

DISCOVERING THE WORLD AROUND US: EXPLORING GEOGRAPHY WITH AN EXISTENTIALIST PERSPECTIVE

DESCUBRIENDO EL MUNDO QUE NOS RODEA: EXPLORANDO LA GEOGRAFÍA CON
UNA PERSPECTIVA EXISTENCIALISTA

DESCOBRINDO O MUNDO AO NOSSO REDOR: EXPLORANDO A GEOGRAFIA COM
UMA PERSPECTIVA EXISTENCIALISTA

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Abstract

This expository text examines philosophy, geography, and perspective as thematic indications. Our objective is to analyze Heidegger's definition of the world and its relevance to human existence, while also approaching Geography as a science that studies geographic space. Additionally, we reflect on the concept of perspective in various areas of knowledge and its fundamental role in knowledge construction and understanding of the world. The text presents definitions, concepts, and reflections on the subject, drawing from existentialism as a theoretical reference. Intended for a general readership interested in contemplating the concept of the world, the significance of Geography as a science, and perspective in different fields, this text serves as an introductory resource. We propose the development of an educational product model in Geography with an existentialist perspective, which not only challenges students but also stimulates their curiosity, fostering a critical and responsible environmental awareness. To achieve this, we suggest connecting Geography to students' daily lives using practical examples, evoking curiosity through thought-provoking questions, encouraging collaborative group discussions to promote critical thinking and environmental awareness. Visual and interactive resources such as maps and videos will enhance the learning experience. Making relevant connections with students' lives and engaging them in the learning process are crucial when teaching Geography to stimulate their interest and understanding of geographic concepts.

Keywords: World; Geography; Perspective; Existentialism.

Resumen

Este texto expositivo examina la filosofía, la geografía y la perspectiva como indicaciones temáticas. Nuestro objetivo es analizar la definición del mundo según Heidegger y su relevancia para la existencia humana, así como abordar la Geografía como una ciencia que estudia el espacio geográfico. Además, reflexionamos sobre el concepto de perspectiva en diversas áreas del conocimiento y su papel fundamental en la construcción del conocimiento y la comprensión del mundo. El texto presenta definiciones, conceptos y reflexiones sobre el tema, basándose en el existencialismo como referencia teórica. Destinado a un público

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general interesado en contemplar el concepto del mundo, la importancia de la Geografía como ciencia y la perspectiva en diferentes campos, este texto sirve como un recurso introductorio. Proponemos el desarrollo de un modelo de producto educativo en Geografía con una perspectiva existencialista, que no solo desafíe a los estudiantes, sino que también estimule su curiosidad, fomentando una conciencia ambiental crítica y responsable. Para lograr esto, sugerimos conectar la Geografía con la vida cotidiana de los estudiantes utilizando ejemplos prácticos, provocando curiosidad a través de preguntas sugerentes, fomentando discusiones grupales colaborativas para promover el pensamiento crítico y la conciencia ambiental. Los recursos visuales e interactivos, como mapas y videos, mejorarán la experiencia de aprendizaje. Establecer conexiones relevantes con la vida de los estudiantes e involucrarlos en el proceso de aprendizaje es crucial al enseñar Geografía para estimular su interés y comprensión de los conceptos geográficos.

Palabras clave: Mundo; Geografía; Perspectiva; Existencialismo.

