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## Contra-Contemporary

Suhail Malik

Once the priority of the avant-gardes, the future of the new is now a commonplace. Stabilized in art and transposed to design, business, engineering, technoscience, experience-based entertainment, responses to climate change, and so on, the new is a general and ubiquitous feature of contemporary social formation and transformation. Transformation, because the new marks today to be distinct from yesterday; that today is 'futural' rather than traditional. The future is happening now. Everywhere. All the time.

Yet, in an important sense, elaborated below, and as the artistic avant-gardes contested, if the future is to be truly futural, it must be distinct from the past and the present; previously unheralded, the new future will be newer than what is now known or experienced. In this sense, the new future is itself in the future. And if the primary issue of politics is the dispute over that new future and its practical construction—what tomorrow will be, what it should be, and how to attain justice *then* (however justice is otherwise determined)—then the demands, divergences, constraints, and contingencies that comprise politics are accompanied by a reflexive complication in its theorization that sets the scheme of this chapter. Namely, that if the new, utterly distinct from the present and the past, is in the future (it will happen *then*), then a new future for the present is at present a future for the future.

While this complex formulation only rehearses that the new future is indeed in the future, its elaboration leads to the more precise formulation of the problem to be addressed in this chapter: that while the new future can be proclaimed, desired, acted on and acted for, nonetheless, for all its semantic and signifying effects, it is in fact an unknown—precisely because it is in the future. The present future can never *in fact* know or presume the future present.<sup>1</sup> As the dispute over the making of what the new future could be and should be, politics is then also where and how the conditions for the future of the future are set.

Abstract and formal as this definition of politics may be, it serves to generalize the now canonical theorization proposed by Hannah Arendt in the late 1950s. The significance of that generalization will become apparent once Arendt's formulation has been specified and then located in a broader characterization of modernity provided by Reinhard Koselleck. The futurity intrinsic to modernity identified by Koselleck provides the terms for distinguishing it from contemporaneity, which is defined here primarily as a distinct postmodern formation that 'cancels' the future. Contemporary art is an instructive representative of the modification from modernity to such a postmodernity. The final section of this chapter contrasts contemporaneity with another identification of postmodernity, wherein a specifically modern futurity is not annulled but, rather, exacerbated to the point of being the premise of the present, which is then an intrinsically speculative present. The operational primacy of the future reorders the received time sequence of past-present-future for the composition of the present, a reordering comprising the speculative time-complex.

The critical point in this rederivation of postmodernity is that the surpassing of modernity does not lead to the cancellation of the future because the future is vitiated, as prevailing critiques propose, but rather that the historical sense of futurity and politics is overwhelmed by a surfeit of futurity. The future of the future is then primarily an issue of whether the present is capable of a new future at all or *too much so*. And that is a politics of postmodernity. But, as will be contested, this is, first, not politics in the Arendtian sense but the new precondition for it; and it is, second, the mandating of a new future subsequent to modernity. Combined, the conclusion is that the future of the new is emphatically operationalized by a postmodernism that inaugurates the future of the future to the detriment of establishing the present; a postmodernism that is contra-contemporary.

### **Action**

For Arendt, the new is a consequence of action, and action is a uniquely human attribute:

It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before. ... The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable. And this again is possible because each man is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the world.<sup>2</sup>

Action gives rise to the unexpected, to what is truly new, because action is unpredictable, and this is in part because of the uniqueness of the individual who acts – an individuality that is itself the consequence of ‘the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together’ in what Arendt calls the ‘space of appearances’.<sup>3</sup> It is this uniqueness in the space of appearance and the possibility of the unexpected which brings ‘something uniquely new into the world at birth’: not the infant *per se*, but the possibility of the unexpected that the new-born may one day enact. This possibility and unpredictability is occasioned not only at birth but reiterated and renewed with every entry by anybody—*any* body—in the space of appearances. Arendt calls that renewal ‘initiative’ and for her it defines human being:

It is initiative from which no human being can refrain and still be human. With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance. This insertion ... springs from the beginning which came into the world when we were born and to which we respond by beginning something that is new on our own initiative. To act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin..., to set something in motion.<sup>4</sup>

Yet action is also unpredictable because its consequences can only be told retrospectively. That is, the story of the act—what the action is—is apprehended upon its completion – what the action was:

the second outstanding character [of action is] its inherent unpredictability. This ... arises directly out of the story which, as the result of action, begins and establishes itself as soon as the fleeting moment of the deed is past. The trouble is that whatever the character and content of the subsequent story may be ... its full meaning can reveal itself only when it has ended.<sup>5</sup>

The necessary belatedness of the comprehension of action makes it unpredictable – which is to say, without clear meaning at the time it takes place. Together, the unexpectedness and unpredictability of action comprise its freedom, which is the freedom of human beings who act and speak in the space of appearances; political freedom.

Schematic though this outline is, it suffices to identify the relevance of Arendt's theorization of politics—what takes place in the space of appearances—for a determination of the future of the new. The possibility of the new is guaranteed for Arendt by the fact of human natality—each human being is a unique possibility for a new future—and reborn with each act and word in the space of appearances. Each action uniquely inaugurates its as yet unknown future.

Arendt derives the unpredictability of action from the discrepancy between the 'fleeting moment of the deed' and the retrospective account of its meaning, which is also a time gap. The mobilization of that discrepancy is not particular to Arendt's theorization but calls on the standard modern distinction between lived history (*Geschichte* in German) and the historical record (*Historie*) or historiography. Yet, as Reinhart Koselleck contends, it is not the primacy of action that requires a belated recounting as Arendt proposes, but precisely the opposite: the modern conception of action is a *consequence* of a specific formation of distinction between the two notions of history. More exactly, Koselleck notes, it was only around 1780, 'following the emergence of history as an independent and singular key concept', that the previous two millennia old Occidental notion of history as recounted stories (*Geschichten*) transformed into one of a history that could also be made, which, as Arendt reiterates in her own way, is the inauguration of modernity as the making of history by human action.<sup>6</sup>

Koselleck's principal contention is that this transformation was itself a consequence of a long-term semantic 'convergence' in the distinct terms for history in German (amongst other European national languages).<sup>7</sup> With that semantic shift,

history as reality [*Geschichte*] and the reflection upon this history [*Historie*] were brought together in a common concept, as history in general. The process of events and of their apprehension in consciousness converged henceforth in one and the same concept.

Though apparently arcane, it is this conceptual identification of two notions of history by a 'history in general' that leads to the inauguration of modernity. For three main reasons: — For Koselleck the well-remarked 'division of labour' of history-making points not to their incongruity but to an underlying semantic unity:

It clearly is a matter of the same history which is made on the one side and written down on the other. History seems to be disposable (*verfügbar*) in a dual fashion: for the agent who disposes of the history that he makes, and for the historian who disposes of it by writing it up. ... The scope for the disposition of history is determined by men.

‘Disposable’ here captures two of Koselleck’s main theses: the immediate one is that the understanding of history being made, which is new with modernity and defining of it, is *contiguous with* the writing of history rather than opposed to it. Despite the apparent discrepancy between lived and written histories mobilized by Arendt, her theorization of action’s unpredictability is consistent with Koselleck on this point: though action is unpredictable because its meaning is incomplete, the historical record gives the meaning of the action, which presumes the *semantic* unity between history being made and its subsequent account.<sup>8</sup>

— The second ‘disposition’ and main thesis Koselleck highlights as providing the conditions for the emergence of modernity is that the semantic convergence of the two senses of history in the mid-eighteenth century subordinates its writing to its enacting. The then-new formation of the concept of history therefore meant that particular recounted histories and experiences came to be subordinated to a ‘history in general’, a ‘singular’ and common history of realization with action having the conceptual priority. Two transformations to the previous concept of history follow: (i) the recounting of history (*Historie*) is ‘diminished’: singular events and experiences can then be localized and framed in terms of a new concept of world history and also of a world-making. And (ii) history is directed instead to the ‘social and political planes for planful activity that points to the future’. In short, history ‘became a concept of *action*’ with a horizon of expectation.<sup>9</sup> Because it is actionable, ‘one is increasingly capable of planning and also executing history’.

