INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND THE ROLES OF PEER-REVIEWED SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS

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Romanian Review of Political Sciences and International Relations celebrates more than a decade of interdisciplinary and peer-reviewed presence among scientific communities. The diversity of articles published called upon aspects related to the heritage brought about by humanities, suggested new trends in political science, or international relations, or emphasized the pillars of fundamental research. Sometimes interdisciplinary research is the result of creativity, and other times it is the outcome of the effort to pursue a subject through all the interferences, or through the most interesting ones, through all the influences, or through the most significant, throughout consequences or through the most intriguing. The scientific enterprise requires specialization, foundations, relevance and creativity. Science is viewed in the history of ideas as the rational and objective enterprise built on the rules, principles and methods of a domain. But where do they lead us? For some specialists, science is still a sum of competing disciplinary theories. Interdisciplinary approaches to science affect both the visions of science and the visions in science. The criticism emphasizes the appurtenance of the scientists to disunity schools of science, bringing to the fore various arguments concerning the role and the importance of specialization. But where is this insulation in specialization leading scientific performance?

The Image of Science, the Unity of Science and Interdisciplinary Views

The interest for connections and correlations in science is both important and diverse. Thus, we can differentiate among interdisciplinary approach (meaning that the scientific collaboration creates a new discipline within which the initial disciplines are unchanged), multidisciplinary research (the same problem is discussed employing knowledge from a multitude of disciplines), crossdisciplinary

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investigation (when the resources from a discipline are borrowed to serve a project belonging to another discipline) and transdisciplinary research (a synthetic work including principles, theories, methods etc. from all the disciplines concerned with that topic of research). Since the metaphor is the fastest and shortest way to acquiring new meanings, in all these cases, the multidisciplinary, inter-, cross-, or trans-investigations are to revalue the role of the metaphor (cartographic, linguistic, socio-political, architectural etc.) in the research imagination.

*Political Science is Interdisciplinary:*

*Interdisciplinary Aspects in Sciences*

Political science and international relations are the result of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, crossdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches. All the sub-domains of political science – political philosophy and political theory, comparative politics, public administration, public law and political methodology – are all the results of interdisciplinary researches. The main political theories come from philosophy. But history and the historical sense of ethics play an important role, too. We have a case of interdisciplinary research combined with all the above mentioned situations of inter-relationships between disciplines. Political philosophy is a branch of philosophy and all the philosophical methods apply to the study of legitimate government, laws, rights, freedom and politics in general, some of the information interpreted come from history, while other aspects, or data (not only these of political philosophy, but the aspects concerning political science in general) send to inter-relationships with humanities in general, with sociology, with law, and public administration.

Interdisciplinary endeavours are the reality in all the modern fields, but as a subject it belongs to the philosophy of science. When Thomas S. Kuhn interpreted, about half a century ago, the inter-relationships between the history of ideas, the history of science and the philosophy of science, he was studying interdisciplinary interferences, consequences and results. Although he noticed that the history and the philosophy of science have significantly different objectives, he was stating that within a process of investigating interdisciplinary relations between these fields. At Thomas S. Kuhn, the philosophy of science is founded in the comparative investigation of philosophy, physics and history, all disciplines producing knowledge, but as different as they are, as scientific disciplines, all have value and relevance. He understood that what has turned him from physics and philosophy to history, was the discovery that science, present in the historical sources, which seems a very different enterprise from the one implicitly present in the pedagogy of science, and explicitly, in the philosophical explanations of the scientific method\(^1\).

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In other words, Thomas Kuhn found out that history can be relevant for the philosopher of science, as, we may add, it is relevant for the philosopher of politics, state, government, institutions, etc. As Kuhn saw the matter, we also can see that history is a resource, providing problems and intuitions. In a similar relation to that between history and the philosophy of science, the historical perspectives in the philosophy of politics, state, government, rights, etc. offer two types of advantages: the contextualization of achievements in the progress of knowledge and advantages following the identification of regularities and irregularities in the history of the processes of knowledge of politics, leading to the identification of rules, laws, etc. For Kuhn, becoming a philosopher means to acquire an intellectual training as to assess the relevant problems and the techniques for their solutions. To learn to be a historian is to attain a special training, too, but the results of the two types of training have diverse results. Indirectly stated as following in Kuhn’s study, the idea is that philosophers can conceive when confronted with the Gestalt diagram more than the alternating perception of the rabbit and of the duck – a “duck-rabbit”, both interdisciplinary (transdisciplinary, actually) and intriguing. This concept is interesting for modernity, interested in rigorous delimitations, but it is interesting for postmodernity, interested – as main characteristics relevant for this discussion – in the language and visionary games. The subtle analytical distinctions are central in the philosophical approach and uninteresting for historians. Yet, we must notice, some theories, methods, ideas and views are mutually relevant. To the same extent as there is the inter-disciplinary attraction between philosophy and history, there is an inter-disciplinary separation.

