



The Converging Horizons: Aspects Of A New Paradigm

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Abstract:

Our research work aims to uncover the epistemological depth of the interdisciplinarity paradigm (the interdisciplinarity paradigm) that is currently shaping the path of scientific knowledge in our globalized world. Since interdisciplinarity, as a concept, derives its essence from relational logic, we deemed it necessary to embark on our epistemological approach to this new interdisciplinarity paradigm by examining one of its key priorities: the concept of relationship.

In this context, we start from an initial assumption that the primary methodological foundation of the relational dimension, as it has been cognitively circulated, was established from within the structural/linguistic domain. This is based on the understanding that the fundamental proposition in the structuralist framework is not the proposition of existence but the proposition of relationship. It is through this proposition and alongside it that a comprehensive grammar was established to study human phenomena.

By adopting the same dualistic logic but dismantling its mechanisms and breaking down all the ideological layers surrounding it, a transition was made from the closed structuralist framework to adopting a divergent/liberating pattern of post-structuralist thought. This new pattern disavows all the determinations imposed by monistic/simplistic logic, allowing for engagement with various intellectual discourses and breaking the isolation between human sciences and other realms of the knowledge institution. This is accomplished through a relational approach that is difficult to disentangle and engage with outside its dialogic logic.

Keywords: betweenness, paradigm, structuralism, poststructuralism, dualism (binarity).

Intervention:

Interdisciplinarity / The Paradigmatic Challenge

Are we standing at the threshold of a new paradigmatic stage?

Indicative evidence suggests this assumption, and foremost among them is what we are witnessing today: a synergy and collaboration of knowledge fueled by an inclusive and multidimensional dialogue involving various stakeholders and specializations. This trend aims to involve all actors in the research field and integrate all knowledge and ideas within an ambitious interdisciplinary project. This project derives its legitimacy and contemporary

relevance from the developments and challenges of our globalized world. Within the context of this paradigmatic shift, we encounter interdisciplinary studies that surpass narrow specialization and instead focus on the relational specificity of domains and knowledge. They emphasize the necessity of exploring commonalities, interconnections, and interrelationships among cognitive questions across various fields. In doing so, interdisciplinary studies reveal themselves as open research workshops that offer promising intellectual horizons within the framework of this new project.

Indeed, interdisciplinary studies have gained increasing prominence in the global academic community. Many countries, particularly those affiliated with the so-called "first world," have revised their research policies by establishing and developing pioneering programs to embrace this new cognitive and methodological alternative, and to harness its potential.

Although this alternative, which some refer to as "interdisciplinary research" or as Mohamed Hamam calls it, "intersective research," has not acquired a "coherent and comprehensive theoretical framework, it remains the most prominent conceptual system and the most important research program that attracts researchers and thinkers. It serves as the basis for most productive scientific initiatives today, allowing many specialists to depart from stagnant specialization and enter into a new, dynamic, and evolving field of interdisciplinary collaboration¹"

In this way, interdisciplinary research has been able to surpass and transcend the rigid intellectual boundaries imposed by the epistemology of "closed systems," which serve the classificatory thinking with its entrenched divisive categorizations, and has given rise to a new form of awareness with the motto "I connect; therefore I exist." It is fascinating to contemplate how the interstitial field, which we can call "the inter-phenomenon," continues to expand and extend, encompassing an increasing number of research orientations². Indeed, by positioning itself in the interstitial space, at the borders and intersections of knowledge fields, interdisciplinarity has the potential to redraw the maps of meaning and reveal new areas of expression, practices, and forms of existence. Its dynamic nature and problematic relationships contribute to continuous questioning, aiming to elucidate its contents and keep pace with its achievements.