— Combined, and to deploy a term that is not Koselleck’s, these partial results lead to the conclusion that world history is an *anthropogenic* history. More specifically, the recomposition of history according to ‘history in general’ sanctions the making of history according to an encompassing anticipation, foresight, and planning, which is to say according to an anthropogenic horizon of expectation.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, as with Arendt, action is anthropogenic future-facing history-making. Arendt incarnates anthropogenic history-making by allocating it to the birth of each human individual, to ‘the naked fact of [its] original physical appearance’. And the complete Arendtian sense of the term, in which the action is constituted by human freedom and autonomy alone, is the realization of the modern recomposition of history according to the anthropogenic horizon of expectation, a historically specific modernity that Arendt then transcendentalizes as a transhistorical ‘space of appearances’, precisely as the generality of anthropogenic world history mandates.

That recomposition of history for action is specifically modern because of its anthropogenics, which breaks from the previous Christian ecclesiastical ordering of history. Actionable history, Koselleck notes, means

an implied renunciation of an extrahistorical level. The experience or apprehension of history in general no longer required recourse to God or nature. In other words, the history that was experienced as novel was, from the beginning, synonymous with the concept of world history itself. It was no longer a case of a history that merely took place through and with the humanity of the Earth. In Schelling's words of 1798: man has history 'not because he participates in it, but because he produces (*hervorbringt*) it'.

That history is 'produced' by the 'humanity of the Earth' as a world history again recalls Arendt's species identification of humanity as uniquely able to act. But that intrinsic universalism is itself historically placed with the 'renunciation of an extrahistorical level' for which human history would merely be the mundane manifestation. Koselleck's derivation of modernity on the basis of this 'renunciation' is crucial to the following discussion, in particular because it provides the schematics for how and why configurations of the new future determine not only the inauguration of modernity qua anthropogenic world history—action, as Arendt calls it—but also its successors.

### **Modernity**

What is renounced with the emergence of the concept of actionable history is the Christian eschatology constituting European orthodoxy up until the mid-seventeenth century. Guaranteeing that divine justice would eventually arrive, the terminal *transhistorical* scheme of the Last Judgement preset the terms and conclusion of all experience and expectation, meaning that 'nothing fundamentally new would arise', validating the drawing of 'conclusions from the past for the future'.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, anthropogenic history as a world history—a world that will then be an anthropogenic world—abrogates the 'constant expectation of the imminent arrival of doomsday', which in turn 'revealed ... a temporality ... that would be open for the new and without limit'.<sup>12</sup> That is, anthropogenic action afforded by the semantic recomposition of history, as the making of world history, 'reveals' a temporality for which the limitlessly new is a historical possibility. While the renunciation of the Eurochristian eschatological horizon of expectation by anthropogenic history does not change the future orientation of history, it does recompose that futurity as a temporality rather than divine justice. This temporality of anthropogenic history is comprised of the future of new.

Time is then the historical opening to a new history, a historicity instigated by action. And, as Arendt argues, it is intrinsic to that historicity of time that it *continues* to mandate new futures – which may or may not bring justice, depending now *only* on the anthropogenic actions taken from now into the future. The terminal premise of Eurochristian history, humanity and its cosmic composition are thereby abolished.<sup>13</sup> More significantly, and what inaugurates modernity, is that *because* what can happen in the future will be new, the future is *now* transformable and *in fact* unknown, distinct then from what Koselleck calls the horizon of experience, which is configured according to the present and the past.<sup>14</sup>

Koselleck traces the emergence of an explicit modernity (*Neuzeit*) through a lexical development by which the migration of historicity to time becomes an epochal characteristic. In brief, the supplanting of Eurochristian historical organization means that time 'is no longer simply the

medium in which all histories take place; it gains a historical quality'.<sup>15</sup> More exactly, 'history no longer occurs in, but through, time. Time becomes a dynamic and historical force in its own right'. Time is, in other words, the historicity of the new future.<sup>16</sup> Contrasted to its Eurochristian organization up to the mid-eighteenth century, the time of anthropogenic history is itself a new time (*neue Zeit* in German). New, because it mandates the anthropogenic new future and also because it distinguishes the present in which action is instigated against both the past and the future, 'the *neue Zeit* of history was also impregnated with the difference which was torn open between one's own time and that of the future, between previous experience and the expectation of what was to come'.<sup>17</sup> That is, the future is new because it is distinct from both past and present. Action per the historicity of the new time is then historical freedom.

The epochal characterization of the *neue Zeit* of history follows from the resetting of the past too, according to the dimension of the new time. The disjuncture of the horizon of experience and the horizon of expectation by action in the present modifies not just what the future can be but also recorded history (*Historie*), which is 'temporalized in the sense that, thanks to the passing of time, it altered according to the given present'.<sup>18</sup> To be clear: the modification of the past Koselleck identifies is not primarily that recorded events are revised by current historians because of the demands of actions in the present; rather that the historicity of time means that 'the *nature* of the past also altered'.<sup>19</sup> What the past *is* in relation to the present and future is determined on the basis of the freedom of anthropogenic action, not their continuity or the constraints that the past places on the present and future, which is traditionalism.

The general resetting of time as the historicity of the present qua anthropogenic action is, then, the historicity of the past. More than the possibility of the present being different to the past, the *neue Zeit* 'is indicative of new events never before experienced in such a fashion'.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, the *neue Zeit* is 'new in the sense of completely other' to the eschatological *continuity* of time and history, instead 'assum[ing] an emphasis that attributes to the new an epochal, temporal character'. And by the late-nineteenth century that 'epochal, temporal' character of the new gives the *neue Zeit* a common name that belatedly yet precisely registers the time-condition of the open future: *Neuzeit*, modernity.<sup>21</sup>

### **Contemporaneity**

Modernity, *Neuzeit*, means, in sum, that the future of the new can be a new future, and the past is a new past, configured by a future-facing anthropogenic history-making, by action. To adapt Arendt's title, modernity is the 'human conditioned'. The cogent inauguration and maintenance of modernity requires coherent integration of these terms—the time of open futurity, the present, action, historicity—in a logic of anthropogenic history. That logic and its supplanting by contemporaneity is demonstrated with particular clarity by the avant-gardism of art declared to be 'modern' in the North Atlantic region from the late-eighteenth century on, just as the term modernity came to prevail as the defining name for the epoch defined by anthropogenic history. Peter Bürger's mid-1970s criticism of Theodor Adorno's staunch advocacy of modernity crystallizes the key issues here.<sup>22</sup> Bürger contests Adorno's characterization of art in general through Modernism, itself defined on the basis of the

category of the new against tradition. That is, Adorno specifies Modernism to be the counter-traditionalism of modernity vectored through aesthetics; a counter-traditionalism that Koselleck for his part identifies as a consequence of the inauguration of modernity qua anthropogenic history. Art is modern for Adorno in that 'the authority of the new [is] historically inevitable' for it.<sup>23</sup> Bürger highlights that the new here does not mean new styles, techniques, media, and other various innovations that in fact comprise the history of artistic development, but the futural new of art. Furthermore, following Marxist doctrine characterizing 'essentially non-traditionalist societies' as 'bourgeois', Modernism 'ratifies the bourgeois principle in art'.

