Rock, Papyrus, Scissors: Antidisciplinarity and Exegesis.

Pedra, papiro, tesoura: antidisciplinaridade e exegese.

Piedra, papiro, tijera: anti-disciplinariedad y exégesis.

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Abstract: The article problematizes the use of different disciplines in the interpretation of the so-called "Biblical World." Arguing that a first step towards the critical biblical interpretation is the decision of a framework on which sources and related disciplines work, it presents different methodological frameworks for the juxtaposition, intersection, transcendence, or avoidance of disciplines to favor the critical biblical interpretation. Ultimately, the article presents a taxonomy of historical sources to tentatively propose an antidisciplinary framework to fuel innovation by focusing the research object.

Keywords: Interdisciplinarity, Antidisciplinarity, Biblical Studies, Material Culture, Textual Culture.

Resumo: O artigo problematiza o uso de diferentes disciplinas na intepretação do chamado "mundo bíblico". Argumentando que um primeiro passo para a interpretação bíblica crítica é a decisão de um quatro teórico nos quais fontes e disciplinas relacionadas funcionem, ele apresenta diferentes quadros metodológicos para a justaposição, interseção, transcendência ou negação de disciplinas em prol da interpretação bíblica. Finalmente, propõe-se uma taxonomia de fontes históricas para propor provisoriamente um quadro antidisciplinary para fomentar a inovação no focalizar o objeto de pesquisa.

Palavras-chave: Interdisciplinaridade, Antidisciplinaridade, Exegese Bíblica, Cultura material, cultura textual.

Resumen: El artículo problematiza el uso de diferentes disciplinas en la interpretación del llamado "mundo bíblico". Argumentando que un primer paso hacia la interpretación bíblica crítica es la decisión de un cuatro teórico en el que funcionan las fuentes y las disciplinas relacionadas, presenta diferentes marcos metodológicos para la yuxtaposición, intersección, trascendencia o negación de las disciplinas a favor de la interpretación bíblica. Por último, se propone una taxonomía de las fuentes históricas para proponer provisionalmente un marco anti-disciplinario que fomente la innovación al centrarse en el objeto de la investigación.

Palabras clave: Interdisciplinariedad, Antidisciplinariedad, Estudios Bíblicos, Cultura Material, Cultura Textual.

Introduction

A prominent Assyriologist once remarked that "the historian of the Ancient Near East is *forced* to take on the role of field archaeologist as well as philologist, *to a degree unknown* to other *fields of research*, whose *areas of expertise* appear better *defined* and seem to be working in a sort of consolidated production chain" (LIVERANI, 2014, p. 6, *my*

emphasis). That would happen due to the "fringe" aspect of historiography, to the "complex set of materials available and the complementarity of the archaeological and textual evidence" that ultimately leads towards "a more holistic reconstruction of the past (from material culture to ideology)." Regardless of his appraised and successful historical reconstruction, the author's complaint also offers a telling example of Assyriology and Biblical Studies' relationship with interdisciplinarity with its hidden assumptions and practices. Despite being advertised as an asset, interdisciplinarity is often perceived as a compulsory need, not a choice, and as a disliked mode of knowledge production or an undesired novelty to a well-established (not to say "traditional") field.

It is noteworthy to recall that the statement belongs to a European disciplinary environment, where knowledge is highly compartmentalized and hierarchized (GINZBURG et al., 1995, p. 544-549). This remembrance should at least warn to the inextricable connection between the modalities of knowledge production and their respective academic context - pros and cons included (FRODEMAN, 2017. p. 7) -, something that was much discussed in the last couple of decades (GIBBONS et al., 1994). Nevertheless, even with this indissoluble connection, it has become a truism to invoke an "interdisciplinary approach" without proper reasoning. Moreover, being true that some fields employ more disciplines by definition (e.g., literary studies, religious studies), that also does not mean a genuine interaction between them (KLEIN, 2017. p. 23).

Perhaps a research project should start by asking if it should use an interdisciplinary approach at least to think what means to be interdisciplinary in the peculiar contexts, with all its possibilities and caveats. The argument is not innovative. W. J. T. Mitchell said twenty-five years ago that "every up-to-date university in the United States prides itself on its commitment to interdisciplinary research and training [...., knowing] that the category of 'interdisciplinarity' is safely institutionalized" (GINZBURG et al., 1995, p. 540-541). Besides stating that "interdisciplinarity" was not innovative already in the last century, Mitchell also claimed that it is

not always used as a theoretical perspective, but sometimes only as a marketing strategy to seduce applicants. In that sense, one should also envisage that interdisciplinarity is not always wanted, or took for granted as a good addition: where I am standing, in this regard, an "interdisciplinary approach" does not seem to suffice, because the simple transference of knowledge from different disciplines is not enough to deal with the facets of my object.