Resumo

Neste texto expositivo, discutiremos três indicações temáticas: filosofia, geografia e perspectiva. Nosso objetivo é analisar a definição de mundo segundo Heidegger e sua relevância para a existência humana, bem como abordar a Geografia como uma ciência que estuda o espaço geográfico. Além disso, refletiremos sobre o conceito de perspectiva em diferentes áreas do conhecimento e como ela é fundamental para a construção do conhecimento e compreensão do mundo. Para alcançar nossos objetivos, o texto apresenta definições e conceitos, bem como reflexões sobre a temática, tendo como referencial teórico o existencialismo. Destinado a leitores em geral, que desejam refletir sobre o conceito de mundo, a importância da Geografia como ciência e a perspectiva em diferentes áreas do conhecimento, o texto pode ser utilizado como uma introdução ao tema. Desta forma, propomos o desenvolvimento de um modelo de produto educacional em Geografia com perspectiva existencialista, em que seja não somente um desafio, mas um possível estímulo à curiosidade dos alunos, promovendo a construção de uma consciência ambiental crítica e responsável. A sugestão inclui conectar a Geografia com a vida cotidiana dos alunos, usando exemplos práticos, despertando a curiosidade através de perguntas provocadoras, incentivando a colaboração e discussão em grupo para promover o pensamento crítico e a consciência ambiental, via a utilização de recursos visuais e interativos, como mapas e vídeos. Ao ensinar sobre Geografia, é importante fazer conexões relevantes com a vida dos alunos e tornar o aprendizado envolvente para estimular o interesse e a compreensão dos conceitos geográficos.

Palavras-chave: Mundo; Geografia; Perspectiva; Existencialismo.

Introduction

The concept of "World" can be understood in different ways, depending on the context in which it is used. According to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, the world is a set of things, people and places that are part of human existence and that are understood from the relationship between the man and the world (HEIDEGGER, 2008).

The statement is quite relevant, since the concept of the world can vary according to the context and perspective adopted. Heidegger, in his work "Being and Time", addresses the world as a fundamental understanding of human existence, which happens through man's relationship with the things, people and places that surround him. Thus, the world is not only a set of isolated objects, but a totality that reveals itself from the way man interacts with it. Therefore, the concept of the world is deeply linked to our everyday experience, to the way we understand and relate to the things around us. Heidegger's approach helps us to reflect about the importance of understanding the world for human existence and leads us to reflect about our role in building and transforming the world around us.

In the field of science, Geography is study of geographic space, seeking to understand the organization and the dynamics of natural and social phenomena that occur on the Earth's surface. According to Santos (2008, p. 7), "Geography is the science that is concerned with studying the diversity of landscapes that are created on the earth's surface, resulting from the different combinations between the natural and social elements that interact on them".

The definition presented brings a classic view of Geography, which has its object related to the study of the earth's surface and its relations with human activities. However, it is important to highlight that Geography is a science that has broadened its scope over time, incorporating new perspectives and methodologies. Currently, Geography presents itself as a social science that studies the relationship between society and space, considering the political, economic, cultural and environmental dimensions. Furthermore, contemporary Geography seeks to dialogue with other areas of knowledge, such as Anthropology, Sociology, Ecology, among others.

Thus, we arrive at perspective, which can be understood as a particular way of perceiving or conceiving something, a way of understanding reality from a certain point of view. According to the Aurélio dictionary, perspective is "the graphic representation of three-dimensional objects or scenarios on two-dimensional surfaces, according to the rules of projective geometry" (FERREIRA, 2004, p. 1438).

From a philosophical point of view, perspective is understood as a way of perceiving the world, which is influenced by our experiences, values and beliefs. According to the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, perspective is "the totality of the effects that a thing exerts on us, according to the position in which we are placed in relation to it" (NIETZSCHE, 2003, p. 44).

This statement highlights the perspective as a subjective element and influenced by our experiences, values and beliefs. Nietzsche highlights the importance of where we are in relation to something in determining our perspective on it. It means that our perspective is shaped by our relation with the world and it can be unique and personal, which is an important consideration in many areas of knowledge, including philosophy, sociology and psychology.

Perspective is a term used in several areas of knowledge, such as philosophy, art, psychology, sociology, among others. At its core, perspective is a way of seeing the world from a specific point of view, which can be influenced by many factors, such as culture, personal experience, and social context.

The quote brought by the user is from the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, who uses the term "perspective" in his book "Time and Narrative". Ricoeur argues that every narrative is told from a specific perspective, which is influenced by the narrator's position in the world and his past experiences. To him, "every narrative is perspectivist" (RICOEUR, 1994, p. 219), that is, every narrative is told from a specific point of view that can be influenced by different factors.