That the artistic avant-garde is exemplarily Modernist is a truism, but Bürger's criticism elucidates two features in the historical development of Modernism that serve to demonstrate how, despite its definition by the new future to come, the logic of modernity is terminal, and also how its terminal state is configured. Adorno's own criticism of aesthetics is premised on art's constitutive autonomy in bourgeois societies. Avant-garde art attacking art's bourgeois institutionalization must then seek to abolish artistic autonomy, 'to do away with art as a sphere that is separate from the praxis of life'.<sup>24</sup> Yet, insofar as the overcoming of bourgeois institutionalization *has become* the Modernist history of art as a history driven by and for the new, the continued corrosion of the autonomy of art by the avant-garde serves to *reproduce* that modern institutionalization. As Bürger remarks, 'the procedures invented by the avant-garde with anti-artistic intent are being used for artistic ends', not least the entrenchment of the extant institution of artistic autonomy.<sup>25</sup> Bürger identifies this reversal or inversion of the 'intention' of the avant-garde to be the 'neo-avant-garde':

the neo-avant-garde institutionalizes the avant-garde as art and this negates genuinely avant-gardist intentions. [...] Neo-avant-gardist art is autonomous art in the full sense of the term, which means that it negates the avant-gardist intention of returning art to the praxis of life.

That is, the metahistorical maintenance of 'the new' configuring avant-garde strategies led to the reversal and negation of its historically situated aims, recuperating the artistic autonomy it disclaims in the name of avant-gardism. And for Bürger this reversal is the perverse success of the avant-garde:

the procedures invented by the avant-garde with anti-artistic intent are being used for artistic ends. This must not be judged a 'betrayal' of the aims of the avant-garde movements ... but the result of a historical process [wherein] the attack [made] art recognizable as an institution and also revealed its (relative) inefficacy in bourgeois society as its principle.

That is, the neo-avant-garde *demonstrates* the truth of art in bourgeois society: that art is in any case an autonomous institution. And this is the lesson Bürger draws against Adorno's theory of Modernism, which will prove instructive for the Koselleckian definition of modernity as an anthropogenic history set to a new future. For Bürger, Adorno confounds the 'historically unique break with tradition that is

defined by the historical avant-garde movements' with 'the developmental principle of modern art as such'. The latter is a 'category of the new' that Adorno 'fails to properly historicise'.<sup>26</sup> That is, Adorno mistakes the historical emergence of the avant-garde to be the transcendental principle of modern art. And it is this category mistake of basing historically situated artistic ambitions on the metahistorical and empty category of the new—effectively positing modernity as a formal category (of the new as a void or an empty signifier)—that leads to the reversal of the aims of modern art, from the abolition of its autonomy (the avant-garde) to its vindication (the neo-avant-garde).

Bürger validates the historical avant-garde by delimiting the historically specific necessity of its newness, adequate then to the task of negating art's bourgeois condition *for a period*. But it is his elaboration of the consequences of Adorno's generalization of the new as principle of modern art that, first, correctly forecasts the subsequent development of art since the 1970s—its transmutation into contemporary art (CA)—and, second, gives the instructive example for the consequences of modernity as anthropic history—its transmutation into contemporaneity. These conclusions follow from Bürger's primary complaint that Adorno's mistaken definition of modern art means that any such determination of the new 'provides no criteria for distinguishing between faddish (arbitrary) and historically necessary newness'. As a formal metahistorical premise, the historical significance of any particular instance of newness cannot be apprehended. Consequently, Adorno's only recourse for determining the category of the new is the paradigm of commodity society, which is perpetuated by the consumer good. What is new in and for art is then indistinct from another option in the common dimension of commodity exchange, an item of consumption organized by difference rather than historical necessity. Consequently,

through the avant-garde movements ... the historical succession of techniques and styles has been transformed into a simultaneity of the radically disparate (*Gleichzeitigkeit des radikal Verschiedenen*). The consequence is that no movement in the arts today can legitimately claim to be historically more advanced as art than any other.

The 'simultaneity of the radically disparate' means that the neo-avant-garde, perpetuating a schematic avant-gardism, spells the end to any notion of artistic progress. A history of artistic development is replaced by the simultaneity of inchoate new art indistinct from expanding commodity markets. The inchoate simultaneity and commodity-equivalence of an art that endorses its social autonomy is a concise summary of the sociohistorical development of CA subsequent to Bürger's identification of the neo-avant-garde. For Peter Osborne, such a simultaneity comprises the contemporaneity of contemporary art.<sup>27</sup> While the conversion of the new from a historically situated criterion to an empty category means that CA is distinct from modern art, it is for that reason also the continuation of the logics and historicity of modern art, be they over-extended and now set against the latter (and this holds for Adorno's own theorization of aesthetic theory too).<sup>28</sup>

## Posthistory

Adorno's mistake as Bürger identifies it cannot however be dismissed as a category error or particularized as the limitation of his philosophical system. If, following Koselleck, modernity is the epoch of the constant inauguration of anthropogenic history in a time that mandates the new as a formal and general category, the Modernism of the avant-garde as Adorno determines it is the art adequate to modernity. Bürger's criticism of the neo-avant-garde's reversing into the perpetuation of commodity societies indexes through art the closing of the epoch of modernity, which afforded the freedom and autonomy of action qua anthropogenically initiated futurity. That epoch is concluded by being continued in modified form as contemporaneity, a new epoch subsequent to modernity whose characteristics are in part now outlined by generalizing the case of art's conversion from modernism. This characterization leads to the determination of the contemporary as a distinct postmodern formation of time-sequencing and history together, for which the future is not the condition of history but is instead 'cancelled'. But it also mandates the critique of that now standard determination of postmodernity to be a modernist misdiagnosis of how the epoch consequent to modernity in fact configures time and historicity.

The distinction between contemporaneity and modernity as Koselleck derives it (and Adorno assumes with him) can be demonstrated by directly comparing the transformation of 'the historical succession of techniques and styles ... into a simultaneity (*Gleichzeitigkeit*) of the radically disparate', which defines contemporaneity in art, to simultaneity in modernity as it is identified by Koselleck. Recall that for Koselleck time in modernity is distinct from the historical equivalence between one time and another set by the horizon of expectation of Eurochristian eschatology. Modernity orders history according to an anthropogenic horizon of expectation in time alone. That time ordering is not only clearly sequential—the past, then the present, then the future—but also a prioritization of the new over the extant or past historical conditions. The received name for such a historicizing time-ordering, reiterated by Koselleck, is *development*: 'From the seventeenth century on, historical experience was increasingly ordered by the hierarchy produced through a consideration of the best existing constitution or the state of scientific, technical, or economic development (*Entwicklung*)'.<sup>29</sup>

This developmental ordering intrinsic to modernity is key to its geohistorical expansion. Because the anthropogenic history defining modernity is *intrinsically* and necessarily a world history, modern societies mandate themselves to calibrate others according to their own developmental hierarchy:

The geographical opening up of the globe brought to light various but coexisting cultural levels which were, through the process of synchronous comparison, then ordered diachronically. ... Comparisons promoted the emergence in experience of a world history, which was increasingly interpreted in terms of progress.<sup>30</sup>

The comparison of cultures according to a specifically Euromodern hierarchization of historical development sanctions the racism of North Atlantic modernity, as Koselleck highlights in the ellipsis of the preceding quote: 'Looking from civilized Europe to a barbaric America was a glance backward.' Based on the diachronic ordering of geospatial distinct cultures according to an integrating time-line of

historical development, Euromodern racism has been the structuring organization entitling extraction and subjugation by the self-mandated actors of progress.

In its historical composition, the 'fundamental experience of progress' structuring Euromodernity requires the convening of diverse cultures that are disparate to one another, of 'non-contemporaneities (*Ungleichzeitigen*) that exist at a chronologically uniform (*gleicher*) time'. That is, Euromodern geoterritorial expansion convenes otherwise heterogeneous and unconnected cultures as 'non-contemporaries' in modernity by situating them in the common time of progress, which is the unified time defined by anthropogenic history that mandates a new future. Koselleck calls it the time of contemporaneity:

The contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous (*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*), initially a result of overseas expansion, became a basic framework for the progressive construction of a world history increasingly unified since the eighteenth century. Toward the end of that century, the collective singular 'progress' was coined in the German language, opening up all domains of life with questions of 'earlier than', or 'later than', not just 'before' and 'after'.<sup>31</sup>

Despite its commonality across both Koselleck's and Bürger's theorizations, the use of 'contemporaneity (*Gleichzeitigkeit*)' to signify the presentation of otherwise disparate particulars in an overarching configuration should not however lead to their semantic identification. The two uses of contemporaneity are distinct in that while disparate cultures are calibrated in modernity by a 'chronologically uniform time' according to a 'progressive construction of world history'—as Koselleck specifies and Adorno stipulates for Modernism in general and the avant-garde in particular—Bürger contends that the simultaneity of 'radically disparate' art movements characteristic of the neo-avant-garde is such that none can 'legitimately claim to be historically more advanced as art than any other'.<sup>32</sup> Distinct to modernity, the contemporaneity of the neo-avant-garde is progress-less, a proliferation of new art absent of development.

