

Logical positivism, performativity of images and the neo-baroque – revisiting the myth of totalitarianism

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Abstract

This text proposes an open reflexion, a work-in-progress exercise that aims at waking up sleeping consciousnesses, in particular the authors' own existential disquietness. Consequently, the idea is to try to keep as many open knowledge fields as possible as long as they may contribute to understanding the role of communities and of community-led social change as an empowering strategy against totalitarianism. The central message of totalitarianism, in political economy, political science, political philosophy, international economics and international relations (IR) is that it occurs as a self-fuelling mechanism, spreading like wildfire and holding the reigns of myth building, myth construction and myth creation so that the myth is itself the totalitarian phenomenon. Democracy tends to be presented as the antagonist of totalitarianism and it is also based in symbolic production. Two myth building mechanisms are confronted as the clash of Titans, and human history is told according to the narratives that create, feed and sustain the dramaturgy of this open scene. In philosophy, considering epistemic shifts and the history of science, logical positivism emerges in the nineteenth century European white male dominated bourgeois' context, spreading across the Atlantic leading to pragmatism, and becoming the dominant thinking paradigm across economic science, political science and IR. The myth building process operates through the performativity of images, which consists of the neo-baroque saturation of the rational part of emotions and of the emotional part of rationality. The result is a playing field that reinvents modernity on a daily basis, refusing determinism and reformatting the Enlightenment promise of placing science at the service of human interests: radical and fundamental interests that necessarily are diverse, plural, inclusive, open and are built on trust and empowerment mechanisms. It is literally a new universe of new meanings that imply a deep dive into myth building. That is, from human rights, to fundamental rights, to animal and nature rights, to rights of the original peoples and beyond, a new world of possibilities is emerging. Myths are inescapable yet the power of resignification, i.e., to re-allocate, dislocate, denotate, connote and detonate differently, is open and infinite.

Keywords: regenerative sympoiesis; existential phenomenology; disruptive imagination; collective memory; creative thinking.

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1 Introduction

Being able to read reality, to interpret and discern threats and opportunities is a life surviving skill that human communities have perfected throughout the evolution of humankind. More importantly, it is at community level that emergent cultures are prefigured - and are then spread wherever they may bring greater depth and breadth to human existence. Hannah Arendt's thinking (e.g., 2022) presents a powerful resource for addressing the horrors of totalitarianism. Indeed, it was Arendt's sharp and critical mind that enabled stating the obvious, that is, that the emergence of totalitarianism is itself a consequence of the fragmentation and destruction of community life. The erosion of communities and of community-based organizations is at the heart of the path of self-destruction and annihilation. The present context of poli-crises, climate change, raising economic inequalities, wars, and increase in racist, xenophobic, aporophobic (fear of the poor) and misogyny trends, calls for rethinking belief systems and that which is taken-for-granted (Vieira, 2018).

This critical task of reinventing world visions involves considering the influences of logical positivism, and how its search for objectivization has fuelled the illusion of fictional prophecies (Calhoun, 1997). Myth building and the role played by the performativity of images and the neo-baroque is crucial in order to understand the challenges of current times.

Every civilisation address myth, philosophy, religion, science and technology. Religion imposes interdictions and obligatory rites, rituals and praxis (Henry, 2008). From prostitution to games and bets, the links and separations in relation to commerce and the sacred, throughout the different historical ages and geographical areas, is an example of the paradoxes, contradiction, ambiguities and conflicts that reflect each society's frailties and vulnerabilities. In ethical terms, prescription, proscription, diagnosis and prognosis, using health science metaphors, help to acknowledge that which promotes physical and mental health, and what is a cause of distress and suffering at societal level.

The baroque and deities; the role of sacred texts; the images of the sacred and our image self-perception and appearances; the apparent contrast between good and evil; the old canons of goodness, beauty and truth; and the new instances of intensity, density, authenticity, help to grasp the complexity of present times political world and the hidden network of significations that populates present times mindsets.

