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The Museum's Fourth Future

Abstract:

It is a widely accepted trope that museums work for future generations. They often define themselves in relation to heritage: something of the past, which is celebrated in the present and securely preserved for the future. In doing so, museums cloak themselves in a shroud of respectability for appropriately thinking in short and long terms and bravely facing future challenges. But what kind of future is at stake in this imperative to secure a heritage for future generations? Taking on a deliberate speculative tone and a philosophical outlook, this essay attempts to address this question by suggesting that museums organize their work on the basis of three futures, entirely riveted to an economic understanding of temporality. Against these, the essay also proposes a fourth future that not only gives impetus to their existence, but also provides them with the only way out of the economic temporalities that govern their existence.

Keywords:

museum future, cultural heritage, museum curation, temporal economy, museum management, speculative philosophy, hope

Introduction

It is a common trope today to say that museums create future heritages.¹ They purchase artifacts from either the past or the present in order to preserve them for the future and in doing so, they put together future heritages. These practices are recognizable across the spectrum of museums, but essentially unquantifiable with any precision. It is not just one future heritage across all museums world-wide, but many future heritages with ever-increasing contents and remits.² This obviously only concerns museums with permanent or semi-permanent collections. Deaccessioning programs only reinforce the trope, selecting what counts today as future heritage over what is deemed either problematic or no longer relevant.³ Displacement of future heritage away from the confines of museums and into material-specific ex-situ conservation practices (the new museum without walls) might change their epistemic status, but not the logic of their apprehension of temporality.⁴ Of course, museums are not exclusively future orientated historicizing institutions. They also create experiences, entertain, inform, and create future imaginaries.⁵ But the very foundation of their existence is to determine value and secure what is valued in order to preserve it for future generations to bear witness to.

By bridging together future and heritage, museums are thereby causal machines creating links between temporal instances all in the hope that these links will be progressively consolidated in the future.⁶ A group of objects, for example, gets labelled, cataloged, and temporarily exhibited and the intention is indeed that such a taxonomic categorization and exposure withstands the test of time. The endless process of revisions (by feminist and anti-racist scholars, most notably), of previous movements in the history of art, for example, only confirm these accurate or inaccurate causal machinations of museums.⁷ Whether they do so consciously or not, museums invariably write biased causal narratives (historical, theoretical, cultural, geographical, political, social, etc.), based on the selective contents of their collections and/or what is loaned. This is what Foucault refers to when he defines temporal arrangements as ideological driven sets of ideas, *Weltanschauungen* that are always historically circumscribed and contingent.⁸ Even in recent instances where wokeness is, for good or bad, all the rage, the causalities are invariably determined by ideologies and narratives popular at the time of their inception and this often irrespective of local contexts or wider narratives. There is never an end to these

1) In what follows, I understand the future and other temporal dimensions as socio-ontological constructs and not in the way these are articulated in physics. Unfortunately, I cannot explore here this issue. I also realize that emphasizing future heritage from the start is typical of a problematic western universalizing enterprise. Unfortunately, I cannot explore non-western – for example, African – conceptualizations of the future, for which there is only the past and the present. For the former see Hammer, *Philosophy and Temporality*, 11-36; for the latter, see Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*.

2) For a good sense of such diversity and how it expands onto various environmental spheres, see Harrison, DeSilvey, Holtorf, Macdonald, Bartolini, Breithoff, Fredheim, et al. *Heritage Futures*. See also, their comprehensive website: <https://heritage-futures.org/> (2015–2019). See also, DeSilvey, *Curated Decay*, and *Landscape Futures*.

3) On this topic, see, amongst others, Besterman, “Disposals from Museum Collections”; Lewis, “Attitudes to Disposal”; Robertson, “Infamous De-Accession”; Mann, “To Have and To Hold”; and Lyubomudrova, “From Museum to Auction Block.”

4) On this topic, see Harrison, “Forgetting to Remember” and Harrison, “On Heritage Ontologies.”

5) From cabinets of curiosities to children and science museums today, museums often present visitors with things unknown to them. Museums are indeed vehicles for materializing new questions and concepts that are not yet known. However, these imaginary futures remain nonetheless still riveted to temporal economies, for which the imagination is often the placeholder of our fears and hopes. On this topic, see Kemp and Andersson, “Futures,” chapt. 3. For a broader analysis of how capitalist societies rely on imaginaries to sustain themselves, see Beckert, *Imagined Futures*.

6) On this topic, see Knell, *Museums and the Future of Collecting*.

7) A memorable example of the former is de Zegher, *Inside the Visible*.

8) See, Foucault, *The Order of Things*, especially, 19–50.

causal machinations for they constitute the core activity of museums, leaving viewers, tourists, and scholars lapping them up critically or not.

Faced with such futural historicizations and causal machinations, artists and anyone who aspires to enter their hallowed halls, can only on the whole, perceive museums as the ultimate destinations for all their endeavors.⁹ Artists openly or unconsciously work in the hope of being part of these causalities hegemonically imposed by museums and the posterity they are perceived to secure. Unwittingly or not, through their taxes and ticket purchases, viewers equally pin their hopes on museums as ultimate destinations for their own cultural heritage. Museum directors and curators also tirelessly think of and operate their museums as the sole destination to whatever they can get hold of, even if their museums' ecological footprint renders their future existence highly questionable. Collectors follow suit with their bequeathals and donations, invariably always hoping that their names survive alongside their riches. Finally, governments bank on museums as the sole repositories of their country's treasures. Ever since their creation in the eighteenth century,¹⁰ everyone has a stake in determining museums as the ultimate destinations of all human creative and scientific endeavors.¹¹

But museums are not just future orientated historicizing institutions, causal machineries, and the sole destinations of artifacts and their archives. They are also projections. Museums are indeed places where the future, and specifically the long-term future, is forecasted as being self-evidently secured. There are no other houses on Earth in which this projective future is more securely fastened. Of course, museums operate, like financial institutions, on the basis of ubiquitous short-term projections, capital budgets, and/or valuations. However, unlike financial institutions, museums know no long-term contingency plans because while the future is always technically unknown, the existence of museums as these "forever" repositories is never put into question. Unlike prisons with their many potential future alternatives, museums are assumed to always exist in one form or another. Where else could all these artworks, artifacts, and objects go if not in museums? Answers to this question are always short in coming, not because the alternatives are inexistant (back to private and/or princely collections, for example), but because museums are emblematic of the many taxonomic Enlightenment projects (zoos, gardens, prisons, herbaria, asylums, etc.), and like democracy and capital are conceived, as will be explored later, as ends in themselves. Even if they often fail in their tasks and even if they engage in successful deaccessioning ventures, the long-term projections of museums are simply unquestionable.

