

TIME, SPACE, AND THEIR MEANINGS

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Abstract: *The events meanings that are locked in time and space appear in evolution process as historical descriptions. Nevertheless, the interpretation of meanings by the theories of international relations involves limitations that highlight either historical themes (security, political interest, and realpolitik) or episodic meanings (history, economy, and philosophy). The difficulty in establishing an interpretative background for meaning description consists in identifying the convergence between historical understanding and how to explain the continuity in the context of the present. The classical paradigms neglected the potential modes of localization in time and space that were possibly subversive. In opposition, post-structuralism emphasizes the continuity of meanings in the logic of international structuration in a way that transcends the self and the own identity through cultural dimensions. Due to that, the theories recognize that between structuration and transformation, there is localization of the meanings and historical perspective over bifurcation moments. According with the present complexity, the theories of international relations needs refashioning into a tool of this information interpretation and his philosophical sense. We dare to develop a deconstruction framework and seek to establish it in philosophical interpretation of international reality.*

Keywords: meanings description, localization, theories of international relations, historical knowledge, critical theories.

Introduction

Time and space represent the elementary parameters of event locations, both in history and in reality. The concepts are used constantly to determine the localization of the knowledge or the sources of the subject, which is analyzed. Also, we know that time and space are two distinct dimensions of reality that report each other into dependent forms. And are considered to be equally important when making references to the existence of an event or how the information is reported to a subject. Nevertheless, time and space are concepts that are objective realities and do not depend on our willingness¹. Yet, the different forms that we give them in the studies have a crucial impact on collective observation of reality and put us in a position to reflect upon how we use history to present reality. Despite these facts, in the social sciences, time and space are enjoyed just by a very particular interpretation that is

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¹ Immanuel Wallerstein, *The time of space and the space of time: The future of social science*, “Political Geography”, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1998, p. 71 PhD.82.

locked together into a form of historical continuity. Due to that, it does not admit their conceptualization and interpretation of meanings location in the informational framework of evolution. From a technical perspective, this issue raises a question about the existence of informational progress and how it is observed in the social sciences after the meanings of events are annotated. It is about the quality of information at a given time and how much it can alter the meanings offered by its observed presence.

In this paper, I want to challenge this variety, starting with how we use time and space and what their proportions are. Distinct from Wallerstein's categorization of the time and space used in the modern world², I consider both concepts as vectors that capture progress, as an act that creates different varieties of structuration and transformations of knowledge sources. Getting closer to the international relations (IR) field, this perspective of time and space is drawing in political practices and the mode in which political narrations invoke the past. In the end, the location of meanings in time and space is about the existence of different forms of the past in the present. In IR, the location of meanings in time and space is about the justification of actions based on the senses offered to the differences that exist in perception of the international structures. This fact makes time and space to be described in two parts, first as concepts of the philosophy and second as reference dimensions. Through this recognition, the only issue related to the subject that I will treat in this paper is the location of meanings that are emphasize in the historical presentation of international reality. In essence, this topic is about the confrontation of how knowledge is transposed from history into explanations of the present world.

Overview

Although the statement refers to only one topic, the approach requests recognition of the multiple aspects that are involved. Due to this cause, the difficulty appears from the difference of view over rules, which influence the world description at different moments. This is a challenge in terms of knowledge and information propagation in different presentation modes. Due to that, I bring forward the informational framework as a drop-box of historical knowledge used to offer a logic to the observations. Following the subject through this premise, I hope to offer a rational point of view about how we need to understand the meanings that present international relations in time and space.

The allocation of space-temporal vectors to the world descriptions happens to exceed the reductionist approach and create convergence points between the historical perspective (the understanding) and the analytical view (the explanation). This feasible possibility cancels the conditions installed by the predefined themes and

² Idem, *The inventions of timespace realities: Towards an understanding of our historical systems*, "Geography: Journal of the Geographical Association", Vol. 73, No. 4, 1988, p. 289–297.

extends the perspectives of what we know on informational ontologies. A vision like this of the world and how the meanings of themes evolve appear to be normal in conditions of imperfection of information. In this idea, the disjunction of perceptions and hardship created by conditions of validation are included equally. Yet, some of the abstract forms generated by the conceptualization of knowledge contain a higher level of clarity than any other solution created on their base. Due to that, the dichotomies do not result from observation errors or descriptions, but at the same time, accuracy is not possible to appear by avoiding temptations to use explanations or knowledge.