Different concepts are activated, which confirm the importance of political thought and the essence of common good: appropriation; emancipation; freedom and peace; decision-making and meaning-making (Bateira, Vasconcelos, 2002). The aesthetics of politics, and the glory and exuberance of political participation, inclusive and diverse, as Hannah Arendt argues (2022), is the way to go. It is already happening; it is not on the other side, it is here, here and now – *hic et nunc*. The social dimension and the experience of the other is prior to individuation and subjectivation. The focus on existence and on larger-than-life projects, individually and collectively, guarantees commitment, presence and flow, precisely because it inherently grasps the essence of humankind, in constant search for new points of inquiry.

2 Myth building

A myth is the best approximation, the best answer, to something that cannot be fully understood and, consequently, fully explained or grasped, leaving free space for recursive projections. A myth points to something related to origins and to identity, and it cannot eliminate the need for mimesis or the need to imitate others and to follow referents. Art itself is the product of a creative process that uses

imitation as a source for something new and mimesis is this transformation of reality into art, in a creative way.

Human beings cannot do without myth building, as if it were an early stage of what later may become philosophy, religion, science or technology, as these examples of knowledge production keep a component of myth, which plays as a creative tension, pushing for further development. The reason for the need for myth, for identification and for mimesis is related to the blank nature of the initial uniqueness of each self, what may be understood as our own being. That is, each individual cannot self-create his or her own self-conception from a vacuum, as it is a relational process that enables individuation and subjectivation (Arendt, 2022). It is the experience of the other that precedes the experience of the self, by definition unstable and provisory.

Sara Belo and Tomás Maia, the translators and authors of the introduction of the “The Nazi myth” (in Lacoue-Labarthe, Nancy, 2021) define myth as a testimony about an origin. This sign, gesture or word, demands an infinite regression, of absolute anteriority, becoming a fiction, or a representation of something that never existed. Behind every myth all there exists are myths of origin. The Nazi myth is powerful and dangerous by presenting itself as an unverifiable truth (Lacoue-Labarthe, Nancy, 2021). The mythical word presents itself as a bearer of truth. Lacoue-Labarthe, in the text “The Western Horror” (1996) explains that this original truth never existed yet, as it cannot be verified, it continuous to function as an illusion, “prior to any manifestation or any logical protocol” (2012). Humans are haunted by the mystery of existence; therefore, myths are essential and become truths that believe in the fiction of its own words.

The myth of totalitarianism uses the power of human search for identification in order to offer a form of capturing a self-fuelling movement that conditions thought and action under the spell of such void identification (Calhoun, 1997). The myth of Nazism is one example of this capturing phenomenon, which continues to exercise its attraction capacity till present times. Twentieth century’s totalitarianisms could be interpreted by the explosive conjugation of political action, religion and art (Belo, Maia, 2021). That is, of the appropriation of the power of religion, the doctrine, and of art, the power of reinvention, as a mutation for political instrumentalization.

According to these authors, the Ancient Greek democracy, the Athenian agora, was considered as a state religion. The exercise of political power, since then, never stopped moulding the human being through the collective myths that were passed on as being true. These had devastating consequences in the far-fetched and also in the more recent past. And it could have again devastating consequences in the future to come. This kind of political myth assumes that it is able to distinguish what is our own and what is alien, what is pure and what is impure. In other words, it is able to perform every kind of purges and purifications: ethnical, social, ideological, sexual or religious.

Revolutionary thought, that frees and emancipates, has to break the dilution of the self into the whole and detach it from the deadly logic of fusion with the same or the one. That is, it does not impose a collective myth; rather, it enables myth building as a resource for the creation of a fiction that is able to reveal human’s identity void. Life is understood as the process of participation on how reality manifests itself, as is argued by existential phenomenology (Henry, 2008). Heidegger (2010) stated that “Every human being is born as many but dies as a single one”, precisely because it is life, the experience of life, and the imprint of existence that makes the uniqueness of each individual.