But how is one to understand this odd museum future: historicizing causal machinations structured in respect of both secured destinations and projections? In asking this question, my aim is simply to encourage a purely *speculative* rethinking of the idea of the future of museums and not to enter, for good or bad, into the specific daily undertakings of museums that are intrinsic to their various sizes, remits, and spheres of influence. My argument is simply that considering the aspects explored below, museums today overall limit themselves to four different types of future. These are obviously non-exhaustive. Others could be determined.¹² Out of the four, three stand out for the way they are structured as specific temporal economies.¹³ I understand a temporal

9) This is also the case for artists who deliberately sought to subvert the hegemonic power of the museum. On this topic, see Lippard, *Six Years*.

10) On this topic, see Maleuvre, *Museum Memories*.

11) As already foreseen by De Quincy as far back as 1804. See De Quincy, *Considerations Morales*. See also Valéry, "The Problem with Museums."

12) For a comprehensive overview of the many ways time is perceived today (planetary, geological, environmental, social, cultural, political, collective, etc.), see the work of Michelle Bastian at: <https://www.temporalbelongings.org>.

13) I use here the expression "temporal economies" to avoid the ideologically driven expression, "regimes of historicity," that is common amongst historians when analyzing the future of museums. On "regime of historicity," see Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity*, xvi.

economy in a broad sense, namely, as the short-, medium-, or long-term future management of human affairs.¹⁴ Such a view reduces the future not only to something exclusively determinable in the present,¹⁵ but also most importantly, to an endless bartering process whereby what is past, present, or future is related to each other in a process of infinite (re-)negotiation.¹⁶ The famous Lewis Chessmen – rendered popular by the Harry Potter film franchise – for example, are an artifact discovered in 1831 that are now considered the most well-travelled treasures in the British Museum’s collection. What was made in 1150 has now become the object of twenty or so temporary “loans” across many different timespans and exhibiting spaces. These chessmen are now circulating commodities entangled in webs of temporal economies. Against these spatial and managerial temporal economies, there is a fourth future – which I attempt to explore at the end – that not only founds the preceding three futures, but also secretly provides museums with their only horizon of possibility.

To speculatively demonstrate this and characterize these four futures, I will be seeking the help of several authors. One of which is Reinhart Koselleck. For lack of space, I will not contextualize his work (his dependency on the work of Heidegger and Schmitt, his vantage point as a vanquished writer after WWII, his divergent perspectives in relation to Habermas, or his secularized reinterpretation of eschatology, one which does not bring salvation, but a generalized reactionary pessimism),¹⁷ I will only attempt to justify this choice. What I think is crucial in Koselleck’s work is firstly, to have recognized a plurality of historical time-structures existing simultaneously and, secondly, to have drawn a distinction between time understood as a set of durations (or “varying extensions of time”¹⁸), and one understood as lived. The former is a datum (chronological, for example) against which the latter can be registered. Without such a datum, lived time does not register, it makes no sense. Strong of such a distinction, Koselleck exposes how western modernity transformed its understanding of time to exclusively rely on sets of durations to the detriment of lived time. In doing so, he reveals the entire arsenal of archaic and telic representations and their inevitable epochal stampings. By reintroducing the idea of lived time, Koselleck shows how duration has been co-opted by economic forces into this endless bartering temporal process. In what follows, I will mostly focus on this co-option by economic forces and highlight the exception, namely this fourth future, which gives museums the possibility of freeing themselves from their temporal economic shackles.

The First Three Temporal Economies

When it comes to museums, these beacons of western enlightened modernity, the future is mostly a future present, that is, an economic set of durations based on present perspectives.¹⁹ The future of museums is on the whole reduced to this artificial rational datum and completely ignores lived time. Such a view not only robs museums of time’s manifold and multifaceted live qualities, it also chains them to a purely economic under-

14) For an account of the history that led to this understanding of the future as traded, see Adam and Groves, *Future Matters*, 57–76.

15) For example: “The way we preserve something is influenced by the way we imagine the future – in other words, the future past depends on the present future.” Holtorf and Högberg, *Cultural Heritage and the Future*, 58.

16) The most extreme type of temporal bartering beyond the museum is perhaps that of intergenerational equity for which past generations are viewed as having produced a future debt for their children. See Willetts, *The Pinch*; Cagney, *Justice and Future Generation*; and MacAskill, *What We Owe the Future*.

17) For a comprehensive introduction, see Olsen, *History in the Plural*.

18) Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 95.

19) I will not draw here from Luhmann’s distinction between “present futures” (contemporary observations of possible futures) and “future presents” (contemporary relations binding sequence of actions and events in time) because the latter necessarily, for me, implies the former. I think Koselleck’s distinction between “lived time” and “durational future” is more productive for our purpose. See Luhmann, “The Future Cannot Begin,” 130–52.

standing of the future. Lived time is complex. Everyone experiences it differently (gender, race, age, socio-cultural backgrounds, etc.). And yet, notwithstanding such an extraordinary diversity, economic apperceptions of time riveted to calendar and clock time remain paramount, regulating, co-ordinating, and controlling everything as if an unquestionable universal truth that cares little for time's many eddies, pools, and flows.²⁰ If one starts to unpick this predominant economic future present, it quickly becomes apparent that it has three crucial characteristics. The idea behind this characterization is not to circumscribe museums' future, but to highlight the general trends in their apprehension of the future. The topic of the future has dramatically come to the fore of many disciplines (sociology, anthropology, museology, etc.), with varying degrees of success, thus rendering any attempt to address it rather cumbersome. To attempt a comprehensive survey would be impossible.²¹ The following characterization is thus simply indicative and not dogmatically intended.

First, the future present of museums is invariably understood through the prism of prognoses and forecasts. In other words, a museum future is essentially the determinable prognostication of a rationally evaluated situation. This is what in English is called futurity, that is, a future time entirely determined in and by the present.²² It involves, for example, budget templates, contingency plans, exhibition timetables, rotas for employment, shipment, storage, conservation, and restoration; as well as schedules, aims, objectives; without forgetting legacies, bequeaths, and endowments. This is by no means an exhaustive list. As soon as a museum receives an object or artifact, for example, it invariably organizes its storage, restoration, its potential future exhibitions, the loans, the insurance, and most importantly, the potential funding sources it could tap into in order to secure its survival and/or exposure. The museum thus articulates its future chiefly in the present through advancing projected temporal returns.²³ At stake here is the need to colonize what is perceived as an open future²⁴ and thereby of eliminating as much as possible the danger of contingent factors that could threaten such colonization, even if these factors, as is well known, often derail many projected returns.²⁵

The reason this first future of museums is channeled through colonizing economies is because the future is entirely conceived in spatial terms as a territory to be dealt with.²⁶ The root cause for this is, of course, the long-standing western understanding of time through spatial metaphors. The future sits at the end of what is usually understood as this spatialized, homogeneous continuum that progresses in short, medium, or long strides. From Aristotle's understanding of time as a "quantity of movement according to a before and an after,"²⁷ whose continuity is assured by its division into discrete instants analogous to geometric points in space, to Augustine's anguished interrogation of fleeting time from the paths of the stars to interior duration,²⁸ to Hegel's conception

20) Although I reach different conclusions, I obviously echo here Berardi's sentiment that contemporary society is indeed unable to evade the algorithmic loop and the racketing of profit to which we are all tied. See Berardi, *Futurability*.

