



AGAINST HEGEL AND MARX: IN FAVOR OF DANTO'S, BENJAMIN'S, AND LÖWITH'S CRITIQUES OF UNIVERSAL HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

A commonality shared by Hegel and Marx is their belief in the existence of a collective destiny or universal history of humankind. Though compelling, it persists that there are major challenges to interpreting history as such. First, this piece will surmise each authors' understanding of the common historical theme, and goal, they believe unites all people. Next, this essay will draw from philosophers Walter Benjamin and Danto, to challenge each theorists' version of universal history. Lastly, this work will draw from Spinoza and Löwith, to further argue that the possibility of a common human history is almost nil, because of the conflicting influences unavoidably tainting the attempts of philosophers such as Hegel and Marx at universalizing history.

Keywords: Philosophy of History; Anti-Historicism; Hegel; Marx; Danto; Benjamin; Löwith;

INTRODUCTION

Per early 19th-century philosopher G.W.F Hegel, history is the unraveling of Spirit on Earth, or the flourishing of the realization of Freedom in human affairs, which will result in humanity's perfection, when people collectively develop or grow to realize that constitutional monarchy is the most mature, or freeing form of coexistence.¹ To mid-late 19th-century economist Karl Marx, history is the common tale of opposition between sociopolitical and socioeconomic classes, which will only end when those most alienated and oppressed arise to rearrange society based on communist principles.² Despite Hegel and Marx's differing views of history and its final aim, their shared belief in a common human destiny is far from being unchallengeable. First, this piece will outline Hegel and Marx's take on history as that journey which all individuals contribute to, and compose. Afterward, this piece will critique Hegel and Marx's universalization of history through the lens of philosophers, Walter Benjamin and Danto. Finally, by drawing from Spinoza and Löwith, this piece will continue to assert that universal histories are unsound due the inevitable collision of incompatible elements, when theorists, including Hegel and Marx, approach history in this way.

¹ Hegel, G.W.F. Leo Rauch trans., *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company INC., 1988), 25, 57, & 97-99.

² Marx, K. & Friedrich Engels. Samuel Moore trans., *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Simon and Schuster, INC., 1964), 80-84.



1. HISTORY AS THE REALIZATION OF FREEDOM ON EARTH

According to Hegel, the major theme found in the trajectory of human affairs is the evolution of Spirit's essence or Freedom in the terrestrial realm through people as those intelligent agents who can make it concrete.³ By Spirit, Hegel understands the totality of reality as being a relation between objective selfhood and subjective identity.⁴ As such, Hegel believes Spirit's material or objective existence is the entire natural order, and as infinite and ever-evolving its self-understanding must also mature, to match its existence as a boundless entity.⁵ This ever-increasing self-awareness, Hegel believes is the nature of Spirit's essence, and when understood by people, it appears as history, or more precisely the record of Spirit coming to terms with its Freedom on Earth.⁶

Now, Hegel believed that Freedom, as an ideal, first appeared on the world stage in the East, where the political structures of the Orient recognized just one person, the absolute leader, or emperor as free.⁷ Antithetically, all others were subservient to that imperial figure, since they did not understand themselves as having liberties, much in the same way as Spirit understood itself in its infancy.⁸ That is, Hegel believes Spirit, in its immaturity, recognized that it only existed for-itself, and the manifold of life in it, it was unaware of, much how the emperors of Imperial China who existed closed-off from all others in the Forbidden City understood themselves.⁹ At the same time, the plethora of people recognizing that one being must stand above them, as a ward, to maintain their shared cultural bonds, and safety, is akin to the manifold of life in Spirit, acknowledging its free essence and revering it as that which makes all freedoms possible.¹⁰ To verify this view, Hegel points his readers to Confucius's moral philosophy, as an example of how people in Eastern societies understood their abilities in relation to the family, nation, and ruler.¹¹ Finally, this understanding, which ultimately led to all historical peoples of the East embracing some form of filial devotion for their national chiefs, Hegel would claim is a prime instance of how Eastern peoples understood and manifested Freedom in their cultural realms.¹²

After Freedom's commencement in the East, Hegel draws his readers' attention to the next major epoch in its development.¹³ To Hegel, Greek *democracy* and Roman *aristocracy* displayed Freedom's advancement, since unlike the Orient, Greco-Roman sociopolitical life recognized more than one to be free, but not all.¹⁴ That is, Greece and Rome both shared in the fact that those states recognized more than just one individual to possess liberties, and those people, as citizens, were distinct from non-citizens and slaves who could not enjoy the

³ Hegel, G.W.F. Leo Rauch trans., *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company INC., 1988), 77-78.

⁴ Hegel, G.W.F. A.V. Miller trans., *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press., 1977), 355-360.

⁵ Ibidem

⁶ Hegel, G.W.F. Leo Rauch trans., *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company INC., 1988), 57 & Hegel, G.W.F. A.V. Miller trans., *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press., 1977), 355-360.

⁷ Hegel, G.W.F. Leo Rauch trans., *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company INC., 1988), 92-95.

⁸ Ibidem

⁹ Ibidem

¹⁰ Ibidem

¹¹ Ibidem, 70-71, 74, & 92-95.

¹² Ibidem

¹³ Ibidem, 95-97.

¹⁴ Ibidem, 93.



same.¹⁵ An example of Greco-Roman culture providing evidence for Hegel's view of Freedom as maturing, but not completely developed in the West, is findable in the religious beliefs of these ancient societies.¹⁶ To Hegel, the religious authors of Greco-Roman antiquity conveyed Freedom's expansive nature, though skewedly since they were only minutely aware of Freedom and its developmental nature.¹⁷ Hegel focuses his readers on the Greco-Roman myth of the titan *Cronos*, which, though the product of a limitedly aware writer, unmindful of history as Spirit's continuous unraveling on Earth, still provided reason to believe that Greco-Roman religion held that Time was at least something real.¹⁸ Consequently, he argues that despite the people of Greece and Rome only unclearly acknowledging a universal progressiveness called Time, it nevertheless enabled them to understand life as temporal.¹⁹ This recognition of the reality of Time, Hegel would claim was a major intellectual discovery of Greco-Roman religion for it put into the motion the idea that history was underway.²⁰

Though a monumental achievement in the West, one should remember that Hegel adhered to the view that because Greco-Roman authors did not write their mythologies with a full awareness of Freedom's progress throughout the world, they could not fully materialize it.²¹ From a Hegelian perspective, this explains why not everyone in Greece and Rome comprehended themselves as free, which played out in their political structures as some possessing liberties, but not all.²² However, another aspect of this is that Spirit's unfolding in human life was not yet at the point where it was possible for Greeks and Romans to know that all were inherently free.²³ Finally, Hegel believed that the Germanic nations displayed the most mature recognition of Freedom, because their constitutional monarchies, rooted in the acknowledgement of freedom for one ruler and all subjects, mimics Spirit's structure most precisely.²⁴

Following Hegel's analysis of Freedom's youth, he comes to address its most mature expression which he believes exists in German sociopolitical life.²⁵ To Hegel, the Germanic political arrangement of one ruler being only as free as the collective liberty of all other people maintains both the individual nature of Freedom as well as its universal aspect.²⁶ In other words, Hegel believes like Spirit's objective existence, the sovereigns of the Germanic World enjoy their liberty for themselves.²⁷ Simultaneously, the people in German principalities, as the manifold of existence Spirit houses, when united, stand as equals to their monarch, for it is from them who he/she derives his/her legitimacy.²⁸ Hence, people, in solidarity, match the freedom of their sovereign, since by deriving his/her freedom to rule from them, while both independently understanding themselves as free, shows that each

¹⁵ Ibidem, 93-94, 95-97.