In this case, the approach of meanings location in time and space is an applied form that follows to solve a problem through the utility of existing elements. To have access to the truth frequently is a request to resort to the artifices. Thus, obtaining an understanding of the value of certain historical themes requires a reconsideration of the initial description. In this case, the objective is to be able to develop the meaning in a way that has as an object the report between the perspectives of actors and what reality presents. Thus, it will receive a higher grade of subjectivity than an objective one, an image that can be subjected to a correction and strengthening process. The alternative is possible to be a result that appears capable of offering a solution when, in reality, it offers only fuzzy descriptions without any sense. In such a situation, Nietzsche warns us that the result is only a false objectification of an aspect that cannot be understood better, not under the existence conditions of the subject. Although there is a strong connection between historical knowledge and the objective perception of international reality, the complexity remains only partially understood.

The simple presupposition that the beliefs and the imaginary have a chance to exist together in artificial reality rather than in a reference is enough to determine us to search for understanding by putting the imaginary in quotation marks. However, the imaginary and the own perspectives can be best understood only when they are analyzed from an isolated point of view over the subject. Thus, if we decide to go deep into such a theoretical debate, we are very likely to achieve a negation and, in short, an incursion into what exists. On the other hand, the possible results represent a prediction of the philosophical speculations regarding the nature of certain subjects in IR. Yet, there is a temptation that does not grant the known descriptions any independent role from historical knowledge, which is equally harmful.

The reference parameters in time and space

In the construction of perspectives, the allocation of meanings in space to phenomena and context, or changes and transitions, complicates debates about sensitivity. This sensitivity appears to be related to the fact that temporality is related to *who we are* and *what we follow*. In this point of the paper, I consider that it is enough to admit that the extension of a consequences model in time is possible to change the

general perception of space. However, at the regional level, for example, the cause-and-effect schemes are relatively effective for security³. The general framework of implications created by variations of variables needs to be considered as part of the reality of an anarchic and unpredictable universe.

From a social point of view, the meanings as an idea of historicity have an identity message that describes the concepts used to present the actors interests and perspectives. In this frame, temporality is not a unitary and isolated vector; it is associated with the complex spectra of the spaces where the actor evolves and develops a social-cultural self. Thus, how the actors understand space and their time has a bivalent representation. First, as a historical localization of their arguments, the distribution of meanings represents a cultural-identity refuge. Second, a pragmatic argument of continuity that follows the world change

To understand the importance of this point, it is necessary to introduce two principles from physics. The principles of *locality* express that two or more phenomena detached from each other are not able to exercise influence directly or reciprocally. However, the object of the phenomenon can support an immediate influence that is determined by the environment in which the phenomenon exists. On the other hand, the principle of *separability* shows that two distinct perceptions of an event can be understood and approached individually from the perspective of the logic that governs the existential space. In the study of international relations, questions related to time and space are asked to appreciate the prediction value of what is possible to happen. For these types of questions, the principle of *separability* appears to be an existence condition that describes the premise of perception associations. Thus, it is considered that in a social environment where there are at least two events for which several actors need to report, the difference in their capacity to report what exists determines the existence of a complex set of events that do not always coincide. To identify the theoretical frameworks that satisfy the principles of *localization* and *separability* for the meanings, we need to analyze the existence of predictions for certain objects.

The central affirmation for this stage is that the consistency of *separability* requires that the explanation of the events logic be reduced to their individual meanings. In the opposite case, a description will emphasize just the differences that exist between logics. This affirmation assumes that, in the absence of a common perception, there exists a disruptive factor that alters the projection of knowledge in the construction of meanings. Thus, the transition from general observation to particular interpretation is a limitation that will restrict the extension of particular meanings to general perceptions. For example, the European situation before the First World War was understood by the great powers in the same terms of balance. Additionally, there were the nations that were under the domination of European power

³ Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, *Regions and powers. The structure of regional security*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 10–11.

and were obliged, due to their position, to report differently to the state that governed Europe. When the First World War started, the actors were implied to understand the situation in the same way, but each of them distinctly interpreted the situation after their own interests. Therefore, the maintenance of conflictual logic maintains the same scheme of understanding by using the same structure of interests.