That way, we can understand that perspective is a fundamental element in the construction of knowledge and understanding of the world. Each individual can see the world in a unique way, influenced by his/her own values, beliefs and experiences. Therefore, it is important to recognize that there are multiple perspectives about any theme or subject, and that it is necessary to consider these different views to build a broader and more comprehensive knowledge.

The general objective of this article is to present a proposition for an educational product that can be used in schools, formal and non-formal spaces, universities in order to stimulate students' curiosity in relation to the world around them, intending to develop their observation and interpretation skills and promotion

of critical reflection about the relationship between man and the environment, fostering the construction of an environmental awareness and the importance of preserving nature. To achieve the main goal, we listed the specific objectives: to relate geography and existentialism; to develop didactic material that addresses geographic concepts in a playful and interdisciplinary way; to instigate the construction of a critical conscience about the relationship between man and the environment; work on training responsible citizens who are aware of their relationship with the environment.

In the area of the problem, we point out the following: how to develop an educational product that addresses Geography from an existentialist perspective, that works on students' curiosity in relation to the world around them and promotes the construction of a critical and responsible environmental awareness? The hypothesis of this article follows a perspective that approaching Geography with an existentialist perspective, using playful and interdisciplinary didactic materials, can stimulate students' curiosity about the world around them and promote the construction of a critical and responsible environmental awareness.

By making this note, we raise our personal justification, because as a Geography teacher, I realize the need to develop a more creative and interdisciplinary approach to awake students' interest for the content. Furthermore, I understand that it is fundamental that the school contributes to the formation of citizens who are aware and responsible for the environment. In the field of social justification, we understand that the environmental issue is increasingly relevant in contemporary society and it is the school's responsibility to prepare students to be critical and aware citizens. In addition, the development of an educational product that addresses Geography from an existentialist perspective can contribute to improve the quality of geography teaching and to students' engagement in learning. So, we come to the scientific justification. This understands Geography as a science that aims to understand the relationships between human beings and the environment. Approaching Geography with an existentialist perspective can contribute to the formation of critical and aware citizens in relation to their relationship with the environment.

For the implementation of the educational product, a training was carried out with the students of the curricular component “Theoretical and methodological foundations of geography teaching”, in the Pedagogy Course at University of Bahia State, Campus XV in Valença city. The training consisted of a course lasting 60 hours, divided into 15 (fifteen) meetings of 04 (hours) each. During the meetings, the concepts and activities proposed by the product were presented, as well as suggestions on how to adapt them to the different realities of schools and students.

It is expected that the use of the educational product can contribute to the development of students' ability to understand the world around them in a critical and reflective way, as well as to the formation of an environmental awareness and to the appreciation of the importance of nature preservation. Furthermore, it is expected that teachers' training can contribute to improve the quality of Geography teaching in the Pedagogy course, using a more contextualized and reflective approach, which takes into account the relationship between man and the environment.

Geography and existentialism

From the perspective of Geography, it can be said that knowledge refers to intellectual production in its different investigations and in the search for reading the objective reality. Thought, on the other hand, stems from the epistemological work of discussion and reflection on what is accumulated by readings of reality, resulting in new knowledge at more abstract and deeper levels about what is produced by geographers.

Japiassu and Marcondes (1996, p.181) in their Basic Dictionary of Philosophy state that the word method derives from the Greek *methodos*, from “meta” (by, through) and “*hodos*” (path) being then: “A set of rational procedures, based on rules that aim to achieve a certain objective. For example, in science, the establishment and the demonstration of a scientific truth”.

It is René Descartes (1994) who creates an “idealist and rational subjectivism” rejecting ready-made dogmatic certainties and starting from doubt as a way of knowing the world. For Descartes, the method is a means of apprehending reality through clear and distinct concepts, called methodical doubt.