¹⁶ Ibidem

¹⁷ Ibidem, 14-18, 20-22, & 36.

¹⁸ Ibidem, 79-81.

¹⁹ Ibidem

²⁰ Ibidem

²¹ Ibidem, 23-24, 31-35.

²² Ibidem, 23-24, 31-35, & 93.

²³ Ibidem

²⁴ Ibidem, 93, 97-99, & 105-106.

²⁵ Ibidem

²⁶ Ibidem

²⁷ Ibidem

²⁸ Ibidem



stood in a relationship in which one regarded the other as needed for the confirmation of either's autonomy.²⁹ Lastly, this German political structure, which neither taints nor overextends freedom, maintains both individual and collective liberties, leaving Hegel to use it as evidence to assert that it is Freedom's ripest moment on Earth so far.³⁰

2. HEGEL'S END OF HISTORY

As argued by Hegel, the end of history is that time in which all people live ethically perfect or coexists as totally recognized and respected individuals based on their shared ability to will freely.³¹ To arrive at this historical event, Freedom must first reach the last point of its earthly development, which Hegel believed would play out on the world stage as that moment in which all people of all nations will come to unite around a universal value system.³² To him, this common value system would equally maximize duties and rights for all, while at the same time preserve each nation's cultural identity.³³ To secure each state's culture, Hegel would claim that no country should interfere with another's way of understanding Freedom's terrestrial pinnacle.³⁴ However, one should recall that because this would be the end of history, Hegel would also assert that no nation would interfere with another's interpretation of Freedom's worldly perfection.³⁵ That is because all nations would honor and acknowledge that though they are not identical, all equally capture and embody Freedom at its highest or most refined moment on Earth as fitting to each's national *ethos*.³⁶ Finally, Freedom's most evolved appearance on Earth, or that time in which all people of all nations come to understand and live dutifully free, is also that time in which the need for history will wane.³⁷

To Hegel, the need for history will eventually disappear, once humanity perfects itself, or comes to realize that Freedom unites all individuals.³⁸ To him, this can only come about once the ethical values of the international order and the lifestyles of the world's citizens perfectly cohere.³⁹ In other words, that time when people perfect themselves and move past the need for history, Hegel would claim begins once every member of the human community voluntarily accepts one another's individuality and together work for the good of all.⁴⁰ In this time of Freedom's global completion, history, or that recorded story of humanity's collective

²⁹ Ibidem

³⁰ Ibidem

³¹ Hegel, G.W.F. Leo Rauch trans., *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company INC., 1988), 105-106 & Hegel, G.W.F. A.V. Miller trans., *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press., 1977), 266-296, 364-374, 410-418, & 453-495.

³² Hegel, G.W.F. Leo Rauch trans., *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company INC., 1988), 105-106 & Fukuyama, F. *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press., 2006), 46-51, 63-65.

³³ Hegel, G.W.F. Leo Rauch trans., *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company INC., 1988), 80-83.

³⁴ Ibidem

³⁵ Ibidem

³⁶ Ibidem

³⁷ Ibidem, 80-83, 105-106.

³⁸ Hegel, G.W.F. Leo Rauch trans., *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company INC., 1988), 95-106, Hegel, G.W.F. A.V. Miller trans., *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press., 1977), 266-296, 364-374, 410-418, & 453-495, & Fukuyama, F. *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press., 2006), 46-51, 63-65.

³⁹ Ibidem

⁴⁰ Ibidem



move toward the emergence out of self-estrangement, will no longer be requisite, since all people would be total embodiments of Spirit's awareness of its essential Freedom.⁴¹

Though tempting to believe that the washing away of history would be identical to the time in which people would return to living in pre-societal arrangements, Hegel would disagree.⁴² First, Hegel believes history's final point would come through an organic process of irreversible progress, resulting in all people reaching the amplest self-awareness and most mature use of their freedom as displayed by their ethical behavior.⁴³ Consequently, it would be more accurate to assert that Hegel adhered to an outlook which envisioned the end of history as being the most civilized time, when all nations recognize their perfection through the flawlessness of their subjects' conduct.⁴⁴

3. MARX'S WORLD HISTORY

The opening page of Marx's *Communist Manifesto* famously reads "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle."⁴⁵ That is, as understood by Marx, the overarching *motif*, found throughout all written history is the struggle between those who oppress and those oppressed.⁴⁶ Marx provides evidence for his claim by drawing his readers to the fact that in all recorded history, antagonisms between groups composing various social hierarchies, in which those who controlled the lion's share of political, social, or economic power subjugated those who possessed less, appears continuously.⁴⁷ One may look to the political division between Ancient Rome's emperors, patricians, and plebeians, the Feudal era's difference between lords, merchants, and landed peasants, and in Marx's age of industrial growth, the economic distinction between bourgeoisie and proletariat, as historical examples of class antagonism.⁴⁸

Furthermore, one must note that this last era of the bourgeoisie and proletariat, Marx believed exists uniquely due to it being an opposition between just two classes.⁴⁹ One reason why Marx believed this to be so is that the aristocracy or bourgeoisie of the *ancien regimes* of Medieval Europe eclipsed that epoch's world order, mainly through the exercise of economic power, which opened the way for them to gain political rights and higher social status.⁵⁰ From these various liberties and heightened social positions, the bourgeoisie, in crises such as the American and French Revolutions, came to topple the yoke of old European crowns, and by doing so, eliminated those who oppressed them.⁵¹ However, this left only the bourgeoisies to have the power to take control of the social, economic, and political aspects of these former feudal nations.⁵² Consequently, those at the lowest strata of power remained alienated from enjoying life the way in which their new overlords, the bourgeoisie, did, and this distinction Marx believed was that which both bourgeoisie and

⁴¹ Ibidem

⁴² Ibidem

⁴³ Ibidem

⁴⁴ Ibidem

⁴⁵ Marx, K. & Friedrich Engels. Samuel Moore trans., *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Simon and Schuster, INC., 1964), 57.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, 57-59.

⁴⁷ Ibidem

⁴⁸ Ibidem, 59-61.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, 58-59.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, 61-63.