The end of the First World War and the change in world logic generated a swift political interpretation of the world, from Eurocentrism to nations. On the one hand, there was the winning group of actors that followed to consolidate the obtained position through the claim of winnings; also, there was the position of allies, for which the recognition of nations and their auto-determination were essential. And there was the group of defeated players who were obliged to submit to a new world order. These were three positions with three different understandings of the interaction environment, although they had started from an almost similar understanding of the same logic. In the first phase, the result of the First World War allowed the correlation of the common environment understanding with the actors interests due to a convergence element. The peace treaty from Versailles. In the second phase, the lack of a common consensus over the new meaning of the world appears as a disruptive factor, a security dilemma that is more artificial than a real one. The most disastrous consequence was the alteration of observation projection about the fact state in the individual meaning offered by the actors to the events that appear. A fact that leads to the development of oppositions on the basis of certain idiosyncrasies.

This example shows us that the submission of meanings to the principles of *locality* and *separability* explains the distribution model of implications in the change of logic. The influence of variations over effects makes their presence felt discretely in the approach of explanation predictions and the form of future meanings. In short, despite the possible propagation of content over time, the change in environment logic reduces the capacity of actors to offer consistent correlations between the characteristics of events that exist simultaneously and their beliefs. In the TRI, this fact determines that the application of the principles to establish a meaningful position regarding events is more intuitive than deductive. And that in conditions where there exists a real incapacity of prediction in the international world. Through analogy with the events that can be studied, it is possible to find more arguments that sustain the possibility of intuition of probability distribution to sustain the certain meaning of some cases.

This aspect of reality makes the construction of certain meanings a complicated process that is not always a rational one. The knowing of anthropological formulas such as *I* and *they* or *us* is just participative in the perception of a fact state, which draws the imagination about what is observed. These perspectives play a special role in what is happening in the space between two events at different levels of interaction. In other words, it is about the intersubjective vision of the perception of explicative elements, about causalities and implications shared by several actors.

Explanation of the relations between themes and temporal frameworks

In general, the theories offer information about international practices with a certain degree of distance between theoretical positioning and exposure of the subjects in political debates. Regarding this, the critical siege on positivism expresses the doubt overextension of descriptions offered by the orthodoxy of TRI to the relationship between subject-object, facts-value, and *I-they*⁴. Is about a language that is possible to represent as an alternative to the translation of what is observable in the history of IR. From the perspective of information, the approach of generalities and limits means that in the construction of knowledge, it is not possible to bring something from the exterior unless there exists a rational practice that argues for this necessity. To accentuate the importance of language and narrations for the description of events means to be able to appreciate objectively the implications of any theoretical attempt to present a situation. This fact prevents an understanding of the gains related to any international context that is associated with history and evolution. For example, when the Nazis in Germany formulated their policy regarding the *Anschluss* between 1934 and 1938, this was an act of negation of territorial dimension instituted through the peace system at Versailles. Also, the political decision of Nazi Germany means the recognition of the opposition between vulnerabilities and stability in the uncertainty of the time. For the political approach to reality, the oppositions do not represent deconstructions but rather emphasize discords that exist on the systemic level and can be transformed into opportunities.

The transposition of national views in actions of foreign affairs represents the capacity of the actors to argue their values in the advantage or disadvantage of binary oppositions. The rise of Nazi Germany in Europe was due to the impossibility of the winning actors explaining the complexity of the international system following the old political philosophies. Due to this fact, the sources of sensitivities and crises that ground the interwar period were developed exponentially through the amplification of idiosyncrasies. In this situation, the Nazis's policy was an intentional act to deform the binary opposition for the validation of their own interests. Despite the cynicism, the Nazis's strategy was to capitalize on political vulnerabilities and social uncertainty through their report on the cultural rights of a nation. Such a kind of action is possible to exist only in certain conditions of international uncertainty associated with reorganization processes. This fact is the one that allows the binary oppositions to be used as negative arguments for national frustrations in the context of a series of crises. Through these types of examples, Derrida sustains that once with the reorganization of the contradiction hierarchy, the "new concept" cannot be correlated with or included in the old regime⁵, but is possible to be recognized as a philosophical truth for the conceptual oppositions.

