



December 21, 2023

2023: A Lesson in Perspective

FEATURE ARTICLE

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A 'hole' new way of looking at things.

With another year in the books, we are once again given an opportunity to reflect. Looking back on 2023, it is difficult to ignore the persistence of conflict throughout our world. It feels like the act of consideration has been overshadowed by the immediacy of opinion.

It is my hope that in 2024 we can redirect our focus towards embracing opposing viewpoints. In a world full of diversity, appreciating different perspectives is a necessity for fostering understanding.

To act as an example, I'd like to impart one of my favorite dinner table discussions: The Great Straw Debate.

How many holes does a straw have?

After taking a moment to ponder this question, some of you will take the stance of the "one-holers". Confident that a straw has a single hole running all the way through it. But others will be inclined to side with the "two-holers", those who are convinced that a straw has two holes - one at the top and one at the bottom.

For those of you who are two-holers, I propose this thought experiment; imagine the straw getting shorter and shorter, until it becomes so short that it is now shorter than it is wide. At this point the straw resembles a shape similar to that of a bagel. How many holes does a bagel have?

As for the one-holers, let's say I take the straw and pinch one of the ends. How many holes are in it now? Still just the one on

the opposing end, right? Theoretically, I could now fill it with liquid, much like a bottle of water. However, if I were to poke a hole in the bottom of a water bottle, how many holes would that bottle then have?

Both one-holers and two-holers are right. However, deliberation requires that both sides be willing to learn about the arithmetic of holes. While topology can deliver a solution using mathematics, this debate serves as an example of how individual perspectives can shape interpretation.

I wish you luck this holiday season, should you choose to bring this debate to your table, and I hope we can all put forth greater effort in learning from differing perspectives in 2024.

Who says we can't all be right?

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