and the fulfilment of humanity's potential:

The advance of freedom is the calling of our time; it is the calling of our country... America has put our power at the service of principle. We believe that liberty is the design of nature; we believe that liberty is the direction of history. We believe that human fulfillment and excellence come in the responsible exercise of liberty. And we believe that freedom – the freedom we prize – is not for us alone, it is the right and the capacity of all mankind (sic) (Bush 2003b).

Pre-emptive military action is framed as merely the responsible exercise of one nation in the principled service of others. Bush's speeches are filled with similar statements, based on his belief that 'freedom is the deepest need of every human soul' (Bush 2004b). In his view, freedom will fill humans' most fundamental desires, those based on spiritual need. Precisely because of freedom's 'universal' and 'spiritual' nature, history's call to ensure its victory must be heeded.

The point is that to ensure freedom evil must be *fought*, and that fighting is a sign of spiritual resolve and fortitude: 'America has entered a great struggle that tests our strength, and even more our resolve...we have made a sacred promise to ourselves and to the world: we will not relent until justice is done and our nation is secure' (Bush 2002d; see also Bush 2002a and Bush 2002c). Thus, using an apocalyptic framework, actual material military conflict is given spiritual resonance. The language works not only on the level of giving sacred import to the nation's military endeavours, but it also interpellates individuals – insofar as they believe in good and evil – into supporting the conflict. Especially in a cultural environment shaped by Manichean stories in film, who in their right mind would take a stand for evil?⁶

FREEDOM AS COMMODITY FETISH

History's call to freedom does more than just authorise war as high calling though. The war for freedom facilitates and reflects material desires, processes of production, and the exchange of commodities. Religious desire strengthens economic desire. As I will show below, the exchange of commodities demanded by American access to markets is projected onto the exchange between the cosmic figures history and freedom. Together history and freedom substitute for, and perhaps also make real, the desire for access to the U.S.'s 'responsibly limited' resources. Freedom is the central figure here. History merely confirms the gravity and truth of the matter. Freedom to contribute to the American economy and to adopt American values is related to a desire for resources, thus it must be both defended and advanced.

Bush's rhetoric of defending/advancing freedom (ie, war in the name of history) is often tangentially related to questions of domestic economy. The sacred fight for freedom becomes conjoined with Americans' financial goals and desires, notably for jobs, access to education, home ownership and more access to earnings through tax reductions. A striking example of the connection between the call to war and Americans' material desires comes in the speech, 'President Calls on Senate to Pass American Dream Downpayment Act' (Bush 2003a). The speech, ostensibly about affordable home ownership, begins with a statement invoking desire: 'People in this country ought to be able to work hard and dream big, and realize their dreams'. Then, after aligning the administration's many attempts to meet the challenge to the economy with its efforts to 'answer' the threat to security, the second half of the speech validates the war on terror and pre-emptive strikes.⁷ By virtue of juxtaposing external security threats with internal economic desires (and worries about meeting those desires), the speech implies that the two realms are interdependent.⁸ Thus, the freedom that must be defended by war stands in, as a sort of shorthand, for a desired set of material wants that must be advanced (the American dream). One must have a job, a house, and lowered taxes, if one is to be really free. At the same time, the very idea of freedom (or loss thereof) generates those desires.

In terms of foreign affairs, freedom is related to the success of a society. In Bush's discussion of freedom in Iraq and the Middle East (Bush 2003b) – one of his longer meditations on the

nature of freedom, to which I will return presently – he states, ‘The prosperity, social vitality and technological progress of a people are directly determined by the extent of their liberty. Freedom honors and unleashes human creativity – and creativity determines the strength and wealth of nations’. Here, desire for wealth, creativity and technology are ascribed to nations of the Middle East and projected onto a screen called freedom. By contrast, the actual ‘freedom deficit’ in the Middle East is said to have negative effects, such as poverty and lack of women’s rights.⁹ But such lack of personal liberties is the result of economic policy (who knew Bush was such a Marxist?): ‘These are not the failures of a culture or a religion. These are the failures of political and economic doctrines’ (Bush 2003b). Thus, economic freedom (unhindered by ‘governments [that] still cling to the old habits of central control’) is understood as the prerequisite for social and religious freedom. The fight for freedom is, therefore, a fight for a political and economic doctrine that does away with centralised control, in favour of privatised economies, from which will follow other forms of freedom.¹⁰

Elsewhere, this economic doctrine, applied to international relations, is called ‘free and fair trade’ (Bush 2004a). In the 2002 *National Security Strategy*, free trade is defined as a ‘moral pillar’ which dictates the economic pillar of being able to buy *and sell* what one makes; it is ‘real freedom, the freedom for a person – or a nation – to make a living’ (White House 2002 p. 18).¹¹ Importantly, then, one of the main goals of free and fair trade is ‘to open up new markets for America’s entrepreneurs and manufacturers and farmers’ (Bush 2004a).¹² So it would seem that economic freedom in other countries includes being open to the American market. Clearly, then, freedom is tied to the American economy, both at home and abroad.