⁴ James Der Derian, *Introducing philosophical traditions in international relations*, "Millennium: Journal of International Studies", Vol. 17, 1988, p. 189–193.

⁵ Jaques Derrida, *(Ex)poziții: convorbiri cu Henri Ronse, Julia Kristeva, Jean-Louis Houdebine, Guy Scarpetta*, Cluj-Napoca, Idea Design & Print, 2001, p. 36.

Because the binary oppositions suppose a stable idea to create the differentiations, each concept is based on the existence of an opposition that can be described with something else. For example, political revisionism considers that the previous state is “*the right one*” and that revocation is a violation of the “*historical right*”. This “*right*” is admitted as the fact that needs to exist in reality through his invocation in a report to what exists in a moment. Due to this, the question that follows the changes in the contradiction hierarchy is: how much is the present considered to be different from the past? What results from this question is an opposition of meanings provided to the situation through the different descriptions generated by the temporality of the space. If the example confirms the result that is obtained after critical destruction of the opposition’s logic, it is not the same when it comes to the language. If the language is associated with determinate political interests, such as Taiwan for China, this possibility is annulled. In this case, the oppositions may contain different meanings, but if there is a dominator or a contradiction, each part will consider that the language used represents the correct way to discuss the situation. Although political language can have greater overtones to present an extended set of meanings, if contradictory sources are found in conceptual oppositions about the subject, then in the majority of cases the language will remain the same. The condition for this situation is that the interests of the involved parties remain the same on the subject and are to be considered achieved.

Based on this account, the concept of difference does not appear to be in opposition to what historical truth represents. From an operative view, the concept of difference is a function that makes it possible to describe the existence of the meaning that can be awarded to each historical element. Yet, these entire facts lead to the formulation of a single truth. It would be a mistake to consider that a conflict or a crisis is perceived in the same way by all actors; if it were so, then there would exist a single political direction through the simple fact that the entire world understands the situation in the same way. The existence of such a possibility does not mean that the results will be better; it is possible to amplify the causes and sustain the continuity of the precedent events in a more aggressive mode. In the end, the understanding of IR through how the themes exist in time is about appreciating history through the recognition of differences. And how the projection of historical knowledge into the explanation of the present can allow us to understand the meaning of the past for the future.

Presence of the past in present construction

The past and the present are two forms of time conceptualization for a horizon of space framing. In theory, this is the theorem that allows to maintain the consent between history and IR on the domination of the epistemological framework on understanding patterns. In philosophy, on the other hand, this framework is about evolution versus functionalism. The first formula suggests the epistemic condition of constructions from the perspective of the actors that form them. This is the line that

emphasizes the dynamic of international reality through an understanding of transformation vectors as an attribute of practices and actors behavior. Secondly, functionalism is part of the consent that considers that the explanation of continuity from the point of view of structural functions needs to represent the basis for continuity understanding. These two forms of consent are emphasized in the theoretical modernization of the dichotomy imagined between change models and variable design. Yet, only evolutionism is the aspect of consent that is associated with the explanation of transformative forces from the history of social constructions.

The ontology of temporal continuity is a form of this consent exposure through recognition of the past and the present as an operationalization mode of time and space. For the validation of this recognition, we will focus on the logic of the formula. As a rule, theorists see this operationalization function as a synchronous application that highlights functional relationships. For these scholars, the abstraction of temporal continuity represents the possibility of identifying functional relations when the rest is about the change of these relations. Especially for the TRI, this model of conceptualization presents a deficiency as a description of continuity through functional change. Therefore, the identification of functionality associated with a temporal period allows us to establish the source that generates the change, but not always the understanding. From this point of view, continuity appears as a logical necessity in the transition between two models of utility. However, a historical perspective on the same relations presents a higher interest in the nature of change. Specifically, the behavior of structural characteristics over time and how they are affected by different variations. This perspective emphasizes the conceptualization of time through the routine study created by social relations. Distinct from the logic of IR, from the historical perspective, there exists a component of phenomenology that allocates an important position to the knowledge above social conventions. This component presents, however, a shortcoming in that the scholar will have more tacit knowledge about the operation of these conventions than explicit ones. Thus, what results is the fact that conceptualization of time in history, although it can highlight the motives of temporal continuity, unfortunately, it cannot deeply approach the transition of utility functions.