Put otherwise, the contemporaneity of the radically disparate characterizing the neo-avant-garde is distinct from Koselleckian modernity in that the proliferation of new art in the neo-avant-garde is not the enactment of an anthropogenic history organized by a future—it is not action in the modern (Arendtian) sense—but rather the proliferation of new art simultaneous and disparate to what is, has been, and will be. In this logic of the update, art is then only ever current (*Zeitgenössische*, which is the German term for what in English is the 'contemporary' of contemporary art). With regard to the characteristically Euromodern composition of history identified by Koselleck, and as the broad metastable transformational dynamic of CA demonstrates, the contemporaneity of CA is then posthistorical and, in this nontrivial sense, therefore postmodern.<sup>33</sup>

Posthistory does not mean that there is nothing new, different, singular, no further simultaneous disparities. On the contrary: the proliferation CA validates and perpetuates is what Koselleck calls the horizon of experience—memory, lived experience, the archive, the present—and each new experience of art adds to and embellishes experience as a whole. Posthistory designates the

contemporaneity of additive yet progress-less anthropogenic experience. Contrary then to the future-conditioned time of modern historicity, the proliferation of *concurrent* pasts, presents, and futures are sequenced in a contiguous and seamless experience, happening before or after one another as alterations of contemporaneity. The ordered distinction of the time sequence is corroded in favour of their simultaneity. And this vitiation of the time order of modernity means not only the dehistoricization of the new, but also the dehistoricity of time.

### **Defuturity**

Incorporating the horizon of expectation into the horizon of experience, contemporaneity entails the destruction of the former in its modern sense. Progress-less, defuturing both the present and the new (even as a formal category), the posthistory of contemporaneity is comprehensively postmodern, and terminally so. Franco 'Bifo' Berardi and Mark Fisher both characterize the period since the early-twenty-first century along these lines, as an epoch of posthistorical contemporaneity. For Berardi, it is a sentimental-phenomenological existential distortion by the neoliberal formation of labour and economy, which undoes the political possibility of the transformative future; for Fisher, these conditions are firstly socio-culturally implemented by the neoliberalization of institutions, including digital reproduction technologies:

Franco 'Bifo' Berardi refers to 'the slow cancellation of the future [which] got underway in the 1970s and 1980s'. 'But when I say "future" [he elaborates] I am not referring to the direction of time. I am thinking, rather, of the psychological perception, ... the cultural expectations that were fabricated during the long period of modern civilization ... shaped in the conceptual frameworks of an ever-progressing development.' The slow cancellation of the future has been accompanied by a deflation of expectations. ... The very distinction between past and present is breaking down. In 1981, the 1960s seemed much further away than they do today. Since then, cultural time has folded back on itself, and the impression of linear development has given way to a strange simultaneity.<sup>34</sup>

Which is to say: contemporaneity, extended now beyond its derivation in CA to the entirety of the sociocultural composition, which can then be called contemporary societies.

Taking into account Frederic Jameson's contribution to this determination of postmodernity (elaborated below), the 'slow cancellation of the future' can be called the Berardi-Fisher-Jameson (BFJ) thesis of posthistorical contemporaneity. Identified as the defuturing of the new, the BFJ thesis however requires amendment. Specifically, as the dehistoricity of modernity, contemporaneity *does* refer to the 'direction of time': contemporaneity vitiates time qua historicity. Furthermore, contemporaneity is the supplanting of the horizon of expectation by the adventure of new experience, and the dehistoricity of time does not wholly abolish a time sequence but rather rebases it as a simultaneous disparity of before and after in a posthistorical metastable experience. There is only a meantime: duration. The 'deflation of expectations' marking contemporaneity is not then the eradication of modernity but rather its depletion. Two corollaries:

(i) Taking up Koselleck's terms, such a depleted modernity happens 'after' modernity—or there was a modernity 'before' it—and modernity is for that reason part of contemporary experience. Put otherwise, contemporaneity is not modern but modernity is *still* contemporary. Modernity is not then earlier than the contemporary, an irrecoverable past of the contemporary as a societal composition, but rather only a part of its present that may be incongruous to other aspects of the contemporary but is not thereby overcome and cannot overcome it.

(ii) The dehistoricization of the past, present, and future in contemporaneity is a symmetrical secular obverse to the Eurochristian eschatology revoked by modernity. Recall that the terminal transhistorical scheme of Eurochristian eschatology preset the terms and conclusion of all experience and expectation such that 'nothing fundamentally new would arise'. The dehistoricization defining contemporaneity replicates that transhistorical determination, yet it amplifies the renewal of a contiguous experience with nothing fundamentally new arising in its stead. Moreover, these two dehistoricizations on either side of modernity are symmetrical inversions of one another: while Eurochristian eschatology bases present experience on the given horizon of expectation of the Last Judgement—a future that is not new but guaranteed and known in premodern Eurochristianity—contemporaneity on the other hand rebases expectation on the basis of a now present experience.

Both of these transhistorical formations propose a terminal extrahistorical organization of history, yet distinctly so: for Eurochristian eschatology that ahistorical terminus is the divine order of the Last Judgment; for contemporaneity, as the BFJ thesis highlights, the posthistorical terminus is the mutable present itself—or, to complete the symmetry with Eurochristian eschatology, its extinction. Elaborating these two terminations of contemporaneity in turn demonstrates how, as for the neo-avant-garde with respect to the bourgeois condition of art, the BFJ critique of contemporaneity reverses into and promulgates the condition it claims to repudiate. The two terminations are:

– *The terminal present.* Fisher's thesis of capitalist realism announces the socioeconomic rendition of terminal contemporaneity: 'The widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative to it.'<sup>35</sup> This impossibility is, as Jameson contends, the elimination of a horizon of expectation that is not an extension of present experience, which experience is then the terminal condition of all futurity. It is the absenting of anthropogenic history, of a historicity directed to a new future.<sup>36</sup> The 'cancellation' of a new future different to the present configures an end-time of present, past, and future in the contiguity of variation of experience, without the finality of Eurochristian eschatology; the ceaseless contemporaneity of an endless-meantime.

– *The extinction of the present.* Yet eschatological finality *does* return to this composition of contemporaneity—with the BFJ critique itself. The slogan that 'it is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism', attributed to Jameson, implicitly contends that contemporaneity can be exited or overcome, but only by the end of either capitalism or the world (through eco-catastrophe, for example).<sup>37</sup> While the imagining of the end of the world entrenches the impassability of capitalism, the end of capitalism represents the utopian possibility of the surpassing of the contemporary. Jameson: 'For the moment and in our current historical situation, a sense of

history can only be reawakened by a Utopian vision lying beyond the horizon of our current globalized system, which appears too complex for representation in thought.<sup>38</sup> Only a radically new future such as the end of the world or the end of capitalism can overcome the current condition. Jameson contends that such a 'reawakening' would be a 'genuine historicity' which, with Koselleck, would define it to be a modernity. What is then more significant than the end of the world is that the BFJ thesis posit such terminations—of the planet, capitalism, and other conditions—as transformed futures distinct from the present and the continuation of experience. These various eschatons are the price of the postcontemporary qua modernity redux.