⁵¹ Ibidem, 61-62.

⁵² Ibidem



proletariat will continue to find central to their frictional coexistence.⁵³ To Marx, the way in which the bourgeoisie oppresses the proletariat is by molding cultural, political, and especially economic reality to secure the exclusive leisure and privileges they seek to enjoy prolongedly.⁵⁴ Concerning cultural oppression, Marx points to the cosmopolitan character of free trade, capitalist economies, and the ways of life that the bourgeoisie bring with them to new markets around the globe to methodically shape world societies to mimic ways that are conducive to their existence.⁵⁵ By political domination, Marx points to the constitutional trends spread throughout the globe as being products of the bourgeoisie's desire to see liberal democracies flourish everywhere for it is those modes of government which satisfy, protect, and favor their economic schemes.⁵⁶

Economically, Marx believed that with the advent of capitalism, or that economic mode of production central to continuing the bourgeoisie's hold over power, came the most apparent and intense subjugation of the proletariat.⁵⁷ First, Marx adhered to the view that new technologies, used to manipulate Nature, hurt the proletariat by making their labor, in certain fields, obsolete.⁵⁸ Moreover, the occupations which remained available to the proletariat were alienating, or it is the case that jobs which machines and other forms of innovation did not render outdated left workers divorced from others, including themselves.⁵⁹ To Marx, this is not proper labor, but instead a modern form of slavery in which people do not have the freedom to sell their work on their terms, but rather only their labor power, which is all the bourgeoisie demands.⁶⁰ As such, the bourgeoisie, unconcerned with the needs, wants, and well-being of the proletariat, do not wish to see working people succeed or enjoy life as they do because it would spell the end of their exclusive hold over society.⁶¹ Instead, workers receive wages that reflect the bare minimum needed to survive, which is perfect for the bourgeoisie since it guarantees that no proletariat will ever have the means to challenge their rule.⁶² Also, the bourgeoisie can place the proletariat in this unfortunate economic reality for it is they who own the means, or raw materials, factories, and machines used to actualize their capitalist agenda.⁶³ Accordingly, Marx believed that this imbalance of power can be the foundation for the proletariat to become class-conscious, or band together to combat their common plight against forms of bourgeoisie political, social, and economic domination.⁶⁴ Once united Marx believes that the inevitable downfall of the bourgeoisie, by the hands of the proletariat, as that revolutionary class which has nothing to lose but its chains, will occur, and thus move history forward.⁶⁵ Lastly, this new age will be that time in which humanity lives communally due to the abolition of private property, and when embraced by all the world's people, will culminate as the end of human history.⁶⁶

⁵³ Ibidem, 58-61, 63.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, 63-66.

⁵⁵ Ibidem

⁵⁶ Ibidem

⁵⁷ Ibidem, 69-72.

⁵⁸ Ibidem

⁵⁹ Ibidem

⁶⁰ Ibidem

⁶¹ Ibidem

⁶² Ibidem, 70-71.

⁶³ Ibidem

⁶⁴ Ibidem, 80-84.

⁶⁵ Ibidem

⁶⁶ Ibidem



4. MARX ON THE END OF HISTORY

To Marx, the end of history is that time in which the abolition of private property or the foundation of bourgeoisie political, social, and economic power spread across the globe through the embrace of communism.⁶⁷ By communism, Marx understands that political outlook which supports the emancipation of the proletariat from living under the conditions set by the oppressive bourgeoisie, along with the intention to end all forms of unfairness.⁶⁸ Unsurprisingly, Marx envisioned history's end as that move toward a new world order in which the proletariat strips away all aspects of bourgeoisie life, and honestly redefines existence by reshaping national economies.⁶⁹ The character of these economic transformations after the critical moment of the proletarian revolution, which Marx believed will inevitably destroy the bourgeoisie's mantle of power, will move away from *laissez-faire* style practices to communally controlled property.⁷⁰ Thus, Marx's end of history depends on all nations embracing communist economics for if private property were to subsist anywhere, it would invite class divisions, which the proletariat seeks to eviscerate.⁷¹

To show that human history is moving toward this universal embrace of communism, Marx points to that fact that capitalist economies can only thrive off opening new markets.⁷² Marx believed that once new avenues for capitalism no longer existed, there could only be infighting between the bourgeoisie, which would ultimately spell their demise.⁷³ That is because as the bourgeoisie scramble for resources to continue to maintain their quality of life, the proletariat will have more incentive to rebel since this hoarding of materials could only impart a greater burden on them than before.⁷⁴ As such, Marx adhered to the view that communism, which washes away class distinctions by eradicating privatization of property, best suits the proletariat's interest for it illuminates a way for them to understand their unique existence as those who best comprehend unfairness, as well as those who know how to best not repeat it.⁷⁵

Furthermore, it is important to note that this historical end to class antagonism can only arise once the marginalized proletariat becomes genuinely self-aware.⁷⁶ That is, when the destitute grow utterly mindful of the deleterious conditions decimating their quality of life, it will not only result in the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, it will also end all injustice since those once oppressed would never reproduce the harsh circumstances they once suffered.⁷⁷ To make sure that this takes place, Marx asserted that all the impoverished must adopt the principles of communism, since, as that supportive doctrine of the proletariat, only it aims to achieve the historical goal of putting a stop to class warfare entirely.⁷⁸

DANTO'S CRITIQUE OF HEGEL'S SUBSTANTIVE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

⁶⁷ Ibidem, 89-92.

⁶⁸ Ibidem

⁶⁹ Ibidem, 78-81.

⁷⁰ Ibidem, 80-82.

⁷¹ Ibidem

⁷² Ibidem, 82-86.

⁷³ Ibidem

⁷⁴ Ibidem, 77-81.

⁷⁵ Ibidem

⁷⁶ Ibidem, 76-79.

⁷⁷ Ibidem

⁷⁸ Ibidem



To philosopher Arthur C. Danto, attempts at universalizing history, including Hegel's and those who follow in his tradition, are ultimately futile.⁷⁹ First, Danto focuses his readers' attention on the fact that there are two types of historicizing, which he calls the substantive and the analytic.⁸⁰ By the analytic philosophy of history, Danto understands the exposition of significant events throughout time, such as the French Revolution, done in a way that critiques the ideas which contributed to those events, to find their true philosophical causes.⁸¹ Furthermore, the substantive philosophy of history is that which tries to find a chief underlying meaning in events of the past, to predict the course of the future.⁸² To Danto, Hegel and philosophers who try to theorize history in his way, are classic examples of substantive philosophers of history, and there is no shortage of challenges Danto raises to treating history as such.⁸³