As a result, the time reported in the history studies is about what is possible to be organized in laws⁶. Namely, the formulation of a framework of observations and knowledge that can be generalized through other disciplines under the logic of temporal continuity. On the other hand, for the TRI, time is the reference that can confirm the existence of certain laws or allow the generalization of some rules until they draw near the status of laws⁷. Due to this, the structural duality and the

⁶ Anthony Giddens, *Time and space in social theory*, in vol. *Lebenswelt und soziale Probleme: Verhandlungen des 20. Deutschen Soziologentages zu Bremen*, J. Matthes (ed.), Frankfurt am Main, Campus Verl, 1981, p. 88–97.

⁷ Milja Kurki, Colin Wight, *International relations and social science*, in vol. *International relations theories. Discipline and diversity*, Tim Dunne, et al. (eds.), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021, p. 13–33.

conceptualization of the time serve as an organizational base for the principles through which the meaning of the events are defined as references in the history studies of the IR themes. Therefore, under the concept of evolution, the change process obtains a systemic sense of transition between two models of organization and social practices⁸. From this point of view, the change is about differences in characteristics established between two temporal periods and by which the social organization of a location is characterized.

Take, for example, the debate among all those who are part of it over the Ukraine conflict. Ukraine represents a nation that was a constituent republic of the Soviet Union when it was formed in 1922 and gained independence in 1991 once the Soviet Union dissolved. In the period of the Cold War, starting with **the Khrushchev** era and the de-Stalinization process, Ukraine experienced a period of re-establishment in its relationship with Russia without, however, eliminating the *Russification* process. Although Ukraine received the Crimean peninsula as an act of friendship, in reality, it was an act of transfer in economic porpoise. The year 1989 marked the transition from social mobilization to mass politicization of life in Ukraine. As a consequence of the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, in 1990 appeared the beginning of parliamentary democracy. This was in general lines of the backdrop, which under the *coup d'état* organized in August 1991, the government in Moscow collapsed and put the Ukrainian parliament in an emergency session conducted to declare Ukrainian independence on August 24, which was ratified by the Ukrainian nation through a referendum on December 1. I will not discuss the historical relationship between Ukraine and Russia, but I am interested in the justification of Ukraine's acts and how this needs to be respected. The majority population of Ukraine, despite the *Russification* and Soviet domination, is Slavic and Tatar, but different from the Russian nation in terms of ethnic definition. They sustain a right recognized in international law based on historical arguments about the existence of a Ukrainian nation in a space whose delimitation was formally defined and accepted on an international level until the Crimean episode in 2014. The Ukraine state is an argument for the recognition of meanings in time and space in an act that prevails in geopolitics.

Under President Putin's leadership, the argument was different. Russia, as a political actor, spoke from the point of view of a long-existing geostrategic fact: the historical influence in the region. The source for this right is not necessarily a political one; rather, it brings into discussion the cultural, social, and security historicity of the Slavic nations from East Europe. For the conflict in Ukraine, the argument was that this conflict sustained the Slavic consciousness of being Russian-centric in the history of the region. An act that followed to eliminate the other cultural and political factors that were imported and "intoxicated" the Slavic character. In public terms, this process started by Russia received the name "*de-Nazification of Ukraine*". These are arguments about the

⁸ S.N. Eisenstadt, *Social Change, differentiation and evolution*, "American Sociological Review", Vol. 29, No. 3, 1964, p. 375–386.

meanings of structuration narrated in terms of national interests. Ukraine's common location and ethnic past with Russia are considered historical facts that cannot be revoked under geostrategic interest or even the new logic of the world. Even if Ukraine demonstrates that there is an argument legitimate for his national will, the conflict is a security debate over the meaning of historical structuration that was transformed into a narrative puzzle. Thus, time and space are just reference to the subject for each side, and the meaning becomes a political topic that follows to sustain the interest of each part.