For the Nazi myth, the Jew represented the anti-type, the counter-evidence of the Arian myth, identified as a worm or a virus; in *Mein Kampf*, there is the downward assimilation from sub-human, to animal, and finally as a virus carrying a dangerous disease. The myth creates the people and the people continue the myth; Hitler declares the need to proclaim an act of faith, a mystical synthesis:

“the life of a race, of a people, is not a philosophy with a logical development, neither a process that develops according to natural laws, but the formation of a mystical synthesis.” (M.K., p. 117; cited in Lacoue-Labarthe, Nancy, 2021). Nazism is the formation and realisation of its very image, as a world vision, which is awoken and mobilised through the masses that are sensitive to affective mobilizations. This implies the lucid exploration of the disposition of the masses for myth building. The manipulation of the masses is not merely a technique but an end in itself: the myth manipulates the masses and is realised through the masses.

The comfortable reliance in the safety and certitudes of moral and of democracy cannot guarantee any future peace or resistance to totalitarianisms that crucially need and call for a general deconstruction of history and of belief systems (Bateira, Vasconcelos, 2002).

Alfred Rosenberg was a close ally of Hitler and he was the main thinker behind national-socialism, through his book, of 1930, “The myth of the twentieth century”. This book was inspired by the work of racist, white supremacists and eugenics authors: Arthur de Gobineau, from France; Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who was British; and Madison Grant, from North America. Rosenberg visited England in the initial stages of Nazism to connect to this international movement of racist supremacists.

The question of race, of fighting for territories and for access to resources was present throughout the historical period from the industrial revolution onwards, in a colonial and imperialist drive. This territorial expansion was present earlier, since the fifteenth century, yet it was the stabilisation of the European nation states, their competition for the dominion of international trade routes and for European imperialist colonising forces that led to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries conditions of possibility for the emergence of totalitarianism.

3 Logical positivism

Logical positivism, in epistemic terms, is structural to knowledge production and use; yet, in existential terms, it is a prison and a form of totalitarianism, which, once dismantled, may serve the purpose of creating safe spaces and opening the floor for dialogue, debate and creativity, in a spontaneous and organic manner, individually and collectively, in the inner and outer conversations that are continuously going on, in vigil and less vigil states.

Totalitarianism, in economic policy and in political economy, as referring to the extreme concentration of power, resources and decision-making capacity, is commonly understood as a regime that is structurally abusive, leading to suicidal and self-destructive modes of operation on a collective scale. Both Donna Haraway’s concept of sympoiesis (2016) and Hannah Arendt’s idea of pluralism (2022), coincide in arguing that human’s self-organisation capacity already encompasses larger than life and beyond human open processes of interaction. As Bonnie Man states, aspiration to judgment, in the *Arendtian* sense, is both unsettling to the discipline of philosophy and important for its future (Arendt, 2022; Mann, 2018), precisely because of the unravelling and disentanglement process that occurs when alterity and otherness are confronted, tested and stretched to its limits.

The ownness and the otherness, within individual or collective experiences, in latent or explicit manifestations is, unavoidably, present in every instance of signification, sense-making, theory building or the creation of new narratives. The structure of a myth, its capacity to condensate powerful human experiences and to serve as a vehicle for further searching, helps to grasp the prefiguring conditions that enable the evolution and development of totalitarianism, and which use the

performativity of images and the neo-baroque as a mechanism for saturation emotions and overloading absorption channels.

