



Non-Positional Thinking

Thinking That Transforms Everything

VERITAS

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Picking Cotton

HMAS Sydney



Allport & Portman 1942



What's Up? The Psychology of Thinking

- **Selective Perception** (data gathering)
- Subjective Memory (data “storage” and “retrieval”)
- ...all held together by the **Constructed Universe**

Selective Perception Filters the Information

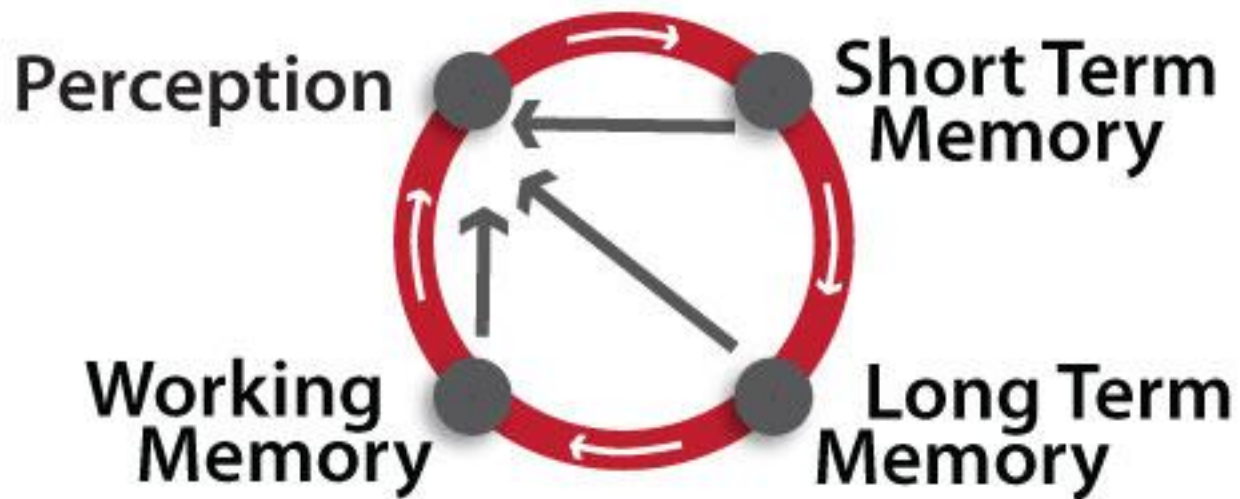
- Purpose is to let in only immediately **relevant** information
- We perceive what we focus on: inattentional blindness
- What we perceive is **subject to physical conditions**
- What arouses us **emotionally** captures our attention
- It is subject to our beliefs, assumptions, logic, etc.

It's Subjective Memory, **Not a Video**

- What we remember is **subjective**
- What we remember is fluid and **constantly changing**
- Many factors compromise eye-witness memory; confidence and sincerity do not equal accuracy
- Memories can be completely fabricated
- The War of the Ghosts

What's Up? The Neurobiology of Thinking

- Antonio Damasio: emotion, reason and the human brain: the neurophysiology of:
 - Perception
 - Memory: Short-term > long-term > working
 - Recollection
 - Perception
 - Decision-making, planning and the role of emotion
 - Perception



What is the **Constructed Universe**?

...the cognitive framework in which all thought takes place.

...the constructed universe **IS** the mind.

What Makes up the **Constructed Universe**?

- Made up of all our **beliefs** about the world
- Starts when we're born (maybe before)
- New information is made to fit
- Changeable in early childhood, mostly fixed after that
- We are not aware of its presence
- Order is maintained through **schemas**

We don't know who discovered water, but we know it wasn't the fish.

Marshall McLuhan

Schemas: Organizing Principles of the CU

- Organize all of our beliefs, memories, thoughts, perceptions into loose clusters of related things
- Connections among these things can be tenuous and “illogical”
- Help us make sense out of experiences (real or imagined)



Why Schemas?