Not only is the fight for freedom invoked to stimulate material desires and ensure the free flow of commodities, but it also regulates and limits that flow. So for instance, in the ‘Compassionate Conservatism’ speech (Bush 2002b), the war on terror (Afghanistan) is used to set up the argument to limit welfare at the domestic level and aid contributions on the international level. This particular speech makes a fascinating argument in which freedom is set up as a particularly American value that can be, and is, *exchanged* for work, money or conformity with other American dictates. Early on in the speech, the audience is interpellated, once again, by the call from history to defend and advance freedom. However, the war on Afghanistan is not simply proclaimed as a war against ‘tyranny and terror and lawless violence’ for all humanity; it is also seen as a war for American values: ‘Whenever America fights for the security of our country, we also fight for the values of our country.’ This statement begins a transition from speaking about the war to the main subject matter of the speech, the compassionate conservatism that will lead to the realization of American values and ideals, summed up in the four freedoms. Freedom from poverty is considered a particularly American value.

Such freedom, however, is not to be accomplished through free money, such as welfare or international aid, but rather it is to come as a result of an exchange.¹³ On the domestic front, freedom from poverty can be obtained through ‘work [ie workfare] and community and responsibility and the *values that often come from faith*’ (Bush 2002b, emphasis mine), with mention of incentives for charitable giving. Thus freedom, at least freedom from poverty, is not ‘God Almighty’s gift to each and every person in the world’ (Bush 2003a) as proclaimed a year and a half later, perhaps as a corrective to this earlier speech; it is rather a matter of exchange. The same thing is said on the international front. Nations receiving aid are expected to ‘end corruption,

to open their markets, to respect human rights, and to adhere to the rule of law' (Bush 2002b, emphasis mine). Monetary aid that will bring freedom from poverty is only given in exchange for conformity to American demands, including the demand to buy American products, and the demand to follow an American standard of law¹⁴ and behaviour.

Here in some ways, freedom acts as a commodity, but one elevated above others as a 'universal value'. It can be exchanged for labour (workfare, labour forces of foreign markets), money (charitable giving, sales to foreign markets), and American values (faith-based, rights-based, law-based). As a universal value, it acts something like the way Marx describes gold. For Marx, gold is a standard form used to mark the exchange-value of commodities, that is, the labour time they represent. It 'acts as a universal measure of value' (Marx 1977 p. 188). It is, however, a purely imaginary expression of value: 'it does not require the tiniest particle of real gold to give a valuation in gold of millions of pounds' worth of commodities' (p. 190). Like gold, freedom, in Bush's discourse, marks the value of labour and can also be exchanged for money (non-gold currency). And like gold, as a universal value against which other things are measured, freedom does not really have to exist anywhere. Because the U.S. can influence market conditions through threat of military force, it can demand freedom without having to have the tiniest little bit of it. This is perhaps why the U.S. can proclaim itself as the model of freedom and can, without ever being called to account for duplicity, make such statements as, 'Successful societies limit the power of the state and power of the military... Successful societies protect freedom with the consistent and impartial rule of law, instead of selecting applying [sic]... Successful societies allow room ... for political parties and labor unions and independent newspapers and broadcast media' (Bush 2003b). By this definition, the U.S. can hardly be a successful society, but it does not matter, since freedom is an imaginary value of exchange.

But freedom is even more evasive than gold, because it exists on a cosmic level. It is called into being by history, thus elevating the banal but bloody enforcement of commodity exchange to the level of the immaterial, where it cannot be grasped (nor critiqued). It seems that in late-stage capitalism the commodity fetish has come almost full circle: now the relation between things is projected back onto personified cosmic figures. Perhaps the analogy that Marx makes between the commodity fetish and the 'misty realm of religion' has become more than just analogy: the items to be exchanged through markets opened to Americans 'appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race' (Marx 1977 p. 165).¹⁵ In this cosmic configuration, elevated religious desire and economic desire converge. As fetish, this cosmic relationship substitutes, and perhaps also creates (material) desires (Freud 1953 p. 20; Freud 1961). As fetish, it mediates those desires and directs their fulfilment (through proper avenues of work and values). As fetish, it regulates and limits certain sets of human relations within the United States and between the United States and other nations.