Within the framework of this endeavor, our exploratory observation and problematic presentation of the paradigm of "interdisciplinarity" fall in line - in this context - with the definition provided by Edgar Morin, who is one of the most important contemporary researchers interested in the paradigmatic issue. He formulated his definition as follows: "The paradigm encompasses, in relation to all discourses that take place within its domain, the fundamental concepts or major propositions of rationality. It also includes the logical relationships of attraction or repulsion (connection, separation, integration, or others) between these concepts and propositions³". And this leads us to say that we are facing a comprehensive and inclusive concept that expands to encompass all discourses, propositions, theories, ideas,

¹ A group of researchers, cognitive integration, International Islamic Institute, W.M.A., vol.1, 2012, p.66.

² Same Reference, p.84

³ Edgar Moran, Al-Manhaj (Part Four), Translated by Jamal Shahid, Arab Organization for Translation, Lebanon, 1st edition, 2012, p.351

etc., upon which its hidden authority is exercised. Morin clarifies the hidden sovereign role played by the paradigm, as it consistently engages in 'the selection of processes that define concepts, propositions, and forms of logic, and also their determination and control. "It chooses the fundamental propositions for rationality and monitors their usage.' This means that the paradigm resides at the core of every thought and discourse.⁴"

This statement reveals, among other things, the epistemic depth of the nature of the relationship that the paradigm has with discourse. This complex relationship, as explained by Morin, he states, "Just as the gene in the DNA controls the entire cell program towards its own objectives, the paradigm controls discourse and theory. Like the gene, it utilizes the generated mechanism (in this case, logic and linguistics) to exercise its power. The analogy stops here, as unlike the gene, the paradigm is not foreign to discourse but grows within it."⁵ Therefore, since the paradigm grows within discourse and is unified with it, any attempt to unlock its constraints must consider the linguistic conditions that shape it.

Structuralism: The Habitat of Relationship

The structuralist efforts to surpass the traditional understanding of existence by providing systematic structural descriptions serve as the intellectual foundation from which many poststructuralist ideas emerged, with "difference" being at the forefront. This is because the initial methodological twist of the relational dimension, as discussed critically, originated from within the structuralist domain. It considers that "the fundamental proposition in the structural perspective is not the proposition of being but the proposition of relationship, and the central thesis of structuralism asserts the primacy of relationship over being."⁶

Structuralism has been relying on and capitalizing on the important insights of Saussurean discoveries from the very beginning. These insights suggest that the sign does not inherently signify anything on its own, but rather through its difference from other signs. In other words, "in the linguistic system, there are only 'differences.' Meaning does not reside in fixed references, but rather it is functional, resulting from its difference from other signifiers."⁷ The structuralist approach has indeed utilized this linguistic insight in its conceptualization of "structure" as "an interconnected set of relationships, where the parts and elements depend on each other on one hand, and on their relationship to the whole on the other hand."⁸ Therefore, it is no longer productive to investigate specific phenomena or elements without considering their inclusion within their relational network. Thus, the relational perspective becomes one of the most important conceptual foundations upon which structuralism relied to establish a comprehensive framework for studying human phenomena. With this understanding, "the scientific perspective no longer sees things as isolated entities that lead to knowledge of the

⁴ Same Reference., p.318.

⁵ Sama Reference, p.319.

⁶ Abdullah Ibrahim, Saeed Al-Ghanmi, and Awad Ali, "Ma'rifat al-Akhar" (Understanding the Other), Arab Cultural Center, Morocco/Lebanon, 2nd edition, 1996, p.22.

⁷ See: Terry Eagleton, "Al-Nazariyya al-Adabiyya" (Literary Theory), Translated by Tha'er Deep, Dar Al-Mada for Culture and Publishing, Syria, 1st edition, 2006, p.159.

⁸ Salah Fadl, "Nazariyyat al-Badaiyya fi al-Naqd al-Adabi" (Primitive Theory in Literary Criticism), Mukhtar Publishing and Distribution Foundation, Cairo, Egypt, Dr. edition, p.180.

whole through their parts and characteristics. Neither is the part itself identical to the whole, nor is the whole merely a sum of its parts. Instead, the most important aspect is the "relationship" that governs the parts and determines the system in which they are interconnected, along with the laws that arise from these relationships and contribute to their structure simultaneously"⁹.

