

EDITORIAL¹

DISCIPLINARITY AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

DISCIPLINARIDADE E INTERDISCIPLINARIDADE EM CIÊNCIAS DA RELIGIÃO

DISCIPLINARIDAD E INTERDISCIPLINARIDAD EN CIENCIAS DE LA RELIGIÓN

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The debate regarding the relationship between disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity in the process of consolidation and diffusion of the Religious Studies discipline, in the light of a contemporaneous debate, should be in the order of the day. Although this is a recent understanding, even before these terms came to the spotlight in the second half of the twentieth century, our discipline, a century earlier, had already evidenced that the treatment of the religion subject demanded an approach in complementation and articulation among several disciplines. Therefore, we can identify in the specialized literature on the Religious Studies discipline at its birth, as well as in the foundation of the first chairs or the outlines of the first events and periodicals, that the founding community of the *Religionswissenschaft* discipline, which is mostly presented in our country as Religious Studies, recognized the premise of what would later be called interdisciplinarity. The beginning of this process was the recognition that it was an autonomous discipline mediating and articulating the various specialized knowledge about the object. The Religious Studies discipline anticipates, on the horizon of its emergence, a contemporary debate.

Whereas, on the one hand, the history of modern science reinforced disciplinary

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knowledge, favoring the emergence of specializations, contemporarily, interdisciplinarity presents itself as a methodological attitude that promotes the overcoming of disciplinary barriers and establishes a relationship between sciences among themselves for a better understanding of reality. Nowadays, as can be seen from the main investigations on the subject, disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity do not work separately at all. The studies by Olga Pombo, Georges Gusdorf, Hilton Japiassu, and Ivani Fazenda, to cite just a few studies that have guided our research on this subject, offer contributions to deepen the debate on the necessary interrelation between the disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity pairs. The recognition of conceptual frameworks, methods and specific procedures that mark the notion of disciplinarity is combined with the recognition of the necessary theoretical and methodological interchange. While modern science was conceived by fostering specialization, contemporary science has promoted interdisciplinarity as a methodological attitude in the search for correlation among knowledge. In summary, what we intend to affirm is that a disciplinary approach is not a sufficient reason for refusing an interdisciplinary methodological attitude. However, neither does interdisciplinarity annul disciplinarity.

Interdisciplinarity is not only characterized by a diversity of approaches. Nevertheless, the analysis of the repercussions of the debate on interdisciplinarity in the field of sciences in general, by one hand, and the discussion on the constitution of the theoretical-methodological principles of the discipline of Religion Sciences, by the other, demonstrates that there are a certain number of inaccuracies on this subject. There seems to be a misappropriation of the epistemological, methodological, and pedagogical debate on the subject. Without further specialized studies, the common sense understanding of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity remains reduced to the suppression of any specificity, to the lack of any internal articulation between the related knowledge, to the mere presence of fragments of diverse studies on a given object. This misunderstanding of interdisciplinarity is not interesting for the primary objective of constituting an autonomous discipline, as is the case of Religious Studies. Rather, it is a negation of it. To whom does it care that the Religious Studies discipline should be a mere non-specific and disjointed consortium of knowledge that purports to study the object of religion?

The discipline is the starting point, but it is also the ending point in the question of interdisciplinarity. Certainly, we cannot go through the meanings built about the term discipline throughout history. However, it can be stated that discipline, in the traditional sense, is understood as a way of delimiting or organizing work from a given perspective.

Therefore, discipline offers no more than a particular angle of reality. This is not the problem of the discipline in itself, but its rigid and inflexible closure. Consequently, the recognition of complex subjects, as is the case of the object of the discipline of Religious Studies, demands a methodological attitude opened to the various perspectives on the horizon of analysis. However, disarticulated, the perspectives do not communicate themselves the variety of knowledge about the object. The discipline will be the organizer and delimiter of the object, which will make possible an adequate understanding of the object from various perspectives.

Religion (religions, wisdom traditions, spiritualities, their correlates, and even their negation is considered) is, as the subject of our investigation, theoretically and methodologically well defined, a complex reality. It is not exhausted and not reduced to social, historical, or psychological elements. On the contrary, it is better understood when, interdisciplinarily, through the articulation that can be elaborated by the discipline of Religious Studies, we dedicate ourselves to its analysis.

Thus, it is important to integrate and problematize knowledge in Religious Studies as an autonomous discipline, starting from its scientific delimitation, to continuously employ interdisciplinary concepts and methods deliberately, in dialog with other disciplines dedicated to the study of religion.

In this direction, we understand that this object of study can be investigated from several points of view. However, the starting point should be guided by the disciplinary objective of the Religious Studies, which investigation is based on the empirical and systematic approach of concrete religious facts, with a non-normative profile, but which, moreover, is a place of intersection of other areas that also have disciplines that investigate religion. Thus, the plurality of approaches favors the dynamic understanding of its object, which needs to be articulated in terms of a global vision of the phenomena being studied.

In this perspective, it is up to the discipline of Religious Studies to perform the task of internal articulation among disciplines of religion but guided by an undeniable principle, which is the production of knowledge that embraces the totality of the aspects that characterize its object. We start from the principle that discipline is the condition for the possibility of interdisciplinarity, this being an attitude that is assumed before the problem of knowledge.