21) An example of such an attempt can be seen with Kuosa, "Evolution of Future Studies."

22) On this topic and on alternative interpretations of this term, see Martinon, *On Futurity*.

23) I am aware that these temporal economies are also juxtaposed with others, such as those established by religion (calls to prayer and Ramadan, for example). I can only leave the exposition of this web of economic temporalities for another time.

24) The exact birth of the idea of the future as colonizable is debatable. Some seem to favor the French Revolution in the way it changed the meaning of revolution "from a turning back to a moving forward." On this topic, see Nisbert, *Social Change and History*, 106 ff., and Luhmann, "The Future Cannot Begin," 130–52.

25) The most blatant way of colonizing the future is through the development of the discipline of anticipation. UNESCO's Futures Literacy Framework, for example, advocates to "transform human governance by empowering everyone to use-the-future more efficiently." (<https://en.unesco.org/futuresliteracy>). See also Miller, *Transforming the Future*.

26) H.G. Wells was probably the first to identify the future as a horizon of colonial opportunity. See Wells, *The Discovery of the Future*.

27) Aristotle, *Physics*, 219a10-219a29.

28) Augustine, *Confessions*, chapt. 15–32.

of time as a negative dialectical dominion of time/space structured by an ever-moving Spirit,²⁹ to Marx's reading of Hegel's temporal movement as concrete praxis,³⁰ all the way to the vain efforts of recent Accelerationists³¹ to precipitate Marx's proletarian state, western perceptions of the future are invariably reduced to spatial representations.³² The list put forward here is again, of course, non-exhaustive. What is distinctive nonetheless about today's spatial colonizations of the future is that they are invariably short-sighted. Perhaps because the distant future is, as will be explored later, both self-evident and secure, museums' future today is indeed always near: what directors perceive as immediately coming and potentially controllable.

This western understanding of the future as this territorial advancement is extraordinarily unshakable. No one would dare to think of the future in any other way than as this spatial colonization with trends, scenarios, driving forces, and returns in sight. This is altogether surprising considering the many attempts in the history of western thought to debunk it.³³ Even in recent efforts to de-anthropomorphize museums,³⁴ the future remains a necessary extension of the present, albeit now thankfully changed to accommodate non-human perspectives. In such views, museums' artifacts are now enmeshed in noticeable "lines of flight" that generate further visible "planes or strata of relations," thus clearly emphasizing again spatial configurations of time. The problem with such a reinvigorated, but nonetheless still spatial view of time is that it continues to be, once more, riveted to an economic understanding of the future that reduces it to an endless play of territorialization and deterritorialization. Even de-anthropomorphized, the future of museums remains nonetheless prone to rational³⁵ determinations exclusively understood through spatial metaphors.³⁶

To truly get us out of these understandings of the future as territorial advancements, it is necessary I think, to reflect again on how these economic future presents have come to predominate our contemporary world. This is where I suggest we turn to Koselleck. One of the aims of his book, *Futures Past*, is this transition

29) Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §102–108.

30) Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1–20.

31) For an interpretation of the phenomenon without political direction, see Rosa, *Social Acceleration*; for accelerationism, see Mackay and Avanesian, *Acceleration*, and Noys, *Malign Velocity*.

32) For a commentary on time as a spatial continuum, see Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 97–116.

33) Whether it is – Nietzsche's eternal return for which the future is always here in the way it breaks with the past (*Untimely Meditations*, 61–63); Benjamin's messianic interventions that determine the future irrespective of the march of time (*Illuminations*, 253–62); Heidegger's attempt to turn the future into the gesture of Being (*Being and Time*); Deleuze's stoic distinction between Chronos and Aion making the future the rapport between the two (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 58–65); Negri's Kairos, this restless instant that leans out beyond the edge of time to create a revolutionary point of decision (*Time for Revolution*, 152 and Smith, "Time, Times, and the Right Time," 1–13); Kristeva's feminist call to consider archaic marginal movements in opposition to masculine times of progression ("Women's Time"); Adorno's stepping out of the magic spell of progress in order to witness the future unravelling (*Critical Models*, 150); Arendt's focus on intervals in time that are no longer and not yet (*Between Past and Present*); Foucault's plea to remove chronology to reveal in the history of an experience, a movement in its own right (*History of Madness*, 122); or De Landa's efforts to think the way matter-energy generates futural expressions of time (*A Thousand Years*) – the attempts to debunk the idea of the future as this territorial advancement is too long to be properly addressed here.

34) Harrison and Sterling, *Deterritorialising the Future*, 43ff.

35) The problem is indeed that such vision of the future is always structured by a type of Leibnizian principle of sufficient reason that translates it as a self-evident temporal unfolding. Such a principle unfortunately goes against this attempt to think of objects irrespective of subjects because it is invariably structured by the all-too-human reasoning process that sees them as indeed perduring. There is unfortunately no space here to explore this satisfactorily. On this topic, see Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*. For Deleuze's Leibnizian take on becoming see Deleuze, *The Fold*.

36) Another example of this is McKenzie's Possitopia, an alternative to both dystopia and utopia which hopes to braid the "probable" and the "preferable" in order to create a viable path for humanity. It rests yet again on a set of spatial reductions of the future. See <https://climatemuseumuk.org/2020/10/15/explaining-possitopia/> and Voros, "Big History and Anticipation."

that occurred at the start of the modern period, roughly between 1500 and 1800. Koselleck argues that the future changed during that time from being perceived in anticipation of a guaranteed end of the world to one in perpetual negotiation. Up until this turning point, the future was indeed utilized by the Christian church as a means of stabilization, “finding an equilibrium between the threat of the end ... and the hope of Parousia.”³⁷ With the balance of power slowly shifting away from the church over the course of these 300 years, the understanding of the future as closed/open on Judgement Day slowly ended.³⁸ This is when an economic understanding of the future progressively arose for the first time, for which prognoses replaced prophecies and apocalyptic discourses. The important aspect of this slow, but radical change is that, as Koselleck says, “prognosis implies a diagnosis which introduces the past into the future.”³⁹ The future is thus no longer what in the distance is open or closed by Judgement Day, but what in a memorable past, the present can reintroduce as new. This means that our understanding of the future as this imaginary territorial or de-territorial projection or retreat is entirely the outcome of this historical shift that trapped us all in a futurity as a pure temporal economy.

