

## NIETZSCHE’S HISTORICAL CONFRONTATION WITH HEGEL: ‘THE END OF HISTORY’?

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### Abstract

The events two-full centuries after Hegel have brought one essential element of his “end of history” into extreme doubt and contradiction. It completely overturns the claim of “progress in history,” to one ending in nihilism: the values of ‘superiority’ of the ‘West’ are capsized into sheer devaluation by Nietzsche. Any claim of progress to a culmination of history only hides the extreme malaise of contemporary man in global affairs. Modern ideologies, enframed within Hegelian historicism, are illusory and no longer admirable practices. They are now seen as major sources of the on-going destructive and denigrating activities of the present-day. They are the encroaching seeds of nihilism. Nietzsche, through the historical consciousness of “eternal return,” seeks to overcome the modern nihilistic tendencies. A new creative and liberating form of history is affirmed that reinvigorates a meaningful vitality back into life, which “ends” the malignant modern Western view of the “end of history” through progress.

**Keywords:** End, history, progress, eternal return, modern.

### Öz

#### Nietzsche’nin Hegel ile Tarihsel Karşılaştırması: Tarihin Sonu mu?

Hegel’den sonraki iki yüzyıllık dönemde yaşanan olaylar, düşünürün “tarihin sonu” kuramına ait olan önemli bir unsurda zıtlıklar ve şüpheli yaklaşımların ortaya çıkmasına yol açmıştır. Bu, Hegel’in “tarihte ilerleme” iddiasını nihilizme dönüştürerek tamamen tersine çevirir: “Batı’nın” “üstünlüğü” değerleri Nietzsche tarafından bütünüyle değersiz hale dönüştürüldü. Böyle bir tarih anlayışına sahip çıkmak ancak çağdaş insanın küresel dünyadaki ilişkilerde yaşadığı büyük sıkıntıyı gizlemeye yarar. Hegel’ci tarihselcilik (anlayışı) ile çerçevesindeki modern ideolojiler artık kullanılmayan, yarılıcı ideolojiler. Bugün, günümüzün süregiden tahrip edici ve yıpratıcı faaliyetlerinin esas

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kaynağı olarak görülmektedirler. Bunlar, nihilizmin arsız tohumlarıdır. Nietzsche, “kesin dönüşün tarihsel bilinci” ile modern nihilist eğilimleri ortadan kaldırmaya çalışır. Kötü niyetli Batılı modern “tarihin sonu” görüşüne son verecek, hayata yeniden anlamlı bir canlılık kazandıracak, yaratıcı ve özgürleştirici yeni bir tarih anlayışının ortaya çıkacağı söylenmektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Son, tarih, ilerleme, sonsuz (ebedi) dönüşüm, modern.

## INTRODUCTION

There are many manners by which the “end of history” has been interpreted. With an analysis upon recent events, many of them are considered as illusory and prejudiced misinterpretations. The power of these misinterpretations denigrates upon the necessary political judgments. We see a deploring criticism of Hegel’s use of history by Nietzsche. He knew, right from the start, that an education based on “Hegelian craniums” is the “most dangerous,” “terrible and destructive” (Nietzsche, 1980: 47). The disadvantaged uses of a thwarted history have been incorporated under the ideologies of liberalism, communism, and fascism. They have contributed to the destructive elements of political totalitarianism and imperialism in the twentieth century. Nietzsche had sensed that, in the Hegelian consciousness, the grand phase of European nihilism had broken the surface. Yet, even today, very little has been done to face that phase and to overcome the further encroaching effects of nihilism. The backdrop of the binary framework of Western consciousness, a product extending from the dominance of the modern scientific rationale, is the seed of nihilism. For Nietzsche, the “end of history” requires a use of history in overcoming it. The term “West,” which started after Nietzsche’s life, encompasses the modern values that he wished to re-value. According to Nietzsche, at the “end of history,” one must rise above the roots of the identities of the ‘West’: one must slash the sword in the “body politic” of modernity.

The contention between Hegel and Nietzsche has been more than a philosophical-theoretical disagreement. The conflicting ideological frameworks within Hegel’s modern use of history were to become the destructive playing fields in the contest for global control. Nietzsche correctly foretold the deprecating political events of the following century in his last official book, *Ecce Homo*, of global technological warfare: “The concept politics has been completely absorbed into a war of spirits, all the power-structures of the old society have been blown into the air – they one and all reposed on the lie: there will be wars such as there have never yet been on earth” (Nietzsche, 1979: 97).

The "lie" involves the modern belief in the superiority of Western consciousness.

It becomes essential today to counter the persistent forms of modern historicism, manifest in the binary frameworks of consciousness that is continuing a further detachment and disintegration of our worldly conditions. Nietzsche provides a creative and liberating spirit to rise above the nihilism through diverse considerations of the "end of history." The countermovement to the nihilism is within Nietzsche's new radical historicism that breeds the perception of "Eternal Return." It is an artistic consciousness, with a return 'anew' to the ancient cyclical view of history; nevertheless, placing advantage and disadvantage of historical use, based on strength or weakness in encapsulating a new, spirited vitality in life, which has been lost today. To arrive at this new-yet-old understanding of the "end of history," a closer explication is required of Hegel's consciousness in relation to the historical thought-process of Nietzsche. We will see that Nietzsche's "end of history" is not its completion, but a divergent sense of history, creating a new goal, with a renewed sense of divinity, based on the measure of vitality in life.