In this way, structuralism assumes the existence of an underlying system (système) behind apparent chaos, encompassing various phenomena and to which all facts can be attributed once the mind reconstructs them as structures imbued with relational significance and functional dimensions. Thus, the cognitive concern shifts from attempting to understand the "essence of a thing" to comprehending how its parts are interconnected and function together.¹⁰

Indeed, this implies that the structuralist perception, whether considered as a method, intellectual approach, or ideology, emerged in response to a strong and eager desire to establish a comprehensive new system that could scientifically explain all human phenomena by connecting various fields of knowledge. The linguistic model served as the exemplary paradigm to achieve this goal. Here we delve into the terminological conception in language analysis as presented by structuralism and later utilized by subsequent intellectual currents. This conception led to the expansion of the semantic specialization of terms, endowing them with an essential quality. Structuralism, throughout its various stages, relied on the belief that "faith in language is the axis for revealing the origins of cosmic patterns manifested in human beings."¹¹ It relied on deducing its evidence from the rules of language and grammar, aspects of structure, contradictions, present and absent binary oppositions, and linguistic transformations.

The structuralist approach successfully contributed to shifting the center of critical focus to "language," considering it the active foundation and producer of concepts, as stated by Abdulaziz Hamouda: "The only tool for achieving knowledge and perceiving existence"¹².

Indeed, structuralism relied on Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between the terminological duality: *langue* (language) as a self-standing system and *parole* (speech) as individual instances of language use. According to this perspective, language is regarded as an abstract, rule-governed structure or normative framework, while speech is seen as the material embodiment of this structure in actual practice by individuals. The duality of *langue/parole*, according to Saussure, entails a separation between what is essential and what is secondary and incidental. This is evident in his reliance on the duality of synchrony/diachrony, where synchronic linguistics is considered capable of discovering the structure and stable system of a language,

⁹ Megan A. Riley and Saad Al-Baz'i, "Dalil al-Naqid al-Adabi" (Guide to Literary Criticism), Arab Cultural Center, Morocco/Lebanon, 4th edition, 2005, p.68.,

¹⁰ Guide to Literary Criticism, p.68.

¹¹ Azat Jad, Theory of Critical Terminology, General Egyptian Book Organization, Egypt, Dr. edition, 2002, p.286.

¹² Abdulaziz Hamouda, "Al-Mara'i al-Muhaddabah" (Concave Mirrors), National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, Kuwait, Dr. edition, 1998, p.256.

while diachronic linguistics is only valid when based on synchronic linguistics, as stated in Saussure's book "Course in General Linguistics."¹³

When formulating this rule within a critical aesthetic framework, it entails considering literature as a "derivative form of a larger form or a structure within a more comprehensive structure, which is language (i.e., writing as a social institution) governed by rules and codes within specific conventions, just like language as a system. From this perspective, literature becomes a type of actual practice compared to writing in general, and in turn, it becomes a linguistic system in relation to its genres. These genres, in turn, transform into actual practices for which literature provides rules and systems that give them their qualitative and literary characteristics¹⁴".

This primarily means that the structure of the literary text, like the linguistic structure, represents a self-contained, meaningful pattern. Consequently, there is no room for the author's intentionality since the creative self is, according to the structuralist perspective, a linguistic product that is shaped by and subject to the determinism of language. Thus, human agency in literature or other domains is eliminated, giving way to the dominance of structural patterns. This perspective is encapsulated in the well-known structuralist manifesto of the "death of the author." Within the framework of these structuralist considerations, the problematic aspect of structure emerges. Despite the presence of internal diversity among the elements of the structure, which ensures a kind of self-dynamics, this internal movement or transformation does not exceed the boundaries of this relational system. It does not resort to external elements but rather works to maintain and reinforce the internal laws. Consequently, it contributes, with its "self-organizing" nature, to the closure of the system, preventing it from referring to other systems.