The point here is that the terminology and methods of exchange between disciplines are not always put under the microscope to see best practices and theoretical frameworks. Therefore, when I was summoned to write an essay in a dossier entitled "*Bíblia - Abordagens Interdisciplinares*," I decided to sketch a personal position on the matter. To my eyes, the framework on which the disciplines interact should be seriously regarded in the process of biblical research, especially in the History of the Ancient Israelite Religion. Consequently, my contribution lies within theoretical considerations and terminology clarifications on different approaches to intersect various disciplines (and, thus, sources) related to the Hebrew Bible. Therefore, building upon the work of scholars from different fields, I propose a tentative antidisciplinary framework on which different perspectives could be brought together, focusing on the research object.

1. Scissors: multi-, inter-, trans-, or in/anti-disciplinarities?

Visualizing the different possible arrangements between the disciplines and corresponding terminologies, i.e., making the proper theoretical "cut," is pivotal to decide on a disciplinary framework. However, if one surveys the variegate literature on the subject, she or he will soon realize that the terminology is fuzzy, with approaches as different as "multi-" and "inter-" disciplinary being used as synonyms. There is also a significant difference from terminologies by field and time. Maybe this could be due to the aforementioned fringe scientific framework or even to the tendency of belittled areas to adhere to terminologies. In any event, being myself in a considerate low-

profile field (Biblical and Religious Studies), I will only use definitions for the sake of argument.

It is important to highlight the fact that this discussion was mainly favored because of the seminal work of Jean Piaget. Especially by his speech in a seminar held at the University of Nice in 1970 (BERNSTEIN, 2015. p. 2). In that seminar, terminologies as "multidisciplinarity," "interdisciplinarity," and "transdisciplinarity" were defined for the first time. Piaget (1972, p. 136) argued against the widespread use of "interdisciplinarity," classifying three levels of interaction between disciplines or fields of knowledge. Bellow, I survey the main points of Piaget's terminology, comparing it with new perspectives and terminologies. I also sketch the methods of integration of disciplines in each one.

1.1. Multidisciplinarity

The most elementary level of interaction for Piaget (1972, p. 136) is called *multidisciplinarity*, which occurs when "the solution to a problem makes it necessary to obtain information from two or more sciences or sectors of knowledge without the disciplines drawn on thereby being changed or enriched." The lack of sophistication and theoretical framework on which multidisciplinarity works, however, make its outcomes too heterogeneous, making it difficult, in Piaget's opinion, to transcend the fields. That is why Nicolescu (2014, p. 19) said that multidisciplinarity "overflows disciplinary boundaries, but its goal remains limited to the framework of disciplinary research."
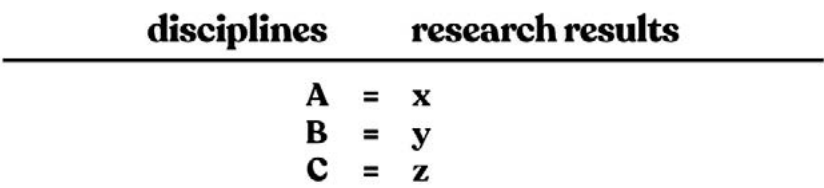

Figure 1 – Multidisciplinary approach
Source: ellaborated by the author.

Thus, the multidisciplinarity only brings together different disciplinary perspectives, not truly integrating the methods of research or disciplines (**Figure.1**). This perspective agrees with rigid and hierarchical departmental structures of research and is connected through juxtaposition. To Julie Klein (2017. p. 23-24), there are two subtypes of multidisciplinarity, the "encyclopedic, indiscriminate, and pseudo forms," that would offer a synoptic scope on a given subject (e.g., philosophy, religious studies), and the "contextualizing, informed and composite relationships," that uses complementary skills on a specific subject (e.g., the philosopher that uses history of philosophical branches).

1.2. Interdisciplinarity

To Piaget (1972, p. 137), the term *interdisciplinarity* should be kept "to designate the second level

where cooperation among various disciplines or heterogeneous sectors in the same science lead to actual interactions, to certain reciprocity of exchanges resulting in mutual enrichment." To him, interdisciplinarity could be achieved by linking two fields by their structures, i.e., trough *isomorphism*. Because of that, Nicolescu (2014, p. 19) said that interdisciplinarity remains within the framework of disciplinary research.

As far as I understand, that would be what W.J.T. Mitchell entitled at the 1990s as *top-down interdisciplinarity*, "a comparative, structural formation that aims to know the overarching system or conceptual totality within which all disciplines are related." It ultimately dreams of "a Kantian architectonic of learning, a pyramidal, corporate organization of knowledge production that can regulate flows of information from one part of the structure to another" (GINZBURG et al., 1995, p. 541).
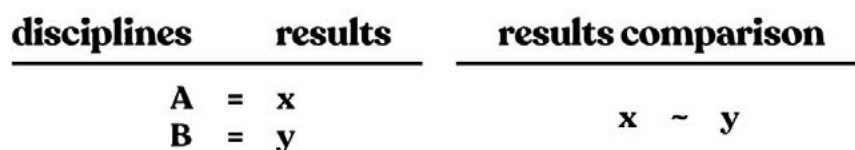
disciplines   results   results comparison

A = x
B = y

x ~ y

Figure 2 – Interdisciplinary approach
Source: ellaborated by the author.