### **1. HEGEL'S PORTRAYAL OF THE "END OF HISTORY"**

It is agreed that Hegel formulated the most comprehensive depiction of the modern consciousness of history. He coalesced the apparent divisions between liberal and communist ideologies, which provoked fascism, within his works. They have set up a means for proper ideological understandings, and for productive criticism of them. But the one key factor that was not surpassed by Hegel is the disparaging modern belief of "progress in history": progress towards a perceived end as the more superior form of civilization. This brand of historical idealism, championed by Hegel, is extensively challenged in the present-day, since we have seen it as the root of the most destructive atrocities in human history. This disadvantageous use of history has had, and continues to have, colossal effects.

For Hegel, the "end of history" was a consummation of its pathways. It was directed towards a final state as the culmination of the pathway of the "modern," which later became incorporated into the "Western" identity:

The great impact of the notion of history upon the consciousness of the modern age came relatively late, not before the last third of the eighteenth century, finding with relative quickness its climactic consummation in Hegel's philosophy (Arendt, 1954: 68).

The “climactic consummation,” in the alleged superiority of events during Hegel’s life, gave a solution to the atrocities of destruction in the pathway of modernity. This theory of “climactic consummation” became practice, as the “West” itself was concocted by Europe in the nineteenth century through its acclaimed superiority in order to devise a contrast to “the Other” Oriental civilizations. Yet, as Hannah Arendt declares, “a whole set of problems by which modern thought is haunted,” extends from the assumption, given by “Hegel and Marx,” “that there is such a thing as Progress of the human race”(Arendt, 1982: 4-5). Even though he includes the profoundest display of the western historical consciousness, Hegel does not surpass the idealistic rectilinear view of progress in history, which is a consciousness that is no longer admirable and continues to produce negating effects.

The ‘end’ by Hegel was conceived that the culmination of human development was acquired in modern times. The “culmination,” or “end of history,” was “not a religious accomplishment” (Wiser, 1982: 243). It was done through the belief of the intellectual ability in modern science to “mark humankind’s progress toward perfectibility” (Wiser, 1982:245). Modern consciousness, allocated by Hegel, encompassed a history that brings together the ‘Divine’ and human. Yet, it would be arrived at through human consciousness. A sense of disbelief in this depiction is aroused.

The ‘Divine’ is portrayed in the universal validity of history to justify the ironically secular superiority of Europe. For Hegel, this was done firstly, through the activities of Napoleon Bonaparte at the Battle of Jena in 1806; and then, a few years later, the championing of his Prussian state, which was understood as the highest political formulation in human history. In his *Philosophy of History*, Hegel laudably depicted the “Modern Times” as the “third period of the German world,” in the “Spirit conscious” of “freedom” in “as much as it wills the True, the Eternal – that which is in and for itself Universal” (Hegel, 1956: 412). A puzzling cruel paradox begins at this point, and increases in rendering the full consciousness of modernity.

In Hegel’s mindset, the modern use of progress in history includes the achievement of the “Absolute Spirit,” and “absolute knowledge,” in “totality,” with the “whole of reality.” It includes: “Thought which Philosophy brings with it to the contemplation of History, [...] the simple conception of *Reason*” (Hegel, 1956: 9). And this *Reason* is “sustained by the Universe to the Divine Being” (Hegel, 1956: 9). *Reason*, in this manner, is “*the infinite complex of things*,” with an “absolute final aim,” and brings together not only “the phenomena of Nature” but “also the Spiritual Universe” to form the “History of the World” (Hegel, 1956: 9). All previous events in history were only building blocks to the final, absolute end. As such, Rome only arises in pursuit towards this “end,” and

its "pursuit is merely *abstractum*" (Hegel, 1956: 9). Therefore, for Hegel, the *abstractum* of the pathway of History became real in Germany. "World History," "Reason," "Nature" and "Universal Spirit" were divine elements to which all previous history was directed, under a rectilinear interpretation of historical proceedings. But a doubtful transformation from the religious to transcendental 'reality' is revealed when both are assumed to be incorporated in modern history. It reveals the ironic "reconciliation between the Divine and Secular" (Hegel, 1956: 447) to which the recent historians of ideas and thinkers have insisted in identifying the paradox in such a proposal: "whether Hegel's 'cunning of reason' was a secularization of divine providence or whether Marx's classless society represents a secularization of the Messianic Age" (Arendt, 1954: 69-70).

This reconciliation, when looked at carefully, is an absurd riddle. Nietzsche hopes that, for Hegel, "one day such a belief" "defies this late arrival," where "his knowing misery is equated with the consummation of history" (Nietzsche, 1980: 47). This defiance has occurred in the twentieth century: through falsified German idealism of consummation, the need to be acclaimed as the greatest can obviously be easily twisted into misery, displaying the most inhumane cruelties in human history. What was once considered to be the height of western consciousness, Nietzsche perceived as the beginning of its own downfall. Its collapse disintegrates the building blocks of the West, on through to its own "end."

## 2. TWENTIETH CENTURY INTERPRETATIONS OF HEGELIANISM

From this onset, a new light was brought to the thought of Hegel in the following century. With a careful and unique analysis from a new standpoint beyond modern historical consciousness, Alexandre Kojève, in his *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, partially reveals what was concealed by Hegel.<sup>1</sup> For Kojève, a one-time Marxist who returned to Hegelianism, "the idea of death" became a determining factor. He states that the previous dialectical approach in history actually displayed a huge struggle between men for the desire of recognition in a "fight to the death" (Kojève, 1969: 7). In effect, this has been perceived as self-creation, the incitement of the particular modern sentiment of individualism and voluntarism, to create the progressive growth in mankind. Under the western conception, the process of history is the progressive self-creation of Man through the ever-increasing possibility for absolute freedom. This modern freedom is attained when Man removes himself from all determinations outside of himself, from all external determinants such as Nature and History. But within this description of modernity, Kojève unmask an

irrational and condescending process.