Jameson's appeal to historicity as an exit strategy from contemporaneity is a typically modernist recourse. As noted, however, modernity is anyway accommodated within contemporary as another of its disparate moments. Among other utopias, then, contemporaneity dictates that the modernity of the BFJ thesis, as a call for a new future of postcapitalism, is itself depleted; yet another future fiction constrained by a disparate posthistorical contemporaneity. Accordingly, the BFJ thesis does not just diagnose the contemporary as a condition and structure of dehistoricity; it also rehearses and is depleted by the contemporaneity that it aims to revoke. A modernist critique of contemporaneity, the BFJ thesis reprises the neo-avant-garde's signature reversal of Modernism, scaled up from the specific institution of art's autonomy in bourgeois societies to the generality of contemporaneity configured by the socioeconomic totality of capitalism.<sup>39</sup>

## **Risk**

Together, modernity and contemporaneity can then be retrospectively identified as the history (*Historie*) of the emergence and depletion of anthropogenic historicity in time according to a matrix set by Eurochristian eschatology, which is their common precursor. It is the history of the migration of the 'extrahistorical' determination of time from the divine to depleted new experiences of the posthistorical present, the termination of their common history in the anthropic mundane. Having identified this matrix of secularized Eurochristian eschatology, the concluding argument of this chapter is that it is however in fact supplanted by another postmodern configuration, one misrecognized by the identification of contemporaneity and its BFJ critique. What is then theoretically available is a composition of the future distinct from that which has prevailed over its history since the dominance of Eurochristianity in the North Atlantic and Euromodernity as world history, a new future for the future.

The premise for the counterpostmodernity proposed here is the development in the scales of economy, organization and logistics adequate to globalization, including the advance of technical and symbolic intermediation, and the coordination of increasingly complex social, economic, and legal-regulatory organization. These developments of large-scale integrated complex societies (LaSICS), as they are designated here in their generality, are the material, symbolic, and infrastructural configurations wrought by the geo-economic expansion of Euromodernity initially by colonialism, and then by a planetary capitalism that has to date also been concentrated in the North Atlantic.

That development has been intensified since the 1990s by ubiquitous digital computation, yet, as a historico-semantically integrated process, it is mandated by the modernity identified by Koselleck: the result of an anthropogenic history integrated as world history. But whereas modernity is

structured by a *horizon* of expectation, a new future to come that is distinct from the present, what is by comparison distinct to LaSICS is that the futurity of the new is their functional condition, the *operational* premise for their technical, material, and symbolic organization and development. This identification of the time ordering of LaSICS identifies, for example, the rapid expansion of credit as the basis for economic and monetary operation since the deregulation of financial institutions in the 1980s: while credit has always calculated a loan on the basis of the future income that can be made from it to accrue repayment with interest, financialization sets that premise as the basis for economic expansion at all scales.<sup>40</sup> Equally, transnational infrastructures of insurance, health, energy, and agriculture (all of which are intensively corporatized) are also all typical of LaSICS, as they are of other basics of social provision such as housing, social welfare, managing climate change, long logistics chains, and the anticipatory models governing security and military configurations. These and other such components of the dynamic and transformative structuring of LaSICS are comprised of anticipations of the future *not* as a horizon of expectation but rather as the present and actual *premise* of their current technical, economic, social, and symbolic operations.

The summary point here is that the *unknown* future—which may or may not be new—is the precondition of the present in LaSICS, their defining feature. And the principal theoretical point is that the future as it is operationalized and manifest in LaSICS is then not the eschaton of a new future to come, as it is for modernity, but a material-symbolic precondition for the calculation of the unknown future, a speculative composition of the present. And contrasted to the equivalences of past, present, and future in a continuity of new experiences configuring contemporaneity, LaSICS *operationalize* the future as unknown and distinct from the horizon of experience. That is, LaSICS supplant the depleted time structure of ‘before’ and ‘after’ characteristic of contemporaneity with the operational ‘earlier than’ and ‘later than’ which are intrinsic to their functional composition. Only that in this configuration the future is operationally, structurally, and systemically ‘earlier than’ the present. In its logic and time ordering, the future is the past, and this reorganizes what the future can be. Equally, the present is ‘later than’ the future, the future of the future.

The complex configuration wherein the future transforms the present and the future even before the present has happened, and the present is the occasion of an unknown future, is the speculative time-complex (STC).<sup>41</sup> A reordering of the time sequence, the STC maintains the modernity of the irreducibility of the future to the present and the past, countermanding the depletion of time ordering defining contemporaneity. Yet it also countermands the eschatological structure of modernity, for which the new future is an absent yet known eschaton. The STC is the schematic configuration of the unknown future as the operational *prior* condition of the present configured by LaSICS.

Call the present that *internalizes* futurity as its intrinsic material-symbolic-systemic premise the speculative present. Speculative, in part because the STC intensively and extensively exacerbates the futural historicity defining modernity, but without the security of its semantic ordering. That is, the operational premise of the uncertain future at once stipulates and undermines the task of anthropogenic history identified by Koselleck as ‘social and political planes for planful activity that points to the future’. That futural historicity is intrinsic to the speculative present, its basis, which is

also the modification of modern futurity with regard to the intensive and extensive dimensions of the present:

— *Intensive futurity*. Migrating from a horizontal ordering of anthropogenic history to the *intrinsic* operational premise of LaSICS, time is *intrinsically* comprised by its futural historicity. Consequently, the historicity of the unifying eschaton of the new future defining modernity as a cogent task dis-integrates. There is instead the multiplicity of specific speculative mobilizations of futures comprising each present. Each present time of the STC is then internally comprised of the proliferation of multiple, dis-integrative historicities. Calling the socially and systemically ingrained futural historicity of time in the STC *ultrahistoricity* serves to demarcate it from its modern precursor.

— *Extensive futurity*. The operational condition of the speculative present is the inherent uncertainty of the future. The resulting necessary intrinsic limitation and constraint on extrapolations into the future by calculation or planning means that actions and designs made in the speculative present are at best a risk, and such risks proliferate with the dis-integration of the new future. Moreover, risk is not only the premise of the speculative present; it is also instantiated again and recomposed with each instantiation of the STC. Comprised by risk and its proliferation, LaSICS are but an extension of what Ulrich Beck and others have since the mid-1980s called risk societies—societies for which the consequences of knowledge and action are constitutively incomplete at the point they are drawn up.<sup>42</sup>

Decisions taken at any given present in risk societies are vulnerable to eventualities that can only be partially planned. Such limitations are for Beck imposed by empirical and anthropological constraints: risks are not only the unknown consequences of present action but are also systemic, integrated and open-ended. Beck identifies three concomitant dimensions of such a 'delocalization':

- a) spatial: the new risks (e.g. climate change) are spreading over national borders, and even over continents;
- b) temporal: the new risks have a long latency period (e.g. nuclear waste), so that their future effects cannot be reliably determined and restricted; moreover, knowledge and non-knowing are changing so that the question of who is affected is itself temporally open and remains disputed;
- c) social: since the new risks are the result of complex processes involving long chains of effects, their causes and effects cannot be determined with sufficient precision (e.g. financial crises).<sup>43</sup>

In one sense, the theory of risk societies makes the trivial point that, as a futural anthropogenic history, modernity is intrinsically subject to future contingencies, the actuality of which are unknown at the time of action. This triviality does however indicate the significant result that risk resets the futural *historicity* of time from its modern configuration, definitively separating the time-historicity of the STC away from the secular composition of Eurochristian eschatology, which matrix configures the modernity of which the STC is the historical result. Elaboration of this result will lead to the concluding identification of the conditions for a politics and an art adequate to the STC, which is also the revocation of contemporaneity, and the recomposition of what politics and art must then be.