DESIRE AT THE END OF HISTORY

Plainly, in this discourse, the United States is positioned as capable of leading or prodding the world to freedom. Because it has achieved this imaginary ideal freedom, it overflows with it. It provides means to the fulfilment of all desire. Perhaps this is why Bush has such access to the voice of 'history': he and his nation have arrived at the ultimate goal of history, they have reached

the end of history, they have crossed to the other side where they can comfortably sit and chat with the all-knowing ‘history’.

The rhetoric is remarkably like that found in Francis Fukuyama’s bestseller of the early nineties, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Fukuyama 1992). As I will argue below, the similarity is not merely coincidental; indeed, Fukuyama’s book can be read as an indicator of the kind of philosophical subtext on desire and war that might be at work in Bush’s rhetoric. Fukuyama’s work has generally been understood as proclamation of the triumph of U.S. liberal democracy at the end of history. In a succinct statement found in his earlier essay, ‘The End of History?’, Fukuyama claims that ‘What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government’ (Fukuyama 1989 p. 4). With the death of communism, Fukuyama argues, all major contradictions have been resolved; it is now simply a matter of waiting for the rest of the world to come into the fold. This view seems to proclaim the victory of global capitalism.

It is in no way surprising that the rhetoric of the present administration should resemble the work of Fukuyama, given that he is a signatory in the statement of principles for The Project for the New American Century¹⁶ (the same think tank that produced the position paper for the Bush administration’s military strategy, *Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century* in 2000¹⁷). Not surprisingly, then, the beginning of the 2002 *National Security Strategy* sounds very much like the Fukuyama’s proclamation of the end of history:

The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom – and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy and free enterprise... For most of the twentieth century, the world was divided by a great struggle over ideas: destructive totalitarian visions versus freedom and equality. That great struggle is over. The militant visions of class, nation, and race which promised utopia and delivered misery have been defeated and discredited... We will work to translate this moment of influence into decades of peace, prosperity, and liberty... Our goals on the path to progress are clear: political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity (White House 2002 pp. i, 1).

Here, the U.S. stands at the end of history, welcoming and encouraging others also to heed the call of history to step over to the other side, to the realm of neo-liberal capitalism.

Though Fukuyama’s text has been soundly critiqued in many quarters,¹⁸ it is still worth returning to this text to see how it might illuminate the philosophical presuppositions of the present Republican configuration. The concept of the end of history that he evaluates in the book is one hinted at by Hegel and elaborated by his influential twentieth-century interpreter, Alexandre Kojève, in his lectures on *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. While Hegel’s philosophical system described the dialectic movement of history toward its ultimate goal,¹⁹ Kojève cryptically suggests that the end of history had been reached. Fukuyama frequently comes back to one of Kojève’s footnotes, which says, ‘I was led to conclude from this that the “American way of life” was the

type of life specific to the post-historical period, the actual presence of the United States in the World prefiguring the “eternal present” future of all humanity’ (Kojève 1969 p. 161).²⁰ In concurring with Kojève’s assessment of the U.S., Fukuyama is, therefore, generally heralded as a Hegelian/Kojèbian prophet of a particularly American neoliberalism.

Fukuyama might also be considered an apocalyptic prophet. It is worth noting that Hegel’s contention that history moves toward an ultimate goal has strong apocalyptic overtones, though sublimated into a philosophical framework.²¹ So Fukuyama, interpreting Kojève/Hegel, applies an apocalyptic philosophy to an analysis of an economic system. In so doing, he brings together two powerful desires – religious desire for the end and neoliberal desire for unhindered access to goods and markets. As argued above, these are the desires at work in the cosmic relationship between freedom and history in Bush’s rhetoric. (Perhaps not surprisingly, one of Kojève’s most influential contributions to the Hegelian project was an elaboration of the role of desire in the dialectic, as is taken up most clearly in the work of Lacan). Assuming that there is something of Fukuyama, and therefore also of Kojève, in the Bush administration’s rhetoric, one might look to Kojève to clarify the philosophical stakes behind the rhetoric that both makes use of and produces religious and economic desire.

The relationship between freedom and history in Bush’s rhetoric can be read productively with Kojève’s discussion of desire in the dialectical progression of history. For Kojève, interpreting Hegel, Time (ie, historical time) progresses toward an end. But it is a dialectical movement from the future, through the past, to the present, by means of desire. Desire (eg, desire for freedom) is directed toward an absent future, and thus it is ‘directed toward an entity that does not exist and has not existed in the real natural world’ (Kojève 1969 p. 134). As such, it is a desire for something other than what is; the present must, therefore, be negated, in order for desire to be fulfilled. As soon as the present is negated, it moves into the realm of the past. The past is, therefore, formed negatively. So in this dialectical movement, says Kojève, desire for the future must negate, even annihilate, a past (pp. 135–138).