With the disappearance of eschatological thought, the future became reduced to planned progress or regress, something to be worked on, thus neatly tying itself to expanding economic and colonial systems and to the shackling of humans to clock time and the control of their labor, leisure, and sleep cycles.⁴⁰ Thus foreshortened with prequels, sequels, and outcomes, the future naturally acquired an inevitable speed it never had until then.⁴¹ “In the eighteenth century, the acceleration of time ... became obligatory for worldly invention, before technology completely opened up a space of experience adequate to this acceleration.”⁴² Museums became exemplary of this sped-up understanding of the future. With their inception in the eighteenth century, right at the heart of Koselleck’s 300-year transition, museums became the new spatial configurations to expose this fast and furious economic approach of the future. In doing so, museums tirelessly use the past to re-introduce the future into the present thus forcing their visitors to become like all-absorbed hamsters on a spinning wheel. The result is a dramatic frenetic standstill where attention span is drastically reduced and whatever is exhibited becomes immediately irrelevant as soon as another show rolls over. Having long abandoned the muddled, but all so potent temporal experiences of cabinets of curiosities, museums are now proud spaces in which the future is made perpetually imminent. Today, the more a museum articulates and implements this frenetic standstill, the more it is successful and prosperous.⁴³

Of course, this first temporal economy is exclusively premised on one inalienable temporal constant: money. As is well known, money is a “general equivalent” that has been excluded from the market in order to serve as its constant regulatory principle. As Marx writes: “A particular kind of commodity acquires the character of general equivalent, when all other commodities make it the material in which they uniformly express their value.”⁴⁴ The reason money has been excluded is because it is a tautology (*tauto* = same + *logos* = language), a statement that is true by virtue of its logical form. Money is a tautology because although a dollar can be

37) Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 13.

38) Even though it is still very much at play in Islamic extremism for which the present is radically devalued and Judgement Day “draws near.” (Qur’an 54:1). There is unfortunately no space to unpack this here. See Adraoui, in Kemp and Andersson, *Futures*, chapt. 18.

39) Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 22

40) See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*; Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, Chap. 1; and Mooij, *Time and Mind*, 105.

41) On this topic, see, amongst others, Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, and Tomlinson, *The Culture of Speed*.

42) Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 22

43) A typical example of this adherence to the cult of speed is the Victoria and Albert Museums’ “Rapid Response Collecting,” a scheme enabling it to quickly collect objects that are important “right now.” #rapidresponsecollecting.

44) Marx, *Capital*, 79. For a commentary on this notion, see Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, 80, and *The Truth of Democracy*, 23.

exchanged, the absolute value always remains the same: One Dollar = One Dollar.⁴⁵ As such, money stands alone for the only referent able to mediate and regulate all other temporal economic and financial exchanges.⁴⁶ For the museum, this means that its first temporal economy is entirely predicated on one unquestionable constant, money, and that this excluded referent regulates *all* of its endeavors. Without it, museums could not envisage its temporal economies. No museums could function without the expectation that money will remain largely stable. No loans could be secured without the expectation of repayment and no research, investment, or development could be undertaken without the expectation that money will remain the only constant in an ever-evolving world. Money rules this first temporal economy by providing the sole necessary balance to its frightening speed of action.

The second characteristic of the museum future – I will go much more quickly now that the premise of the first future has been broadly laid out – is that it is multiple.⁴⁷ The abandonment of a single future end/Parousia (embodied in eschatology) and the advent of prognoses multiplied the future, fracturing its arrival according to whatever was pilfered from the past and regurgitated anew. This is what Koselleck calls the “contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous,”⁴⁸ the fact that although we appear to experience and work toward only one future for all, this future presents itself in a myriad of competing ways. Short, medium, and long terms are pitched against each other in order to determine the best possible return. The idea, for example, that the British Museum is reluctant to return the looted Benin Bronzes to Nigeria shows that, besides the discrepancy in audiences, it considers Nigeria to still have a lot of work ahead of itself in order to match its supposed excellence in conservation and presentation. A British future is therefore not the same as a Nigerian future. The future is always a multiplicity of futures, each taking place in different tempos, progressing slowly or at great speed, arriving early or still a long way to come. This economic futurity inherited from the Enlightenment and sped up by capital is thus multiple even though one is always led to believe, following Hegel, but Marx too, that the future is one. This is the paradox of our current understanding of the future: multiple it remains nonetheless harnessed by an Enlightenment ideal of a universal autonomous category, the work of history, this by-gone remnant of the Christian era.

The third characteristic of this museum future is that it is, in all cases, never future enough.⁴⁹ By this, I mean that the future is always frustrated in never being properly fulfilled.⁵⁰ This is what Koselleck refers to when he talks of a “horizon of expectation (*Erwartungshorizont*),”⁵¹ this temporal category that always recedes

45) This is not a reference to the index: that is to say, first gold, then since 1945 to a basket of currencies, but a reference to an absolute value.

46) On this topic, see also Beckert, *Imagined Futures*, chapt. 5.

47) This is what Berardi calls “the multidimensionality of the future.” Berardi seeks a way out from the multifaceted apocalypse brought on by capitalism, but his future remains a future present. His hope, “the cooperation among cognitive workers worldwide” stems from a present that always cancels itself out, thus leaving no room for the possibilities he envisages. Berardi, *Futurability*, 20 and 189.

48) Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 90

49) Again, I have gone down the route of Koselleck instead of Luhmann, that is, of an ever-receding future instead of a defuturized future. The latter, of Brunschvicgian origins, focuses on the impact of new technologies, namely, the fact that technology depletes the present of the future. The former, keeps a wider and non-technological approach to the problem. See Luhmann, “The Future Cannot Begin,” 141–42, and Brunschvicg, *L'Experience Humaine*, 355 ff.

50) I am aware that such a frustration has been reformulated in relation to globalization as an end continually forming itself. There is no space here to make such a comparison. On this topic see, for example, Nancy, *The Creation of the World* and Cerny, *Rethinking World Politics*, 98.

51) Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 262. Koselleck uses this expression to mean something that can never be materially reached: it moves forward as we proceed. This is different from Husserl who uses the word “horizon” so as to limit its nature to our phenomenological apprehension of it. See Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*.

from the “space of experience (*Erfahrungsraum*)” to make room for more future.⁵² This is, I think, Koselleck’s most profound idea: the fact that, notwithstanding how the memorial past is used, our future is mostly drawn from present experience thus foreclosing us within it.⁵³ As he writes, “the space of experience open toward the future draws the horizon of expectation out of itself.”⁵⁴ This is the other crisis of our contemporary world, which takes its most prominent shape today in the fact that capitalism cannot supposedly be abolished.⁵⁵ Capital is indeed entirely structured by prognoses seeking returns of the same. Contemporary human future mirrors this in the way it is stranded in what has no other horizon, but “more” and “more of the same” specifically.⁵⁶ Inevitably, museums adhere to this foreclosed capitalist horizon of expectation. They understand the future not only as the mere by-product of a chronological interpretation of history, but also as a capital return that can never be satisfied because it is always postponed, always in the expectancy of the next exhibition without any form of relief or completion in sight.⁵⁷ We are now at the polar opposite of the medieval understanding of the future as opened/closed by Judgement Day. Capital has stranded us in a perpetual search for an equilibrium between the threat and promise of more.