## Contracontemporary

Risk societies are those for which the new future that defines anthropogenic history—the plan—is itself susceptible to future contingencies that can partly be accounted for (by risk management) but also contingencies that can not. The ultrahistoricity of the speculative present vitiates the secular-eschatological conditions of modernity, including anthropogenic history, and the futural historicity of the speculative present is instead *itself* contingent in time. The speculative present is then contramodern. The future is *only* the premise for uncertainty in the present. Which is not to proscribe the possibility of the contentful plan or anthropogenic history. To the contrary, the STC mandates that the future can be reset. But if the risk is too great, any definitive new future is untenable. In exacerbating the historical dynamic of time qua historicity via the systemic social integration comprising LaSICS, the risk composition of the STC is definitively separated from modernity. Yet, in that LaSICS are themselves a result of the comprehensive world history and its development mandated by modernity, risk societies are definitively postmodern.<sup>44</sup>

Equally, however, the priority in the STC of a delocalized futurity unknown to experience means that modernity as it is defined by the horizon of expectation is supplanted for the speculative present not by the horizon of experience, as it is for contemporaneity, but by its intrinsic and contingent time historicity. That is, though the scrambling of the standard time sequence of past, present, and future is common to both contemporaneity and the STC, the former is characterized by the depletion of time-ordering in favour of the contiguity of experience, while the ultrahistoricity of the STC maintains but reverses the time distinction of modernity, exacerbating rather than depleting the futurity of the present. The postmodernity of the speculative present is then contracontemporary as well as countermodern, as are the LaSICS operationalized on this premise.

Being both countermodern *and* countercontemporary, the operational risk characteristic of the speculative present corresponds to neither subvariant of secularized eschatology. The STC maintains and extends the futural historicity inaugurating modernity, of the modern composition of the new and of futures, but now wholly detached from residual Eurochristian configuration, mandating instead the configuration of futures that are comprehensively global. The historicity of the speculative present exacerbates its modern dynamic but at delocalized scales and with no set future.<sup>45</sup> To deploy Jean-François Lyotard's terms, the 'grand narrative' characteristic of modernity is not only supplemented by any number of calculative cautions against contingencies, but history-making according to that plan is itself obfuscated by delocalized risk and the contingent and provisional 'small narratives' of its administration.

Which is to reiterate that risk societies and the speculative present are large-scale, integrated, complex – and futural. The postmodernity of the STC is not then the 'cancellation of the future', as the BFJ thesis contends, but the reverse-ordering of the time-sequence of modernity's secular eschatology. More precisely, while risk-postmodernity vitiates the commanding future organizing modernity, that 'cancellation' is not because of the absencing or withdrawal of futurity, as per the BFJ thesis, but instead because of a contracontemporary *surfeit* of futurity. Modernity is exacerbated such that it is usurped by the counter-postmodernity of the STC. That is, theorized outside of the logic of

the BFJ thesis, the future is 'cancelled' not because it is absented or withdrawn but because there is too much futurity, too much risk, to secure a future—anthropogenic history qua action—over any other. The futural plan typical of the modern task of anthropogenic history loses its way. Another plan will always be needed because no plan is adequate.

Indexed to a specifically anthropogenic condition alone, as Arendt stipulates, the surfeit of the future must however be revoked. Recall that modernity is defined by the future-making of anthropogenic history, which condition for the new is a doctrine of action, and that Arendt incarnates this condition for each human. The delocalization of risk societies however supplants this anthropogenic condition and, with it, Arendt's prioritization of politics as *anthropogenic* futurity. Specifically:

- Scale: as Beck contends, the intermediation of LaSICS mean that decisions and consequences are delocalized, which is to say greater than the capacity of any Arendtian 'space of appearances' of direct interpersonal engagement.<sup>46</sup>
- Integration: action for Arendt leads to the new, the unexpected, because it is each time unique, a uniqueness conferred to each human at birth; but unexpectedness is intrinsic to the speculative present characteristic of LaSICS, for which the uncertainty of the consequences of actions are configured as risks. Comprised by and subordinated to the ultrahistoricity of the speculative present as risk is, human uniqueness is unnecessary to the composition of unexpected consequences.
- Complexity: for Arendt action is unpredictable because its meaning is not disclosed until its subsequent account; yet if the unknown future precedes the present in the STC, and if the future that results from any act is in fact a new composition of risks, then there cannot be a determinate culmination or completable sequence for any act, nor any completed meaning. Ultrahistoricity means instead that the recording of history is nonterminal, and that unpredictability precedes action as its premise.

That is, each of Arendt's anthropogenic determinations of action is inadequate to the contramodernity of the STC. Overall, her theory of politics is insufficient to the speculative present. More generally, the surfeit of the future in risk societies means that *anthropogenic* action is an insufficient and inadequate basis for forging the future. Assuming the residual validity of modernity as its theoretical and political scheme, the BFJ thesis of the cancellation of the future misidentifies that the future is forged according to a speculative present whose futurity erodes the ultimacy of anthropogenic history. To be clear: action cannot overcome risk in the comprehensive postmodernity of LaSICS because risk comprises the preconditions and consequences of action. Rather, forging a future in the speculative present by action first requires a delimitation of the futurity of the speculative present, which means (i) the constraining of risk, and also (ii) the redetermination of action itself distinct from its modern anthropogenic determination. Elaborating these requirements in turn provides the concluding derivation of a contracontemporary politics—the setting of the future of the future—and of an art adequate to the delocalized speculative present comprising LaSICS.

— *Risk Constraint*. If the making of a specific future is not to be 'cancelled' by the surfeit of the future, the risk composition of the speculative present must be constrained. Such constraints can include various kinds of security, insurance, social provision, and capital; or, on the other hand, by

regressions such as the reimposition of linear calibrations of progress or eschaton, or the highly bounded and stabilized semantic structures and consequent social organizing effects of traditionalisms. The theoretical generalization of these measures is that constraining or abating risk in order to direct a course of action—to initiate a future—presumes a selection of risk, contingent on the specifics of the speculative present in each instance and the specific future to be set. Yet, all such constraints are themselves only incomplete and uncertain in the STC, only partly knowable in their consequences and delocalized effects. The constraints to risk are themselves risks. Moreover, the selection of what risks are to be abated is to select various possible future outcomes over others, a provisional—and only ever provisional setting—of the future of the future. And that is a politics, one that is prior to anthropogenic action.

— *Action redux*. Because the risk intrinsic to the STC is not uniquely a consequence of individual actions but a situated compositional requirement of LaSICS, the constraining of risk is a systemic condition to provide the *social* capacity to enact the future—'social' here meaning the configuration of LaSICS, not the interpersonal engagement in a space of appearances. To be clear: it is not that anthropogenic action and interventions are eliminated in LaSICS. Rather that, configured by the STC, anthropogenic action is configured by the delocalized *socius* of LaSICS. That *socius* is definitionally more expansive and at scales of systemic integration and interconnection greater than individual or socially segmented anthropogenic capacity.

That is, LaSICS supplant the anthropogenesis of history defining modernity, including action and art, with a *sociogenic* enacting of the future defined by the irreducible consequences of that modernity. Action, because it is not the 'human condition' or history (*Historie*) or the horizon of experience that provides the basis for action in the speculative present of LaSICS, or of what its capacity of the new is, but instead a meta-anthropic—or, abbreviated, metanthropic—affordance of LaSICS.<sup>47</sup> To reiterate: the metanthropic condition of action does not eliminate anthropogenic history but encompasses it and deprioritizes it as a provisional semantic constraint to risk, but a constraint which, for that reason, comprises further sociogenic risks. And that deprioritization stipulates the resetting of art too. In particular, the sociogenic enacting of the future supplants both the premise and the results of art since the avant-garde; the premise being the historico-political freedom of anthropogenic history-making, and the result being the consolidation and reinforcement of the 'bourgeois institution' of artistic autonomy qua CA. Two requirements for such a comprehensively sociogenic art highlight its distinction from art since the avant-garde. First, contrasted to an art that is in each instance an individuated opening of meaning without finality—typical of the avant-garde artwork in Modernism as it is when resituated to the open-ended interpretive task of the addressee in CA—'the new' of an art adequate to the speculative present is configured not by the freedoms demonstrated by such semantic indeterminacy but instead by its *specification* of a future. And such a specification is in each case a historico-systemically situated constraining of risk intrinsic to the speculative present. 'Historico-systemically situated' here rephrases that the speculative present is comprised sociogenically; that specifying a future by constraining risk is a sociogenic operation. Second, then, the art adequate to the risk composition of LaSICS is a situated component in the

socially integrated composition of the speculative present and its risk. So, comprised, art's autonomy is abrogated.