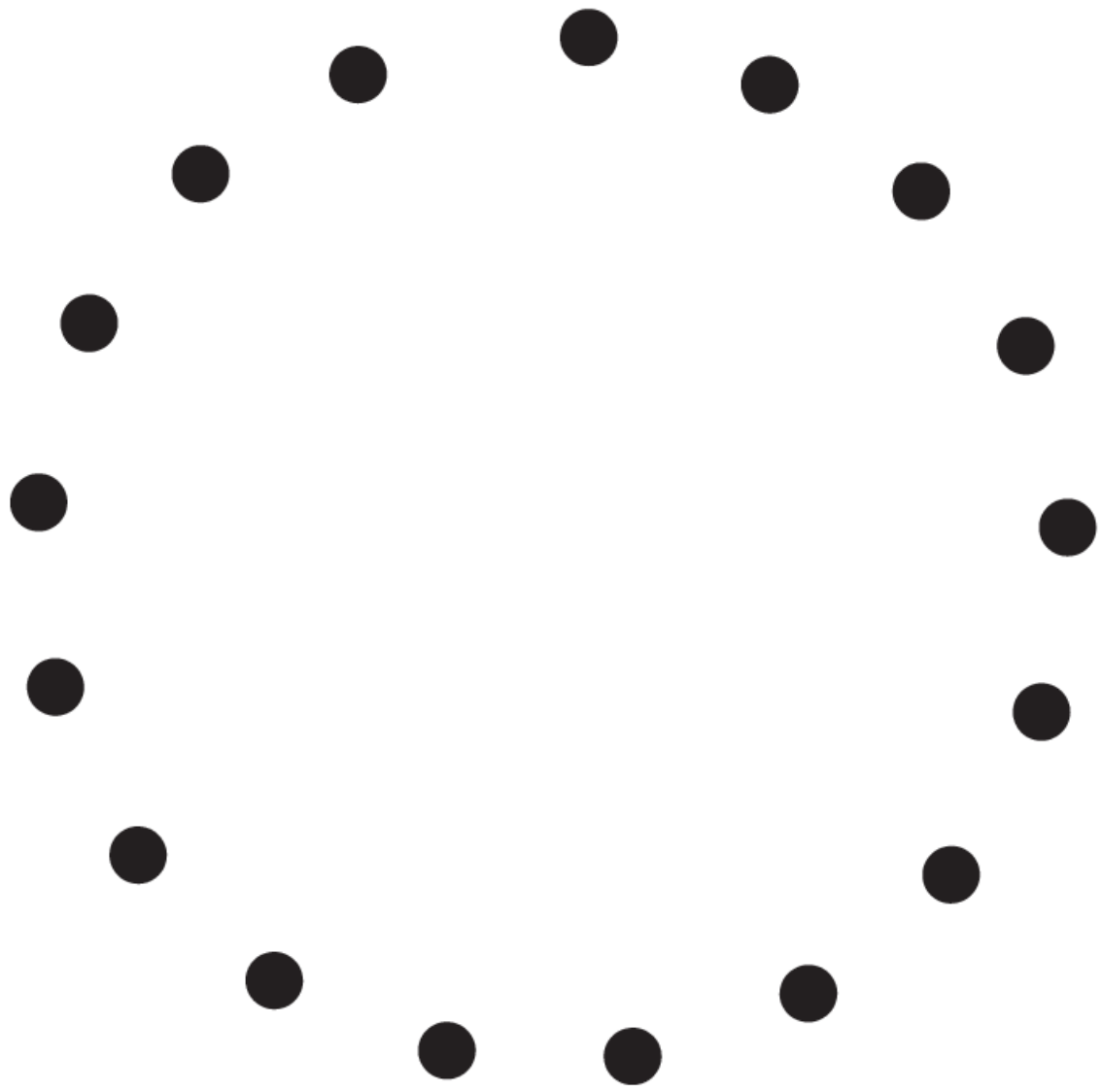