Overall, this means that museums understand the future as being purely structured as, a) economy (forecasts seeking satisfaction with an immediate or prolonged return), b) split in its multiple occurrences and yet homogeneous in its historization (the historical future of grand narratives superseding all parochial economic futures), thus ditching us all, as Lyotard clearly foresaw, in a permanently incredulous contemporaneity that only seeks itself,⁵⁸ and c) never achievable (receding because the present always differs from past prognoses), thereby leaving us all like perpetually unsatisfied children who never get what they want.⁵⁹ This diagnostic is not rosy. It is regimented, paradoxical, and frustrated. It offers no exit from the stubborn imperative of preserving a sallow past in the hope of constructing a rosy future that never materializes, thus securing forever the idea of museums as ends in themselves. Even those highly paid consultants who claim to scan the future like radio telescopes in order to capture and amplify weak signals to sell “the extraordinary and uncertain”⁶⁰ offer nothing more than the same, albeit nicely repackaged for the insatiable hunger of their clients’ consumers. As such, museums have no choice but to chime in unison with other non-museal ventures for which the future is equally tied to the frenetic consumption of more of the same.⁶¹ The museum temporal economy is thus hermetically shut, and we are all, including the most extreme of anti-conformists – anarchists themselves – trapped in it.⁶²

52) As Luhmann also writes: “the essential characteristic of a horizon is that we can never touch it, never surpass it, but that in spite of that, it contributes to the definition of the situation.” Luhmann, “The Future Cannot Begin,” 150. See also Maleuvre, *The Horizon*.

53) This anticipates Luhmann’s observation that modern western societies are primarily structured as always increasing their future. Unfortunately, I cannot explore this sociological phenomenon in this context. See Luhmann, “The Future Cannot Begin,” 141.

54) Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 262

55) As Jameson says, one can imagine the end of the world, but not the end of capitalism. Jameson, “Future City,” 76.

56) As is well known, such a stranded situation was erroneously explained as the end of history. See Fukuyama, *The End of History*.

57) For the impact of this future never future enough on museums, see Harrison, *Heritage*.

58) See, amongst others, Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*.

59) This metaphor was already in use in De Quincy, *Conditions Morales*.

60) I’m thinking here specifically of the work of Superflux, a London foresight company working for clients such as the V&A and Google. For a discussion on their capitalist understanding of the future, see Harrison and Sterling, *Deterritorialising the Future*, 158–69.

61) The idea that the future has been closed-off has been formulated in many different ways. I give here two further examples: as an undertow of stasis buried under a frenetic compulsion for the new (Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*), or as a system that eliminates the conditions of possibility of imagining another horizon (Žižek, *Living in the End Times*).

62) As is well known, museums operate as gravity wells incorporating all that is external to them, including what is most antithetical to them, namely anarchists, who invariably aim to destroy the sort of futurity that makes any stable future present possible. However,

Part of the reason this diagnostic is not rosy is because the first three temporal economies mentioned so far, all rest on a hegemonic way of dealing with the future. It is hegemonic not in the sense whereby museums would harbor a Machiavellian power within its pristine walls, but because it stems from an institutionalization of “common sense” when it comes to an institution’s prospects. As is well known, the future as an economic horizon of expectation mostly derives from a group’s construction of reality⁶³ and how it acts in relation to it.⁶⁴ Museums’ directors, curators, and administrative staff all participate in establishing these hegemonic temporal economies by basing themselves on what appears as “common sense,” “normal,” or “obvious.” But as Gramsci warned us, anything that falls within the remit of “common sense” is precisely how hegemony occurs.⁶⁵ What museums’ staff consider as the most normal way to interpret their institution’s future is indeed entirely predicated on the success of their own views (most often: expand the number and diversity of visitors, make more popular shows, increase funding and revenue streams, get media and social networks’ attention, etc.) even if, in the end, these views are far from normal, obvious, or common sense. The three temporal economies highlighted above are thus hegemonic because they are recurrently made group decisions – made, of course, at great speed because of impending funding deadlines – on how a museum is interpreted within the larger context of global corporate-driven capital economies. Needless to say, because such hegemony is hinged on larger ones, no one is therefore to blame, and everything becomes “common sense.” In intertwined hegemonies, moral irresponsibility is thus *de rigueur*.

The Ray of Hope of the Fourth Future

The only saving grace from these three intertwined futures is the one that museums bank on without ever referring to it: the future brought on by progeny, the fourth museum future.⁶⁶ Museums always operate their foreclosed economic future presents for the sole purpose of future generations, that is, on the understanding that humanity will continue making babies.⁶⁷ If progeny was not at the heart of all museums’ economic temporal endeavors, they will simply close their doors for there would be no need to preserve anything whatsoever. In the hermetically bolted economic future in which museums steer themselves in, the only ray of hope is indeed that provided by children. Before looking into this hope brought on by progeny, I feel it is important to highlight its two main aspects. Again, this is not intended as an exhaustive analysis of the issue of progeny and how

as the famous “Anarchist Guide” for museums shows, even the idea of anarchism ends up in the museum. See Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist Guide*.

63) On this topic see, amongst others, Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* and Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*.

64) No understanding of the future can be severed from an understanding of action and the idea of such an action. In Heideggerian terms, there can be no inauthentic or vulgar future without an authentic future, namely, the way Dasein acts in everyday action. There is no space here to explore the way the two temporalities braid each other. See Derrida, *Aporias*, 41.

65) Notes about common sense and hegemony are scattered in various passages of Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks*. In a nutshell, Gramsci defines “common sense” as the dynamic, uncritical, and unconscious way of perceiving the world. If museum directors and administrative staff think the future is a common sensical statistical given that needs to be met, then this “common sense” will be applied to the museum whether it is representative of reality or not. No one ever dares to question a statistic, especially if it comes from above. See Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*.

66) I deliberately use here the term progeny instead of future generations because the latter is too indeterminate. As its etymology indicates, progeny implies a progenitor, the one who creates this future, but not necessarily by way of biological reproduction.