In a footnote, Kojève reflects on what makes something a ‘historic’ moment in the present; it is both the impulse *and the ability* to do away with the present, based on past evidence (ie, memory). He gives the example of Caesar’s decision to aim for world domination (the future) in a moment of peace (the present). Caesar’s decision is historic only because he is able to enter into the dialectic of time on the basis of *past* abilities to fight and win wars. Thus, in true dialectical fashion, something of what has been negated (the past) must be preserved and carried over into the new present. In other words, the past is not completely annihilated, it cannot be forgotten entirely. The memory of past success is necessary to the creation of the ‘historic’ moment. What is lost or forgotten in the process of negation, however, is any lack of the desired end (here, domination) in the present-becoming-past. What is remembered is only past evidence of having been able to make others conform to one’s desire.

Within this logic, it would not be surprising to find that a political discourse positioned to evoke ideological and religious desire (for freedom, ideological dominance and the end of history) as well as economic desire (for the American dream and concomitant markets open to American buying and selling) would constantly have both to negate and affirm the past. This perhaps explains how the Bush administration can continue its triumphal bellicosity amidst constant accusation and scandal. The Kojèbian dialectic shows that ‘history’ can only come into view, can only

make its call, by immediately forgetting that there never really was any freedom in the past and by triumphantly remembering the past successes of coercion.

However, the attempt to evoke the desire for freedom *at the end of history* does not quite fit into this philosophical framework. For Kojève, the end of history also marks the end of the dialectic, and therefore, presumably, the end of desire. The function of freedom as commodity fetish, however, shows that desire, both economic and apocalyptic, is a requisite part of capitalist exchange. In a Kojévian framework, where desire is intimately related to the dialectical progression of history, the end of history would have to entail the end of desire, and therefore of capitalism. According to this line of reasoning, then, the freedom that Bush proclaims – economic freedom desired by all people – can only be the beginning of one more stage in the dialectic.

THE FIGHT UNTO DEATH

The fact that a secularised form of religious desire stands in for economic desire in Bush's efforts to secure new markets indicates that, even if unconsciously, his speechwriters do not concur with the contention that the United States' version of liberal democracy marks the end of history, as proposed by Kojève. I would like to look at a point in Bush's public discourse that appears more consciously to contest both the Hegelian/Kojévian framework in which the dialectic is finally resolved, and the notion that the United States holds freedom out to other nations so that they too can enter into the heavenly realm of the end of history.

In the speech on freedom in Iraq and the Middle East, Bush (2003b) again stresses the need to fight for freedom, but he does so in a way that breaks with an understanding that freedom marks the final point in history. In the speech, Bush reminds his audience that 'liberty, if not defended, can be lost'. He further asserts, in a startlingly philosophical statement, that 'the success of *freedom is not determined by some dialectic of history*' (emphasis mine). Instead, freedom is 'by definition' determined by 'our willingness to sacrifice for liberty'. Now given the usual articulation of the President, one cannot assume that 'dialectic' is a word well known to him; nor can one assume it to be part of the colloquial language of his general public. This line cannot, therefore, be read as a casual mistake, or a throw away line. It is only intelligible if it is understood as a philosophical contention on the part of his speechwriters that freedom does not come through the resolution of the dialectic. The argument of the speech seems to be that any loss of freedom cannot be understood as part of a natural progression through negation to something higher. But what is at stake here in replacing the logic of dialectic with the logic of sacrifice? The stakes seem to have gone up: now it is human life that must be exchanged for freedom. But why? Are Bush's advisors and speechwriters not, like Fukuyama, neo-Hegelian? What precisely is the philosophical contention?

I would suggest that this line marks the philosophical break that the Bush administration makes with neoliberalism, by way of a neoconservative Nietzschean corrective to Kojève.²² Where neoliberalism understands free trade as a sort of liberal world contract, sufficient to bring about the desired capitalist end of free trade (through globalisation, multilateralism, and, of course, quiet military coercion), neoconservatism eschews liberal values of equality and mutual exchange and attempts to re-establish an environment in which a desire to be recognized by others (through imperialism, unilateralism, and overt and celebrated military coercion) can lead to self improve-

ment and excellence (Fukuyama 1992 p. 304). The philosophical bases for this rupture are outlined in Fukuyama's *End of History and the Last Man*.