The model, therefore, uses disciplinary constraints to study an object and seeks the results for structural similarities (**Figure 2**) that could be achieved by collaboration or integration between different disciplines. Klein (2017. p. 24-25) identifies two methods of integration. The first one she calls "methodological interdisciplinarity," that happens when someone borrows "a method or concept of another discipline to test a hypothesis." The second one would be the "theoretical interdisciplinarity," which implies the creation of "conceptual frameworks for analyzing particular problems, integrating propositions across disciplines, and synthesizing continuities between models and analogies."

1.3. Transdisciplinarity

The third level to Piaget (1972, p. 138) is "a higher stage succeeding the stage of interdisciplinary relationships," which he coined as *transdisciplinarity*. This level would not only "cover interactions or reciprocities between specialized research projects but would place these relationships within a total system without any firm boundaries between disciplines." That stage was only a dream to Piaget, who said that to become operational, transdisciplinarity would require "a general theory of systems or structures including operative structures, regulatory structures, and probabilist systems, and linking these various possibilities by means of regulated and definite transformations." To Nicolescu (2014, p. 19, *author's emphasis*), this means a framework where something "is at once *between* the disciplines, *across* the different disciplines, and *beyond* all disciplines," having

the goal to understand the present world.

That would be what Mitchell called "bottom-up" interdisciplinarity, i.e., compulsory interdisciplinarity dictated by a specific problem or event. To Mitchell, studies in gender, sexuality, and ethnicity are necessarily interdisciplinary in that way because they "need to carve out professional spaces and mechanisms of collective memory against the institutional forces that tend to squeeze them out or appropriate their energy" (GINZBURG et al., 1995, p. 541), cultural studies being of the same kind.

There are two current significant transdisciplinarity streams (MCGREGOR, 2015). The most widespread is called *Nicolescuian Approach*, which follows the work of Basarab Nicolescu (e.g., 2012. 2014) primarily. This theoretical approach assumes the inability of disciplinary constraints to produce new knowledge, so through metaphysics and quantum physics, it tries to achieve a *unity of knowledge*, by its three axioms:

> (1) The ontological axiom: *there are different levels of Reality of the Object and, correspondingly, different levels of Reality of the Subject*; (2) The logical axiom: *the passage from one level of Reality to another is insured but the logic of the included middle*; (3) The epistemological axiom: *the structure of the totality of levels of Reality appears, in our knowledge of nature, of society and of ourselves, as a complex structure: every level is what it is because all the levels exist at the same time* (NICOLESCU, 2012. p. 19, *author's emphasis*).

The second one is called *Zurich Approach*, following the work of a 2000 seminary held at Zurich (GIBBONS et al., 1994). This approach mainly focuses on research, blends distinctive disciplinary constraints, and deals mostly

towards the resolution of contemporary world problems, even as it does not retain any particular methodology. The central hypothesis of the Zurich group is the existence of two modes of production of knowledge. Mode 1 would be the traditional one, that creates knowledge within disciplines, attending interests of the academic community, and using homogeneous skills, hierarchies, structures, and specializations. Blind peer reviews measure its success. Mode 2 is the antithesis of Mode 1, creating solutions to be the context of the application, i.e., going beyond disciplinary frameworks (MCGREGOR, 2015).
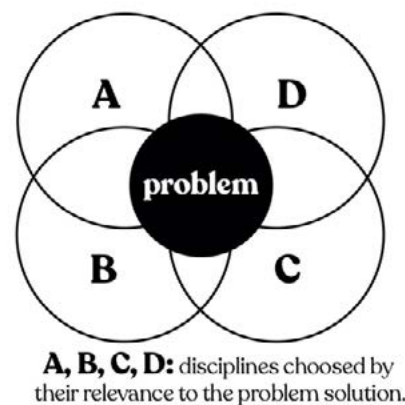

Figure 3 – Transdisciplinary approaches
Source: ellaborated by the author.

Go beyond disciplinary models is the ultimate achievement of both approaches. The differences lie in the ways to achieve it: the Nicolescuian presents a theoretical framework with difficult application, and the Zurich Approach does not have a fully developed method, but its target on problem-solving helps in the practice (**Figure 3**).

1.4. Indisciplinarity or antidisciplinarity

Besides Piaget's triad, there is an *indisciplinary* and, more recently, an *antidisciplinary* proposition. To my knowledge, the first to propose such a thing was W. J. T. Mitchell, who said that the standard interdisciplinarity was not appealing to him since he would prefer "a kind of escalating shame at the increasing number of disciplines in which I find myself certifiably incompetent" (GINZBURG et al., 1995, p. 541). For that matter, the perspective would be a different kind of interdisciplinarity or, preferably, a perspective of "indiscipline." However, instead of a "top-down" interdisciplinarity (i.e., comparative, structural), and a "bottom-up" interdisciplinarity (i.e., compulsory and dictated by a problem or event), he argues for a third kind, an "inside-out" interdisciplinarity, an anarchist research momentum (GINZBURG et al., 1995, p. 541).[2]