In Hegel's rendering, the essence of man is conditioned by a fear of death and the uncertainty of life. The idea of death "anthropologizes" Hegel's philosophy, because it is through the foreknowledge of death that distinguishes Man as Man. One can assume that giving a complete and certain account only occurs in posterity. If the essence of Man is won with the death of Man, then the self-creation of Man occurs at death. The assumed superiority of man is its ultimate demise. It is a rendering of an account that can never be given, for one remains an enigma until one dies. This paradox is precisely why one can say that modernity has undermined itself. Kojève tells us:

..the totality of the Real implies human reality, which exists only as a creative movement. Perfect and definitive adequation of Being (=Substance) and Discourse (=Subject) cannot therefore be effected until the end of times, when the creative movement of Man will be completed (Kojève, 1973: 116).

In pushing Kojève's analysis a little further, the desire for Man to objectify himself absolutely, as Man can only come about at the "end of times," can only occur when *Man is over*. If Man is completed, then he is no longer Man. The Western project is both culminated and imploded within Hegel's discourse. It seems this is a necessary condition of its completion.

Bataille, who is coupled with Derrida in Derrida's article, "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelian Without Reserve" (Derrida, 1978: 254), represents this paradox in these words:

The privileged manifestation of Negativity is death, but death, in truth, reveals nothing. In principle, death reveals to Man his natural, animal being, but the revelation never takes place. For man finally to be revealed to himself he would have to die, but he would have to do so while living... But this is a comedy! (Derrida, 1978: 257).

The claim of absolutism to finalize and complete history is indeed a fine show of wizardry. In the end, all that made man distinct – the creation of the Historical world opposed to the determinations imposed on Man by the Natural world – is eclipsed into one another. Man is returned to his animal being in the concerted effort to create himself outside of his naturalness and animality. All Bataille and Derrida can do is laugh.

In his discussion of master-slave relationship, Hegel concludes in giving absolute meaning to something that does not make sense. The master, in putting at stake his very life for recognition and prestige, thereby representing the movement and meaning of history, only can achieve this recognition through

the servile consciousness of the slave. In effect, the master must be enslaved to the slave's recognition for the possibility of his own mastery. Therefore, his prestige is not desirable, since, in his bid for independent self-consciousness, he does not detach himself from the slave consciousness:

The independence of Self-consciousness becomes laughable at the moment when it liberates itself by enslaving itself, when it starts to work, that is, when it enters into dialectics (Derrida, 1978: 255).

Bataille dislocates Hegel's logic at its starting point, and, since Hegelian logos is circular, this dislocation extends to its end. But it is only a failure in one sense, because modernity may be within Hegelian discourse itself. The entirety of Hegelian discourse was not enunciated by Hegel. Bataille called it Hegel's "blind spot." It appears that Hegel retained a weak slavish perspective upon the final culmination of history, which blinded him from all implications of his own formulation. The imperative for apocalyptic objectivity blinds him because it is a submissive disposition. Derrida explains:

What is laughable is the submission to the self-evidence of meaning, to the force of this imperative: that there must be meaning, that nothing be definitively lost in death, or further, that death should receive the signification of "absolute negativity" that a work must always be possible which, because it defers enjoyment, confers meaning, seriousness, and truth upon the putting at stake (Derrida, 1978: 256-257).

But, as Bataille shows us, this imperative for meaning, which the West has exalted, confers meaninglessness; although, we would not have discovered this if Hegel did not complete the process for us. We must come, then, to reveal the unsaid side of Hegel, and the underside of modernity. To understand the Hegelian dialectic in terms of Negativity and Death, it is important to understand the death of the identity of the 'West'. In such an approach, we see other paradoxes in modernity.

Through the entire realm of Hegelian criticism, the meaning of the word "end" is reversed, yet still maintaining its designation. The term "end" itself has a variety of different and contrasting meanings: in one sense, it could mean the last development, the culmination, the aim, the final goal, or the arrival of the ultimate possibility; or, that something is over, gone, surpassed, finished, demised, or ruined. For Nietzsche, the appropriate "end of history" is not that of the final goal, nor the arrival of humankind's perfectibility, nor the crowning achievement of the West. The end of history would be better conceived as the surpassing, the finishing of the actual consciousness dominant at present, of the modern West. The good assessment of history is that the 'West' is over; it is

finished, and that it has demised itself. It is practically reversed by displaying the ruin of the West instead of its superiority. The actual terminology, a stern conception of self and other, which began around 1900, was a remnant of the persistent belief in the superiority of European civilization.

Clearly, to continue through this Hegelian historical “end” – that this New World is the Age of Absolute Knowledge – is a failure. Nietzsche calls this ‘Absolute Knowledge’, the seed of nihilism. This is precisely how Nietzsche radicalizes Hegel's historicism. Hegel fails not because what he said cannot be considered ‘true’ – truth and falsehood becoming almost a matter of indifference for Nietzsche – Hegel fails through weakness, because he brings himself to the abyss of the ensuing modern consciousness, and turns away. But this does not keep Hegel's discourse from being the highest expression of conventional beliefs, as that which still, to some extent, expresses the characteristics of our current political consciousness and activity.