For Fukuyama, what is meant by the dialectic is the famous struggle for recognition between master and slave. The question he pursues in the book, posed by Kojève's interpretation of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, is whether or not liberal democracy at the end of history arrives at the mutual recognition attending the resolution of the master-slave dialectic. Fukuyama concludes that liberal democracy's valorisation of universal recognition, or equal rights, does indeed mark the resolution of the master-slave dialectic. His central question, however, is whether such a state of universal recognition would be satisfying. He contends, with Hegel and Kojève, that the desire for recognition is central to human experience, but he asks 'whether liberal democracy adequately satisfies the desire for recognition' (Fukuyama 1992 p. 289).

Fukuyama does not answer the question of whether liberal democracy is satisfying in the affirmative, but rather presents a critique of universal recognition that is consistent with neoconservative thought. It is well known that Fukuyama trained with Allan Bloom, a disciple of the neoconservative intellectual historian Leo Strauss,²³ but commentators do not usually detail the influence of neoconservatism in Fukuyama's reflection on Kojève.²⁴ Derrida, for instance, reminds his readers that Fukuyama's book is written in the Straussian tradition, though exploited as 'the finest ideological showcase of victorious capitalism in a liberal democracy'. In spite of this heritage, says Derrida, the text is ambivalent, 'suspensive to the point of indecision', especially in its concluding discussion of responses from the Right and from the Left to the proposition that the U.S. version of liberal democracy marks the end of history (Derrida 1994 p. 56).²⁵ I would contend that Fukuyama is not indecisive in the least; rather, he strongly favours the response from the Right. Following a rightist reading of Nietzsche, he asks, 'Is recognition that can be universalised worth having in the first place?' (Fukuyama 1992 p. 301). Indeed, it appears that the central contention of Fukuyama's book is to affirm the right wing critique of the end of history. Of his two critiques of universal recognition – one propounded by Marx, suggesting that universal recognition has not actually been reached within capitalism, and one offered by Nietzsche – he prefers the latter, which he calls a 'more powerful criticism of universal recognition' (p. xxii) arising from the 'more profound pole of criticism [of Hegel]' (p. 300).

The 'powerful critique' that Nietzsche contributes to Fukuyama's argument is the understanding that because recognition is trivialized within democracy, at the end of history, the 'last man' ends up in the same place as the slave in Hegel's master-slave dialectic. Without the struggle for recognition, society degenerates. The last man is complacent and unable to deal with real moral issues, a man without a chest (Fukuyama 1992 p. 7). The structure of Fukuyama's argument is remarkably similar to that of his teacher, Allan Bloom, in the introduction to the English translation of Kojève's lectures on Hegel:²⁶

But looking around us, Kojève, like every other penetrating observer, sees that the completion of the human task may very well coincide with the decay of humanity, the rebarbarization or even reanimalization of man. . . . After reading it, one wonders whether the citizen of the universal homogeneous state is not identical to Nietzsche's Last Man ... We are led to a confrontation between Hegel and Nietzsche and perhaps, even further, toward a reconsideration of

the classical philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, who rejected historicism (Bloom 1969 p. xii).²⁷

Bloom wonders, perhaps, because Strauss says as much in *On Tyranny*, in his reply to Kojève's comments on his reading of Xenophon's *Hiero*. Strauss writes, 'The state through which man is said to become reasonably satisfied is, then, the state in which the basis of man's humanity withers away, or in which man loses his humanity. It is the state of Nietzsche's "last man"... If the universal and homogeneous state is the goal of History, History is absolutely "tragic"' (Strauss 1968 p. 223).

Fukuyama reflects such a reading of Nietzsche when he asks, 'If everyone was fully content merely by virtue of having rights in a democratic society, with no further aspirations beyond citizenship, would we not in fact find them worthy of contempt?' He further states:

A civilization ... that fanatically seeks to eliminate every manifestation of unequal recognition will quickly run into limits imposed by nature itself. We stand at the close of a period in which communism sought to use state power to eliminate economic inequality, and in doing so undercut the basis of modern economic life. If tomorrow's isothymotic passions [desiring equal recognition (1992 p. 182)] try to outlaw differences between the ugly and beautiful, or pretend that a person with no legs is not just the spiritual but the physical equal of someone whole in body, then the argument will in the fullness of time become self-refuting, just as communism was (Fukuyama 1992 p. 314).

In other words, a liberal democracy that settles for equal recognition will be doomed to the same fate as communism. Clearly then, Fukuyama follows the neoconservative tradition of reading Kojève. But what solutions does he propose?

After outlining the degeneracy of the end of history, Fukuyama accepts a number of what he calls Nietzsche's 'acute psychological observations', including 'the way in which struggle and risk are constituent parts of the human soul, [and] the relationship between the desire to be greater than others and the possibility of personal excellence and self-overcoming' (Fukuyama 1992 p. 313). This striving for superiority is 'necessary for the creation of anything else worth having in life' (p. 302). In other words, the fight for recognition, the fight for superiority is for Fukuyama, after Nietzsche, central to success, even, in 'some degree ... a necessary precondition for life itself' (p. 315).