The debate on the Ukraine conflict is a typical topic of political differences over security meaning and historical rights in the contemporary world. What is interesting about them is that they both employ particular implications of time and space translation but also create implicit references to justification deriving from historical perspectives on the topic. History is not at all neutral on such topics but is often puzzling with political meaning. And it is with the hope of reducing the ambiguity of the conceptualization that I present this example today. Let us start by remembering the historicity of the meanings in IR. This knowledge is essentially a product of realist doctrine and the geostrategic nature of space. Therefore, it is not that the theme discussed by the IR scholars was not previously developed in security analysis; the idea that there was a specific domain of knowledge that we call IR analysis, in turn, is submitted to a set of disciplines. Thus, the production, reinterpretation, and development of this disciplinary knowledge for the meanings observed in foreign affairs are introduced in global and regional overviews.

When I say that meanings found their logic in historical frameworks distributed to the IR, I am thinking first of all of the information that became accepted in the domain of knowledge and descriptions. The canonization of such an approach into paradigms in the form of practices and concepts used to express the interests in relation to reality that the actors pursue to sustain their perspectives and positions represents facts that follow the rules. Most contemporary political actors follow these rules to improve their security and consolidate their power. In addition, these actors create regional constructions and establish perspectives intended to facilitate the exchange of arguments and improve their resilience. Finally, the so-called agents began to catalogue the actors interests and their capabilities in terms of these same meanings and distinctions. In a globalized world, most of this activity was occurring in only two regions: Europe and Asia, and in two trans-regional relations: the transatlantic relationship between the United States and the European Union and the United States' relationship with China. All of these organizational structures existed starting with the Cold War. And most of them were in place by 1918.

In addition to the temporal cleavage between past and present, the meanings that arise from history are ostensibly temporal, and the second cleavage is policy or identity, which is ostensibly spatial. The last cleavage is unfortunately more ambiguous and represents a limit in our understanding of a hypothetical convergence between the historicity of the themes and the narration of the subjects. These cleavages define the boundaries in terms of the conditions of the presumed

propagation of knowledge in time with space redefinition by actors, cultures, and societies. The partitioning of what is real and what is possible to be hidden about the location of meanings in time and space is, of course, not an accident. It reflected the dominant dimension of knowledge interpretation of history under the impact of factuality and, most particularly, information concentration, which became crystallized as the complexity of the global system in response to cultural symbolism. Each historical period believes in progress, an act towards a more civilized world, where the impulses are found in the rational thinking of the nature of actors and sense of events. In this sense, the formula of discrete continuity of the time over meaning development and evolution of structures found a justification in history and for the form into an explanation of the present. At the same time, the transitions recognized as forms of change through the passage from a defined past to a predefined present show that evolution and continuity are two inseparable vectors from the ontology of space-time.

Conclusions

Every generation's lives *complicated times* due to the modernity and meanings that bring towards history in present. There exist many social, cultural, political, and philosophical signs of this. Yet, perhaps the most interesting are the idiosyncrasies and historical ethos that are found in our judgement of the present. Through these two concepts, we tend to call into question a significant segment of the meanings that nations construct when the space-time dimension appears to be complicated. It was this cultural model that legitimized the concept of historical continuity and, indirectly, the concept of episodic geopolitical space. Today, concepts like complexity and uncertainty are popular in the philosophy of time and space, but the information compression and the lack of a dominant philosophy bring forward the necessity to study the meanings distribution in world construction. Suddenly, the interpretation that the realist paradigm made about space's existence in time through the geopolitical and geostrategic view of the political actors is undermined and can be open to debate. Suddenly, the limits of how we think the world works are up for grabs.

Of course, there are also social and political reasons to conclude that world philosophy is in crisis. I will not follow here to develop the subject. In that sense, the syntax of "*complicated times*" is just a repetitive one. Yet, the *Fortuna* from history is very unlikely to be the same. But there are no stable guarantees. It depends on our visionary will to develop a new stage of understanding and seek to implement it. We need to appreciate that, in the complexity of progress, there exists a moment when the distribution of meanings in political and social life requires a new appreciation. I do not suggest stopping the history, but looking where we are squarely in the face. I do not suggest there are no risks, but this is a call for

triumphalism about a better philosophy of evolution perception. This is a call for rational choices in complex (unpredictable) evolutions about which we master highly comprised information, in a time when the world is sufficiently splintered to achieve the conditions for transforming worldwide individual meanings in a collective logic.

Yet, why should political choices and world perspectives be easy? If it were, there was a simplified world, a world submitted to realism reduction, and probably what we could interpret would be just a routine of security and materialism.