### **3. NIETZSCHE AND NIHILISM: A REVERSION OF THE MOVEMENT OF THE ‘WEST’**

For Nietzsche, retaining the idea of the movement of humanity towards its height at the end of history, especially in Germany<sup>2</sup>, is a harmful sham. Yet this idea is not discouraged from our educational process, even through to the twenty-first century:

there has been no dangerous change or turn in the German education of this century which has not become more dangerous through the enormous influence, continuing to the present moment, of this philosophy, the Hegelian. (Nietzsche, 1980: 47)

Part of this danger, Nietzsche admits, comes from what Hegel did not say - what he wished to blind himself from:

for Hegel the apex and terminus of all world history coincided in his own Berlin experience. He should have said that all things after him are properly judged to be only a musical coda of the world historical rondo; more properly yet, to be redundant. He did not say that. (Nietzsche, 1980: 47)

Nietzsche reveals the unsaid side of Hegel. Nietzsche is emphatic where Hegel is passive. The “Age of Absolute Knowledge” only turns out to be the victory of an illusory consciousness. This is a clear indication that there is an underside to Hegel that inverts and implodes the motivating imperative that sought to give modern humanity its justification and sovereignty. With his new

'philosophy', Hegel managed to divinely acclaim bypassing philosophy's basic standard of love for knowledge to actual knowledge, manifest in his present-day Germany: "To help bring philosophy...to the form...where it can lay aside the name of *love* of knowledge and be *actual* knowledge." (Hegel, 1967: 70) Such a final state became a luring statement for the modern scientific mentality, but void of the real.

At the end of history, Hegel alluded to "the great man" – the master at the end who possessed superior knowledge. However, as seen in Nietzsche's lament of the new-Hegelian era, man at the end of history was not a "great man"; indeed, quite the opposite, man at this perception of the end of history was the "last man." The "last man" is not a character from the assumed opposing ideology. For Nietzsche, the "last man," in an age of nihilism, could be perceived as *the last human, indicating a great fall in humanity*. The people in a technological age can be less human.

Although they were still perceived in the nineteenth century, for Nietzsche, the modern values brought about the dissolution of the established modern beliefs, values, ideals, and practice, with the epistemological and judicial problems of modern science. It brought about nihilism. Nietzsche's response to this condition was a retroactive consciousness through a new set of principles to counter this nihilism, in order to override the modern scientific rationale and the modern imperialist tendency. This process began early on in Nietzsche's works and developed onto their end.

For Nietzsche, the entire modern process is veritably a history of nihilism. As Heidegger relates, Nietzsche's nihilism, as a "historical movement," cannot be simplified to the notion of being within the "void of nothingness" (Heidegger, 1977a: 62). It is "scarcely recognized within the destining of Western peoples." Yet, the essence of nihilism "is, rather, the fundamental movement of the history of the West" (Heidegger, 1977a: 62). It is "the world-historical movement of the peoples of the earth who have been drawn into the power realm of the modern age" (Heidegger, 1977a: 62-63). The "unfolding" of nihilism "can have nothing but world catastrophes as its consequence" (Heidegger, 1977a: 62). But nihilism in "no way coincides with the situation conceived merely negatively, that the Christian god of biblical revelation can no longer be believed in" (Heidegger, 1977a: 63).

For Nietzsche, Christendom "is the historical world-political phenomenon of the Church and its claim to power within the shaping of Western humanity and its modern culture" (Heidegger, 1977a: 63). It is directed to the derivation of the whole structure of modernity: modern metaphysics, science, the ideologies, the authority of scientific reason, the happiness of the

greatest number, progress in history, all of them “suffer the loss of their constructive force and become void” (Heidegger, 1977a: 65). Yet, the dominance still persists over almost all of our practices: the reduction of politics to economic competition - which is heralded by liberalism, communism, and their antecedent fascism - the mechanization of our work life, and even our educational process, which turns the human into a tiny cog in the massive mechanical wheel of a technocratic world.

It is evident that Nietzsche perceived this situation for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Any viewpoint from a limited sense of history is only a “temporal abstraction,” a breakdown of memory which impedes upon knowledge. Its reactionary and superficial impulses only display a limited understanding of the reality of the present, and cannot predict to any significant degree the occurrences of the future.

Nietzsche ridicules an illusory, idealist belief: “Now that this shabby origin of these values is becoming clear, the universe seems to have lost its value, seems ‘meaningless’ – but that is only a *transitional stage*”(Nietzsche, 1969: 10-11). This meaninglessness is a preliminary stage of nihilism. Within it, we realize that ‘progress’ may bring about more excessive forms of destruction through human depreciation. Yet, nevertheless, it is only a transition.

Nietzsche’s radical historicism employs the uncommon meaning of “radical”: the discovery of the grounds and roots of historicism, and refurbishing the judicial decision through what is to be remembered, and what is to be forgotten for the health of the people and culture: “*the unhistorical and the historical are equally necessary for the health of an individual, a people, and a culture*” (Nietzsche 1980: 10). Out of necessity, Nietzsche has gathered the possibilities of Western thought under this context; he has not only “completed metaphysics,” but has risen above it. Nietzsche revitalizes thinking under new formations of judgment. Such appraisals can only be understood from a clearer apprehension of the “end of history.”

Nietzsche begins the breakdown of Hegelian historical consciousness through his divergent use of history, by rising above the imperative for apocalyptic objectivity. This new sense of history is clearly rendered in Foucault’s article “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.” It appears evident that he wishes to demonstrate Nietzsche’s “effective history” as going “beyond” the “suprahistorical”<sup>3</sup> (Foucault, 1977: 152) perspective of Hegel, since, as Foucault retorts, it is outside the traditional necessity for “apocalyptic objectivity” (Foucault, 1977: 152). Therein, the “apocalyptic objectivity,” identified in Hegel’s perspective, is the specifically Western imperative. Foucault is

suggesting that with “effective history,” (Foucault, 1977: 153-155) one can go beyond and step out of this destructive orientation. For Foucault, Nietzsche’s “effective history” involves a transformation from the reductive apocalyptic-secular claim of the progressive end to history and its systemization of modern science and technology. Particularly for Foucault, the “English tendency” in history towards a “linear development” involves “reducing its entire history and genesis to the exclusive concern for utility”(Foucault, 1977: 139). This is, for Foucault, a poor understanding of the genealogy of mankind.