Fukuyama's Nietzsche is grafted onto Kojève's understanding of the movement of dialectic as combative. Any real desire, Kojève argues, is desire for social recognition, which engenders the fight unto death. In fact, for Kojève, 'desire *is realized* by the action of the fight to death for pure prestige. And this fight is realized by the victory of the master over the slave, and by the latter's work in the Master's service' (Kojève 1969 p. 144). Desire is, of its nature, bellicose. Of course, the work of the slave in *satisfying* the master's desire is for Kojève what eventually brings about the resolution of the dialectic, but Fukuyama seems to want to interrupt the process, in order to restart the dialectic, and to restart history (Fukuyama 1992 p. 334).

Fukuyama does not want to give up on liberal democracy, he says. He argues that a liberal democracy will find ways to accommodate the 'natural' strivings for superiority that will neces-

sarily emerge.²⁸ People ‘will want to risk their lives even if the international state system has succeeded in abolishing the possibility of war’ (Fukuyama 1992: 314). Fortunately, says Fukuyama, liberal democracies provide a great deal of internal room for these strivings, including entrepreneurship and sports (pp. 315, 319). However, even these avenues may not be sufficient to satisfy some people’s longing for recognition:

One suspects that some people will not be satisfied until they prove themselves by that very act that constituted their humanness at the beginning of history: they will want to risk their lives in a violent battle, and thereby prove beyond any shadow of a doubt to themselves and to their fellows *that they are free*. They will deliberately *seek discomfort and sacrifice*, because the pain will be the only way they have of proving definitively that they can think well of themselves, that they remain human beings... A liberal democracy that could fight a short and decisive war every generation or so to defend its own liberty and independence would be far healthier and more satisfied than one that experienced nothing but continuous peace (Fukuyama 1992 p. 329).

In short, only the risk of war can fulfil the striving for superiority that is prerequisite for excellence, and even, for life itself. He also argues that it is in this arena that politicians can gain recognition where otherwise they might not. Thus, ‘America’s 1991 war in the Persian Gulf indicates that a politician like George Bush, inconsistent and constrained on the domestic issues, can nonetheless create new realities on the world stage’ (Fukuyama 1992 p. 318). In short, a leader can lead a country beyond itself into new realities that change the world, by demanding recognition that will inaugurate the fight unto death.

RESTARTING HISTORY

Bush–the–Younger’s statement that freedom is not the result of the dialectic of history is consistent with this view. Freedom is *not* that which waits for the world at the end of history, for if it were, it would mark both the resolution of the dialectic and the end of capitalist desire. By contrast, freedom, in the terms in which it is defined by Bush’s rhetoric, is the epitome of capitalist desire. Held out as a universal value, it can be read both as a demand for recognition and as a demand for war. It is not the resolution of the dialectic, but rather that which will generate the never quite resolvable dialectic, understood as the continual fight unto death and the ascendancy of the master.

What then can we say about Bush’s demand for ‘our willingness to sacrifice for liberty’ (Bush 2003b)?²⁹ Is it the reassertion of a Christian philosophy over and against a neoconservative Nietzschean philosophy, marking a conflict between Bush’s evangelical speechwriter Mike Gerson, and other members of the Bush administration? Perhaps, but it also marks an awareness that a nation cannot gain recognition on the international front without some loss of life. Yet whose life? Whose sacrifice? Clearly, neither Bush nor members of his administration will sacrifice their lives.

Fukuyama conflates the term ‘sacrifice’ with risk; it is that which will assure people that they are more than merely citizens of a democracy, that they are in fact human. But there is something somewhat disingenuous about substituting sacrifice for risk. Within the Hegelian/Kojèveian

framework, sacrifice signifies the slave's recognition of, and consequent submission to, the master. Within a Nietzschean framework, sacrifice is the outworking of a slave mentality; it is not, therefore, to be admired. What can be said, then, about the demand that others sacrifice in the name of freedom (freedom to own houses, to have jobs, to go to school)? It seems to me that the demand for sacrifice is, as a demand for recognition of leadership, a request by the nation's leaders to its electorate to recognize that that freedom is theirs to offer. By granting recognition, the population submits. More broadly, it may be a demand that begins the fight unto death between the ruling class and the citizenry, culminating in a reified class division, in the separation of masters from slaves. Here economic desire, religious desire, and desire for recognition become one and the same: these are desires that can only result in the fight unto death.