Thomas Kuhn understood the drama involved in preparing an article of philosophy: “They start from a problem and a key to solution, both often met in the critique of another philosopher. These are examined – on paper, mentally, or in discussions with peers – waiting for the moment when the author feels it is the high time to write. Most often, this feeling is incorrect and the author turns back to re-examining the subject, until, finally, it is written, almost as if all of a sudden.” For Kuhn, contemporary philosophy of science could be more relevant for the historian of science if the history of science had a more important role, if the evolution of ideas were taken more into consideration, along with the scientific methods and techniques. Interdisciplinary research can not only make a priority from investigating the evolution of ideas, but it can also stimulate this evolution, in political science, too. The changing patterns of the scientific education, of its institutionalization, of its moral aspect or of financing are dire obstacles to scientific evolution.

Philosophy is central to interdisciplinary research in many domains. Nevertheless, unlike other philosophical sub-domains, philosophy of science and philosophy

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2 Ibidem, p. 5.
3 Ibidem, p. 7.
5 Ibidem, p. 12.
of law are the only ones addressing domains where the philosopher qua philosopher knows very little. And it is more probable for the philosophers of law than for the philosophers of science that they have been trained specifically and significantly in the field representing their object of study and to analyze the same data as the scientist about the domain of her or his interest. Kuhn notices that the magistrates and jurists read philosophy more than scientists read philosophy of science. Political scientists and the specialists of international relations turn to philosophy, sociology, history, law, psychology, etc. attempting to bring fundamental and more interdisciplinary theories closer to the realities of the sates and of the world, and to resolving states’ and individuals’ problems.

Peer Review Process in Relation to the Interdisciplinary Roles of Journals

Although the value of the peer review is different from journal to journal, “the value of peer review is not so much as a means of filtering poor manuscripts (though it is helpful to have the backing of several reviewers when faced with an irate author); instead, peer review is valuable as a means of enhancing the quality of what is published.” Peer-review can also set back highly creative or highly interdisciplinary studies, when it is prone to an extremely specialized approach and when the reviewers are neither diverse enough in their interests nor up to date enough in the particular sub-domain open by that interdisciplinary study. Assessing the quality of research should not be pursued to the detriment of another aim, which is communicating perspectives of the world, maintain the scientific dialogue, acknowledging new paradigms and not mere communication of information, or a mechanical application of theories to situations, etc. The role of the peer-reviewed journals is to offer a voice as well to the mainstream studies as to the more innovative ones, contributing to a lively scientific community and to the evolution of science.

Schaffner (1994) listed several roles of peer-reviewed academic journals: building a collective knowledge base, communicating information, validating the quality of research, distributing rewards and building scientific communities.

Most of these roles are overlapping, and most of them are self-explanatory. The first role, building a collective knowledge base, is considered the most important, while in our view the most important is the stimulating role of the studies published, which continue the dialogue in the field and lead to the evolution of science. The role of archive of knowledge is related to communicating information. Indeed, in this respect the peer-review process in very important in

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6 Ibidem, p. 15.
maintaining a good scientific level among the studies published, as well as the speed of the information, theories, paradigms, etc. dissemination and the interactivity of the scientists. The less suggestive role is “distributing rewards.” It refers to the contribution of peer-reviewed journals to the hierarchy appreciation, intellectual property and worth, and intellectual credit of the published specialists. The peer-reviewed “journals still fulfil the role of documenting the paternity of intellectual property.”

Interdisciplinary approaches to science affect both the visions of science and the visions in science, provided that they support the unity of science. Peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journals create scientific communities where the dream of the unity of science is seen in renewed meanings.

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9 Ibidem.