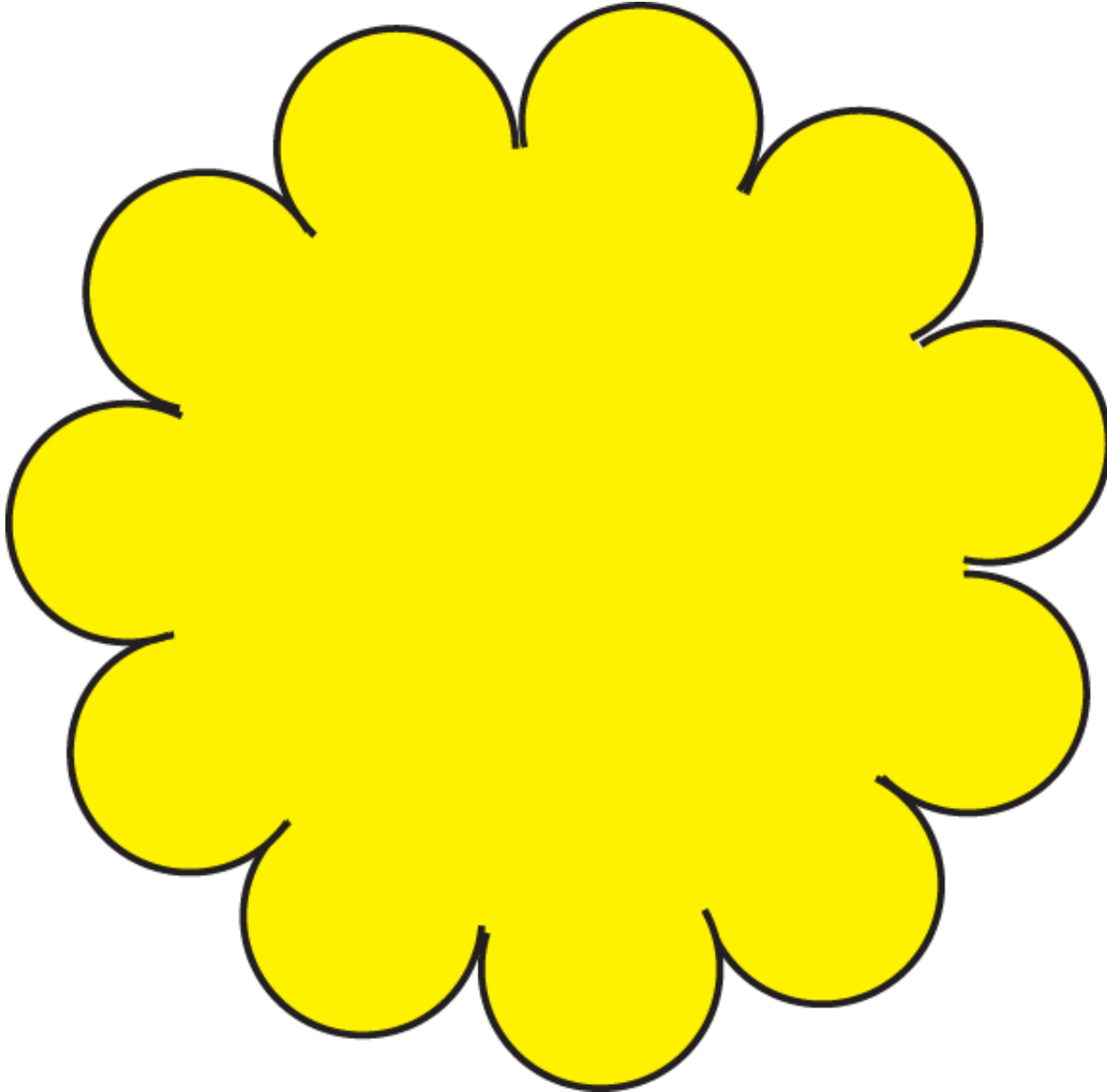
Why Schemas?