67) I am obviously aware that museums bank not solely on progeny, but also on ideas and actions that they hope will continue in the future. However, my view is that these cannot take place without modes of life carrying them into future. Biological reproduction trumps here all ideals. On the idea that the future is also created by ideas see Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, chapt. 16, 38, 39, 123, 124, 143, and 150.

it compares with other perspectives, Western or otherwise, on procreation or generation. This is also not meant as a defense of pronatalism without any concern for the often-disregarded issue of overpopulation, a key factor behind climate change.⁶⁸ The aim is simply to pinpoint where hope could possibly lie on the enclosed contemporary treadmill that museums find themselves on.

One of the first things to note about progeny is that it is most definitely not posterity. Posterity is always an “afterwards,” a generalized fantasized time. Posterity will remember this museum as an institution of integrity, for example. By contrast, beyond the images of “baby,” “family,” and even “descendance,” progeny touches upon a future not so much devoid of imaginary, but radically open. The future is indeed for the said “baby” a blank slate on which to negotiate as well as possible what has been handed over. Because of the trapped temporal conditions of modern times, the inheritance or legacy is always laden with complex histories that are impossible to make sense of because they crisscross and obscure the baby’s horizons of expectations. However, notwithstanding these foreclosed horizons heaving with varying degrees of duties and responsibilities as well as prospects and opportunities, the baby offers the potential of an exit from the jailed conditions of the present. This occurs not only at the level of subjectivity whereby progeny breaks the self-sufficiency of Being and thus opens the future⁶⁹ (“The child frees the parents from the solitary confinement of their being”⁷⁰), but also at broader levels (logical or biological families, groupings, affiliations, etc.), whereby progeny disrupts the logics and rationalities of previous generations and thus rips open or slowly divulges the unheard and the unexpected.

The other key thing about progeny is that, by contrast, it responds to a supposedly innate biological drive to reproduce. While its future is strangely open beyond the economic temporalities trapping the present, its past origin is based on an imperative so old that it cannot be recalled. Even though science devises ever more sophisticated incursions into our origins, what drives us, sometimes desperately, to procreation is invariably lost in time. Once again, beyond the tropes of “baby,” “family,” “descendance,” and the plethora of excuses to ensure a cared-for retirement or a secure lineage, there is no true origin for tirelessly carrying out our progenitive proclivities. It simply makes sense because such a sense is lost in time. If the origins of progeny were certain, then procreation would respond to a lack such as that conceived, for example, by Paulo Freire who writes: “hope is rooted in men’s incompleteness, from which they move out in constant search – a search which can be carried out only in communion with others.”⁷¹ By contrast, the immemorial aspect of progeny responds to no lack. It might respond to a need, wish, or desire, but such response occurs irrespective of lack. This imperative lost in time is precisely what gives museums a groundless justification for their existence. Progeny is thus both radically immemorial and open to an un-appropriable future.⁷² Such a double status is precisely what frames and consolidates our presently foreclosed economic futures; it is their sole open-ended origin and destiny.

However, the particular progeny that sustains the hope of all museal economic relationships to the future is not just a feeling of expectation that, with children, things, in the end, will get better. If this were the case, then it would be a type of hope structured again as a temporal economy, namely that children will be tasked to triumph where the contemporary world failed. It would then mimic capitalism’s hegemonic understanding of hope for

68) For an overview of the issue of overpopulation and the threat of natalism with regards to climate change, see Bogner, “Overpopulation and Procreative Liberty.”

69) On this topic, see Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 70ff.

70) See Chalier, *Figures du Féminin*, 137–70.

71) Freire, *Pedagogies of the Oppressed*, 94.

72) If space were not limited, it would be necessary to analyze the immemorial and unpredictable aspects of progeny in the materiality of the museum itself. Progeny would then be understood in its widest sense, namely, to quote Barad, as an ongoing intra-activity, one for which “past and the future are iteratively reworked and enfolded through the iterative practices of spacetime-mattering.” I can only leave such a vast issue for another context. See Barad, “Nature’s Queer Performativity,” 121–158.

which upward social mobility across generations is the goal. But, as we now know, children will not get better jobs, lifestyles, and be surrounded by better commodities or museums.⁷³ Nothing in our contemporary world guarantees that. On the contrary, everything points to the opposite: lack of jobs, environmental catastrophes, and further social, cultural, racial, and political inequalities. There is not even a covenant that descendants will even bother to take up and continue developing that Enlightenment project we today call museums. This does not mean that all is then lost and that museums should abandon progeny as one of its structuring futures and cry out “Fuck the Child” as the queer theorist Lee Edelman does in his forceful gesture against heteronormative economic apprehensions of the future.⁷⁴ The key thing about the hope brought on by progeny is precisely the fact that, as hinted above, it evades all economic dimensions, including heteronormative hopes and aspirations. How so?

Because progeny is a type of future that curiously anticipates nothing.⁷⁵ As is well known since Plato, children do not give immortality to the parents.⁷⁶ They do not extend their hopes and aspirations which, as Nietzsche remarks, is simply “a symptom of sentimental senility.”⁷⁷ On the contrary, they stand for what we cannot anticipate as the future. They stand for what is not contemporary, what cannot fulfill the dreams or nightmares of the present age. In a reading of Levinas on the theme of hope, Catherine Chalier rightly observes that a true future is always structured in relation to a “time without me,”⁷⁸ a time I cannot anticipate or structure with a return. The triumph of this immemorial imperative to reproduce indeed establishes an opening of the future that has nothing to do with economic hope and this is precisely why it matters so much.⁷⁹ To make babies is not to hope for a better world, it is to renounce on the victories and defeats of the contemporary in order to acknowledge a world “without me,” that is, a world finally empty of today’s aspirations and despairs.⁸⁰ As Levinas himself says, “it is to set sight on a ... time beyond the horizon of my time.”⁸¹ A radically different type of future than that provided by computations, the economies of the gift,⁸² the management of assets and

73) On the hegemonic capitalization of hope and its unequal distribution in western societies, see Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism*, 7–21.

74) This does not mean abiding to a heteronormative view that would consolidate a falsely innate biological drive to reproduce and ignore or suppress the variety of modes of reproduction available to humans. The aim is to pay attention to what drives us to persevere with museums: a hope that remains utterly un hoped for. On queer interpretations of the future, see Edelman, *No Future*; and Dean, *Unlimited Intimacy*.

75) This content-less hope is obviously not a type of *novum* determined as persisting alongside economic hopes. A progenial hope is not gained on the basis of an ontology of the not-yet-brought-out. The reason is that there can be no logic, ontological or otherwise, to validate such an empty hope experienced through affect. Similarly, what is passed is not eventually “manifested-out” in the world, not even as a signpost of daydreams and imaginations. It is, on the contrary, what is indeterminable, un-anticipatable, defies logic and yet, for some reason, continues to be passed. On hope understood as *novum*, see Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*; Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*; Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*; or closer to us, Innerarity, *The Future and its Enemies*. For a commentary on Bloch’s hope in relation to culture, see Siebers in Kemp, *Futures*, chapt. 10.