First, Danto claims that substantive philosophers of history, such as Hegel, err when they attempt to universalize history or find meaning, regular patterns, or common themes throughout the march of time since there is no comprehensive way of finding general indicators of what is yet to come.⁸⁴ One reason for Danto's assertion is that history is not over, and as continuing, the most a substantive philosopher of history can hope for is a philosophy concerning fragments of the past and not the entire scope of history.⁸⁵ Seen in this light, one may claim that writing a universal history is impossible because the story of humanity is not yet complete.⁸⁶ Consequently, Danto would claim a philosophy of history like that of Hegel is unachievable, due to no form of a common destiny shared by all people yet occurred, because the history of humankind is ongoing.⁸⁷

Moreover, Danto criticizes the idea that a unifying theme is findable in history. Danto believes this to be so because though one may analyze historical events, and try to fit them into a basic mold, the fact that time's expiration is still to happen, shows that no one can verify his/her prediction until the series of time is whole.⁸⁸ For one to grasp Danto's point more easily, one may claim that he adheres to the view that universalizing history is akin to one claiming to know the meaning of an entire novel without first reading all of it through.⁸⁹ Thus, if one claims that a specific happening in a book captures its whole story, that person can never know for sure unless he/she completes that volume, much like how history by not being in a state of cessation, is not entirely knowable now.⁹⁰ To complicate matters further, because people can never know the end of history until it genuinely finishes, Danto finds that picking out one facet of it, and making an entire system from that aspect, can only be unsound.⁹¹ That is because history is still happening, and any primary *motif* derivable from it is only speculative because there is no end to compare and confirm it with precisely.⁹²

⁷⁹ Danto, A.C. *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 1965), 1-2.

⁸⁰ Ibidem

⁸¹ Ibidem

⁸² Ibidem

⁸³ Ibidem

⁸⁴ Ibidem, 2-3.

⁸⁵ Ibidem, 4-5.

⁸⁶ Ibidem

⁸⁷ Ibidem

⁸⁸ Ibidem, 5-6.

⁸⁹ Ibidem, 11-12.

⁹⁰ Ibidem

⁹¹ Ibidem, 6-8, 11-13.

⁹² Ibidem



Lastly, Hegel's claim that Freedom's progression, as that uniting theme found throughout all history, Danto would assert, captured only Hegel's epoch at best, and if it were the last say on the matter of history, no further theorization of it would persist.⁹³

Also, Danto asserts that both descriptive and explanatory accounts of history are requisite for a historical theory to be a genuine philosophy of history, further damaging the substantive approach to the passage of time as displayed by Hegel and others.⁹⁴ That is, Danto believes historical theories can only become philosophies of history if they draw upon both descriptive events of the past, or data which provides a path to finding a pattern indubitably applicable to future times, and explanatory ways of expressing that pattern via causal language.⁹⁵ Accordingly, Danto attests that when historical theories only emphasize one element of this two-part requirement for an authentic philosophy of history, such as those who try to break down the past into a collective journey generated by some main driving cause, those theorists can only fail.⁹⁶ That is because it is illogical to support the idea that a leading historical force pushes humanity forward since no complete or comprehensive history of the world exists.⁹⁷

Indeed, even if it did, historical events are still not so uniform as to ever unquestionably prove the existence of just one universal purpose to the movement of time.⁹⁸ Hence, something such as the Hegelian assertion that history is that "slaughter-bench" which necessarily works with cunning toward the ever-increasing actualization, recognition, and realization of Freedom on Earth, would be just an explanatory historical theory to Danto.⁹⁹ That is because Hegel fails to tie his view of Freedom's unraveling throughout the world to every integral historical fact ever recorded.¹⁰⁰ Thus, because the unfolding of Freedom, as that all-encompassing reason for humanity's epochal progression, can never be truly universal, or apply to every decisive historical instance ever on Earth, renders it unable to be a genuine philosophy of history.¹⁰¹ Finally, Danto would agree with this analysis of Hegel's understanding of history because by failing to draw from concrete historical facts to support his explanation for why history is Freedom's evolution in the terrestrial realm, Hegel could not provide the last say on this matter.¹⁰²

Furthermore, Danto continues his barrage on substantive philosophies of history, such as Hegel's, because it is impossible to capture the full meaning of history as it is occurring as opposed to viewing it in hindsight.¹⁰³ A helpful illustration of this point is when Danto draws his readers' attention to the idea that contemporaries in philosophy, though having some knowledge of the influences and approaches each takes to his/her work, can never know the full impact of those influences until one finishes a career another can overview.¹⁰⁴ Thus, only

⁹³ Ibidem, 13-16.

⁹⁴ Ibidem, 7-8.

⁹⁵ Ibidem, 7-8, 11-13.

⁹⁶ Ibidem, 1-2, 3-8, & 11-13.

⁹⁷ Ibidem, 11-13.

⁹⁸ Ibidem, 13-16.

⁹⁹ Danto, A.C. *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 1965), 13-16 & Hegel, G.W.F. Leo Rauch trans., *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company INC., 1988), 31-34, 35.

¹⁰⁰ Danto, A.C. *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 1965), 1-3.

¹⁰¹ Ibidem, 3-6.

¹⁰² Ibidem, 2-3, 6-8.

¹⁰³ Ibidem

¹⁰⁴ Ibidem, 13-16.



if a philosophy of history can capture how major historical events will come to shape future times based on the centrality of what influences historical actors in the present, can it start to be truly universal.¹⁰⁵ However, because no one can assess someone's actions without first knowing the ends he/she produced, and because it is only in retrospect that one can find total significance in those actions, a so-called universal philosophy of history cannot yet emerge.¹⁰⁶

Another critique of substantive philosophies of history, including Hegel's, Danto argues, derives from the notion that these philosophers of history link together the past and present from the lens of a future which is still unsure.¹⁰⁷ Accordingly, Danto claims substantive philosophies of history make declarations that are prophetic, however, not historical.¹⁰⁸ That is because, like prophecy, substantive philosophies of history narrate from the standpoint of an era that remains uncertain.¹⁰⁹ In other words, one cannot claim that an unactualized future is compatible with events of the past or present.¹¹⁰ That is due to the past and present being real, while the future something no one can know for it is still in a state of mere possibility.¹¹¹ Thus, something such as Hegel's claim that a rational Providence realizes itself throughout the course of human affairs defies logic.¹¹² One reason why one may make this claim, which Danto would concur, is that Hegel envisions Freedom's growth from immaturity to a state of maturity as being history itself, which is problematic because how can that which already is, turn into something it is not.¹¹³ Finally, this problem, Danto claims, bars Hegel's philosophy of history from being genuinely historical, because by postulating from a viewpoint which is not indubitably sure, it is more theological, or prophetic than initially thought.¹¹⁴

5. BENJAMIN'S CRITICISM OF MARX'S WORLD HISTORY

As understood by philosopher Walter Benjamin, Marxist's historical theory is a play on the weak messianic power harbored by people concerning humankind's recorded past.¹¹⁵ Benjamin charges Marxists as adhering to weak messianism, or the claim that people have the power to rectify the mistakes of past centuries, so that they can change the world for the better, and consequently, redeem, or exercise a power of salvation over themselves, and their planet, as theoretically misguided.¹¹⁶ That is because Benjamin points out that Marxists, like those who believe in messianism, understand history as reaching an end that will ultimately and undoubtedly result in the well-being of humanity.¹¹⁷ This creed of the cessation of history as guaranteed to be righteous Benjamin claims Marxists are aware of, and the first

¹⁰⁵ Ibidem

¹⁰⁶ Ibidem

¹⁰⁷ Ibidem

¹⁰⁸ Ibidem, 2-7.