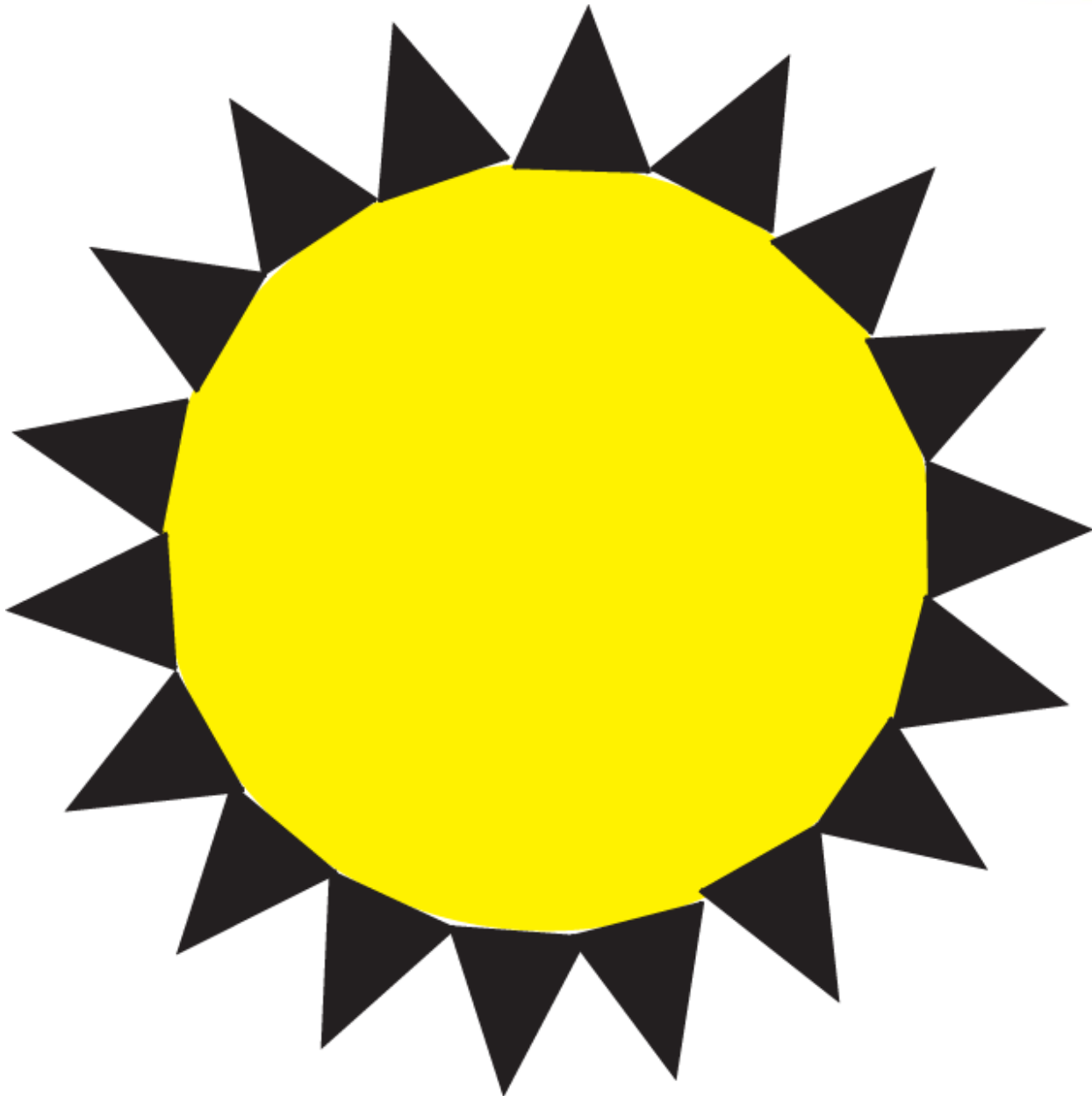
Survival!