76) When Plato declares in *Laws* that the begetting of children should be a law, he obviously hoped that this would be sufficient to satisfy man’s natural yearning for deathlessness, but that it could never serve as a form of immortality per se. See Plato, *Laws*, book IV.

77) Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 267.

78) Chalier, *Presence de l’Espoir*, 159, my translation.

79) Tim Whyman hints at this possibility but without exploring it as an empty passing. See Whyman, *Infinitely Full of Hope*, 98–99.

80) Unfortunately, I cannot address this in relation to forms of life beyond humanity. On this topic, see Scheffler, *The Afterlife*.

81) Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*, 27

82) May, for example, analyses the future of museums through economies of gift-giving in terms of acts of reflection on the hubris of future-building (in Holtorf and Högberg, *Cultural Heritage*, 45–57). For me, only an an-economic type of gift without returns such as that of Mauss, *The Gift* and Bataille, *The Accursed Share* can be thinkable in relation to what museums entrust onto future generations, but then it would no longer be a gift, it would be a non-productive expenditure, a generational excess similar to the prodigality of the sun in the way it gives without return.

legacies, and the patriarchal and heteronormative bartering of patrimonies. This is not a future for the faint-hearted who would recoil in horror at the idea of a world empty of our cherished and dreaded present or one for the brave who would confront head-on the emptiness of a future that yet again needs conquering. This is, on the contrary, a future true to its name, one for which there is, at last, no more guarantee or insurance, immortality, or “in perpetuity.”⁸³

The important thing about a future that evades all forms of temporal economies and is conceived as being “without me” is the fact that it constitutes itself as a transmission without content, a transport without transportation, as it were. Progeny is indeed not a placeholder for what we project today, it is on the contrary, *the relaying of hope itself*. As Chalier also remarks, “to truly reach out toward the other’s time, it is to transmit this trust in hope.”⁸⁴ In other words, we make children, and we give them future not because we hope they will fulfill our desires or repair our misdeeds, but because they are the carriers of an inalienable hope that supercedes all our economic anticipations.⁸⁵ From in between what is radically immemorial and utterly unpredictable and amidst the clamped crisscrossing of economic temporalities, inheres this contentless passing of hope. Paying attention to this relay is thus crucial. It determines the fact that against the hegemony of the previous three economic futures, the only temporality that museums can truly hang on to properly is that of progeny for the way it ceaselessly passes on a type of hope with neither contents nor telos. As just that, a transmission, the future thus becomes no longer exploitable, strangely remaining without potential or possibilities.

Conclusion

In the end, couched in this fourth temporal dimension, the future of museums can now be posed as indifferent to its demise, a prospective which as hinted earlier, is much more difficult than that put forward by queer theorists with their insistent emphasis of the present.⁸⁶ This indifference should indeed not be seen as an excuse to exacerbate a present “lived time” in the expectation that it will pass on a hope worthy of its name. Doing so would be, as I intimated earlier with Koselleck, to pitch “lived time” against durational economic temporalities, the acting against the telling, the *res factae* against the *res fictae*.⁸⁷ In such a short-sighted perspective, “lived time” thus becomes an exacerbated present.⁸⁸ As such, what matters is a heightened untimeliness or contemporaneity un-encroached by temporal economies. The problem with this emphasis on “lived time,” on a present for which “the same event sounds different in the evening than it did in the morning,”⁸⁹ is that it still offers no exit, except more of the same relived and re-heightened which, as intimated earlier with regards to capitalist

83) While not altogether rejecting acts of immortalizing human deeds which sit opposite to aspirations to immortality. Unfortunately, there is no space to explore Arendt’s technical distinction. See Arendt, *Between Past and Present*, 70–72.

84) Chalier, *Presence de l’Espoir*, 155, my translation.

85) This passing of hope is not the same as the passing of the promise that if parents failed in improving their children’s lives, they, in turn might fulfil that promise. Because it is empty, such a passing cannot be broken and is unhampered by individual failures. On this topic, see Stack, *All Our Kin*, and Shipler, *The Working Poor*.

86) Within queer theory, hope is usually bound to the present rather than the future as is evident in feelings of communitarian happiness, for example. See Snediker, *Queer Optimism*, and Ahmed, *Promise of Happiness*.

87) Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 207–208. See also Koselleck, *Sediments of Time*, 60–78.

88) I have pinpointed Koselleck, but I could have taken any philosophy that emphasizes what is coming to the point whereby we are left with nothing else, but a differential process, call it *différance* or becoming. See Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 86–87; Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 186–93; and Faulkner, *Deleuze and the Three Synthesis of Time*, 14ff.

89) Koselleck, *Sediments of Time*, 68.

apprehensions of the future, organizes itself as an endless process of refraction without exit.⁹⁰ Museums tirelessly emphasize this with their habitual valuation of immersive experience, interactivity, and participation.⁹¹ As such, insisting on “lived time” is still to abide to economic forms of temporality for which performativity and forms of becoming (in history and in galleries) supplement temporal bartering, leaving the future still in suspense because there is no other “horizon but itself.”⁹²

In contrast to this, museums’ indifference to their demise is one that takes seriously the conditions that allow them to exist in the first place. If the future is indeed what is un hoped for,⁹³ what is beyond calculative thinking, then it cannot solely focus on its survival. It must also focus on what brought museums to exist in the first place not by looking at their inception and long history, but by taking in consideration what secretly founds their existence, namely this mundane and underscored act of relaying hope. Is this not precisely what ultimately is at stake in museums? The idea that notwithstanding its horror, brutality, and violence, humanity; with its ingenuous social, cultural, and scientific artifacts; is somehow worth preserving and that amidst its ever-expanding heritage, something worth passing sustains itself after all. To focus on the last temporal perspective as the passing of hope is not to disqualify the many economic futures of museums.⁹⁴ It is, on the contrary, to give some wiggle room to what does not enter the realm of economy. In doing so, the aim is to evade a little the foreshortening of the Enlightenment’s temporal economic dimensions and to emphasize the necessity of also rekindling with the circumstances (environmental, geological, planetary, etc.), which lead to our being on Earth, tirelessly passing hope to our children. This transmission of hope is indeed all there is for museums even if they are, as so many have predicted before, bound to eventually disappear, and ultimately be seen as not-so-Enlightened-after-all blips in the history of humanity on Earth. To focus on this progenial imperative is to orient museums away from an addiction to the frenetic standstill and toward a future at last bound up with this very Earthly activity of relaying hope.