¹⁰⁹ Ibidem

¹¹⁰ Ibidem

¹¹¹ Ibidem

¹¹² Ibidem, 1, 2-7.

¹¹³ Ibidem

¹¹⁴ Ibidem

¹¹⁵ Benjamin, Walter. Edmund Jephcott et, all, trans., *Selected Writings Vol.4 1938-1940* (Mass: Harvard University Press., 2003)., 388-391.

¹¹⁶ Ibidem

¹¹⁷ Ibidem



reason why it is problematic is that it does not match their stress on anti-idealist and anti-theological explanations of times past.¹¹⁸

Secondly, Marxist teachings, like messianism, or that Judeo-Christian theme of the world's deliverance from suffering and the forces of evil, by promising that the history of humanity will inevitably end righteously, are guilty of adhering to a utopic understanding of time's progression which can never precisely payout in the future.¹¹⁹ That is due to the reality of reaching this goal as being impossible since Marxists, Jews, and Christians alike could never validate their redemptive understandings of history unless it precisely plays out in their respectively envisioned ways.¹²⁰ Hence, some predetermined end of history, to Benjamin, lacks justifiability not only because it ignores humanity's power to choose a way to develop without having to move toward an End of Days scenario necessarily, but it also ascribes an immutable finality to history that is still unsure.¹²¹ That is because, if, as Marxists believe, history does have an end, it means it had a beginning and understood as such it would have to have an already firm structure, which would leave no room for chance or future progress.¹²² However, progress is another doctrinal feature of Marxism, and as such its utopian promise, like Judeo-Christian apocalyptic theories can only remain in a state of limbo, due to the logical incompatibility of its belief in history's progressive nature and its undoubted end.¹²³

Now, to Benjamin, Marx's universal history, as undivorceable from idealist claims that history is progressive and the religious notion that it must come to an end helps to debase Marx's view because he contradicts his historical materialist approach.¹²⁴ In other words, Marx, by postulating that history is the continuing tale of class opposition while holding to the belief that it will end in the annihilation of all class warfare, shows he believes real material conditions will lead to a future ideal time.¹²⁵ This historicizing is problematic for a Marxist understanding of the common destiny of humanity because it is unlikely that real economic conditions driving the course of history will lead to the time in which people no longer rely on those conditions for their subsistence.¹²⁶ Moreover, if material economic conditions determine people's actions, which shape history, Marx's claim that an ideal time in which people cease to need economies would mean the end of history.¹²⁷ However, Benjamin points out that history would only be at a standstill for time itself would not cease.¹²⁸ Thus, even if an ideal communist world order emerged, and the final point of history declared, the persistence of time would imply that history is not yet over.¹²⁹ Finally, these problems, or the incompatibility between the real and the ideal, in either experience or reason, not only shows that Marx made mistakes in his framework, it shows that the flaws in his universal history are irresolvable.¹³⁰

¹¹⁸ Ibidem

¹¹⁹ Ibidem, 391-393.

¹²⁰ Ibidem, 393-396.

¹²¹ Ibidem, 391, 393-396.

¹²² Ibidem

¹²³ Ibidem

¹²⁴ Ibidem, 392-394, 396-397.

¹²⁵ Ibidem, 395-397, 402-404.

¹²⁶ Ibidem, 402-404.

¹²⁷ Ibidem

¹²⁸ Ibidem

¹²⁹ Ibidem, 392-392, 404-407.

¹³⁰ Ibidem



Also, concerning Marx's universal history, as paralleling certain religious notions, and thus defying its historical materiality, Benjamin details how Marxists revolutionary theory is akin to the Judeo-Christian hypothesis of the Last Judgment.¹³¹ First, Benjamin shows that the Marxist's belief in the shared fate of humanity as culminating in that time when the proletariats will unite and overthrow the powers that be corresponds neatly to the Judeo-Christian theory of the fulfillment of history when the righteous come to recognition over the wicked as the inheritors of the New Jerusalem.¹³² Accordingly, Benjamin would claim that Marxism, as understood in this sense, is not a historical but rather a theological materialism.¹³³ Aside from being a contradiction in terms, Benjamin reminds his readers that Marxist followers themselves refuse any such label since they stress that their theoretical roots are not in religion but in the progression of history itself.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, the idea that history is building toward a moment when those most downtrodden necessarily come to reorganize the world benevolently still has religious undertones.¹³⁵ Lastly, since the progression of world history after Marx's time still featured unfathomable horrors that went unpunished, and because those tragedies did not spell Armageddon, is proof to Benjamin that Marx's world history did not only miscalculate the future, it is also likely that it wrongfully defined its end.¹³⁶

6.SPINOZA'S CRITIQUE OF TELEOGY AND PROPHECY IN HISTORY

Per 17th-century philosopher Benedict De Spinoza, teleological as well as prophetic beliefs are unsound, or at least problematic for a variety of reasons. First, take for instance Hegel's teleological belief that the end of history is the undoubtedly, and unavoidable maturation of Spirit, or that deistic force that is becoming ever-growingly aware of its Freedom until reaching its freest state.¹³⁷ To Spinoza, Hegel's concept of Spirit's end as the cessation of recorded human affairs would be an impossible happening due to the problematic nature of a teleological Deity.¹³⁸ One reason why Spinoza would doubt Hegel's concept of a goal-oriented Spirit is due to his view of God as infinite, immutable, and eternal.¹³⁹ By the infinitude of God, Spinoza claims that because one understands God as boundlessly omnipotent, it is the case that no form of finite life, such as people, can be compatible with his/her limitless nature, let alone exceed his/her bounds, to stop him/her.¹⁴⁰

¹³¹ Ibidem, 405-408.

¹³² Ibidem

¹³³ Ibidem

¹³⁴ Ibidem

¹³⁵ Ibidem

¹³⁶ Ibidem

¹³⁷ Hegel, G.W.F. Leo Rauch trans., *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company INC., 1988), 25, 57, & 97-99.

¹³⁸ Spinoza, Benedict De. *Ethics*. Edwin Curley trans., (Princeton Penguin Books., 1996) 1p10, 1p11, 1p15-1p17, Jaspers, Karl. *The Great Philosophers: Spinoza*. Hannah Arendt ed., Ralph Manheim trans., (New York: Harvest Books., 1966) 9-25, & Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster., 1967), 569-580.

