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Response to David DeGrazia

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As David mentions, he and I are good friends. Our friendship is based on many things, but certainly part of it is our similar concerns for the future of psychiatry (and health care more broadly). David outlines these similarities well, so, like him, I will concentrate on our differences. We have had extended conversations about these differences, but we usually end up not much closer than the two papers would suggest. This indicates to me that there is more than a "misunderstanding" between us. We understand each other. David understands me and I do him, but we have different perspectives. It is important to note however that our personal differences are part of a larger social context. Indeed, we are bit players in a larger discursive theater, and the deadlock between us is also the battle scene of the "science wars" drama currently raging in academe. These theatrical academic wars have been, like the real wars they simulate, very destructive and very crude. Fine distinctions and nuances are lost on a battlefield. Thus, I am grateful to David for articulating his perspectives so eloquently and for providing such a good humored opportunity for continued dialogue on this topic—without either of us having to go to war.

In my response, let me make the somewhat arbitrary, but to me useful, distinction between the *process* and *content* of David's and my differences. The *process* aspects of our differences largely come from our cross-disciplinary interactions. David's disciplinary background is analytic philosophy, particularly bioethics. Mine is a post-disciplinary mix of psychiatry and cultural studies. However, even though I consider myself "post-disciplinary," it is important to realize I am as bound by that discourse (which David points out) as David is by his (which David does not point out). Post-"disciplinary" is still "disciplinary" despite many efforts to go beyond it. David's and my different disciplinary boundedness creates a cross-disciplinary divide that effectively functions like a cross-cultural divide. After all, disciplines (including most "post-disciplines") resemble cultures in that each has its own histories, parent (usually Father) figures, core texts,

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conferences, journals, styles, rules, norms, expectations, quality criteria, institutional relations, and funding sources. In addition, each discipline defines itself as "not" some other discipline, and usually that negative definition includes why the one discipline is better than the other—or at least better for the specific preoccupations and concerns that are key to that discipline's self-understanding. The result: disciplinary incommensurability and disciplinary ethnocentrism. The incommensurability comes when differing logics and paradigms of one discipline set up differing preoccupations and priorities (which they usually do) compared to the logics and paradigms of another discipline. The ethnocentrism comes when members of one discipline look across the disciplinary divide at another discipline and they "disciplin-o-centrically" see with glaring clarity what the other discipline is "getting wrong." They rarely see what the other discipline is "getting right" in a way which theirs may not. In addition, they rarely see that what is crucially important to one discipline is much less crucial to the other—and the other way around.

To further articulate what I mean by cross-cultural incomensurablity and ethnocentrism, let me discuss the cross-cultural moment David brings up in his response to my paper. When David addresses Afghanistan and the effects of the Taliban militia on the lives of Taliban women, he looks across a cultural divide at an Afghanistan community. He (and presumably the conference presenter he cites—who may very well be from Afghanistan since cultural perspectives can be quite hybrid) are dramatically aware at the "basic human" rights violations for the women of the Taliban community. But, while David and the presenter point their index fingers at the Taliban human rights "dysfunction," neither of them seem to be aware of the three fingers they point back at themselves. Neither David nor the presenter mention the kinds of abuse, oppression, and torture occurring to women in "Western" cultures. For the Taliban, I suspect, the situation is reversed. For them, Western secular, economic, and sexual practices are so unacceptable that they create for the Taliban a glaring awareness of Western "dysfunction," not only with regard to women, but also with regard to broader cultural and spiritual values. The incommensurability between the two perspectives is not, I would argue, due to what David seems to think is the Taliban's lack of awareness of basic human needs like "breathing, food and water, avoidance of severe injury, and treatment for injuries." Rather the incommensurability comes from what the differing communities are willing to sacrifice for what. Western culture also sacrifices basic human needs—not because they don't know about these needs, but because these needs are at times seen as lower value in relation to other needs. No doubt, when the Taliban look toward the West, they too miss some of the advantages of Western ways.

In addition, as David points out, the Taliban are hardly unified. Many of the women of the Taliban community feel their human rights are being violated. But it is an idealization of culture to imagine it operating as a unified functional organism—there is always conflict. Many in the West also believe their

human rights are violated. Lack of unification does not mean that cultural processes are irrelevant or that certain Westerners (and those who agree with them) have access to the universal truth. Conflicts within cultures (and even subcultures) also work like conflicts between cultures. They too create incomensurablities and ethnocentrisms—which only further complicate the issue of cross-cultural interactions. My point in raising these difficulties, however, is not to consider in detail all the cross-cultural complexities between the Taliban and the West, but primarily to illustrate out how cross-cultural considerations pose challenges that David is not fully addressing.