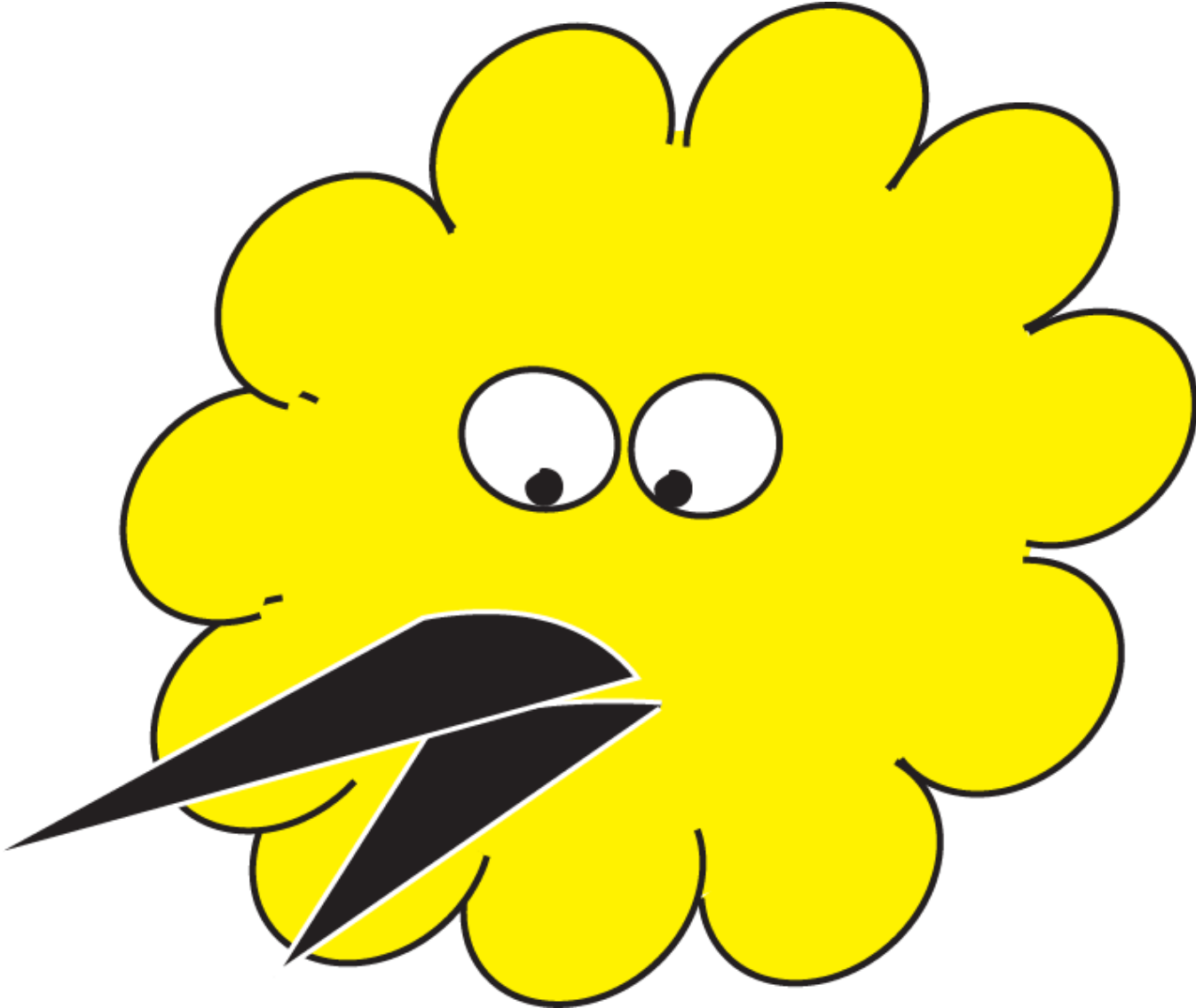


Example of a simple schema...











Schemas Can Lead to Thinking Errors

“Who the hell wants to hear actors talk?”

– *HM Warner, Warner Bros, 1927*

“I think there is a world market for about five computers“

–*Thomas Watson, CEO, IBM 1958*

“There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home.”

-*Ken Olson, Chairman/ Founder of Digital Equipment Corp., 1977*

“Sensible and responsible women do not want to vote.”

-*Grover Cleveland, US President 1905*

Positional Thinking

Thinking Errors Caused by Schema Failure:

- Maginot Line thinking
- Zero-sum thinking
- Monkey Jar thinking
- Lost Key thinking
- Short-cut errors

Thinking Errors: Maginot Line Thinking

- Doing what worked in the past *only because it worked in the past*, without examining how appropriate that strategy is in light new information, developments and technology.