It is understood that Cartesian positivism, English empiricism, German idealism, Hegelian dialectics, Marxist historical materialism and the phenomenological-hermeneutic field served as a theoretical and doctrinal basis for the development not only of scientific and philosophical knowledge, but of different methods and positions and interpretation of reality based on different fundamentals. All these theoretical perspectives reverberated and still reverberate over geography.

Here, we will deal with existentialism, having as an initial approach the phenomenological-hermeneutic method. For this approach, it is necessary to deal with what a phenomenon is. This is everything that shows itself from itself, that is, the phenomenon is everything that reveals itself. Phenomenology, on the other hand, is the study of the phenomenon, that is, the study of everything that reveals itself from itself. In the words of Husserl (1992) a “return to things themselves”. It can be said that phenomenology seeks to perceive what is human in its essence, in which “it has to do with principles, with the origins of the meaning of experience” (RELPH, 1979, p.01).

While the natural phenomenon is, primarily, objective and treated by the bio-physical-mathematical sciences, the human phenomenon, in order to be better studied and understood, needs to be understood from the perspective of language, of the lived experience, of the experienced. Here it reverberates the world of life in its everyday life, in terms of lived experiences. It is important to understand that “one cannot separate science from the scientist, the subject from the object...” (OLIVEIRA, 1996, p.48).

That said, it is considered that it is in reality that we capture the essence of things through phenomena, and, “it is the human being in his/her essence that phenomenology seeks to perceive” (DARTIGUES, 1992, p.51).

In the area of Geography, phenomenology influences the way of analyzing the geographic space, taking into account the lived experiences, highlighting the meanings and values that the human being gives to himself/herself and to the lived

space, a socially constructed space, having as a principle the perception and life of the different subjects. This current breaks with the duality between subject and object. In this understanding, Geography, based on phenomenology, seeks to highlight the meanings and the importance that the subjects give to the space.

In this so-called understanding of importance, it penetrates the concept of place and existence. The latter one takes into account every delimitation or definition of being, that is, a way of being that is somehow demarcated and defined. From existence, we jump to the philosophical current “existentialism”, where existence is what is first heard. This audition carries a meaning of occupying time and place (it still needs to be addressed here). Existentialism is a philosophical current that addresses, in general, the human existence in all its complexity. Geography builds here one of its homes, one of its places, because as Sartre (1956, p.269) tells us: “it is not possible for me not to have a place”.

Understanding that “to exist is to have a place” (ENTRIKIN, 1980) we become aware that the house and the street are these immediate/direct places – Roberto DaMatta (1986) – works on this relationship primarily in his work “What does make Brazil to be, Brazil?”. Writing about the region, the country and even the Earth, raise a symbolic condition with regard to the place. In other words, the Earth is our home. From the immediate/direct to the symbolic, everything is a place. The understanding engaged here involves realizing that the place of human experience can be temporary or perennial. The ephemeral of the place comes from the intense process of transformation. Perenniality, on the other hand, is what occurs to the place to continue being it, despite the transformations. There is no separation between one dimension and the other, since the incorporation, maintenance and re-elaboration of the place are, in a certain dimension, the life of each of the subjects involved in the construction of the place, this being a place of belonging, including the physical aspects, emotional and also related to memory, including social.

Taking this route is walking towards consciousness and this is intentional, that is, all consciousness is consciousness of something. To that extent, consciousness is not a substance, but is in the dimension of movement, being a “consciousness of”. By acting/thinking along this path, we experience with Sartre (1970) that freedom exposes existence in its contingency, in its character of being more, that is, only

existence is free. Thus, freedom transcends history at its core. In other words, freedom is our home, it is our place, being opposition rather than appearance, it is a manifestation full of meaning, where the intentionality of consciousness is a key part and the perception arising from lived experiences is, thus, considered important and fundamental methodological step.