These challenges are also there when David reads my paper. When David says he knows only two of the sources I cite, he speaks to the very different disciplinary culture he is coming from. But, when he critiques my style as "unfortunately worded," my post-disciplinary intellectual tools (postmodernism and cultural studies) as "baggage" to be "thrown overboard," my genre as more "dogmatic" than his, and my perspectives as "unintelligible," "wildly implausible," and making "no sense," we have a situation more like cross-cultural incomensurablity and disciplinary-o-centrism than a meaningful engagement in the advantages and limitations of different approaches and perspectives. This is where David and I are caught in the science wars despite our friendship. The war goes both ways, of course, and I am often guilty of treating analytic bioethics in the same dismissive way (only in reverse). I've been heard at times to call analytic bioethics "overly obsessive," "wildly out of touch," and "completely irrelevant." The difference seems to be that I am more aware of the process than David. But then, what am I doing when I say that except asserting my disciplinary-o-centric superiority for my particular (post-)disciplinary wisdom compared with David's? I seriously doubt that David will find this argument for postmodern superiority very compelling. Clearly, the very process of working across disciplines is making it hard for us to communicate.

Let me turn now from the process to the *content* of David's critique. David is right that I have not presented detailed arguments regarding the Enlightenment's "crisis of representation." I'm assuming basic familiarity with a postmodern critique which details the way that modern knowledge of the True and the Good (terms which do, on my reading, often carry all the metaphysical inflation which David downplays) are always mediated through systems of language, culture, infrastructure, rituals, and power relations (Lewis, 2000). I also do not go into a detailed discussion of cultural studies—which is, as I use the term, a kind of post-postmodern genre. In general, the cultural studies genre from which I'm writing does not reargue postmodern critiques; it applies these critiques to a variety of everyday social discourses (Lewis, 1998).

Like David says, cultural studies applications are sometimes taken to mean that there is no "mind independent world." But that is a misreading. Cultural studies writers believe there is a world independent of minds. Instead of David's strong

idealist reading, cultural studies only highlights that there is no direct unmediated access to that world. Since David and I agree that there is a "mind independent world," his self-satisfied paternalistic admonitions that I not forget this (real) world will do little good to resolve our differences (just as telling the Taliban that women need to breath is unlikely to be helpful).

But, though neither of us are "anti-realists," I do not want to minimize an important conflict between us. Though cultural studies includes the real world, it also allows for multiple "true" knowledges of the world known through multiple frames of reference. This seems to be a key point of contention between David and myself. David says that "various incompatible forms of truth" make "no sense." For me, the pluridimensionality of the world is banally obvious. "Multiple truths" makes much more sense to me of historical and cultural differences than a "one truth" thesis could ever do. Still, I understand why David says what he says. He is thinking that *either* there were brontosauruses *or* there were not. Period. End of discussion. For David, if we have a classification for Brontosourous, or if we do not, does not change the basics facts regarding whether Brontosoursous existed. The fact of the matter, as David presents it, is independent of what people think about it. But, this "either/or" is the very rigid distinction that I (and those in my cultural studies tribe) am trying to avoid.

David approaches a "brontosaurus" as if it were an isolated object that can be known or not known, where as I see it in a much less isolated frame—more intermingled with the blooming buzzing confusion of it all—and only knowable when presented through a linguistic system of relations and classifications. There are a variety of ways in which brontosauruses could be presented—for example: dinosaurs, four footed animals, animals with tails, really big animals, animals which no longer live, animals which look really small from a distance, animals which belong to "science" but not religion, etc. These classificatory systems are not True or False as much as they are different. Because the world has multiple dimensions along these lines, it can be organized through linguistic and cultural systems in very different ways. In effect, different organizational systems create different life-worlds out of the myriad of possibilities in the world, and these life-worlds go on to actively create different worlds. For example, if brontosauruses and humans were to live at the same time, and if brontosauruses fell in the "good to eat" category, then over time they would likely become extinct or farm animals. That is very different world than one where brontosauruses are in the "sacred creatures" category. Let me be clear, I'm not saying, "anything goes" or that people can use whatever concepts they desire. None of the categories mentioned claim that a brontosaurus can fly. Of course, "flying Brontosauruses" are possible, but such a discourse would require a very different meaning of "to fly."