Even without mentioning Mitchell, a parallel approach was developed by MIT scholar Neri Oxman (2016), who proposed a way to instigate creativity in Design. Something similar to the Zurich Approach, while its primary goal is to solve real-world problems, Oxman proposed that the first step towards an antidisciplinary approach would be the cartography of knowledge, i.e., the action of mapping the fields of knowledge and interpellations to the studied phenomenon,

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[2]   Nicolescu (2014, p. 19), in a Freudian slip, rejected this kind of approach for being resulted by an "anarchical form of knowledge." His opinion derives from his taxonomy that placed Mitchell's indisciplinarity with his transdisciplinarity. I contend with Nicolescu that Mitchell's indisciplinarity would be "closely related to transdisciplinarity." To the best of my understanding, Mitchell thought transdisciplinarity as "bottom-up interdisciplinarity" (cf. *above*), since, quite the contrary, Mitchell refused any kind of systematization that could hurt or handicap the creativity of research.

uncovering relations, oppositions, and occasional hiatus. This mapping would let the designer notice the contributions from each field so that a "parallactic" or "entangled," approach became feasible, by the transgression of the different fields, and the joint operation to achieve an ultimate goal.

Those positions can also be linked to what Julie Klein (2017. p. 28) entitled "critical interdisciplinarity" that, especially connected to the several "turns" of knowledge in the 1960s and 1970s, ultimately seeks to "interrogates the dominant structure of knowledge and education with the aim of transforming it, raising questions of value and purpose silent in instrumental [interdisciplinarity]." The connection with the turns of knowledge is noteworthy since it also implies that the nature of sources changes the framework on which the disciplinary constraints behave in the scientific endeavor.

2. Papyrus: The "Bible" at the crossroads of disciplines.

What happens when we one tries to translate the taxonomy to Biblical Studies? In the last century there was several attempts to integrating disciplines in Biblical Studies, especially concerning the historical reconstruction of what is commonly called "Biblical World," "Biblical Israel," or "Ancient Israel" (cf. DAVIES, 2015).[3] I sketch below the uses of different modalities of the interaction of disciplines within Biblical Studies. The examples are, of course, not exhaustive, and only reflect streams that I find significant.

2.1. Multidisciplinarity and Biblical Studies

From the taxonomy above, it would be possible to ascertain that each research effort in Biblical Studies is at least *multi*disciplinary. Despite its specific disciplinary frameworks and constraints, the biblical scholar uses different disciplines to study his or her research object, especially

from the Social Sciences (or Humanities, or *Geisteswissenschaft*) specter, such as Anthropology, Sociology, History, Archaeology, Literature, Philosophy, Theology, and so forth. The choice of words is not accidental: I called *multi*disciplinary, not *inter*disciplinary since there is no real interaction between disciplines, but rather a compilation or juxtaposition of perspectives (cf. KLEIN, 2017).

That could be said, for instance, about the addition of Archaeology in the task of reconstructing the ("Biblical"?) past. Traditionally, the two disciplines worked apart, and the results compose a final synthesis (cf. BARTON, 2015. p. 100). The lack of integration in this particular example occurs, in my opinion, because of the idiosyncrasy of the field to prioritize written (or sacred?) sources by hidden agendas rather than by its historical pertinence to the reconstruction of a historical topic or event. Conversely, the profits of this kind of approach are to integrate research effort from different standing points.

2.2. Interdisciplinarity and Biblical Studies

The biblical criticisms developed in the second half of the twentieth century are, instead, inherently interdisciplinary. That could be argued mainly because the greater amount of methods are adaptations from other fields, and it is especially true to literary criticism (e.g., Genre Criticism, and Rhetorical Criticism) (CLINES, 2015. p. 148).

In this regard, there were also significant changes in the concept of "history,"[4] brought by the challenges of New Historicism (BARTON, 2015. p. 120-121; cf. ADAM, 1995, p. 45-60).[5] As a movement, they share at least four primary assumptions (HENS-PIAZZA, 2002, p. 6): literature is conceived as integrally tied to and identified with other material realities; literature as on par with other types of texts; there are distinctions between literature and history; the construction

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[3] The interpretational pivot in my endeavor is the so-called "Biblical World," a flaw but unifying concept that could congregate the most relevant textual artifacts, the histories and stories of the Bible, the textual history of the Bible with its manuscripts, artifacts and visual manifestations that generate the broader cultural landscape that is seeing as a main concern to the Biblical Studies area. On the problems of the terminology, cf. HUNZIKER-RODEWALD, 2012.

[4] The meaning of "history" in Biblical Studies is a discipline on its own. Cf. SÆBØ, 2013.

[5] According to Mary Klages (2012. p. 58), it surpasses Historicism by rejecting "the compartmentalization of disciplines fostered by the university system, insisting that a particular cultural moment or phenomenon can best be understood through examination of multiple factors, including economic, political, literary, religious, and aesthetic beliefs and practices."

of the past is intimately tied to the present.