With reference to Nietzsche’s *The Genealogy of Morals*, Foucault interprets genealogy as being outside “any monotonous finality” (Foucault 1977: 139). Genealogy involves a search through “unpromising places,” and the recognition, at times, of being “without history,” to be “unhistorical” in Nietzsche’s terms, in order to forget the type of history that is detrimental to the core of life. Genealogy “rejects the metahistorical development of ideal significations and indefinite technologies” (Foucault, 1977: 140). Such a “metahistorical” perspective quickly reveals the ironic secular-divine determination as a product of modern metaphysics, which actually includes a “metaphysical revenge” against the earth and its natural conditions. Nietzsche’s radical historicism is “effective,” since it oversteps Hegel’s historicism and modern metaphysics.

The secular belief of modern metaphysics that led man with “the height of optimism” to be the master of the earth, was only a false belief filled with hubristic ignorance. The reverence for technology arising from this absolute, apocalyptic vision, and the correlating view that technology brings about an ever-more stable and secure world, is no longer believable. History, nature, and human nature are nowhere near being in control; if anything, they are more out-of-control in our technological age. Instead of security and stability, we have a growing psychological and spiritual disruptive condition, with increasing anarchy in our political and social malaise, created through the dominance of the technological façade.

As far as Nietzsche is concerned, we have become historically “sick beings.” Modernity is the “grey-haired” (Nietzsche 1980: 41) age, with the “weakness of the modern personality” (Nietzsche, 1980: 32). This weakness is caused by the dominance of perspectives generated by the falsities of Judeo-Christian notions, and “feverish” forms of historicism manifest in modern ideologies. Nietzsche clearly states in his “On the Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life,” that the Hegelian “superhistorical” view is an “excess” of superlative history, and “is detrimental to life” (Nietzsche, 1980: 14). It forms an “intellectual phenomenon” of “mania,” “injustice,” and “blind passion” to mould an “earthly darkened horizon” (Nietzsche, 1980: 14). Such a

history “conceived as pure science and become sovereign, would constitute a kind of closing out of the accounts of life for mankind” (Nietzsche 1980: 14). Instead of freedom through man-made history, one easily becomes enslaved and framed in the technological wheel.

In modern science and technology’s effort to control Nature, it appears that Nature is lashing back, placing the modern technological man in helpless conditions. The personal and psychological effects have repercussions on the believability of the key factors in European civilization, an acculturation that nevertheless has spread the Western concepts, values, and principles almost entirely world wide. Nietzsche foresaw the grandeur of this task to combat the spread of the modern identity and framework.

With strength in judgement required for the recognition of vitality in life, history is rendered, by Nietzsche, to be re-used under these divergent contexts. The process includes the discovery of elements that contain retroactive forces for vitality that have been hidden away or forgotten by the dominance in modern historicism. The defective form of history as the by-product of modern philosophy and science must be overcome both spiritually and educationally. With the rectilinear belief of progress in history, we have come to “the end of the age of rational man,” and that “the values of [modern] rationalism are not cosmically sustained” (Grant, 1969: 32). Modern science should now be viewed as a product stemming from the disenchantment with the world. The answer must rise above the modern European consciousness, which is a consciousness encompassing almost the entire world.

#### **4. THE EFFECTS ON THE PRESENT-DAY**

The thought process of Nietzsche undermines the structure of modern scientific rationale in its separation of “theory and practice,” or thoughts and concrete events. Nietzsche’s claims can be seen on a practical level, as George Grant reminds us: “what he prophesied is now all around us to be easily seen” (Grant, 1969: 25). Ideologies have revealed their abstractions from reality. The abstractions that man could control history and nature under modern perceptions, which were once exalted under the Enlightenment period and maintained in Hegel and Marx are now known as systems of control over man. The continuity of factors that sustain these idealist illusions provides a systematic framework that puts together forces outside the control of man.

With the ensuing global economic crisis arises the questioning of the system of the present-day economic order. The economic forms of organization that were prominent and promising at the beginning of liberalism are now in

decline. A revaluation of values is required to meet the limited demands within the uncontrollable amount of supply. Marxism, in its claim to arise to a superior level of a "classless society" through a proletarian revolution, is another idealistic illusion. Man's historical inevitability and economic determinism – which, in the end, Marx untenably contrasted with his call to action of "man making history" and the forgetting of philosophy – were proposals to which his liberal, capitalist enemies would have thoroughly enjoyed, as it provided a means for them to justify their practices for mere economic gains.

On the other side of the same spectrum, we have had in recent days the refurbishing of the notion of the "end of history" under a liberal ideological view through a Japanese-American-Straussian scholar, Francis Fukuyama. With the downfall of the Soviet Empire, Fukuyama argues that liberalism has acquired victory over Bolshevism and communism. The "end of history" under the Hegelian "suprahistorical" assessment made liberalism the "champion," and the Marxist man, the perceived opposite of the liberal, as the "last man." Ironically, Nietzsche's true "last man" resembles the "re-animalized man" (Kojève) who directs his concern to the consumer liberal democracy that was heralded by Fukuyama, a shopping-center selection of whatever he pleases<sup>4</sup>. Present-day political ideologies have not recovered any goals of dignity, virtue, or excellence. There is a continual call for justice, to which there is little or no response.