Maginot Line Thinking

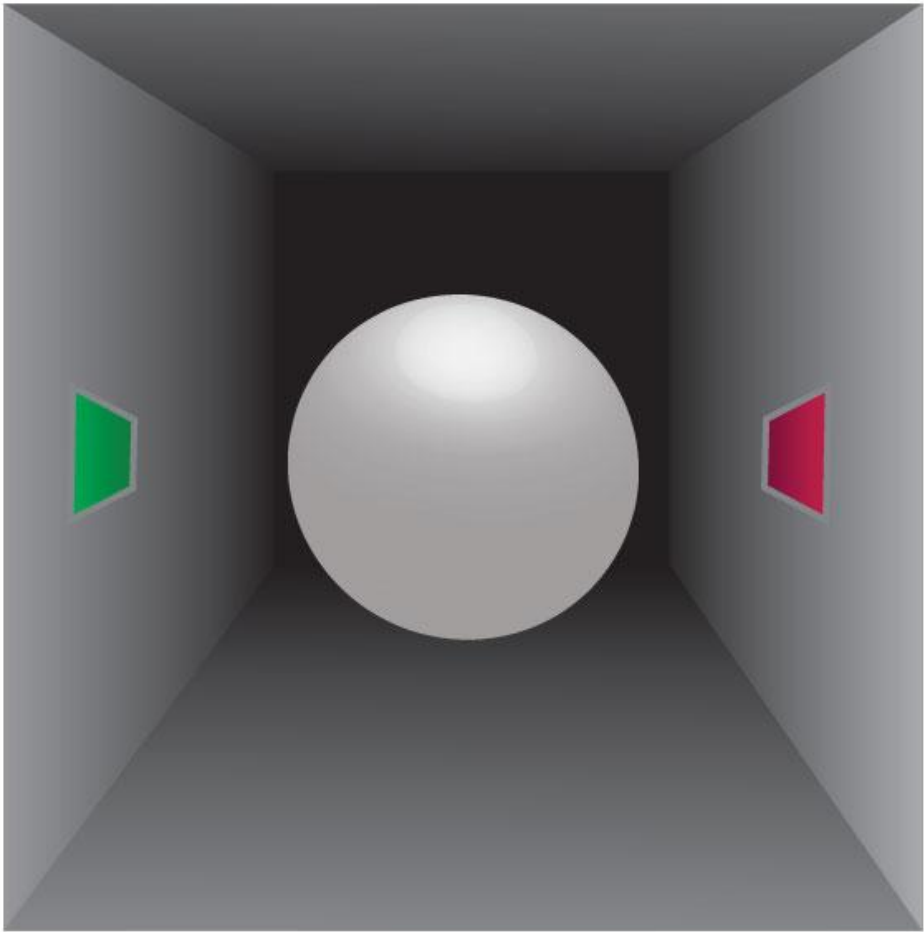
- Examples
 - Maginot line
 - Switzerland's Watch Industry
 - Miracle on Manchester
 - Guy Popovich and the San Antonio Spurs

