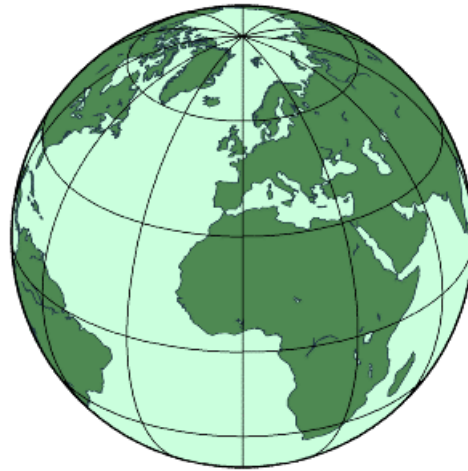


Constructive Debate



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Ineffective debate

- If you are like most people then you probably do the following:
 - Occasionally have a new idea: “Hey, I thought of a good way to do ...”
 - As you think about the idea it seems better and better
 - Tell your idea to somebody else and they say “It is flawed because ...”
- Possible results:
 - You think the other person is too negative
 - The other person thinks you are stupid or naïve
 - You decide it is too frustrating to share your ideas with others
- What went wrong?
 - People tend to view ideas in a one-sided way
 - If we initially think an idea is good then we look only for reasons to support that viewpoint
 - Likewise, if we initially think an idea is bad then ...
 - People view a debate as a competition with a winner and a loser

The Wright Brothers

- The Wright Brothers flew the first airplane in 1903:
 - They spent 4½ years doing research into flying before they succeeded
 - During this time they developed and tested many theories
- Their father taught them a way to debate productively:
 - At the dinner table he picked a topic for debate
 - One brother argued *for* the topic and the other argued *against* it
 - After a while, the father asked them to switch sides in the debate
- By doing this, the brothers:
 - Got to look at an issue from multiple (at least two) sides
 - Viewed debating not as competition, but as a cooperative way to uncover the truth
- The brothers used this tactic frequently in their work
 - It helped them beat aviation researchers who had better funding

Edward de Bono

- Edward de Bono coined the term *lateral thinking*:
 - He has written many books on techniques to improve thinking
 - *Lateral Thinking* was one of his first books
 - *Six Thinking Hats* is more up-to-date
 - His work was inspired by his academic research into physiology
- A detailed discussion of his ideas is outside the scope of this course:
 - Instead, the next few slides provide a brief outline to arouse your curiosity
 - Read *Six Thinking Hats* for details

Edward de Bono (cont')

- Six (imaginary) hats have different colours:
 - White denotes objective facts and beliefs (that is, unchecked facts)
 - Red denotes emotions. Example: “I don’t know why, but I don’t like it”
 - Yellow denotes optimism, hope and positive thinking
 - Black denotes caution. It is used to point out weaknesses in an idea
 - Green denotes creativity and new ideas
 - Blue is used by the facilitator to control a meeting
- The facilitator puts on his blue hat and might say:
 - “We want to discuss <topic>. We will use <sequence of hats>.
First, put on your <colour> hat.”
- Everybody gives comments according to the current hat
- The facilitator tells the group when to switch to another hat
 - The facilitator uses the blue hat at the end to conclude the meeting

Edward de Bono (cont')

The use of imaginary hats serves a few purposes...

- It helps people to explore an idea from different viewpoints
 - The Wright brothers' technique explored an idea from two viewpoints
 - The hats help you explore an idea from five different viewpoints
- It removes people's egos from the meeting:
 - *Everybody* looks for flaws when wearing the black hat
 - *Everybody* looks for positive ideas when wearing the yellow hat
 - And so on
- The *Six Thinking Hats* book:
 - Provides useful detail that is outside the scope of this course
 - Is very readable and quite short (less than 200 pages)

Summary

- Most debates are not productive because they are competitive
- The Wright Brothers used debate in a more constructive way
 - They switched sides, so they could tease out the truth of the issue at hand
- Edward de Bono's *Six Thinking Hats* is more refined
 - Provides an ego-less way to examine an issue from five viewpoints