The direction of serving the people in the present-day democratic state is diminishing. More of the common people are witnessing the decline in the political quality of leaders. In the recent victory by Barack Obama of being elected as President of the United States, a spokesman, in describing his rise to power, stated that, at first, he was "too smart" for succeeding in attaining political positions within the American democratic framework. If there was ever a time when wisdom is required in political leadership, it is during the diminishment of political order. Yet, it is denounced for political success. There is no historical exemplary educational method in current-day politicians. Similar mistakes and corruptions continue from the lack of learning exemplary lessons from the past.

The abuse of power in authoritarian, despotic, and tyrannical states is rising. There are many elements today that manipulate people's consciousness, with a variance of techniques and manoeuvres to make them believe in falsities. The imagery-laden pursuit that produces charismatic leaders today easily provides 'success' for the corrupt individuals in recurrent factionalism, who pride themselves in manipulating the minds of the people, whether they are aware of it or not. As Nietzsche retorts, the "end of history" through the performance of modern values has set-up a framework where the "weak

overpower the strong.” It is the weakness and narrowness of spirit that produces brutal and inhumane forces of power. The concentration on technological economic progress, scientific methods management, and on the constant flow of excess information, impedes upon the actual knowledge of the “real” conditions, with the use of superficial meanings of terms and concepts and a lack of a merited historical consciousness.

In most parts of the underdeveloped world, the level of anarchy is multiplying. Any application to “democratize” these people is fruitless. Naivety is displayed in the fact that “freedom” and “democracy,” in those parts of the world, is not the answer. If anything, it can provide a more chaotic condition. Democratic principles do not work in such a chaotic situation. Its hubristic superlative praise hides the reality that it can only survive in a pre-ordered condition of credibility of political leaders and economic growth. In a world wide view, both of those necessary entities are diminishing.

There is a rise in various forms and levels of authoritarian regimes. Anarchic chaos continues to spread, with civil wars, the acquisition of bitterly hostile power in military forces, inhuman genocides, terrorism, all of which renders the destruction of the social fabric of human order. The UN, for example, has often displayed its lack of capability in responding effectively to the present-day chaotic conditions. Its principles do not adjust to the extreme disorder of anarchic predicaments. “Peacekeeping” does little to nothing in a civil war close to the extreme level of genocide. We have recently heard that the genocidal forces that led to one of the most inhumane cruelties of human history in Rwanda has moved into contentions for power and money in the chaotic conditions of the neighbouring Congo. Very little was done to stop its continuance.

Factors in modern politics can readily be seen as devitalizing. From various causes, the people’s thought is impeded on the nature of politics. “Thoughtlessness” was identified by Hannah Arendt as the key factor that produced the atrocities of the Nazis on the Jews. With modern science, there is an imbalance of the material and spiritual world, which is more firmly recognized as time goes on. Technological devices, computer games, other unreal appearances and futuristic superficial and supernatural images sway modern humanity from the reality of thoughts and lessons in history.

Under Nietzsche’s thought design, the decline in the heralded modern ideals and values will become more obvious as time goes on. The acceptance of nihilism is crucial, for Nietzsche. If not, the damaging aspects of the ensuing nihilism will continue to grow. Nietzsche did not invent our condition of

nihilism. It came from a realistic analysis of modern ideals and values. The chief direction in Nietzsche's works is to overcome nihilism.

##### **5. NIETZSCHE'S OVERCOMING OF NIHILISM: THE RE-CREATION OF STRENGTH IN HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS TOWARDS ETERNAL RETURN**

The 'newness' required in overcoming the nihilism of apocalyptic historicism involves a 'new' return to both re-value the events of the past. It requires the knowledge of both the advantageous and disadvantageous elements of history for life. It involves a creative sense of history measured by the ancient cosmological strength in its acceptance of life as a product of our natural origin: "*Only from the standpoint of the highest strength of the present may you interpret the past*" (Nietzsche, 1980: 37). We see a new strength in the use of history as a ground for new discoveries:

*Historia abscondita.* Every great human being exerts a retroactive force: for his sake all of history is placed in balance again, and a thousand secrets of the past crawl out of their hiding places – into the sunshine. There is no way of telling what may yet become a part of history. Perhaps the past is still essentially undiscovered! So many retroactive forces are still needed! (Nietzsche, 1974: 104).

This sentiment was repeated in Arendt's "What Is Authority?":

It could be that only now will the past open up to us with unexpected freshness and tell us things no one has yet had ears to hear (Arendt, 1954: 94).

History now, is not the historiological vision of progress, but a reassignment of confronting it, inquiring about it, "sitting in judgement over it," for health in the vitality of life. Human dignity may be won back by rising above modern historicism, by starting a "denial of the Hegelian right that History as Progress is the ultimate judge" (Arendt, 1982: 5). History is radicalized through a new form of historicism which brings forth a new formulation of justice outside of the modern infrastructure. The current-day forms of institutionalization, administration, and scientific calculation is a rationale form that ignores the basis of the human. Nostalgia and illusory pronouncements to move history are harmful to the vitality of life, and are judged as to be forgotten in this new historical sense. From it, it can be assessed that with the modern discovery of progress in history, the meaning of existence

was no longer conceived as the story of man, but the development of a scientific rationale, which injuriously neglects the essence of the human. The new historicism rises above the modern deficient standpoints.