To capture creative thinking, to unleash collective memories and empower disruptive imagination, that is, to enable the possibility of alternative perspectives, livelihoods and experiences, it is mandatory to breakthrough exhaustion and saturation. This occurs merely because the conditions of possibility of totalitarianisms hold together until they cannot hold anymore the winds of change and the possibility of newness. It is commonly assumed that strangeness and fear, discomfort and unsettledness, disquietness and incertitude, are to be avoided, when offered a chance, a condition shared by humans and beyond, yet, culture is precisely the vehicle that painstakingly and silently opens up new windows of opportunity and let's go of past certitudes enabling novelty to emerge. That is, the fearless attitude occurs when fear is re-signified. The Ah!Ah! and Eureka visionary and prophetic experiences are part of a pattern that unequivocally dismounts the vicious circle of stating that it is always too early until it is too late.

Conversations, open conversations, are unique and paradigmatic examples of the unfolding of reality that is manifested through language, in all its forms, in humans and in non-humans alike. The broadening of horizons and expansion of the depth and breadth of the choreography between manifestation and participation, the snapshot of whatever is emerging, is a process that different theories, schools of thought and non-formal knowledge production have successfully captured.

In other words, in rich and poor regions and territories of contemporary societies, the profusion of Cosmogonies, world visions, narratives and experiences that is being offered, intentionally or otherwise, is overwhelming. Religion, laic spirituality, arts, sports and policy-making, the embedded and embodied nature of socio-technical systems and of techno-science paraphernalia, in large language models and in the open spontaneous conversations that occur, for instance, between strangers when waiting for public transport, reveal astonishing degrees of inter-permeability, showing influences and cross-influences in an ongoing dynamism. Turbulence, acceleration, movement and change, the ontic and existential phenomenology of how life is experienced in its immediateness and inter-penetrability, between the individual and the collective, the interior and the exterior, the public and the private, that which may be called our own and that which is felt as alien and foreign, even when part of selfhood, the familiar strangeness, is an open journey, a roadmap that is recognised across history.

The core message is that the creation of safe spaces, of colloquial and cordial environments, inclusive and plural, is, primordially, an existential experience, that is, it occurs, it is present and acknowledged as such, individually and collectively. This experience, in turn, may be understood as the tip of the iceberg of immemorial processes that may take the name of freedom, or democracy, or climate justice. Whatever the naming, it is an ongoing process that each life cycle, each generation, each culture and each civilisation produce, consume, share, create and recreate, and, when necessary, new age eras have to be named. Again, Hannah Arendt (2022) is a mastermind author to grasp the complexities of existential experience as a community experience. This relates directly to the reality of social solidarity economy because without a direct lived experience of social engagement and of social care there is no personal investment in supporting communities. Contrarily, the existence of commons and of community-led initiatives is a powerful sign of human cultures that are healthy and generous as opposed to self-serving and narcissistic.

Logical positivism emerged in nineteenth century European philosophy as an antagonist to relativism. The Enlightenment movement of the eighteenth century, the Renaissance and the emergence of modern sciences in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, have created an epistemic

window of opportunity for the emergence of certitude, trust and blind confidence in linear and cause-effect rationality. In this sense, logical positivism helped to create a high degree of trust and confidence in science, seen as perfect logic (Arendt, 2022). Science, for a logical positivism epistemic position, is like a cloud that is reached by using a ladder that can then be thrown away because it is no longer necessary.

If it is true that metaphysics is an European illness, as was ironically commented, it is because it was able to capture mythological and archetypical thought, with its full strength, vital energy, and capacity to mobilise human existence and to unify it according to some kind of dramaturgy and rationale. The logos, the Greek passion for capturing existence through language, i.e., the rational and formalised use of language, as if before that the tool itself was not accounted for, is still active today. Philosophy, religion and science are heirs of the myth building process that is common to every culture or civilization (Henry, 2008). Moreover, culture is the process that is like a Fenix, being reborn from the ashes and recreating and reformatting old myths into new civilisations.