¹³⁹ Spinoza, Benedict De. *Ethics*. Edwin Curley trans., (Princeton Penguin Books., 1996) 1p10, 1p11, 1p15-1p17, Jaspers, Karl. *The Great Philosophers: Spinoza*. Hannah Arendt ed., Ralph Manheim trans., (New York: Harvest Books., 1966) 9-25, Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster., 1967), 569-580, & Popkin, Richard H. ed., *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press., 1999), 329-336, 363-366, & 373-382.

¹⁴⁰ Ibidem



From this one may claim that Hegel's teleological vision of Spirit, or God, is faulty because nothing can cap God's power, rendering any end to him/her, as the complete realization of Freedom in the terrestrial realm, to be a misunderstanding of his/her nature in Spinoza's eyes.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, because God is limitless, and hence, uninterrupted by any conditioned form of life, Spinoza would claim God is already free, and thus the notion of his/her movement toward Freedom, in the Hegelian sense, is unsound due to it being a reality already.¹⁴² Though Spinoza believes that God can only be free in a way that always coheres with his/her Nature, he nevertheless claims that the most uncompelled being is still God.¹⁴³ To Spinoza, this is so due to only God setting the conditions of Nature, since he/she alone possesses the power to do so. This version of freedom, Hegel seems to want to claim, especially if one recalls his idea that Spirit's drive is what causes the world to recognize higher states of liberty.¹⁴⁴ Consequently, because Hegel's understanding of Freedom, upon analysis, is not so different from Spinoza's understanding of God's uncoerced essence and existence, it is the case that Hegel wrongfully ascribes a *telos* to the Deity.¹⁴⁵ That is due to the idea that both Hegel and Spinoza share, that God is supremely determinant and as already free no movement toward a more significant Freedom can be possible due to the non-existence of such a degree.¹⁴⁶ Hence, comprehending history as Spirit's evolution toward a pristine awareness of its Freedom is wrong from Spinoza's perspective, since history cannot display that stride, due to God already being most free.¹⁴⁷

Moreover, due to the impossibility of anything possessing the might to exceed God, Spinoza would claim justifies that God is immutable, and by being unable to change, nothing can cause the Deity to develop into a more excellent state.¹⁴⁸ In other words, Spinoza adheres to the outlook that something such as an end to history is logically nil due to the

¹⁴¹ Ibidem

¹⁴² Spinoza, Benedict De. *Ethics*. Edwin Curley trans., (Princeton: Penguin Books., 1996) 1p17-1p22, Jaspers, Karl. *The Great Philosophers: Spinoza*. Hannah Arendt ed., Ralph Manheim trans., (New York: Harvest Books., 1966) 9-25, Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster., 1967)., 569-580, & Popkin, Richard H. ed., *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press., 1999)., 329-336, 363-366, & 373-382.

¹⁴³ Ibidem

¹⁴⁴ Hegel, G.W.F. Leo Rauch trans., *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company INC., 1988)., 25, 57, & 97-99.

¹⁴⁵ Hegel, G.W.F. Leo Rauch trans., *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company INC., 1988)., 25, 57, & 97-99, Spinoza, Benedict De. *Ethics*. Edwin Curley trans., (Princeton: Penguin Books., 1996) 1p17-1p22, Jaspers, Karl. *The Great Philosophers: Spinoza*. Hannah Arendt ed., Ralph Manheim trans., (New York: Harvest Books., 1966)., 9-25, Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster., 1967)., 569-580, & Popkin, Richard H. ed., *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press., 1999)., 329-336, 363-366, & 373-382.

¹⁴⁶ Hegel, G.W.F. A.V. Miller trans., *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press., 1977)., 266-296, 364-374, 410-418, & 453-495, Spinoza, Benedict De. *Ethics*. Edwin Curley trans., (Princeton: Penguin Books., 1996) 1p17-1p22, 2d1-2p1, Jaspers, Karl. *The Great Philosophers: Spinoza*. Hannah Arendt ed., Ralph Manheim trans., (New York: Harvest Books., 1966) 9-25, Russell, Bertrand. *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster., 1967)., 569-580, & Popkin, Richard H. ed., *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press., 1999)., 329-336, 363-366, & 373-382.

¹⁴⁷ Ibidem

¹⁴⁸ Spinoza, Benedict De. *Ethics*. Edwin Curley trans., (Princeton: Penguin Books., 1996)., 1p20, 2d4, 2p32, & 5p17-18.



inability of anything to change God.¹⁴⁹ Hence, the Hegelian narrative of Spirit's maturation causing the world to achieve a deeper understanding of liberty would be an impossibility to Spinoza because God, as necessarily immutable, cannot progress, but instead remains statically complete.¹⁵⁰ As such, it would be more accurate to drop Hegel's belief in the movement of Spirit, because of Spinoza's justifiable assertion, or claim that God's permanence cannot vacillate due to the lack of anything being able to kilter him/her.¹⁵¹

Also, Spinoza's theory of the eternal nature of God is another way to argue against and debase Hegel's teleological understanding of world history as that universal tale shared by all people, driven by Spirit's stride toward completion.¹⁵² First, Spinoza would assert that God is eternal or it is the case that he/she exists without temporality due to him/her being he/she who determines the rules for time to emerge.¹⁵³ Accordingly, Hegel's view of Spirit's development as genuinely reflected in times past, cannot be right. That is because, on the one hand, that which is eternal is not subject to interference by that which is not eternal, such as humankind.¹⁵⁴ On the other hand, because God is exempt from the conditions of time, it follows that history cannot have any relation to God since history as a temporal record does not capture the essence of eternity, and is only incompletable.¹⁵⁵ Lastly, prophetic takes on history like that of Marx would be another challengeable stance to agree with, due to Spinoza's critique of religion and prophecy further found in his *Ethics*, as well as his *Theological-Political Treatise*.¹⁵⁶

Spinoza, who famously declares that dogmatism can quickly lead to superstitions, expresses this, to illuminate the fact that others may use dogma to assert and at times abuse political power, which Marx's prophetic vision of the end of history as that epoch when the proletariat dismantles the bourgeoisies' power structure, invites.¹⁵⁷ First, Spinoza would argue that because God is necessarily impersonal, due to his/her distinct glory which renders him/her to be incompatible with the nature of less magnificent beings, like people, provides evidence to believe that history is absent of any overarching plan.¹⁵⁸ As such, one should not adhere to Marx's revelatory perspective of history, and his aim to paint the recorded past as surely culminating toward a universally just end because it can only result in unjustifiability or unreality.¹⁵⁹ That is, Spinoza would adhere to the view that no plan of God could be knowable to people due to the incoherency between the nature of God's Intellect and human reason.¹⁶⁰ Lastly, God, by being necessarily impersonal, cannot possess a plan for humanity

¹⁴⁹ Ibidem

¹⁵⁰ Hegel, G.W.F. Leo Rauch trans., *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company INC., 1988), 25, 57, & 97-99, & Spinoza, Benedict De. *Ethics*. Edwin Curley trans., (Princeton: Penguin Books., 1996), 1p20, 2d4, 2p32, & 5p17-18.