For Nietzsche, it is rising above the morality of good and evil stipulated in Christian and related secular versions. Nietzsche's radical historicism involves a Dionysian standpoint of desire and revelry from ancient history that existed before the roots of the identity of the West<sup>5</sup>. It is used against the reduced Apollonian version of the "god of reason," which became the "god of science" in modernity, and provided an extreme hindrance to desire and revelry. Nietzsche's new history is "divine" under divergent principles, from a new and vital historical confirmation. It is a part of his breaking away from the modern metaphysical tradition.

It is from the "Dionysian standpoint," that "nihilism might indeed be a *divine way of thinking*" (Nietzsche, 1967: 15). That is to say, that the demands of the essential writings and creative works and deeds of our time would be the ones that do not ascribe to a "will to truth" by means of methodological modes of inquiry, or the "scientific approach" of factual commentary, and certainly not the "science of morals." The essential writings of our time would show an implicit awareness of the end of history - of nihilism - as a creative standpoint, as a new approach to the work of art; one which, through an exchange with words and stories, tempts one engender meaningful actions, to perform bold deeds, to be virile and strong, to make his own valuations and goals in full knowledge that they are based in otherwise dubious origins. Their merit is entirely within the creative foresight and hindsight of the human. And the greater the strength of conviction within the measuring of the feature of the vitality in life, the greater the binding and divine effect it will have. In it is the recognition that this new character of the "divine" is created at the end of western history, at the end of modern philosophy, and at the end of modern metaphysics situated in Hegel's works.

Nietzsche's historicism is not enslaving but creatively liberating. It is done so from those very roots without negating the past or present, but accepting all as necessary, accepting all that is with an affirmative disposition. As Stanley Rosen reports, nihilism has a "liberating salutary consequence," (Rosen, 1989: 145) a liberating creativity that recognizes the need to become a "great human being," one that leads to the formation of a stronger consciousness. The new retroactive use of history is based on the essential human element of justice in making judgement on any event in history as either enhancing or deprecating the vitality of life; and it requires the use of such a mindset in order to assess the events of each and every day. It is beyond the apocalyptic objectivity of history, where only "an illusion lurks." Modern

history ignores that “the most powerful and spontaneous moment of creation in the inner being of the artist” (Nietzsche, 1980: 35). This claim to artistic creativity undermines the tenets of modern metaphysical and philosophical thinking, and points the way for a new thinking upon which to act, at the end of philosophy, at the end of one form of history, with reliance on a new “higher history,” without rejecting the past as the typical ‘modern’ process does<sup>6</sup>. Nietzsche’s new “way of thinking” within the notion of eternal return, emerges out of necessity, and radically overturns and reverses the previous formulations in the effort to overcome them.

The “unending process of chaotic transformations of chaos” is embedded in Nietzsche’s circular “eternal return of the same,” (Rosen, 1989: 153) which is stated in his “Gateway of the Moment,” a moment of the most intensive existential or practical import. The cyclical view of human life is derived from the ancient cosmological standpoint, coming with a ‘new’ – yet grounded in the old – conception of the human in relation to history, nature, and religiosity. Modernity, under these proceedings, may only signify an open-ended, unclear, constant movement. The foundational principles of absolute “world history,” nature, religion, and reason actually disrupt any foundational procedure and therefore concepts unknowingly disintegrate themselves. Instead of the past being behind the present, which is in the modern consciousness of progress in history, there is much to be taken from the past through an eternal reverence that is renewed in order to encounter the present debility of the historical interpretation to justly conceive the temporal condition.

“Eternal return” is the latest development in Nietzsche’s historical considerations in order to confront the modern consciousness of time, where almost everything is conceived as redeemable. The conceptualization of the eternal is in direct opposition to the current sensibility that life is just “the passing of time,” where, according to Grant, just “time is history.” But in the technological world, this sense of time actually makes time unessential and our place bereft of solidity: “Through technology the planet has become eternity in non-Time, our everywhere in No-Where” (Darby, 2001: 60). Under eternal return, everyday is a judgement day, since every moment becomes unredeemable. The merit is measured by overstepping the foul characteristics that are products of the decline in vitality. This may degenerate some, but can embellish others. For those who accept the Western development *ultimatum*, where “God is dead,”<sup>7</sup> a higher form of history is ordained: “for the sake of this deed, he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto” (Nietzsche, 1974: 181). The higher, nobler form of history is under the notion of eternal return.

Eternal return really amounts to “the greatest weight,” since strength is measured on its acceptance. It is to demand the overcoming of the on-going nihilistic emptiness of certain values, principles, and a sense of history that can easily generate *decadence*, *ressentiment*, and revenge. If not, the decline in humanity will continue. The idea is initiated in an aphorism of *The Gay Science*, at the end of Book IV, “*Sanctus Januaris*.” The previous aphorism is entitled “*The dying Socrates*.” In it is revealed the weakness of the man who has been declared the root of the Western identity: in his last moment of life, Socrates cried, “Crito, I owe Asclepius a rooster,” which was a common saying to the god of medicine when being cured of a disease. The disease for Socrates was life itself. In the collapse of the modern age, Nietzsche pleads that we must even overcome the basis of this very identity: “we must overcome even the Greeks” (Nietzsche, 1974: 272).

The following aphorism is “*The greatest weight*,” where eternal return is introduced.

It will either “change you” or “crush you” (Nietzsche 1974: 274). With the notion of living your life a numerous amount of times, you will either “throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus,” or, you will experience “a tremendous moment,” where you have “never heard of anything more divine” (Nietzsche 1974: 273-274). The “eternal confirmation” is divine, since it measures the strength in the human for the acceptance of the nature of life. To this test, this crucial dividing line, *Socrates failed*. He finishes Book IV with *Incipit tragoedia*, which is almost identical to section I of “Zarathustra’s Prologue,” when the realization comes to Zarathustra that he must “exit his solitude,” and “must *go under*” to face the descent of man.