When Claude Levy-Strauss advocated for structuralism, as a form of interpreting original people's cultures, lifestyles and livelihoods according to some common pattern, so that the old witch would be the doctor, the tribe's chief the high priest, or the elderly council the supreme court, this flattening into transversal commonality, although extremely powerful and flexible, also reflected that something was being lost (Bateira, 2012). For instance, the presence of mystery, of magic, or the familiarity with other dimensions of social reality that would be invisible and apparently hidden, became detached from the logical positivism view of liberal professions of the raising bourgeoisie European societies (Haraway, 2016). Superstition was out, and the sacred, magical, metaphysical, archetypical and symbolic dimensions became enclosed into the private sphere. Interestingly, the forward-looking movement, the confidence and trust, the wishful thinking charisma and literal hope that science holds, is itself an heir of these old rags of non-scientific thought. That is, it takes more than science to capture science.

Modernity may be considered as the break with Antiquity's deterministic thinking, installing the possibility of openness of reality, unfolding with an open-ended script (Calhoun, 1997). Under this reasoning, modernity is an unfinished business that each new generation has to take charge of, to perform it and co-create it, passing it onto the next generation. More importantly, modernity can be interpreted as a creative tension that is part of the experience of existence itself, individually and collectively. Action, language, knowledge and meaning-making would be the performativity vehicle, the mode of transportation, of transformation, that humans experience, as singular entities and as part of the history of humankind. This performance is enacted through the use of language and the participation in social practices.

Meaning-making is the trial and error iterative and recursive process that uses a finite set of words and rules to create infinite combinations; each time language is used, in texts, images, sounds, verbal communication or artistic and performative initiatives, meaning is unsettled, disturbed, perforated and reinvented. A clash between generations, groups or cultures represents this territorial dispute for the meaning-making process itself; that is, old meanings are rejected, seen as meaningless, nonsense, trivial and disposable, yet that negative tension is still creative and calls attention to the process itself.

The position of certitude, in myths, philosophy, religion, science or technology, of presenting something as already achieved, as if holding the reigns of the creative process, as a drive and an impulse that has to be expressed, is itself modernity reinventing itself, searching for an opening that escapes determinism.

Determinism is circular, as a cycle that constantly repeats itself, as if there would be a sacred book with the rules of the universe that could control everything, time and space, past, present and future; modernity then would be a spiral, with back-and-forth movements, advancements and regressions, and always with an open end, to be reinvented every day. As a vector, it would have a starting point and a direction, yet the initial point is new every day and the direction too; that is, every new situation, position, occurrence, contingency or movement calls for reframing the starting point and direction.

Teleological thought, ultimate ends, big narratives and epic tales would be put to the side, despised and neglected as old fashioned and stale, pathetic and futile games of magical guessing; yet, the here and now presence, the starting point and direction that is there every new day, as part of the experience of existence and of connection across time and space, beyond geographical eras of geographical distances, the drive and pulsing that is unavoidably there as an inescapable vital energy, even is distress, decay and close to death or end of a life cycle, cannot be erased.

Positive or negative limit situations alike are able to cut across routines and habits and reveal the openness of existence as a fragile, plastic, flexible and always novel, as if it were the first time; individually and collectively, the experience of awe is necessary to destabilise the subject and to transform it into an intersubjective, plural and diverse experience of being alive (Bateira, Vasconcelos, 2002). Inclusivity and wholesomeness, unity as a non-homogeneous process, diverse and diversifying, the experience of alterity, of otherness, and of the other in oneself, our own strangeness and intimate familiarity, all these are examples of the open search that modernity as non-deterministic thought implies.

4 Self-organisation and story-telling

Self-organisation, on behalf of whatever entity, is part of the inner structure of theoretical approaches that take living-systems as their thinking matrix. Civilisations, societies, communities, institutions and formal and informal groups may be interpreted according to their capacity to self-regulate, under the assumption of some kind of unity (Calhoun, 1997). There is a zoom-in and zoom-out effect in terms of capturing a fractal theory movement, identifying patterns, trends and some kind of commonality, in style, process, result and interpretation.