The results of both Literary and the New Historical criticisms are, as Klein (2017. p. 24-25) put, a "methodological interdisciplinary," as the result of the borrowing of methods of another discipline to test a hypothesis, their uses being instrumental. The profits of this kind of approach are to integrate different research perspectives into a third discourse - and even method -, in a way that could bring novelty to stablished fields.

2.3. Transdisciplinarity and Biblical Studies

It is possible to argue that Biblical Studies have seen a few transdisciplinary approaches that, according to Klein's phrasing (2017. p. 29-30), are built upon "synthetic paradigms" or "general systems," such as "structuralism, post-structuralism, Marxism, phenomenology, feminist theory, and sustainability." Even considering that in Biblical Studies, these perspectives are usually subjected to the primary discipline - and, in that case, they should be linked to interdisciplinary approaches -, it is also true that these paradigms work in an intellectual framework that goes beyond disciplinary constraints.

In Biblical Studies, that could be said about the methods usually labeled "ideological criticisms" (e.g., Feminist Criticism, Gender Criticism, Materialist Criticism, Postcolonial Criticism, Minority Criticism, Cultural Criticism, Autobiographical Criticism, Psychoanalytic Criticism, etc.; CLINES, 2015. p. 160-168), but also about Structuralism, Poststructuralism, and Deconstruction (CLINES, 2015. p. 158-159). These perspectives challenge the construction of the field within its boundaries, at the same time that develop a self-reflection on the construction of biblical knowledge. The transdisciplinary transcendence helps to advocate closer looks at certain topics. However, for being subordinated to "general systems" the assumptions should be sufficiently problematized not to generate circular or excessively ideological constructs.

3. Rock: The "Biblical World" and Antidisciplinarity.

In the same way that it is a paradox to define (i.e., to put boundaries on) antidisciplinarity or indisciplinarity, it would also be a paradox to name antidisciplinary approaches. That attitude could only hurt the most primary assumption of the perspective, that is, its avoidance of systematization. To recall once again Mitchell's assertion, he envisage indisciplinarity as "a kind of escalating shame at the increasing number of disciplines in which I find myself certifiably incompetent" (GINZBURG et al., 1995, p. 541) or, to quote Nicolescu (2014, p. 19), it would be an "anarchical form of knowledge."[6]

I have tentatively proposed elsewhere an antidisciplinary approach to inquire about the religious history of Benjamin's Plateau in early Iron Age (CARDOSO, 2019, p. 35-38). Even with the object acquainted to Biblical Studies, because of the chronotopic convergence between the historical object and the textual ("biblical") representation, the study tried to avoid disciplinary frameworks of both related areas History of Religions and Biblical Studies. The starting point is Biblical Studies, since from the historical-critical study of the Hebrew Bible questions, such as the striking difference between the religious portrait of the region with the archaeological record is blatant. Therefore, I have followed Oxman's (2016) insight of tentatively constructs the cartography of knowledge fields related to the object but translating the perspective to his diachronic needs (fig. 4).

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[6] Ironically, Nicolescu's affront would likely please Mitchell. In that sense, it is pivotal to highlight that, despite being a paradox to talk about the relationship between anti- or indisciplinary and Biblical Studies, neither Mitchell's indisciplinary nor Oxman's antidisciplinary argues by the extinction of disciplines. Instead, they try to surpass their boundaries and to establish new scholarly paradigms.
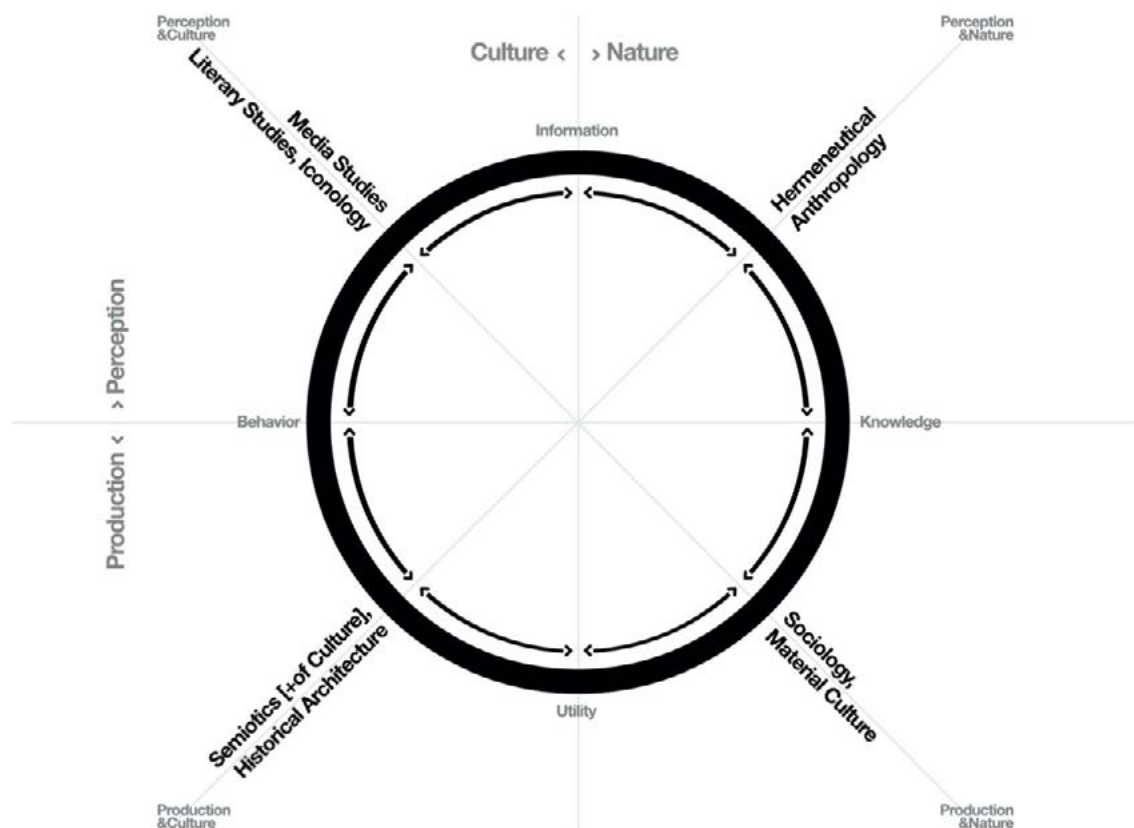
Figure 4 – Cycle of Krebs, applied to the history of religions.
Source: ellaborated by the author.