In this way, totality (holism), self-regulation¹⁵, and self-control become distinctive characteristics of structure that reveal its synchronic dimension. Inherently, they deny the quality of "historical" from the meaning of "structure." These characteristics, therefore, affirm the independence of the structure as a concept from any external determinations that would force it to exceed its boundaries. The construction of the structure is not tied to a specific history or moment of its production. Instead, it is a process of self-transformation and self-adjustment through the gradual reconfiguration of the individual elements within the overall pattern. From all that has been presented, it becomes apparent that "structure tends to assume a tribalistic supremacy with a comprehensive nature. It leans more towards being a mere mental construct rather than a collection of sensory relationships within material structures that can be directly perceived¹⁶. Consequently, it reveals its underlying system, which operates in an unconscious manner that surpasses the will of individuals".

¹³ Abdullah Ibrahim, Saeed Al-Ghanmi, and Awad Ali (Understanding the Other, p.45.

¹⁴ - Megan A. Riley and Saad Al-Baz'i, "Guide to Literary Criticism", p.52.

¹⁵ See: "Dalil al-Naqid al-Adabi" (Guide to Literary Criticism), p.70.

¹⁶ Abdullah Ibrahim, Saeed Al-Ghanmi, and Awad Ali, "Ma'rifat al-Akhar" (Understanding the Other), p.62.

From this perspective, it becomes clear that in its attempt to generalize the linguistic model and make it the criterion, foundation, and tool for analysis, structuralist theory, as researcher Fadel Tamer observes, aspires “to create an absolute and transcendent new hegemony that replaces previous material and ideal hegemonies. In doing so, it falls into the trap of the same metaphysics, despite its attempt to approach the scientific model in terms of accuracy, rigor, and objectivity¹⁷”.

The reliance on the idea of a "model" as a reference for the interpretive process implicitly involves an unspoken intention to interpret variables in terms of constants, or to subject the reality with all its variables, transformations, and dynamics to the authority of a single abstract nature that encapsulates and generalizes the power of the model. Therefore, when contemplating the cognitive trajectory of structuralism as a significant turning point in the history of human thought, one can find the clearest example of the transformation of "rational modeling¹⁸," as Ali Harb describes it, from its relational perspective. It shifts from being one of the mechanisms established in thought and employed to understand facts to a problematic field loaded with ideology. Such relationality undermines the principle of hierarchy and solidifies the authority of the "Transcendental Signifier" as established by the metaphysics of presence. When the "binary oppositions" used as intermediaries ultimately transform into a battleground dominated by one of the binary's sides as the "origin" for the branch, which is the second party in the binary, they lose their significance because the number "two" is not a contingent occurrence in relation to the number "one."¹⁹

Therefore, it necessitated addressing the structure of the rational system as established by structural thought, or let's say - structural philosophy - by relying on a non-systematic philosophy, or in other words, a philosophy outside of philosophy, without all its conceptual legacies and inherent constraints. Indeed, it was an intellectually risky task undertaken by a group of thinkers who sought to challenge the rational system and replace it with the structuralist system. Armed with different intellectual and discursive strategies, they navigated the intricate issues of linguistic matters across contemporary literature, philosophy, and the humanities. In doing so, they inaugurated an intellectual phase characterized by diversity, multiplicity, and the negation of a homogeneous mental system. This phase came to be known as post-structuralism, indicating a clear reference to the problematic interrelationship between structuralist approaches and what comes after them.

Structuralism faced internal challenges when it couldn't find within its theoretical foundations the means to surpass the crucial problems it encountered, especially those related to the evident division between its promises and its actual achievements. This inherent inadequacy manifested itself on several levels, most notably, as researcher Sabri Hafez points out, by “neglecting the comprehensive role of history in favor of focusing solely on the centrality of the

¹⁷ Fadel Tamer, "Al-Lughah al-Thaniyah (Fi Ishkaliyat al-Manhaj, al-Nazariyah, wa al-Mustalah fi al-Khitab al-Naqdi al-Arabi al-Hadith)", Arab Cultural Center, Morocco, Lebanon, 1994, p.12.

¹⁸ See: Mutaa Safadi Critique of Arab Reason, Center for National Development, Dr. edition, 1999, p.40.

¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, "La dissémination", Editions Du Seuil, Paris, 1972, p.401.

text. Structuralism also went beyond specificity in its pursuit to demonstrate the universality of structure, disregarding the social and cultural contexts of literary works. It emphasized determinism and disregarded dialectics entirely. However, its most significant drawbacks were its emphasis on the subject matter at the expense of the self and its appropriation of the humanistic tendency that characterized the humanities over the course of two centuries.²⁰

These intellectual shortcomings, among others, converged to undermine the foundations of the structuralist project from within, giving rise to a new project that is indicated by the term "post-structuralism." There is an intricate relationship, one could say, between these two projects. Researcher Mahmoud Al-Ashairy states in this context: "The relationship between post-structuralism and structuralism is one that involves historical connection, a relationship between the precedent and the subsequent, as well as an objective connection. It also implies transcendence and surpassing. Post-structuralism is a state of rectifying errors, even if they are substantial errors, whether they pertain to the concept of structure itself, the approach to history, or claims of scientificity."²¹

It is true that the relationship and interplay between the two projects are highly complex, and the stakes involved are of great importance. Understanding the post-structuralist discourse, with all its intricacies, requires grappling with the challenges it presents. Therefore, we believe that the best way to discuss the "transition from structuralism to its aftermath" may lie in focusing on what is most essential, as emphasized by Dany Robert Dufour. He asserts that the most crucial aspect lies in the "idea" that drives systems of thought. He states, "Regardless of how an idea is derived (by some) or how it is exploited (by others), we still need to understand how this idea coheres within the system or systems of thought in which it operates."²² It seems that the concept of "Binary Opposition" is at the center of the intellectual debate between structuralism and its aftermath.

In this way, and with much simplification, it can be considered that post-structuralism, with all its branches, currents, and complexities, negates the intellectual singularity inherent in the binary logic of structuralism. It replaces it with the logic of infinite multiplicity of meaning systems or, in other words, the logic of difference. This means that the difference with structuralism and from it becomes a difference within it. This signifies that with the constant evocation of the structural conceptual heritage, there has been a transition from the path of structural domination to the path of its taming by adopting "the very binary logic" but dismantling its mechanisms and uncovering the layers of ideology surrounding it. Jacques Derrida, in his book titled "Writing and Difference," acknowledges the impossibility of detachment from metaphysical concepts or dispensing with them in order to negate them,

²⁰ Sabri Hafez, "Qarn al-Khitab al-Naqdi wa al-Nazariyyah al-Adabiyyah" (The Century of Critical Discourse and Literary Theory), Fasol Magazine, Issue 40, Winter/Spring 1997, p.202

²¹ Mahmoud Al-Ashairy, "Al-Ittijahat al-Adabiyyah wa al-Naqdiyyah al-Hadithah" (Modern Literary and Critical Trends), Mirt Publishing and Information, Cairo, Egypt, 2nd edition, 2003, p.105

²² Danny Robert Dufour, "Al-Binyawiyyah al-Tabbah wa al-Thaluth" (Structuralism, Medicine, and Trinity), translated by Mohamed Al-Rafrafi, Al-Arab wa al-Fikr al-Alami Magazine, Issue 9, Winter 1990, p.05.

stating that "we do not possess any language (langage), syntax, or lexicon that is foreign to its history."²³

In this context, the concept of "Structuralism" in its relational dimension is considered one of the most important avenues for understanding this history, as it is a concept deeply rooted in Western epistemology in both its scientific and philosophical aspects²⁴. Therefore, it was necessary for the discourses of "negation" that emerged after structuralism, including Derridean deconstruction or what is known as "Deconstruction" to draw on the conceptual and terminological tools of structuralism. This is done in order to reveal the inherent contradictions within its conceptual framework and penetrate the logic of "binary oppositions" which, through its hierarchical structure, perpetuates the principle of intellectual singularity. This principle is the very foundation on which "ideology" relies to establish its dominance, knowing that it is a "direct form of thinking through the model."²⁵