In conclusion, it appears that the use of apocalyptic metaphors to motivate economic ends is not benign; the stakes are deadly, both at home and abroad. Moreover, it appears that war, for this administration, is not simply a means to an end; it is rather the beginning of a new imperialist history. Those interested in strategizing against perma-war may wish to consider the bellicose stance of the present administration as a philosophical program rather than as a shocking outbreak of fascistic lunacy. It is my hope that such strategizing will take seriously the convergences of religious and economic desire and work to find new metaphors and new philosophical frameworks for resistance.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Christian Parenti (2003) argues that the Austrian economist F. A. Hayek helped strategize 'the modern political right's "war of ideas."' Hayek's vision included long range planning (as opposed to engagement in 'day-to-day political fights'), and the co-optation of socialist use of utopia as a political motivator. In Parenti's words, 'Hayek invites us to reconsider the role of ideas and the long-term timeframe of their impact'. Neta Crawford also underlines the importance of 'building the new world conceptually', in her steps to finding a way out of the logic of American empire (Crawford 2004 pp. 7–8).
- ² For an excellent and illuminating analysis of the sustained U.S. drive for empire – embedded in its foreign policy from the beginning of the twentieth century until the present – see Bacevich (2002).
- ³ For instance, the September 2002 *National Security Strategy*—that major policy paper for the Bush administration known best for advocating 'pre-emptive strikes'—claims that the duty of the United States is to 'defend liberty and justice because these principles are right and true for all people everywhere' (White House 2002 p 2). The task of policing a 'universal' law in the world is consistently framed in the discourse as a divine calling. The chosenness of the U.S. has become so aggrandised in this administration's rhetoric, that in his speech on the first anniversary of 9.11, Bush famously made the same claim about the U.S. that the writer of John's gospel makes about Christ: 'America is the hope of all mankind ... That hope lights our way. And the light shines in the darkness. And the darkness will not overcome it' (Bush 2002d). For further analysis of the logic of this citation, see Castelli (2005).
- ⁴ As Edward Ingebreetsen has pointed out in his work on the apocalyptic roots of American culture, the fear of hidden evil has been part of American life since the time of the first settlers. Early Americans, Ingebreetsen argues, were constantly reminded that hell and all forms of evil threatened to intrude at any moment, and of individual susceptibility to entertaining evil. A most terrifying aspect of evil was its ability to creep into the lives of individuals or their neighbours; thus constant guard was kept against it. Interior scrutiny formed good citizens, whose good behaviour banished evil and fear (Ingebreetsen 1996 pp. 21–28).

5 As Elizabeth Castelli (2005) has observed, in the 9.11 anniversary speech, history actually converges with God, who is also said to have given ‘us’ the duty and privilege of ‘defending America and our freedom’. Castelli’s observation can be extended to the rest of the discourses produced by the Bush administration.

6 See Murphy (2003) for a discussion of Bush’s discourse as epideictic rhetoric (ie, ‘appeals that unify the community and amplify its virtues’) as opposed to the more common deliberative rhetoric of politicians, (ie, ‘arguments to justify the expediency or practicality of an action’ (p. 609)).

7 ‘We are in a new kind of war and it requires a new kind of strategy. We will not wait for further attacks; we will not hope for the best. We will strike our enemies before they can strike us again’ (Bush 2003a).

8 A similar connection between the war for freedom and the economy at home is made in the 2004 State of the Union Address. The apocalyptic justification for the war with which the speech begins (‘we refuse to live in the shadow of this ultimate danger’ (Bush 2004a)) is followed by the statement that ‘adversity has also revealed the fundamental strengths of the American economy’. These strengths, which appear mainly to be deficits, Bush details by listing his accomplishments and future plans for tax reductions, job creation, and access to education and health care.

9 For an analysis of the question of women’s rights as it relates to the apocalyptic discourse of the Bush administration, see Runions (2004).

10 For a discussion of the limits and contradictions in Bush’s understanding of freedom and decentralized government, see Singer (2004 pp. 63–89).

11 For analysis of this citation, see Crawford (2004 p. 5). For an analysis of the trade barriers that Bush has put in place, in spite of his discourse valorising free trade, see Singer (2004 pp. 126–132).

12 For a history and analysis of the U.S. ‘strategy of openness’, see Bacevich (2002).

13 For a discussion of Bush’s decisions on humanitarian aid, with a focus on AIDS aid, see Singer (2004 pp. 119–126).

14 One must also assume that adherence to the rule of law is adherence to law as defined by the U.S., since it openly denies recognition of other legal bodies, such as the International Criminal Court: ‘Americans are not impaired by the potential for investigations, inquiry, or prosecution by the International Criminal Court, whose jurisdiction does not extend to Americans and which we do not accept (White House 2002 p. 31).