The perspective, thus, instead of being subjected to the disciplinary constraints of Biblical or Religious Studies, constructed an environment of research where the research object stood at the center of the process. On the one hand, by mapping the object throughout the lenses of the disciplines that touch the object, it focuses on the structure of the reality, which allows the researcher to visualize the blind spot of the disciplines. On the other hand, the disciplines are instrumentally used to contribute to specific needs, filling the gaps in knowledge. The process could be considered either experimental, perhaps abductive (PEIRCE, 2005. p. 30), as well as could be labeled idiosyncratic since it would lead to a methodological enterprise deeply linked to the researcher's expertise.[7]

3.1. Ideas for an Antidisciplinarity Approach in Biblical Studies

Whereas the main profit of an antidisciplinary or indisciplinary approach is the avoidance of the disciplinary blind spots, its difficulties lie in the methodological feasibility. A possible solution is to focus on the sources and its resulting ways of producing meaning, following a categorization related to the contribution of the source to the research question. That said, proposing a taxonomy of sources is challenging because of the multiple ways to characterize them and the endless overlaps. In what follows, I will sketch out a taxonomy of historical sources using Barros' (2019) considerations. Then, I will describe my categorization of sources for Biblical Studies, to propose a tentative framework for an antidisciplinary approach to the "Biblical World."

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[7]   That could be seen as a tendentious, even idiosyncratic approach, but since the totality is not an option in the modern (or Ancient) world, the subjectivities of the researcher should be classified as benefits.

Barros (2019) argued that there are at least four criteria that could be used to categorize historical sources. The first one is the position of the source concerning the process or group of events under scrutiny. This relationship could be (a) temporal, (b) spatial, (c) ideological, or (d) related to the investigation problem. The second criterion is the quality of the source, i.e., its material or language, which could separate sources between sources of content and material sources. The third criterion is the intentionality of the source, i.e., if it was created to represent something/someone or it is a non-intentional source. The fourth criterion is the serialization, i.e., if this source is inherently linked to other sources of the same kind or it is a single source.

Two aspects are worth to mention. First, it is somewhat artificial - one could even say too Kantian - to distinguish between "content" and "form," especially when dealing with textual sources. In this, the difference between "material" and "content" sources is fragile. Barros (2019) was aware of the problem and argued that "content sources" are fundamentally linked to its content that "could be or not accompanied by its original support." That is not to say that one should neglect the materiality of the textual sources, something that scholars of the *Histoire du Livré* have made us aware (e.g., CAVALLO; CHARTIER, 1998; CHARTIER, 1998, 2002, 2013; MCKENZIE, 1999). The taxonomy here, therefore, implies the primary interest in a particular research object, such as the way it disposes of its visuality, textuality, or materiality in producing meaning.

The second aspect is actually a rather obvious conclusion: a source cannot be classified only according to its quality (e.g., being textual or visual), or to its temporal position (e.g., being close or distance to the events portrayed), as usually practiced. Considering that each source, even the textual ones, has "specific ideological implications" (WHITE, 1994, p. 88-89, *our translation*), the distinction between "primary/direct" and "second/indirect" sources has to be built upon various criteria, those constructed from the starting point of the research question. That is to say that one should start a research project by systematically getting rid of his or her hidden agendas - or, in the worst-case scenario, the expected results - in order to produce scientific work.

Even aware of eventual overlaps, I prefer to classify the main types of sources to study the "Biblical World" within three categories: material culture, visual culture, and textual culture. Roughly, one could say that each cultural entity is distinguished by its peculiar way of producing meaning, whether the main focus of interpretation lies on its materiality (material culture), visuality (visual culture), or textuality (textual culture).[8] The taxonomy is not innovative but needs to be understood with its implications.