Deconstruction was able to reveal the ideological underpinnings of the structuralist approach when it questioned the principle of binary oppositions, which is relied upon in structuralist studies. According to Terry Eagleton, deconstruction shows that "the binary oppositions that structuralism operates with represent a stereotypical way of seeing for ideologies. It suits ideologies to draw strict boundaries between the acceptable and the unacceptable, the self and the other, truth and falsehood, meaning and meaninglessness, reason and madness, center and margin, surface and depth." This ultimately serves the established terminological norm of the relationship as solidified by Western intellectual traditions.

The intellectual dualism embedded in the conceptual principles of structuralism, which essentially stems from the simple idea that "every system is analyzable based on a specific dualistic formula,"²⁶ was one of the main reasons for its historical stumble after the events of 1968 in France. It was subsequently reevaluated. Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Jacques Lacan attempted to reconstitute it from within, but they found themselves largely outside its boundaries. As a result, they began laying the foundations for constructing an alternative, often referred to as "post-structuralism."²⁷

Indeed, the discourses of "negation" that followed structuralism, such as deconstruction, can be seen as philosophical reactions to the dominance of logocentrism, with all its cognitive mechanisms (reason, structure, voice, signifier, signified, sign, etc.), as established by the philosophy of presence. Ernest Gellner highlights the intellectual framework of the critical approach adopted by the discourses of negation, comparing it to the traditional cognitive order. He states, "The domain of theoretical authority of classical centralized knowledge assumed that there is a right way and a wrong way to acquire knowledge. The problem lied in finding and

²³ Jacques Derrida, "L'écriture de la différence", Editions Du Seuil, Paris, 1967, p.412.

²⁴ - Mutaa Safadi, Critique of Arab Reason, p.45.

²⁵ Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory, p.214.

²⁶ Danny Robert Dufour, "Embedded Structuralism, and Trinity ", translated by Mohamed Al-Rafafi, Al-Arab wa al-Fikr al-Alami Magazine, Issue 9, Winter 1990, p.06.

²⁷ - Azzat Jad, " Theory of Critical Terminology , General Egyptian Book Organization, Egypt, 1st edition, 2002, p.277.

justifying the distinct difference between the two methods when determining and assigning their positions. On the other hand, contemporary thought moves towards the absence of such distinction and asserts that the establishment of a classification system for types of knowledge is morally and politically harmful, resembling the layering of one coat of paint over another, with the implication that the two distinct methods may be interconnected.²⁸

Indeed, this liberating trend of "post-thought" and its opposition to the idea of modeling, regardless of its origin, has led to a kind of intentional semantic instability in its conceptual components and methodological foundations. Its main distinguishing feature is "indeterminacy,"²⁹ clearly indicating that it is a divergent mode of thought. It disengages from all determinations to engage with all intellectual discourses, whether in philosophy, anthropology, literary criticism, or other domains of the knowledge establishment, through a complex network that is difficult to decipher and engage with outside its own logic.

Finally, if we contemplate the intellectual outcome of the studies that have adopted the binary paradigm - if the term is appropriate - in the new millennium, we find a clear inclination towards liberation from the primacy of traditional logic, confined and besieged by notions of correspondence, similarity, analogy, essentialism, and other functions that have reduced the concept of relation to a hierarchy of binary oppositions that have been inherited by human thought throughout its long history. Undoubtedly, these studies have responded to an ideological and philosophical stance, and, before and after that, to a linguistic one that relies on plurality and dialogue.

²⁸ Ernest Gellner, "Ma Ba'd al-Hadatha wa al-Aql wa al-Din" (Postmodernism, Reason, and Religion), translated by Mu'in Al-Imam, Dar Al-Mada for Culture and Publishing, 2001, p.63.

²⁹ See: Nabil Ragab, "Mawsuat al-Nazariyyat al-Adabiyyah" (Encyclopedia of Literary Theories), Egyptian International Publishing Company, Egypt, 1st edition, 2003, p.536.