A similar situation arises with David's comparison between astrology and physics. David hopes we can at least "agree that astrology is not on par with physics in yielding knowledge (as opposed to belief)." But, unfortunately, even

something that seems so basic for David is problematic for me. Physics is superior at prediction and explanation, but it is inferior at meaningful organization of human life. Astrology has the opposite features. To call astrology a "myth" and therefore to dismiss it as "mere belief" is to miss the way that astrology based rituals, like the rituals of other so called "myths," have a kind of built-in wisdom and knowledge into human needs and yearnings. A way of life organized around stargazing can create a way of life with a plenitude of good hours. It will never create an automobile or a nuclear reactor, but neither will it deplete the ozone, unleash catastrophic contagions, or develop weapons of mass destruction. David, like the Western knowledge tradition in which he works, with all of its physics pride and spirit envy, should not be dismissive of alternative knowledge. Western knowledge has its areas of strength, but it also has its weaknesses. This, of course, is one of my main points in the paper with regard to Prozac and the relations between bioscience oriented psychiatry to other forms of knowledge making about human suffering. These should not be master/slave colonial relations. There should be a genuine appreciation of difference.

David also argues that my "denial of truth" and other declarative statements are contradictory because they all constitute truth claims in themselves. Therefore, I must be presupposing the existence of truth for my claims to be intelligible. This is tricky because it is a derivative of our "one truth" verses "multiple truths" difference. My position is not an anti-realist denial of truth as much as it is a postmodern complication of truth and appreciation of multiple truths. If there is only one "truth," then contradiction is ruled out and David's critique stands—one cannot make truth claims without acknowledging the existence of truth. But, what slips in the back door here is the notion that the existence of truth equals the existence of one truth and the idea that truth as a priority should be sharply separated from other priorities. When I argue that there "is no direct access to the world," I not only make a truth claim; I also make ethical, aesthetic, environmental, political, and spiritual claims. I argue, in other words, that there are a variety of advantages for thinking this way. There are also losses in thinking this way. However, these losses do not mean that I am living in "myth" any more than the losses of science mean that science is a myth. It is possible to organize the world and ways of life scientifically. It is possible to place a major priority on the existence and pursuit of Truth (even over friendship!). And, it is possible to define Truth as prediction and explanation separate from other priorities. If a culture is organized around these scientific frames, like for example the culture of biopsychiatry, it will be intelligible. However, it is also possible to organize cultures and ways of life differently and still be intelligible. I am arguing for some other ways.

Similarly, David argues that my paper is contradictory because I point out the limitations of current bioethics while at the same time make multiple normative claims through my appeals to the negative "effects" of Prozac. But, again, my position is not that "nothing is good" or that "anything is as good as anything

else." The problem is not that there is "no good" and "no bad"; the problem is that there are too many "goods" and too many "bads." If we narrow ourselves down to a single "objective standard of rightness or goodness," we slip into a sense that something is *either* good *or* bad. But, this is too blunt for interrogating complex new knowledge like biopsychiatry because it is both good and bad. The task is to side step this binary so that we can critique the complexity of knowledge effects with more subtlety. Biopsychiatry-as-usual is not unethical (at least with the current understanding of bioethics), but it still has multiple problematic effects. Since bioethics is not addressing these problems, there needs to be additional discourses to address them. There is no a priori reason why ethics could not play a role. Indeed, the additional discourses I discuss in the paper could be developed under the banner of "ethics." But, that would mean a shift from current ethical paradigms.

There is also no inevitable reason why a discourse of "science" and the "true" could not play a role. It is possible that the discourse of science could be utilized in a very different way. David argues "science" requires "quality control." Depending on how one defines "quality control," we might even be able to reappropriate the term "science" for many of my concerns. If David's "quality control" meant insuring that different forms of knowledge making play fair rather than dominate each other, that certain social groups are not significantly over represented in the process of knowledge production, and that there should be deep critique (not only epistemological, but also social, political, environmental, etc.) of the possible effects of knowledge priorities, then I think we have some common ground. I'm happy to call this kind of quality control "science" (or "ethics" for that matter.) I'm even happy to use a discourse of "quality control" and to insist that quality control is important in seeking truths (and/or goods.) But, I'm not happy pretending that our current way of understanding science (and/or ethics) is sufficiently addressing these issues of inclusion and the broader consequences of knowledge making.

Over time, I'm hopeful that the science wars will fade so that people who have similar concerns about medical technoscience (like David and me), but are on different sides of a disciplinary divide, can eventually form a coalition. The future *natures* we will inhabit and the future *beings* we will become are too important to leave to science and ethics as we know them today.

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