3.2. The Biblical World, material culture, and antidisciplinarity

The definitions of material culture are usually broad. According to an old - and somewhat dated - definition of James Deetz (apud HICKS, 2010, p. 48), "material culture is usually considered to be roughly synonymous with artifacts, the vast universe of objects used by mankind to cope with the physical world, to facilitate social intercourse, and to benefit our state of mind." Recently, Daniel Miller (2005. p. 5), said that the best way to define it is to realize that "objects are important not because they are evident and physically constrain or enable, but often precisely because we do not 'see' them." To the author, "the less we are aware of them, the more powerfully they can determine our expectations by setting the scene and ensuring normative behavior."

Richard M. Carp (2011. p. 475) argues that material culture "refers to everything that is both perceptible and cultural, not only artifacts but also the contexts, processes, and skills of use and production that surround and interpenetrate artifacts." Ultimately, it is possible to say that objects shroud cultural conceptions that lie beyond the intentions of their

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[8]   I distinguish with Christoph Uehlinger (2015. p. 385), the distinction of Visual Culture and visual culture, the first as a discipline, and the second as a research object. The same can be argued about Material Culture and material culture, the first a discipline/perspective, the second a research object. This is not to say that these disciplines do not help to construct their homonymous research object.

producers because they "talk about themselves - or, rather, remit to the discourse level that surrounds its insertion in the world" (CARDOSO, R., 2013). Thus, their meaning could only be perceived by the examination of the wholeness within a cultural landscape,[9] since "symbols may be used to mask, exaggerate or contradict certain types of information flow and social relationships" (HODDER, 1995, p. 37, cf. p. 11-24).

Consequently, the method of using artifacts to corroborate or contradict some textual reference is not adequate. Instead, one needs to acknowledge the symbolic universe of the artifact, among other related artifacts, to understand its way to produce meaning. That means that a mere juxtaposition between disciplines (multidisciplinarity) could be misleading since the meaning of the artifacts lies within deep cultural and psychological connections. The material culture, in this regard, should be analyzed transdisciplinary at the intersection between material-focused disciplines, such as Archaeology, (Historical) Architecture, and Art History, with disciplines concerned with behavioral and social patterns, such as Sociology, Anthropology, and Psychology.

3.3. The Biblical World, textual culture, and antidisciplinarity

Although "text" and "literature" are familiar concepts, needing fewer explanations, the expression "textual culture" maybe is not. The concept is normally used for the disambiguation between "documental" and "non-documental," which conceals the duality amid "textual" and "oral" cultures (cf. PRINS, 2011). My use of the term is meant to highlight two methodological assumptions. The first one is related to the scope broadenings of historical research from complex texts to every textual artifact, i.e., to classify them by the way they produce meaning,[10] and not by some ideological, theological (or disciplinary?) agenda. The second is to denaturalize this kind of source as the primary way to represent the human experience but to acknowledge both the cultural milieu in which it is conceived and the fictional dimension of this kind of historical source.

For that matter, it is important to think about the hierarchization of sources. Gwyn Prins (2011. p. 166, *our translation*), in this regard, argued that the hierarchy of sources is usually Rankean[11] since "when it is available official written sources they should be preferred," and only when they are not available, "one has to bear the second choice, seeking information far from the pure source of the official text." The phrasing reminds me of an elucidative - and somewhat ironic - metaphor once told by Peter Burke (2001, p. 13) that "traditionally, historians have referred to their documents as 'sources,' as if they were filling their buckets from the stream of Truth, their stories becoming increasingly pure as they move closer to the origins." Needless to say, I found this type of hierarchization unsound, and prefer a positioning such as Jorg Rüpke's (2011. p. 286), who once said that sources "simply do not tell us 'how it really was' [...] thus it is useful to give long lists of types of sources and types of distortions of historical reality by the source's representation of it". Besides that, the criterion of positioning mentioned above should also be constructed from scientific methodological dating techniques.[12]

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[9] *Cultural landscape* is, to Carps (2011. p. 480), "an interconnected array of material culture." The concept is very close to Klaus Krippendorff's "discursive universe" (2006, p. 23).

[10] According to Flusser (2017. p. 98-121), there is a mediatic difference between the "surface-thinking," ahistorical, and the "line-thinking," historical. While visuality is understood in a not-necessarily sequential way, alphabetic writings need the linearity to be understood. In what concerns us here, that means that broadening the scope of textuality would imply gazing not only "historical" texts, in the way that Flusser argues, but also to consider "non-historical." Perhaps that could lead to the realization that not all biblical texts are meant to be decoded in a sequential, morphosyntactic way. See, e.g., the prophetic encrypted messages, or even those texts with apotropaic and/ or magical goals.

[11] I.e., linked to Leopold Von Ranke.