This commonality, lived individually and collectively, across different historical eras and far apart geographies, can be seen as the product of a process, a movement and an action (Puskás, et al, 2021). More importantly, it is in movement, both capturing tiny details and focusing in an open horizon. The experience of being human, of using language, of participating in life, merely by existing and being alive, implies participating in this ongoing sharing with all living systems, past, present and future, of some kind of commonality, which gains a different layer when seen from within.

The importance of addressing this first-hand experience of existence and of grasping limit-situations, life cycles and the immediate apprehension of the inescapable nature of inner and outer worlds, in a constant flow, helps to grasp the same movement occurring in biological terms, or in geology and in palaeontology. Life exists on the surface of the planet for millions of years and the life we live as humans is part of that process; that is, together with other living beings, we are the vehicle, the package, the means, for the continuation of life.

Continents and oceans, rivers and mountains, and the historical process of their formation, is another example of the infinite layers of mutual dependence and interconnectedness that are necessary to take into account in order to explain their existence. The fact that original people's

nature-loving cultures actually attribute magical powers and a high degree of sacredness to rivers, forests or some animals is revealing of the mythical and symbolic process that is present and active in these communities, and their intense relationship with their ancestors' territories.

Humans are story tellers, story listeners and story lovers. Stories are told endlessly and the selection of the stories and of the narratives that are being told is itself the story of how humans have come into existence (Henry, 2008). Keeping a story at a child level pattern of demand requirements is crucial. It helps to guarantee that the simple mix of simplicity and complexity prevails. The essence of the essence of a narrative is lost when reductive, linear, cause-effect, mechanical, expert focused and hyper-specialisation report-like telling take hold of scholarship, of the academia, and of the political decision-makers discourses.

Competition and market operations have become part of the dominant narrative and even when collaboration and cooperation are promoted, they are at the service of more sophisticated forms of social dominance and social control (Bateira, Vasconcelos, 2002). The labour markets are the ultimate example of the seduction and manipulation mechanisms that fuel public and private operations, in services, industry and agriculture. Across different settings of production and consumption the dominant paradigm is an indoctrination that is performed in the name of professionalism, productivity, efficiency and effectiveness. Business level lexicon is extended and adapted to include non-governmental organisations, voluntary work-force and civic society institutions.

In order to become better professionals, something has to be done, and by so doing, development is possible: personal, professional, organisational, institutional, and societal development will occur. Economic, social and cultural achievements are the result of positive and effective developmental processes (Bateira, 2012). The better the professional, the better the organisation and the better the society. Professionalism is promoted and from the cradle to the grave, every social role is optimised, standardised and replicated. Family roles, interpersonal relationships, friends and colleagues, and hierarchical relations, within the institutional framework of who sets the rules and who performs the rules, whoever tells what has to be done and whoever has to obey, these work in cascade, self-replicating itself.

That corrupt people practice corrupt acts; that homicides kill and that robbers rob; that economic crime, sexual crime, white collar crime, femicide and infanticide, human trafficking and organs trafficking crimes, genocide and ethnical cleaning are on the raise, these anti-social behaviours are not immune to the effectiveness strategy that has taken hold of present times social world.

5 The neo-baroque and the performativity of images

The main message of the present text is that political thought cannot be separated from personal and existential dimensions. That is, the dimension of a community and of what Hannah Arendt (2022). calls "intermediate bodies", communities as the interface between the individual and the social, in particular power structures within the social system, is of paramount importance for the present text. Moreover, it is the erosion of the community and of community-based organisations that is at the core of emergence of totalitarianism.

What is experimented inwardly, as life itself, whatever characterises the humanness of existence is essentially political, caught by a moving target of common good, co-curated among the creative tensions of reality (Arendt, 2022). Tigers cannot lose their tigerness yet humans may lose their humanity if and when intentionally and consciously, or otherwise, a self-destructive mode is activated.

Individually and collectively, in the present and in the past, close by and far away, in inner and outer worlds, it is possible to acknowledge disconnection and denial mechanisms that eliminate creativity, spontaneity, ingenuity and the vital drive of existence.