Two consequences follow, which, though contradictory in Modernism, are in fact aspects of the one requirement for an art adequate to the speculative present: (i) the ambition of the avant-garde according to Bürger, to rescind art's bourgeois institutional autonomy from the social totality, is realized—but not as an artistic or political-critical imperative motivating the avant-garde. On the contrary, artistic avant-gardism is completed and supplanted because art is one component institution of risk constraint in the sociogenic specification of a future in the speculative present. Accordingly, (ii) the art adequate to the speculative present has no priority or privilege as an institutional format for the future of the new. Configured by the speculative present, the criticism Bürger makes of Adorno's commodity paradigm for the future of the new of art is reversed: the future of the new that was once the prerogative of art since the avant-garde is instead a ubiquitous feature of LaSICS, including but not limited to commodities. Art is then one among other component aspects in an economy of risk constraint in LaSICS.<sup>48</sup> Conversely, while defending art's autonomy qua Modernism or CA from the comprehensively sociogenic composition of the speculative present also constrains the more general and systemic sociogenic risk it is imbricated in—by insisting for example on its historical formats of individuated, personalized, and subjective presentation and interpretation—such constraints limit risk by repudiating all but microscale operations. For that very reason, however, such art cannot attain the multi-scalar operability or situate the *sociogenic* specificity of its risk constraint in the surfeit of futurity. The defence of art since the avant-garde cannot then configure one future over another. And without the sociogenic constraint of risk, such art is limited to the proliferation of simultaneous disparate semanticizations, which is the defuturity of CA.

As cases of anthropogenic history, variants of the uniquely human capability to enact a new future, both art since modernity and action as Arendt proposes it are supplanted by the risk politics of the metanthropic-sociogenic speculative present. If, then, they are to continue to meet the task of setting a future, both art and politics have to be reset by the risk politics of delimiting the surfeit of futurity so as to set a future. And while the sociogenic resetting of the conditions of anthropogenic history has been somewhat adopted by various generalizations of anthropogenic incarnation as condition of action and semanticization—such as (but not limited to) posthumanism, transhumanism, antihumanism and inhumanism—these are but conversions of the historical modernity of development, particular subordinate components of the sociogenic generality of risk-politics enabling action in the speculative present. Unconstrained from these residual anthropogenic determinations, metanthropic development is instead the uncertain future of sociogenic contingencies, which means the uncertainty of development distinct from modernity. That postmodernity, initiated by LaSICS, operationalized qua the STC, is a global historical development distinct not just from Euromodernity but moreover from any anthropogenic future; a future that is unpredictable because it can have no semanticizing account, no adequate *Historie*. A development comprised instead by a future in the future.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The distinction between the present future—the future for the present—and the future present—the present that is in the future—is made in Elena Esposito, *The Future of Futures: Time of Money in Financing and Society* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011 [Italian: 2009]), 126ff.

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition (Second Edition)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1958]), pp. 177-78.

<sup>3</sup> Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 198.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 176-77.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 191-92.

<sup>6</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantic of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004 [German: 1979]), p. 195.

<sup>7</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all citations from Koselleck in this section are from *Futures Past*, pp. 193-96.

<sup>8</sup> Arendt is compared against Koselleck for the sake of the present argument. The historical attribution is in fact the reverse: for Arendt's influence on Koselleck's thinking of totalitarianism in the 1950s see Niklas Olsen, *History in the Plural: An Introduction to the Work of Reinhart Koselleck* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), p. 88 n.8; and, more substantially, Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman, 'Koselleck, Arendt, and the Anthropology of Historical Experience', trans. Tom Lampert, *History and Theory* 49:2, May 2010, pp. 212-236.

<sup>9</sup> Koselleck, *Futures Past*, p. 196; see also p. 132. And, 'historical time, if the concept has a specific meaning, is bound up with social and political actions, with concretely acting and suffering human beings and their institutions and organizations' (p. 2). About a century after the period Koselleck is examining, Friedrich Nietzsche presents a typography of the degrees history mandates and debilitates action – or 'life' as Nietzsche designates the term of present development: see 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', trans. R.J. Hollingdale, *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997 [1876]).

<sup>10</sup> For a recent counterintuitive example of history-making according to a horizon of expectation—a horizon marked in this case by the *inhuman* as the *ratio*genic transformation of intelligence currently vectored through the human as its historical basis but to be freed from it—see Reza Negarestani, 'The Labor of the Inhuman', in Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian (eds.), *#accelerate. The Accelerationist Reader* (Falmouth/Berlin: Urbanomic Press/Merve, 2014), pp. 427-66.

<sup>11</sup> Koselleck, *Op. cit.*, p. 196

<sup>12</sup> Koselleck, *Op. cit.*, p. 232; syntax rearranged.

<sup>13</sup> The supplanting of Eurochristian eschatology by anthropogenic history is explicitly dramatized a century or so after the semantic convergence Koselleck identifies by various European existential tracts on the Death of God—notably including Nietzsche, for whom the divine eschaton is replaced by the *Übermensch*, the overman. Following Koselleck's lead, the *Übermensch* is but the replacement of the historical condition of the divine eschaton by *anthropos* as its anthropogenic term. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006 [1883-92]), p. 5. The replacement of God as the condition of historical structuring by an anthropogenic stipulation is previewed slightly earlier by Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*, trans. Josephine Naukhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001 [1882]), §125.

<sup>14</sup> For the distinction between the horizons of experience and expectation, see Koselleck, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Koselleck, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

<sup>16</sup> Frederic Jameson identifies historicity with 'true futurity' in 'The Aesthetics of Singularity', *New Left Review* 92, March-April 2015, p. 120.

<sup>17</sup> Koselleck, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

<sup>18</sup> Koselleck, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

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<sup>19</sup> Koselleck, op. cit., p. 240; emphasis added.

<sup>20</sup> Koselleck, op. cit., p. 228, for the following quote too.

<sup>21</sup> Koselleck, op. cit., p. 224, also p. 228: ‘*neue Zeit* ... can signify in a simple fashion that the contemporary *Zeit* is, by contrast with one previous, “new”, whatever the mode of graduation. It is in this sense that the term *modernus* was coined, which has not, since then, lost the meaning of “today”’.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 1984 [German: 1980<sup>2</sup> (1974<sup>1</sup>)]).

<sup>23</sup> Bürger, op. cit., p. 29, translation modified to accord with Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentnor (London: Continuum, 2002 [German: 1970]), p. 21.

<sup>24</sup> Bürger, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>25</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all citations in this section are from Bürger, op. cit., pp. 57-63.

<sup>26</sup> Bürger, op. cit., p. 60-61, syntax modified.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London: Verso, 2013), Ch.1; *The Postconceptual Condition* (London: Verso, 2018), Part One.

<sup>28</sup> Bürger, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>29</sup> Koselleck, op. cit., p. 238.

<sup>30</sup> Koselleck, op. cit., p. 238; for the next quote too.

<sup>31</sup> Koselleck, op. cit., p. 246.

<sup>32</sup> Bürger, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>33</sup> See Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014<sup>2</sup> [1997<sup>1</sup>]). Danto proposes the posthistory of art consequent to its ‘end’: ‘contemporary art ... has no brief against the art of the past, no sense that the past is something from which liberation must be won, no sense even that it is at all different as art from modern art generally. It is part of what defines contemporary art that the art of the past is available for such use as artists care to give it’ (p. 5).