¹⁵¹ Ibidem

¹⁵² Spinoza, Benedict De. *Ethics*. Edwin Curley trans., (Princeton: Penguin Books., 1996), 1p8-1p12.

¹⁵³ Ibidem

¹⁵⁴ Spinoza, Benedict De. *Ethics*. Edwin Curley trans., (Princeton: Penguin Books., 1996), 1p8-1p12, 2p30-2p32.

¹⁵⁵ Ibidem

¹⁵⁶ Spinoza, Benedict De. Jonathan Israel, ed., *Theological-Political Treatise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), B. §§1-10, C. §§1-15.

¹⁵⁷ Ibidem, §§1-4, §§7-10, & §§14-20.

¹⁵⁸ Spinoza, Benedict De. *Ethics*. Edwin Curley trans., (Princeton: Penguin Books., 1996), 5p17-18.

¹⁵⁹ Ibidem, 1p15-1p22

¹⁶⁰ Ibidem 1p15-1p22, Bk. 1 Appendix, & 2p1-2p2.



in the slightest, and as such if not even the Deity can project a common theme findable throughout human affairs, neither can anything else.¹⁶¹

At a more profound level, Spinoza would claim that God, as understood to be personally part of humanity's destiny could only lead one to err logically; for God, by not possessing finite, limited, or determinate attributes must be unanthropomorphic.¹⁶² Consequently, God, by not being human in any way, cannot be personal, and as such Marx's underlying prophetic tone, as he describes an unavoidably comprehensive end to history, where all people live utopically, is neither of God nor human nature, and thus, it is false.¹⁶³ That is because Spinoza would charge Marx with unjustifiably deifying human nature when he asserts that individuals can achieve a perfect state of coexistence due to only God having the power to exist perfectly.¹⁶⁴ Finally, Spinoza would also declare that Marx's view of the end of history mistakenly humanizes Providence, which cannot be the case because the Divine surpasses humanity's abilities so much so that it would be small-minded to believe that a prophetic historical theory, like that of Marx, is a concern of God.¹⁶⁵

Moreover, Spinoza adheres to the view that when interpreting scripture, one should be mindful of the fact that one must remain in the realm of scripture itself, and know that it is a moral tale to enrich people's lives by revealing a sure path to blessedness.¹⁶⁶ However, this implies that Spinoza would believe that when one attempts to apply any pattern adopted from religious texts, such as Marx's belief in the sure stop to humanity's recorded history, that person can only be at fault.¹⁶⁷ That is because Spinoza would assert that Marx's belief in only material aspects of life determining the course of history, is an attempt to mix two distinct and incompatible disciplines, namely, sociopolitical and economic studies with religious theory.¹⁶⁸ Hence, Spinoza who would support the view that Marx, regardless of knowing or not, mistakenly put a revelatory twist to his philosophy of history, stepped out of the bounds of all canons he tried to unite.¹⁶⁹ Finally, Spinoza would claim that due to the different approaches, methods, aims, and truths discoverable in theology as compared to the social sciences, demonstrates that Marx did not unproblematically try to combine these fields since any further discussion on the matter would be impossible if he had.¹⁷⁰

8. ON THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF UNIVERSAL HISTORY

So far, one may understand the purpose of this essay as an attempt to explicate and critique Hegel and Marx's views concerning what each believed was an accurate portrayal of history or that universal tale shared by all humanity, as well as its end. However, this paper will now explore whether the possibility of a common destiny of humankind and its cessation can ever be capturable philosophically. First, to achieve this task, this paper will enter the philosophy of Karl Löwith. Lastly, through his analysis of the modern person, as neither satisfied by reason nor faith, and with neither a firm belief in recurrent historical

¹⁶¹ Ibidem, 1p15.

¹⁶² Ibidem, Bk. 1 Appendix

¹⁶³ Ibidem

¹⁶⁴ Ibidem

¹⁶⁵ Ibidem

¹⁶⁶ Spinoza, Benedict De. Jonathan Israel, ed., *Theological-Political Treatise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), B. §§1-10, C. §§1-15.

¹⁶⁷ Ibidem

¹⁶⁸ Ibidem

¹⁶⁹ Ibidem

¹⁷⁰ Ibidem



patterns nor a solid trust in a teleological interpretation of history, will help to clarify why universal histories of humanity can only be unsound.

As understood by Löwith, if one analyzes the great historical philosophies of the past, including Hegel and Marx's, those theories are either foundationally eschatological or teleological or both.¹⁷¹ By an eschatological portrayal of history, Löwith envisions that pagan view of times past, in which life-cycles, recurring themes, and seasons of existence pave the way for the belief that history is comprehensible and is akin to the adage "nothing is new under the sun."¹⁷² Thus, Marx's claim that all history boils down to the recurrence of class struggles, and Hegel's understanding of history as necessarily featuring cycles of crisis, so that Spirit grows more aware of its Freedom on Earth, Löwith would claim are eschatological views, which ultimately find their roots in pagan religious beliefs.¹⁷³ Consequently, because the grounds of universal histories, like Hegel and Marx's, rests on religious ideas, they can never be purely philosophical, and as such when theorists label their philosophies of history as all-encompassing, they can only do so by comprising the philosophical aspect of their projects.¹⁷⁴

Next, Löwith also draws his readers' focus to teleological accounts of history or those theories which postulate that history is progressive since it has a beginning, as well as purposeful for by having a start it must have an endpoint or goal.¹⁷⁵ To him, this teleological understanding of history as possessing a first and last moment did not begin in Judeo-Christian creeds but became significant features of them.¹⁷⁶ Hence, something like the Hegelian assertion that history's critical moments are necessary for Spirit's realization of its Freedom in the world, or the collective progress of humanity as approaching a state of perfection, is, to Löwith, a teleologically driven theological speculation.¹⁷⁷ That is because, Hegel's belief in time as moving toward a final epoch in which Spirit recognizes its Freedom, which will play out on the world stage as the embrace of constitutional monarchy across the globe, epitomizes a teleology of history for it describes an irreversible process continually pushing human affairs ahead.¹⁷⁸

Moreover, Hegel's account of history as the recorded realization of Freedom on Earth, driven by Spirit, which works for-itself, while simultaneously always pushing humanity toward a new degree of perfection, Löwith would claim is more of a religious than philosophical utterance.¹⁷⁹ That is, Löwith would claim Hegel's view of history is not too different from the Judeo-Christian belief that God works outside the world for his/her purposes, solely by his/her will, and ceaselessly for the benefit of humanity.¹⁸⁰ To Löwith these similarities give credence to the view that Hegel attempted to secularize a theological view of history, in his philosophical reflections of times past, which by using religious language, to deify philosophy, took attention away from the importance of levelheaded critique, for the fancies of speculation.¹⁸¹

¹⁷¹ Löwith, Karl. *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press., 1949)., 204-207.