Existentialism, seeking to break with the opposition between subject and object, with the anthropocentric view of the world, recovering humanism, seeking to establish the lived space as revealing of social practices, with the place as the center of the analysis, it approaches the place not simply as something objectively given, but as constructed by the various subjects in the course of their varied lived experiences.

By working in this perspective of understanding, we set out to perceive the object and objective of Geography. Like this:

The space is the object of geography. The knowledge of the nature and the movement laws of socio-economic formation through space is its objective. The geographical space is the interdisciplinary space of geography. It is the category through which we can dialogue with other scientists who seek to understand the movement of the whole socio-economic formation, each one from their analytical reference. The notion of space as the ground of geography is certainly a theme that permeates all geographic discourses at all times, as it can be seen from a simple comparison of the way as geographers have been defining it over time (MOREIRA, 2008, p. 63).

Having “the space as the object of geography” and its objective being “The knowledge of the nature and the movement laws of socio-economic formation through space” all this according to Moreira (2008), we refer to Cavalcanti, who although does not include the concept of space, she considers that the “most important function of geography (...) is to form a spatial awareness, a geographical reasoning” (CAVALCANTI, 1998, p.128). Here is consciousness in all its vigor, being “consciousness of”, to which we affirm that:

[...] the phenomenology consists of a method and a way of thinking, in which the 'intentionality of consciousness' is considered key because the consideration of the perception arising from lived experiences is thus considered an important and fundamental methodological step, seeking to break the opposition between subject and object, as well as between actor and observer (LENCIONI, 1999 *apud* SPOSITO, 2004, p.73).

For Castrogiovanni (2012, p.07) the geographic space is understood as “a historical product, as a set of objects and actions that reveal the social practices of different groups that live in a given place, interact, dream, produce, fight and (re)build it.” In all this construction, we realize along with Sartre (1970, p.04) that “man will only be what he designed to be. Not what he wanted to be, because wanting is commonly understood as a conscious decision that, for almost all of us, it comes after what we have made of ourselves”. We are the builders of our lives, of our places and in this undertaking, which is the result of a project “[...] there is not a single one of our acts that, creating the man we want to be, is not simultaneously creating the image of the man as we think he should be” (SARTRE, 1970, p.05). What we have here is the presence of essence and appearance in a single dimension, that from the place, where the ephemeral and the perennial meet. This meeting takes place in eternity, which is not a temporality, but a spatiality, in which objectivity and subjectivity become present in a vigor-of-having-been, in an actuality and future (Heidegger, 2005), that is, time reveals itself in the being and in this one presence exists, even in absence, always being in a now and not yet.

Didactic material, geographic concepts, playfulness, interdisciplinarity and construction of a critical conscience

For the development of a didactic material that includes a playful and interdisciplinary approach to geographic concepts, it is important to consider the different possibilities offered by geography as a discipline. As Lefebvre (2012, p. 65) argues, Geography is "a science of space and time, which can be used both to describe and to understand the social, cultural and environmental reality that surrounds us". In that regard, it is fundamental that the didactic material be able to explore not only the physical dimensions of the space, but also the social, cultural and political relations that are manifested in it.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the existentialist perspective mentioned in the suggested theme, which seeks an understanding of the world based on individual experiences. As highlighted by Merleau-Ponty (2002, p. 26) and Heidegger (2008, p. 78), the human existence is directly related to the perception of the world, which is always influenced by our personal experiences and values. Therefore, a teaching material that takes this perspective into account must be able to stimulate students' critical reflection, encouraging them to think about their own experiences and their relation with the world around them.

According to Heidegger (2008), human existence is intrinsically linked to the relation with the world, and this relation must be understood in an existential way.

In order to encourage the construction of a critical awareness about the relation between man and the environment, it is important to address topics such as the relation between society and nature, environmental degradation caused by human activities, the importance of environmental preservation and the relation between consumption and the environment. These themes can be worked in an interdisciplinary way, involving disciplines such as biology, history, sociology and philosophy.