Danto’s thesis was first published in explicit form in 1984, acknowledging Hans Belting’s 1983 argument for the end of art, on the basis that the ‘grand narrative’ of artistic development is irredeemable. See Hans Belting, *The End of the History of Art*, trans. Christopher S. Wood (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987 [German: 1983]). Belting’s characterization recalls Jean-François Lyotard’s breakthrough conception of postmodernism in 1979 as the ‘incredulity’ towards grand narratives of progress, replaced then by small narratives without overarching developmental logic. See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993 [French: 1979]).

<sup>34</sup> Mark Fisher, *The Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2014), pp. 7-8, ellipses added. Fisher cites Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi, *After the Future*, trans. Arianna Bove, Melinda Cooper, Eric Empson, Enrico Giuseppina Mecchia, and Tiziana Terranova (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2011), pp. 18-19. Fisher’s characterization of the folding back of (pop) cultural time relies on Simon Reynolds, *Retromania: Pop Culture’s Addiction to its Own Past* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2011). For William Gibson, calling on ‘whatever relevant kinds of historical literacy, and fluency in recombination’ is an ‘atemporality’ (@GreatDismal, Twitter, 25 May 2009 [twitter.com/GreatDismal/status/1918556578]; accessed March 2018).

<sup>35</sup> Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Alresford: Zero Books, 2009), p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> This is a constant in Jameson’s writing on postmodernity. See for example the summary statement in ‘The Aesthetics of Singularity’: ‘the very heart of any account of postmodernity ... [is] a dissolution of past and future alike, a kind of contemporary imprisonment in the present...[,] an existential but also collective loss of historicity in such a way that the future fades away as unthinkable or unimaginable, while the past itself turns into dusty images.’ Jameson oddly calls this condition a ‘volatilization of temporality’ (p. 120) rather than its depletion.

<sup>37</sup> Frederic Jameson, ‘Future City’, *New Left Review* 21, May-June 2003, p. 76. Jameson here refers to J.G. Ballard as the ‘better coordinate’ than cyberpunk for the apocalyptic imaginary of the ‘churning pseudo-temporality of matter ceaselessly mutating all around us’ designated ‘junkspace’

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by Rem Koolhaas. Jameson's statement is a paraphrase without attribution of H. Bruce Franklin's criticism of Ballard as being limited to 'project[ing] the doomed social structure in which he exists' instead of a utopian project of a new world: 'What could Ballard create if he were able to envision the end of capitalism as not the end, but the beginning, of a human world?' See H. Bruce Franklin, 'What Are We to Make of J. G. Ballard's Apocalypse?', in Thomas D. Claerson (ed.), *Voices For The Future: Essays On Major Science Fiction Writers, Vol. 2* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1979), pp. 82–105 (also available at [www.jgballard.ca/criticism/ballard\_apocalypse\_1979.html]).

<sup>38</sup> Jameson, 'Aesthetics of Singularity', p. 121.

<sup>39</sup> This because the thesis is Marxian, meaning that it enjoins a horizon of communism, which is precisely a horizon of expectation structuring the present as directed to a new future distinct from it. On this eschatological format, elaborated in a moment in the main text, see Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 2006 [1993]). Derrida identifies Marxism as 'messianic without messianism', which is to say that it proposes 'a certain experience of the emancipatory promise' according to 'the formality of a structural messianism' (p. 74). For Derrida, this messianic structure, to be absolutely endorsed in Marxism, is demarcated from messianism, which is a 'metaphysico-religious determination' that gives specific identity to the term of that promise (p. 111). In that Derrida's messianic structure of emancipation proposes a formal and metahistorical determination of justice via Marxism, his theorization is subject to precisely the same criticism Bürger puts to Adorno regarding the transcendentalization of the new of Modernism, now only with regard to capitalism as a whole, as socioeconomic contemporaneity, which, accordingly, is then effectively reinforced by its Marxist criticism and, more so, by what is 'undeconstructible' of deconstruction (p. 33).

<sup>40</sup> See Greta R. Rippner, *Capitalizing on Crisis: The Political Origins of the Rise of Finance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); and Martijn Konings, *Capital and Time: For a New Critique of Neoliberal Reason* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018).

<sup>41</sup> Armen Avanessian and Suhail Malik, 'The Speculative Time Complex', in Avanessian and Malik (eds.), *The Time Complex: Post-Contemporary* (Miami: [NAME], 2016), 5-56 (also available at [dismagazine.com/discussion/81924/the-time-complex-postcontemporary/]).

<sup>42</sup> Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society*, trans. Mark Ritter (London: Sage, 1992 [1986]); Ulrich Beck, *World at Risk*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Oxford: Polity, 2008 [2007]); and Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Sage, 2002). Other theorizations of risk societies are also provided by: Anthony Giddens, *The Consequence of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); Niklas Luhmann, *Risk: A Sociological Theory*, trans. Rhodes Barrett (New York: Routledge, 2017 [1991]); and Esposito, *The Future of Futures*.

<sup>43</sup> Beck, *World at Risk*, p. 52.

<sup>44</sup> In the early 1990s, Giddens proposed that what was then often called postmodernity was not the overcoming of modernity but 'modernity coming to understand itself', its 'radicalization'. See Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity*, pp. 48-52. The convergence of Giddens's argument with the characterization of contracontemporary postmodernity is however blocked by Giddens's characterization of prereflexive modernity (characterizing the Enlightenment for Giddens) as inheriting the preceding premodern composition of 'divine providence which is replaced by providential progress' according to reason, thereby 'replac[ing] one type of certainty by another' (p. 48, syntax modified) – providing then a basis for European validation of its colonial dominance, as Koselleck also notes. Koselleck's thesis, however, is that history can be remade qua modernity precisely because even though its format is eschatological, *all* extrahistorical determinations are renounced. What Giddens calls reflexive modernity is just modernity anyway according to Koselleck. Only that (i) reflexive modernity proposes that historicity is open without any eschatological configuration—which is postmodernity according to the main argument here; and (ii) such a postmodernity itself takes two formats—contemporaneity and the contracontemporary composition of the STC, which distinction is unavailable to Giddens for historical and theoretical reasons.

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<sup>45</sup> Benjamin Bratton's characterization of 'planetary computation' as an 'accidental megastructure' provides a salient example for the construction of LaSICS: see *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), §2. Climate change and the Anthropocene provide another example of global-scale future qua risk: see Ulrich Beck, *The Metamorphosis of the World: How Climate Change is Transforming Our Concept of the World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016). The necessity of integration and complexity are also demonstrated by the conjunction of these two global-scale configurations: addressing climate change and the Anthropocene historically, prospectively and politically requires planetary orders of computation in modelling, observation (not least through satellite-based imaging), and communication networks.

<sup>46</sup> Suhail Malik, 'The Onto-Politics of the Spectacle and the Abu Ghraib Images', in Amanda Beech, Jaspas Joseph-Lester, Matthew Poole (eds), *Episode: Pleasure and Persuasion in Lens-based Media* (London: Artwords Press, 2008), pp. 105-116.

<sup>47</sup> Metanthropic here, signifying the sociogenic rather than individuated and corporeal basis of action in LaSICS, is distinct from 'metanthrope' used by both Raphael Lepuschitz and Charles Stross, both of whom deploy the term to mark technical transformations of the human body, a recomposition more regularly designated by 'transhumanism'. See Raphael Lepuschitz, *Der Metanthrop: Von Menschen und Maschinen* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2010); and Stross's one mention of the term in *Accelerando* (London, Orbit, 2005), p. 288. There is by definition no 'metanthrope' as individuated subject of the metanthropic operation proposed in the main text here. The latter is much closer to Giddens's notion of 'structuration' but one configured in a speculative present, meaning that structuration is also a destructuration. See Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Cambridge: Polity, 1986).

<sup>48</sup> See Diann Bauer, Suhail Malik, Natalia Zuluaga, 'Operationalizing Real Abstraction: Art and the General Abstract Image', in Gean Moreno (ed.), *In the Mind but not from There: Real Abstraction and Contemporary Art* (New York: Verso, forthcoming).