¹⁷² Ibidem, 14-18.

¹⁷³ Ibidem,

¹⁷⁴ Ibidem, 204-207.

¹⁷⁵ Ibidem, 182-184.

¹⁷⁶ Ibidem, 14-18.

¹⁷⁷ Ibidem, 52-55.

¹⁷⁸ Ibidem

¹⁷⁹ Ibidem, 55-59.

¹⁸⁰ Ibidem

¹⁸¹ Ibidem, 54-57.



Likewise, Marx's certainty in the inevitable end of the bourgeoisie as setting the stage for universal harmony between all people, Löwith would claim, is teleological because of Marx's adherence to the view that history is culminating in an inevitably final breaking point.¹⁸² Also, Marx's understanding of history as ending utopianly, in peace and communal living, with the proletariat as those victors of history, Löwith would assert is theological for, like religions, it projects an unsure future as sure.¹⁸³ Finally, like the flocks of religious believers who have faith in the End Times, and the salvation, or redemption of the world, Löwith believes Marxist doctrines contain similar ideas, such as the proletariat's hope to unite as class-conscious, to usurp their oppressors, and fulfill history righteously.¹⁸⁴

From this, one critique of universal histories, Löwith would claim, is that they are not indeed philosophies of history but instead theologies of history.¹⁸⁵ That is due to philosophers, including Hegel and Marx, writing universal histories in a way that relied more on either the paganists' eschatological approach or the Judeo-Christian treatment of time.¹⁸⁶ Problematically, since neither paganism nor Judeo-Christianity is real philosophy, but, instead, faiths of lore, Löwith finds that those creeds, when attempting to provide historical concepts, nevertheless always produce notions that are contradictory, incoherent, or archaic.¹⁸⁷ One reason for this is that if one takes an eschatological view of time as opposed to a teleological one, then that person cannot understand history fully for without any temporal frameworks no history can be dateable. As such, if history were without any recorded direction, it would not only be unanalyzable, but no one would ever be able to explain why time displays progressiveness.¹⁸⁸

At the same time, if one were to take a teleological view of history alone, history would lack meaning since reemerging *motifs* would never resonate with people if the progressiveness of time were entirely independent of them.¹⁸⁹ Therefore, whichever way, eschatologically or teleologically, that one may interpret history, it remains that because both are not historical notions, and instead remnants of religious doctrine, these so-called concepts can only be forever impure, negating the possibility of legitimate universal philosophies of history.¹⁹⁰ Finally, even in modernity, where people can blend both eschatological and teleological takes on time, implying that there still may be hope for a universal philosophy of history to emerge, Löwith would remain in vehement disagreement.¹⁹¹

Also, the archaic nature of historical concepts thought up by theologians, which influenced philosophical attempts at universalizing history, Löwith believes, no longer fits well with people's present-day understanding and experience of history.¹⁹² One reason for this is that modernity brought to light issues concerning the analytical incompatibility of eschatological and teleological views of history, despite the appeal to resolve and blend both

¹⁸² Ibidem, 41-44.

¹⁸³ Ibidem

¹⁸⁴ Ibidem, 48-51.

¹⁸⁵ Ibidem, 192-195.

¹⁸⁶ Ibidem

¹⁸⁷ Ibidem

¹⁸⁸ Ibidem, 199-203.

¹⁸⁹ Ibidem, 203-207.

¹⁹⁰ Ibidem

¹⁹¹ Ibidem

¹⁹² Ibidem, 10-19, 203-207.



for the sake of a complete philosophical history of humanity.¹⁹³ To Löwith, merging the eschatological and teleological outlooks of history, to trace a common tale and destiny shared by all individuals can only lead philosophers to inaccuracies.¹⁹⁴ That is because if eschatology is valid, and “nothing is new under the sun,” then the end or *telos* of history must be repetitive.¹⁹⁵ However, this implies that the end of history already happened, making it either illogical to believe it will reoccur or false to assert that any final point is accomplishable.¹⁹⁶ Similarly, if teleology is sound, and everything is in a becoming state of progress, rendering each successive generation to feature something historically new, then finding a steady, ever-present, and meaningful theme to history would have to be nil.¹⁹⁷ Thus, to Löwith, universal histories are always incomplete because if a philosopher stresses eschatology more than teleology, or teleology more than eschatology, then that theorist is either denying the reality of new historical events for a supposedly uniting historical trend, or a shared historical fate at the expense of so-called historical significance.¹⁹⁸

From these problems and criticisms of the possibility of universal philosophies of history, including those of Hegel and Marx, Löwith helps to expose such projects as inherently frictional due to the incompatibility of elements like eschatology and teleology, reoccurrence and progress, faith and reason, and theology and historical method. As such, this essay hoped to convey not only the universal histories of Hegel and Marx, as well as the critiques of each by Danto, Benjamin, and Spinoza respectively; it also intended to reveal the complexities of ever achieving a flawless and undiluted philosophy of history for all people, and for all time. Therefore, it is safest to assume, as well as honest to admit that no all-encompassing philosophy of history is yet achievable, and, it may never be.

CONCLUSION

The beginning of this piece conveyed to the reader Hegel’s understanding of history as that recorded process by which Spirit finds, or grows conscious of its essential Freedom on Earth, or in the realm of inscribed human affairs.¹⁹⁹ Following this essay’s explication of Hegel’s philosophy of history, the more socioeconomic, sociopolitical, and materialist take on universal history, through Marx’s *The Communist Manifesto*, came to the fore. The purpose of surmising both theorists’ takes on the collective destiny of humanity was to cast light on a similarity between them, that one may overlook all too easily. However, a deeper purpose of surmising Hegel and Marx’s outlook on history as that shared story of humankind was to prepare the reader for the philosopher Danto’s critique of Hegel’s philosophy of history, as well as the theorist Benjamin’s assault on Marx’s universal history. Lastly, by drawing from the philosophers Spinoza and Löwith, this piece aimed to simultaneously reinforce Danto and Benjamin’s arguments against Hegel and Marx, while, also, paving the way to show why any attempt at universalizing history is unachievable due to elements outside of philosophy, like theology and faith, compromising that effort.²⁰⁰

¹⁹³ Ibidem

¹⁹⁴ Ibidem

¹⁹⁵ Ibidem

¹⁹⁶ Ibidem

¹⁹⁷ Ibidem

¹⁹⁸ Ibidem

¹⁹⁹ Hegel, G.W.F. Leo Rauch trans., *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company INC., 1988), 25, 57, & 97-99.

²⁰⁰ Löwith, Karl. *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press., 1949), 204-207.



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