Social sciences in general and IR in particular has witnessed an interest in interdisciplinarity, in cross-pollination approaches, and in openness to the epistemic shifts that bring vanguard and pioneer thought (Esteves, et al, 2021). The focus is not in new recipes, solutions, or ready-made answers but in new questions that are able to rethink, reprocess and re-evaluate the status of life, of human and beyond human life in contemporary societies (Henry, 2008). Border crossing and horizon expansion is the process of careful exploration of the full potential of different disciplinary knowledge sources, formal and informal thought, doctrines, systems of thought and epistemic positions.

The argument is that the attitude of openness is itself inherent to scientific creation. In fundamental research, it is the passion and intuition of a research group that guides exploration. Moreover, that same attitude is itself a scientific culture, open to all. That is, the empowering energy of acknowledging, assuming and exploring a questioning position, which guarantees, continuously, that there is an open space for free thought, is like being caught by a passion or a permanently contagious virus. Better still, it is like a parasite that gets located in one's body and makes its home there. In this sense, humans are the incubators of a collective intelligence that crosses the history of humankind and is common across different geographical regions, cultures and languages (Alden, et al, 2010).

The universality of science is this blank-check, this wishful thinking prophecy that postulates that it has to serve humanity, humankind, life, life beyond humans (Haraway, 2016). If it fails to deliver its promise then it is abuse, mediocracy, barbarism and self-destruction. On one hand there is the assertion that the gains of science are universal, and are for the benefit of the whole of present and future human communities and beyond. On the other hand, there is the manifestation of novelty, of creativity and spontaneity in every human existence; and it is from this vital drive that scientific creation emerges.

Logical positivism is understood as the epistemic position that takes what is being manifested as existence as a matter of adequate description; if one can describe it completely, then it is fully into the radar of attention, purpose, and will (Vieira, 2018). Contrarily, existential phenomenology firmly protects, nurtures, fosters and cares for non-linear and non-cause-effect approaches to reality, holding firm into a necessary open space for the unknown, the marginal and the peripheral.

Logical positivism corresponds to dominant thinking, homogeneous and exclusivist, neglecting and denying conflict, paradox, and ambiguity. However, dissident heterogeneous thought, that questions what is taken as given, is a condition for novelty (Bateira, 2012). It is from plurality, from diversity, and from recognising the commonality among multiple voices that it is possible to capture the uniqueness of creative thinking, individually and collectively.

Science has in common with myths, philosophy and religion an inner structure that transcends its outcomes, i.e., what it delivers, as its results. The inner structure of science captures an open movement and a dynamic openness that is universal. Every civilisation, institution or formal group is able to come into existence through a process of capturing, moulding and calling its own, this vital force. This helps to explain how humans crave for belonging, for recognition, for reciprocity and for identification. That is, humans' existence is pre-given by early life groups, in family, school and social gatherings, that filter traditions, dreams and ambitions, projecting past, present and future into an ongoing open narrative. Being products and producers of reality corresponds to this position of adhering, incorporating, and taking it as a second skin, this capacity to create bonds, and to inculcate

a deep experience of existence through exercising creativity and spontaneity. Again and again, every human production is itself the product of this vital impulse.

It is through a process of images, of processing visual imaginary connections and sense of wholeness that creation is conducted. The performativity of images is precisely the action of images upon an impressable surface, in this case, of human existence. Permeable and impressible, sensitive and attentive to details, to modalities, tonalities, densities and intensities, the performativity of images operates transversely, across all senses (Vieira, 2018). A musical scene, a perfumed atmosphere, the texture of a surface, are all active elements of imagining totalities. As a jazz orchestra, they work carefully throughout common themes that are then improvised; in synergy, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Thought, taken as past, present and prospective analysis, are examples of activating memory and intentionality under the spell of the performativity of images. Publicity, propaganda, marketing, branding, reputation, market value or supply-chains are formal techniques that apply visions of wholes, of unity, capturing an easy to process automatic message; their effectiveness corresponds to the effectiveness of the performativity of the images that are put together.

