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**Relating to the Argument Culture**

It is extremely hard to recognize the type of society we live in, it is even harder to realize why we do the things we do. Humans are born with natural skills, but many others are learned throughout our lives. Society imposes its own way of viewing things; it teaches us to be independent and forbids us from making mistakes. What is established in society are cycles that seem impossible to break, yet like other things that can be learned, we can learn to break them.

We live in an argument culture, a culture that society has shaped for us to live in. Since the beginning of our education, we are taught to always defend our point of view. That is a powerful skill that we all need and use daily, the problem is that we are not taught to understand others’ point of view. According to the book *Dialogue and Deliberation*:

Students have learned to argue vigorously and even angrily, but not to think about alternatives, or listen to each other, or determined how their position may affect others, or see complexities, or reconsider the position they began with, or even to make new connections across a range of possible disagreements. 13

If students are not taught to reconsider their thinking, how is it that we expect professionals to understand each other’s point of view? We should not expect for someone to care about the other person’s position, for we teach to be judgmental and blame others, rather than been understanding. The goal of the argument, according to the society we live in, is to find out which side is wrong. In an argument, we see the other person as the adversarial; in other words, the other person becomes our enemy and the battle has to be won by one of us. Maybe the reason why the cycle of misunderstanding continues is because we see each other as enemies, not as teachers.

While many people lose themselves in the battle of argument, others try to avoid it. Sometimes, arguments are avoided because we do not want to get in trouble, but worst of all we are afraid of losing in the argument. Like Margaret Heffernan explained in the Ted Talk, “85% of people at work don’t address their issues because they are afraid of conflict… they think they are going to lose.” Society commands us to always win; losing is not an option, for that reason humans do not speak up. As humans we prefer to be in a comfort zone and getting into an argument makes us vulnerable. When there is a disagreement and we lose, we blame ourselves and think we are not good enough; that is our vulnerability. Many people are afraid of been susceptible that is why they avoid conflict.

The way society educates us towards arguments can be changed by simply teaching us to be more sympathetic. Instead of having an argumentative culture that makes us enemies, we should have a dialogue and deliberation type of culture. It does not mean that we should not argue, all it means is that we should change the way we do it. We have to be taught that it is important to understand another person’s point of view and to learn from them. It is important to mention that we depend on each other, so our relationship with others can help or destroy us. That is why is so critical to be understandable. We are very similar to one another, maybe with different perspectives in life, but we are all vulnerable of the same situations. In the book it is suggested that, “We need to find a way to come together, respectful of our differences and diversity, even in the midst of deep conflict” (37).

Conflicts and mistakes should not be used as something negative, but rather to help us think on how we see life. We are often too afraid of being wrong or losing while in an argument, we want to be perfect and always right. Kathryn Schulz, mentioned on the TED Talk, “We avoid being wrong.” It is very natural to be wrong, but society perceives this as vulnerability. This makes us afraid of making a mistake, how will we learn about life without making a mistake? That is almost impossible. Accepting our mistakes can be used to our advantage, for we can gain understanding about something. In a conflict, if we “lose” we are able to understand the other person. Instead of trying to always be right we need to think on the other point of view. Although society has taught us that there are only two sides, winners or losers, when it comes to resolving a conflict and mistakes everybody wins.

I learned to defend my thoughts long before starting school. I was the only girl in my family and always against my brothers’ ideas. Of course, I would win most of the time; my parents probably thought that by having me win, I would be a happier child. And I was, until I started school. I became judgmental and blame others for the things that were happening to me, I wanted to continue to be right, but that was impossible. There, I had to learn that things are not always the way I wanted them to be, and until now I continue to learn that life is not how we expect. There came a time in my life that I avoided arguments because I was afraid to lose. I did not know how to defend my point of view and I never recognized when I was wrong. Even if I knew I was wrong, I never accepted it because that made me weak. As time goes by, I have come to the conclusion that I am like most of the human beings; afraid of making mistakes and to accept other people’s opinion. In class, I have learned not to see the other person as an enemy, but as someone that can teach me something. The cycle of positive relationships is crucial in our lives, for we all depend on each other.