How is one to characterize such a progenial hope? Museums around the world are busy today organizing exhibitions about the potential demise of the Earth’s eco-system in the hands of corporate greed, capitalism, neo-liberal doctrines, and the persistent lack of a global environmental strategy.⁹⁵ Within the context explored thus far, if the end of the world is indeed nigh, then it is not a question of showing in exhibitionary form that inevitability, which is what these exhibitions tirelessly do, but how the passing of hope structures such an end. The structuring of hope in front of such a cataclysmic future cannot *solely* be based on determinable futures (changes in human consuming habits, improved corporate responsibilities, governmental accountabilities, genuine universal taxations, etc.), it must *also* focus on what motivates us to continue further still no matter

90) I realize that Koselleck’s aim is to create a model for a historicity of life for which history operates at two levels: a writing down of experience and a rewriting of such experience. This approach privileges layering and perspectival refraction over any cohesive historical narrative. On this topic, see Franzel, “Koselleck’s Timely Goethe.”

91) On this topic see Bishop, *Participation*, and Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*.

92) Overall, this is what Hartog calls the fad of presentism in today’s museological circles, namely, a present endlessly focused on a past that is not passing. See “Time and Heritage.”

93) What is “un hoped for” is of Heideggerian origin. As such, it cannot be understood as an inverted hope, the “unlooked for” or the “unplanned,” for example. What is “un hoped for” is what is unanticipated. See Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 148.

94) This proposal does not obviously oppose itself to forms of sustainable development, even if these are invariably predicated on meeting human needs and aspirations in the present. See Borowy, *Defining Sustainable Development*, and Merriman, “Museum Collections and Sustainability.”

95) For example, *Art & Climate Change*, Liverpool Biennial (2006 & touring); *Perpetual Uncertainty*, Z33 (2017); *The Work of Wind, Air, Sea*, Blackwood Gallery (2018); *Nature’s Nation: American Art and Environment*, Princeton Museum, (2018–2019); *Anthropocene*, Malmö Museum (2020); *Anthropocene On Hold*, PCAI (2020–2021); *Climate in Crisis: Environmental Change in the Indigenous Americas*, Brooklyn Museum (2020–2022); *We Are History*, Somerset House (2021–2022); *Waters Rising: A View From Our Backyard*, Focus Gallery (2021–2022); and *Our Broken Planet: How We Got Here and Ways to Fix It*, Natural History Museum (2021–22).

the horror that is unleashed every day. This other focus is perhaps most clearly evidenced in the way the future is laden with affects that never enter the contingency field in budget templates. As Appadurai rightly observes, the future is indeed invariably strengthened by “affects and emotion, for they give [it] its specific gravity, traction, and texture.”⁹⁶ Is this not precisely what children provoke in their parents: an emotive hope that, after all their generation's destructive behaviors, their children's lives can, once again, also relay hope? The end of the world is thus not solely one of suffering, trauma, fear, and sorrow, it is also one of awe, vertigo, excitement, and disorientation, a whole cornucopia of affects that emphasize not that the future is bankable or that there is salvation and redemption after the apocalypse, but that there is still, through the relaying of hope, the possibility of escaping all types of statistical and numerical projection.

Unfortunately, as can be expected, a future that solely rests on passing hope and whose horizon of expectation is not characterized by futural returns or utilitarian instrumentalization can never be substantiated. If I put aside the three temporal economies explored above and if I do not instrumentalize the uneconomic side of this passing of hope, then what am I left with? Not an empty future that can be appropriated as mine or polluted with impunity⁹⁷ and not a future so radical that it serves nothing but the reiteration of a promise.⁹⁸ I am left, most simply, with this passing without contents that can only be *felt* as an affective rolling over amongst generations. In other words, if there is one thing that can appease my contemporary anxieties or expectations it is precisely that there is still a passing beyond what keeps us addicted to futures and therefore in a state of war with ourselves. To focus on such a passing is to make the effort to understand the future as it plays out in affective contexts that cannot be co-opted by capital. It is to focus on a future that is sensed because it is sense itself, that is, it is the sensory as it extends itself out of the present. But this is not a lonesome venture that only progenitors can experience. To insist on uneconomic or contentless progenial hope is to also attempt to adhere to this feeling as a mode of becoming collective, and thereby of attaining a kind of historical and political agency through the sensorial instead of the economic.⁹⁹ Is Extinction Rebellion not precisely this affective (outraged, but also hopeful) coming together in the face of our imminent environmental disaster? Do they not highlight that hope must be passed over and beyond the very urgent need of compelling governments to avoid ecological collapse? Any act that insists on passing this ray of hope without hope changes the future in ways that cannot be predicted.

96) This is the most that can be rescued from Appadurai understanding of the future as a cultural fact, one that is “ours to design” (3) like any other commodity, albeit infused by “affects and sensations” (287) on the basis of a local “family of capacities” (290). Is the numerically driven protocols and technologies of our capitalist corporate world not precisely driven by these local imaginary affects such as those, developed, for example, by Apple in California? The future cannot be shaped by pitching a local design against a global one, an affect against a ROE (Return on Experience). Without a more nuanced understanding of the future, one which takes in consideration the utterly unexpected and the an-economic hope of progeny, these aspirations and imaginaries remain stuck within a neo-liberal understanding of the future. See Appadurai, *The Future as Cultural Fact*. On other equally problematic alternative future “designs,” see Harrison, “On Heritage Ontologies.”

97) As is well known, the idea that the future is empty is the product of the Enlightenment and colonization. On this topic, see Adam and Groves, *Future Matters*, 13.

98) This passing of hope is here understood outside of any messianic structure riveted to the singularity of a future always already Other. The reason is because the passing of hope is necessarily plural. It occurs at each begetting of children. Such multiplicity renders null the singular apperception of the future as radically Other of Derrida's Judeo-atheist post-monotheism, for example. There is no radical alterity in this passing, not even one that inscribes itself in “the face of the other” because what is passed “passes” irrespective of whether there is a Most High structuring it. Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 174. On this Judeo-atheist monotheism, see Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*.

99) There is unfortunately no space to explore this topic satisfactorily. Suffice to say that this focus on hope as an an-economic passing should perhaps be analyzed through the prism of Lyotard's libidinal energy, whereby the sensory, here the affect of hope, passes as a wordless imperative. On this topic, see Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 11.

Museums who recognize this passing of hope prompted by progeny can then begin to focus on the conditions that make them holders and transmitters of a hope laden with affects. They can create not more future heritages, but more future hopes. This does not mean asking museums to endorse strategies to survive beyond the apocalypse, but that notwithstanding the very real apocalypse coming our way, to trust the premise of inter-generational knowledge that nothing is worth securing more than hope itself. In this world, shaken by relentless and all-pervading political, social, cultural, and racial inequalities, where life has been reduced for a large majority to mere survival and where the future has been foreshortened to near-sighted exploitable territories, it is essential I think, to start thinking differently about how and why museums are historicizing causal machineries perceived as unique projections and destinations and to rekindling them to the immemorial imperative that gave their hallowed halls their originary impetus.

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