The new historical platform with the doctrine of eternal return is, for Nietzsche, one of the most grandiose entities and enterprises in human history. This perception of life is required during these times. It requires an “*Ubermensch*,” an “overman,” to overcome the modern fallacies of the “Will,” and to adopt the reversed direction of eternal return. The modern perception is revealed as an erroneous deprecation of life in the conception of progress in history, since it is a pinnacle not of superiority, but the pinnacle of a weak and destructive perception of human life, a consciousness of resentment and revenge for the nature of the earth and human life within it. For Nietzsche, these demands comprise the reality that one must face at the end of history.”

The meaning of the “end” is transferred away from its finishing of history towards a new goal. The goal provides a new pathway to bring back what has been forgotten, and forget much of what has been brought to modern consciousness. It is to bring back meaning, virtue, and justice into politics. This

goal may engender condescension in spirit, since it seems as though the needed masters of our age are few and far-between. Notwithstanding, Nietzsche has inspired not only great thinkers in the twentieth century, but also leading literary artists, who are directed towards the overturning of destructive modern values.

## NOTLAR

<sup>1</sup> The comment made by Alexandre Kojève comes to fruition: "No, Hegel was not wrong: he truly gave the date of the end of history in 1806. Afterwards, what has happened? Nothing at all, just the *alignment of provinces*. The Chinese Revolution is only the introduction of the *Code Napoleon* into China." (Alexandre Kojève, "The Idea of Death in the Philosophy of Hegel," (1973) taken from, Barry Cooper, "Hegelian Imperialism," *Sojourns in the New World*," p. 27.)

<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche strongly expresses his contention with Germany to a point where he is one word away from stating that he "hated" Germany. Most of Nietzsche's friends were Jewish, and one can surmise that he could perceive a potential genocide in a twentieth-century German political force.

<sup>3</sup> With the term "suprahistorical," Foucault is emphasizing a certain absolute, historical determinism that is usually associated with Hegel's historicism. He identifies it with the "emergence of metaphysics" because, like metaphysical thought, this historicism places "History" itself over and above the everyday occurrences in order to give to those occurrences an order and meaning. The genealogical perspective removes necessity and the absolutist characteristics from this historicism. With a genealogical orientation, there are no metaphysical elements set over and above earth itself by which meaning may be derived. Meaning is derived from a different approach. The difference is eloquently stated in Nietzsche's eternal return that, in the end, is the basis of his radical historicism. (See, Foucault, Michel., "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", in his *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*.)

<sup>4</sup> For Francis Fukuyama, in his *The End of History and the Last Man*, the "last man" was the Marxist, and the winner of this Western contest was the liberal man: "the end point of mankind's evolution." For Fukuyama, this comes from the point of view of "the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." But this apocalyptic claim of finality only shows that any believer in the ideology of liberalism is a part of the "last man" – the one in last place in a denounced modern history - as the Marxist ideologue

<sup>5</sup> Heidegger, in his article, "Who Is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?," argues that Nietzsche, even with his expression of the "most abysmal thought," (Heidegger, 1977b:78) and the implications of his Eternal Return "from the Dionysian standpoint" only "suggests that he was still compelled to think it metaphysically, and only metaphysically" (Heidegger, 1977b:78). But Heidegger, in this article, partially changes his former clear placement of Nietzsche into metaphysics. The next and last sentence of the article states: "But it does not preclude that this most abysmal thought conceals something unthought, which also is impenetrable to metaphysical thinking" (Heidegger, 1977b:79). It is almost an admittance of his former mistake. From this, one can imply that Heidegger finally realized that Nietzsche's thought goes beyond and rises above modern metaphysics.

<sup>6</sup> At this instance, usually the term “post-modern” arises in consciousness. But it will not arise further for this discussion. ‘Post’ almost implies the same form of linear progress that the new direction of thought supposedly criticizes. Foucault and Derrida do not use the term. Postmodernism’s reading and writing “against the grain” is only a further dissolution of modernity. It is not beyond modernity. It does not include a rebuilding. It is ironic in being perceived beyond modernity, yet “modern” is sustained in the term. As such, the term “post-modern” can be claimed as an oxymoron, or at least parochial. Adopting such a term can easily provide misunderstandings. One can surmise that Nietzsche would renounce this term.

<sup>7</sup> To most people, no more abominable statement could be made, and many have squandered Nietzsche for such a claim. But it was mentioned first by Hegel in announcing “the end of history.” Hannah Arendt cites “Hegel’s declaration” in her introduction to *The Life of the Mind*: “the sentiment underlying religion in the modern age [is] the sentiment: God is dead.” (Arendt, 1978: 9) [This statement was taken from Hegel’s “Glauben Und Wissen,” (1802), *Werke*, Frankfurt, 1970: 432] A good description of this seemingly most disdaining metaphor is made by Heidegger: “Nietzsche uses nihilism as the name for the historical movement that he was the first to recognize and that already governed the previous century while defining the century to come, the movement whose essential interpretation he concentrates in the terse sentence: ‘God is dead.’ That is to say, the ‘Christian God’ has lost His power over beings and over the determination of man. ‘Christian God’ also stands for the ‘transcendent’ in general in its various meanings--for ‘ideals’ and ‘norms’, ‘principles’ and ‘rules’, ‘ends’ and ‘values,’ which are set ‘above’ the being, in order to give being as a whole a purpose, an order, and – as it is succinctly expressed – ‘meaning’”(Heidegger, 1982: 4).

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