[12] In this regard, Christoph Uehlinger (2005. p. 283; cf. KNAUF, 1991; UEHLINGER, 2019, p. 104-105), proposed that: "1. Primary sources are documents that can be dated on the material basis of archaeological criteria (context of the find, typical classification, style, paleography, or the like) with relative accuracy (criterion of being dateable). 2. Primary sources originated during or shortly after the reported events (criterion of temporal proximity)." Uehlinger also highlights the fact that there are other criteria to consider, such as the function of the source, and the ideology of the historical sources. In another place, Uehlinger distinguish between primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary sources, where *tertiary* are the ones with no access to primary sources; and *quaternary* are those with unchecked sources in a coherent, but acritical, narrative (cf. UEHLINGER, 2001).

That leads to the realization that textual analysis not only implies the specter of Humanities, such as Literary Studies, Hermeneutics, Rhetoric, Philology, and related criticisms but also needs to be built in consonance with other perspectives stemming Paleography (and/or Papyrology), Media Studies, Archaeology, Chemistry and so on. The concept of the text as an artifact should also let interpreters aware of texts as powerful and/or magical objects in the course of history. In my opinion, therefore, the interpretation of textual culture should also consider the text beyond its disciplinary constraints.

3.4 The Biblical World, visual culture, and antidisciplinarity

Visual culture[13] broadly refers, as Christoph Uehlinger (2015, p. 385) puts, to "any kind of cultural entity, from individual artifact or classes of artifacts through particular media to complex displays, configurations, settings, formations or regimes that involve visual perception, communication, commodification, and consumption."[14] Its study tries to decipher "how images as well as the rituals, epistemologies, tastes, sensibilities, and cognitive frameworks that inform visual experience help construct the worlds people live in and care about." In other words, their study helps to understand "the things people do with images" (MORGAN, 2005. p. 25). It implies a dialectical operation, on which images deploy particular ways of seeing, helping in the construction of reality in the way it is perceived, at the same time as they are constructed by reality itself.

Visuality, however, produces meaning in a different way from textuality, which should not be overlooked. I could state, alongside Klaus Krippendorff (2006, p. 71, cf. p. 23), the proposer of the "Semantic Turn," that one should consider meaning within the discursive universe of an artifact not to the linguistic abstraction that name such artifact, because they "are not entirely stable entities. Their meanings change with use." To

Krippendorff (2006, p. 51), each object has its own experiential history, "which are woven into social or cultural histories, always involving many people and their use of linguistic categories and artifacts." There was an attempt by Panofsky (2014, p. 64-65), who distinguished between three levels of meaning, namely pre-iconographic, iconographic, and iconological. Even with pitfalls (BURKE, 2017. p. 66; UEHLINGER, 2015, p. 397), Panofsky understood that images are not only socially constructed, but also have a particular discursive universe, that must be interpreted as a whole.

The concept of visual culture, in this regard, is not only linked to the iconographic descriptions but with visuality in a more extensive way. That means transgressing the limits of Art History, Design, and Semiotics to a holistic view, which could be generated by intersections with interpretative sciences such as Anthropology and Sociology, but also by technical sciences, such as Chemistry, Computer Sciences and so on.

Conclusion

I have proposed in the present article that interdisciplinarity is not to be assumed uncritically, as a child's guessing game. Choosing a modality on which the disciplines intersect or juxtapose is a pivotal first step in the process of biblical interpretation, which could benefit or harm the results of the research presented. To that extent, in the first part of the article, I have tried with the help of different scholars to define perspectives such as multi-, inter-, trans-, and in-/antidisciplinarity. I have highlighted the fact that these approaches, even with fuzzy terminologies, differ in the way they juxtapose, combine, transcend or avoid disciplinary constraints to producing knowledge, which is deeply rooted in the way the disciplines are historically constructed.

In the second part, I presented Biblical Studies' perspectives that, in my opinion, are related to these different approaches, even without explicitly acknowledging it. Even in a traditional field, there

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[13] Regarding the difference between "Visual Culture" and "visual culture," cf. above n. 7.

[14]   Thus, the concept of "image" should not be understood in the distinction between [fine] *art* and other visual manifestations. To that extent, Bonfiglio (2016, p. 169) suggested a "visual culture exegesis."

are approaches to the past and present centuries that successfully achieves a higher integration of disciplines, mostly by borrowing theoretical and methodological schemes. In this regard, I share my opinion that an antidisciplinary perspective could benefit Biblical Studies in avoiding disciplinary constraints and epistemological prejudices; at the same time, it could bring a renewal of the field by using the variegate experiences and background of individual researchers.

To build a case for antidisciplinarity in Biblical Studies, I have proposed a categorization of sources that could be used for understanding the Biblical World. In building this categorization, I tried to suggest different disciplinary views that could contribute together to understanding these sources, using the antidisciplinary perspective to work in the gaps of the different disciplinary approaches. At this point, I need to evince that there is a basilar distinction between thinking interdisciplinarity as means for education and interdisciplinarity as a means of knowledge production. However, it is also essential to acknowledge that without some transgressions there can be no evolution in the fields, and by transgression, I could say either the avoidance of interdisciplinarity (as Carlo Ginzburg defended, GINZBURG et al., 1995, p. 534-536) or the invocation of an indisciplinarity (as J. W. T. Mitchell, GINZBURG et al., 1995, p. 540-544).

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