Locked Doors: Threshold Concepts as Guardians of the Discipline

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On Negotiation and Tribes

Writing about co-operation and solidarity means writing at the same time about rejection and mistrust

– Mary Douglas How Institutions Think (1986), 1
Overview

- Threshold Concepts as ‘enabling’
- Interdisciplinarity also as ‘enabling’
- Disciplinary skirmishes
- Scenarios of Engagement
- What next for interdisciplinary teaching?
On Knocking Down Walls
Scenario 1 ‘Surrender your passport’

‘I just don’t want them to blow up the plant: it’s messier than blowing up a lab.’
Scenario 2. ‘Here be Dragons’

A physiologist wrote:

I don’t have patience for arguments from the Chinese Room experiment, because as a physiologist I consider the human brain to be a machine.
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I don’t have patience for arguments from the Chinese Room experiment, because as a physiologist I consider the human brain to be a machine.

A historian responded:

Who makes that judgement . . . The brain? How does the brain do so? Automatically, presumably . . . Or are you implicitly distinguishing ‘brain’ from ‘self’?
And a pharmacologist continued privately to that historian:

*If the brain is not a machine, then what is it? The only other possibility seems to be start talking about souls or some other form of mysticism. I’d prefer not to do that myself.*
Scenario 3. ‘Cattle-raiding’

The interesting question is not whether Derrida and his peers were correct but why they backed themselves into a corner where it was almost impossible to say anything about anything.
What about Students?