Furthermore, it is important that the didactic material uses playful and creative strategies to make learning more attractive for students, such as games, practical activities and visits to places that exemplify the themes worked on. By encouraging the construction of a critical awareness about man's relation with the environment, students are expected to develop a more responsible and conscious attitude towards the environment in which they live. As pointed out by Santos (2009), "education for the environment is a continuous process and should be seen as a path towards the formation of an ecological conscience, capable of promoting changes in attitudes and behaviors" (p. 63).

Training responsible and aware citizens

The formation of responsible citizens who are aware of their relation with the environment is an essential issue for the construction of a sustainable and balanced society. Thus, Geography can play a key role, providing students with a critical and reflective view about environmental issues and encouraging the adoption of sustainable attitudes in their everyday lives.

According to Ribeiro (2012), the formation of critical and active citizens in society is one of the main objectives of environmental education, which seeks to make people aware about the importance of a harmonious relation between human beings and the environment. In addition, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of environmental education in the process of building citizenship and in the formation of individuals capable of understanding and transforming the reality in which they are inserted.

To encourage the formation of responsible citizens who are aware of their relation with the environment, it is essential that the activities suggested by Geography teachers are aligned with the principles of environmental education and are contextualized with the local reality. Thus, it is possible to awaken students' interest about environmental issues and encourage the adoption of sustainable attitudes in the school environment and in their communities.

Among the activities that can be carried out in this regard, we highlight the carrying out of the research projects about the environmental situation of the neighborhood and the city, the creation of school gardens for the production of organic food, the carrying out of campaigns for the selective collection of solid waste, among others. All these activities must be accompanied by critical reflections about the consequences of human actions on the environment and about the possibilities for transforming this reality.

Almost final considerations

Geography can contribute to the development of broader and more complex perspectives about the world, considering the diversity of existing contexts and realities. Through the study of the relations between society and space, Geography

can help to understand the dynamics that permeate the organization of the world we live in, considering not only physical and natural aspects, but also political, economic, cultural and social ones.

Thereby, Geography can help to promote more critical and reflective perspectives on the world, seeking to broaden the understanding of the different existing realities and promoting the construction of a fairer and more equitable world for all. Through the dialogue with other areas of knowledge and the adoption of more participatory and inclusive methodologies, Geography can become a science that is more engaged and committed to social transformation.

Based on this thinking, we understand that, among the various philosophical currents, the phenomenological-hermeneutic method, which is an initial approach of existentialism, influences the way of analyzing the geographic space, taking into account the lived experiences, the meanings and values that the human being confers to himself and to the lived space, breaking with the duality between subject and object.

Along this path, we anchored in the development of a didactic material that includes a playful and interdisciplinary approach of geographic concepts, and this must be considered in relation to the diversity of possibilities offered by Geography as a discipline, exploring not only the physical dimensions of space, but also the social, cultural and political relations that are manifested in it. In addition, it is important to address the existentialist perspective, which seeks an understanding of the world based on individual experiences, and encourage critical reflection by students, encouraging them to think about their own experiences and their relations with the world they live in. To do so, it is necessary to address issues such as the relation between society and nature, environmental degradation caused by human activities, the importance of environmental preservation and the relation between consumption and the environment, in an interdisciplinary way, involving disciplines such as biology, history, sociology and philosophy. The use of playful and creative strategies to make learning more attractive for students is also essential. It is expected that education for the environment promotes changes in attitudes and behaviors, forming an ecological awareness capable of promoting responsibility and awareness in relation to the environment in which we live.

Therefore, the formation of responsible citizens who are aware of their relation with the environment is essential to build a sustainable and balanced society. Geography plays a fundamental role in this process, providing students with a critical and reflective view of environmental issues and encouraging the adoption of sustainable attitudes in their everyday lives. So, it is important that the activities suggested by Geography teachers are aligned with the principles of environmental education and are contextualized with the local reality, awakening students' interest for environmental issues and encouraging the adoption of sustainable attitudes in the school environment and in their communities.

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