The baroque is an art style, present in architecture and in visual arts that is characterised by an excessive and amplified use of elaborate décor and a hyperbole of details (Alden, et al, 2010). This exaggeration, magnification and inflation of stimuli is itself a saturation strategy; that is, every effort is put into creating an atmosphere of excess, which creates an impact of dizziness, almost indigestion, yet it is powerful and addictive.

In present times, the neo-baroque operates not in architecture or traditional painting and sculptures but in technological production. Whatever is offered, is explored to an extreme of overwhelming segmentation, differentiation and multiplication. Today, as in the past, an alienation and numbing effect is carefully manipulated, which enables total colonisation without resistance. The masses and the media enter into this game, of serving and of being served; as saturation is reached in one area, product or service, a new alternative emerges, which follows the same trajectory.

Consumerism, placing a disproportionate attention into possessing, acquiring, buying, and getting hold of things, positions, and access to services, until saturation is reached and beyond, that is, permanently expanding the borders into new limits, is itself a self-alienation strategy that is instrumentalised in an abusive fashion (Haraway, 2016).

Totalitarianism is reached under the spell of abusive, seductive and manipulative offerings. Numbness takes hold; and the gold is offered to the robber. The masses and the media are instrumentalised into an alienation ritual that is hard to break.

6 Conclusion

The main argument of the present text, as Hannah Arendt posits (2022), is that totalitarianism is a consequence or is conditioned by prior factors that are intimately connected to community life, to communities themselves and to organisations and organisational systems that are community-based and community-led. Therefore, the set of interlinked knowledge fields that help to grasp the complexity of power structures and of agency dynamics is absolutely critical.

Moreover, the role of IR in contemporary societies is more important today than ever before. IR has a tradition of multidisciplinary research, of comparative studies and of critical thinking that are crucial; the present poli-crises demand radical and innovative political thought (Vieira, 2018).

Logical positivism can be understood as the dominant-thinking world vision and epistemic positioning, which advocates for the rejection of idealistic, metaphysical or transcendental claims to define moral values, ethics and axiology. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of factual and empirical evidence in determining the truth and value of propositions, and asserts that knowledge can only be derived from scientifically confirmed statements (Calhoun, 1997).

The myth of totalitarianism corresponds to the creation of a fiction that feeds into itself, in the sense that a narrative of identarian origins is created that satisfies the masses need for mythological subjectivation and individuation. Images and the performativity of images exercise the power of signification, of myth building and of identification. That is, it is through the use of images that a vision of the world is created, sustained and maintained (Arendt, 2022).

The neo-baroque corresponds to the recuperation of centuries old role of the baroque style, which was the first ever global movement of architecture and interior design that occurred with the expansion of Portuguese and Spanish colonialism and then spread globally (Alden, et al, 2010). More importantly, it is the functioning of visual, affective and emotional saturation through which the exaggeration of the baroque style operates that is relevant. In contemporary societies, the old and the new media permanently replicate and disseminate a saturation of images, multimedia and hypertext images, which is itself a form of producing alienation, inducing consumerism and creating the conditions of possibility for the development of new forms of totalitarianism (Bateira, Vasconcelos, 2002).

Democracy, peace, justice, solidarity and freedom, as ideals and values for the construction of a society that is inclusive, diverse, and plural, critically depend on the capacity to exercise political debate, free thinking and openness to novelty (Puskás, et al, 2021). IR, among other social science disciplines, has the intellectual resources, methods and praxis that may be a valuable source of hope for the creation of better, more effective and satisfactory public policies, locally and globally, based on hands-on and grassroots action-research. That is, concrete benefits for concrete people and territories depends upon the quality, charisma and innovative drive of scientific research; and IR is at the forefront of such developmental movement.

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