15 Space does not permit an engagement of Jacques Derrida’s gloss of Marx’s analogy between commodity fetish and religion as ‘idealization, autonomization and automatization, dematerialization and spectral incorporation, mourning work coextensive with all work, and so forth’ (Derrida 1994 p. 166); it may be important at some point to think about the cosmic figure ‘freedom’ in the Bush discourse as it relates to the mourning produced in the work of war. Derrida considers this ‘return of the religious’ in Marx to be symptomatic of a quasi-transcendental messianic structure of experience (‘that irreducible movement of the historical opening to the future’), through which he wishes to reclaim the revolutionary potential of Marx (1977 pp. 167–169). For further elaboration of this point, see his response to the critics of *Specters of Marx* in Sprinker (1999 pp. 250–256). I would, at a later date, like to explore Derrida’s messianic without the messianism with respect to the problem of apocalyptic language in public discourse.

16 According to his own home page (<http://www.sais-jhu.edu/fukuyama/biograph>), Fukuyama has been involved in producing Republican ideology and foreign policy since the 1980s. He served on staff for the State Department, during the Reagan administration (1981–82, 1989) and worked for the RAND Corporation for much of the eighties and some of the nineties. He is also a signatory in the Project for the New American Century’s letter of support for the war on terror, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/Bushletter.htm>.

17 Project for the new American Century. *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources*
18 *for a New Century*. Washington DC: Project for the New American Century; 2000.
http://www.newamericancentury.org/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf

18 For an excellent account of the intellectual history behind the proclamation of the end of history, and
19 a critique of Fukuyama's optimism about capitalist democracy, see Anderson (1992 pp. 279–375).

19 Anderson points out that Hegel nowhere directly posits the *end* of history, though his work strongly
20 moves in that direction (Anderson 1992 pp. 285–294).

20 Fukuyama seems to ignore Kojève's two following statements: one that 'Man's return to animality
appeared no longer as a possibility that was yet to come, but as a certainty that was already present,'
and two, that he later changed his mind on the point that the U.S. has reached the end of history. For
21 a discussion of the humour of this passage, and a re-reading of it, see Derrida (1994 pp. 71–75).

21 For a reading of Hegel's apocalypticism, see Altizer (2000). For an analysis of the particularly
Christian reading of Hegel in *The End of History and the Last Man*(Fukuyama 1992) see Derrida
(1994 pp. 60–61). Derrida also underscores the biblical figures of gospel and promised land found
22 there (pp. 56–58).

22 There has been a great deal of discussion about the neoconservative influence on the Bush adminis-
tration. For a sampling of the numerous analyses of the effect of neoconservatism on the Bush admin-
istration, see Carr (2003), Hagan (2003), Milbank (2002), Singer (2004), Tanenhaus (2003); for
critiques of such analyses as conspiracy theories (and warnings of the anti-Semitism of some critics
of neoconservatism), see Lieber (2003); for an insider's description of neoconservatism, see Kristol
(2003).

23 For Strauss' influence on neoconservatism, see Drury (1988), Rozen (2003), Singer (2004); for an in-
sider's perspective on the influence of Strauss, see Berkowitz (2003); for Strauss's love of Nietzsche
as a strong critic of modernity, see Drury (1988 pp. 170–181).

24 Drury points out that Fukuyama must be read as a neoconservative, even though his work was 'received
as a manifestation of American triumphalism' (Drury 2004: p. 180, n. 24).

25 Anderson also calls Fukuyama 'deeply equivocal' on this point (Anderson 1992 p. 344).

26 A complicating factor in this genealogy is the friendship between Strauss and Kojève. As a protégée
of Strauss, Bloom also studied with Kojève. Their philosophical differences show up most clearly in
the exchange between Kojève and Strauss in *On Tyranny*(Strauss 1968). For analysis of these personal
and philosophical relationships, see Drury (1994).

27 A return to classical philosophy is, of course, one of the trademarks of neoconservative thought (see
Drury 1988). For an exposition and analysis of the effect of Fukuyama's reading of Hegel through
Plato, see Anderson (1992 p. 50).

28 The focus on nature betrays a Straussian desire to return to 'natural' hierarchies, over and against
rights-based equalities; see *Natural Right and History* by Strauss (1953). Of interest to biblical
scholars, Strauss opens this text with two epigraphs from the Hebrew Bible that would bear some
analysis.

29 The demand for sacrifice seems to increase as the war in Iraq goes on. Bush's press conference on
April 13, 2004 attests to an increase in the rhetoric of sacrifice (Bush 2004b).

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