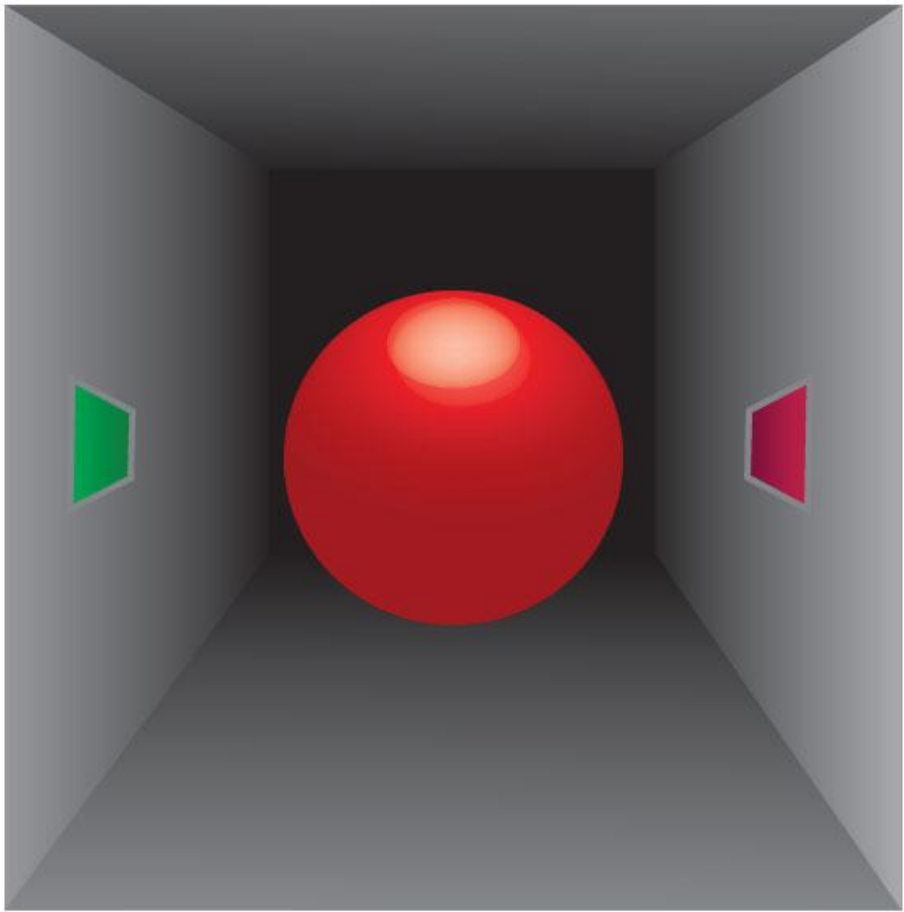
Thinking Errors: Zero Sum Thinking

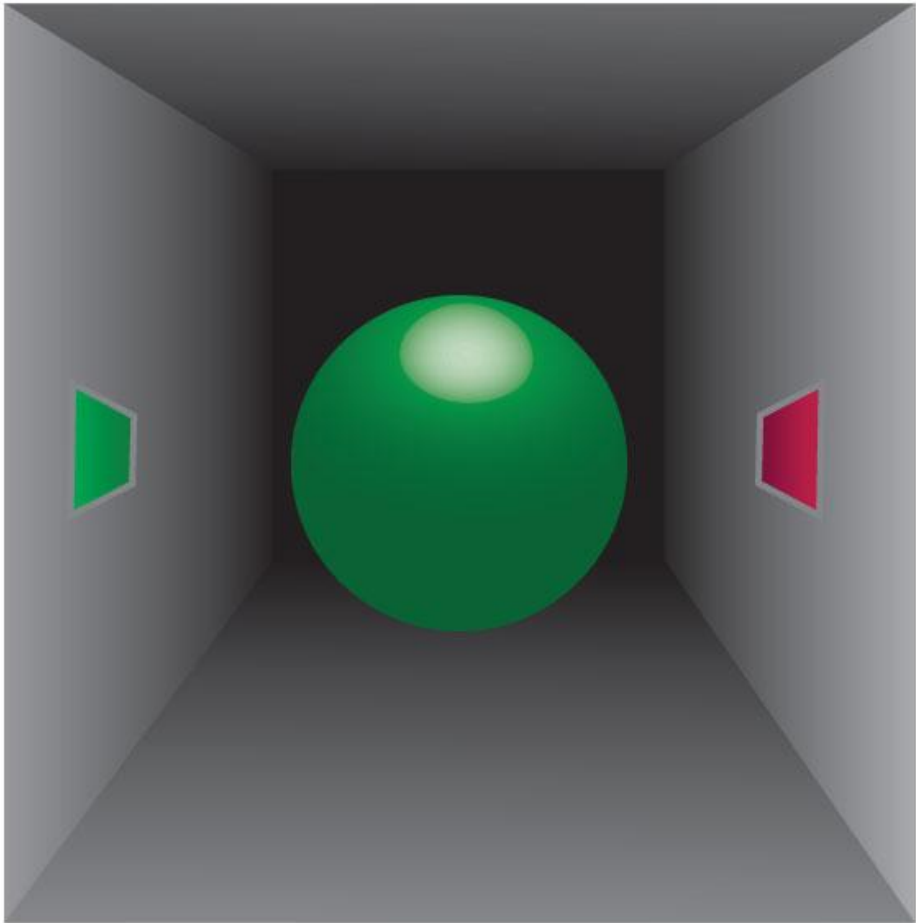
- Believing that there is a **limited amount of “solution”**.

Zero Sum Thinking

- Examples
 - Fixed position thinking
 - Either/or thinking







Thinking Errors: Monkey Jar Thinking

Thinking for the **short term** and/or seeing only particles; **seeing only “now”** but not how current actions lead to future outcomes; **seeing only parts** but not how they’re related.

Monkey Jar thinking

- Examples
 - Tragedy of the commons
 - American autos

Thinking Errors: Lost Key Thinking

Looking for information/solutions/answers somewhere only because that's where the information is **easy to access**.

Lost Key Thinking

- Examples
 - Measuring results: call Center
 - Treating the symptoms

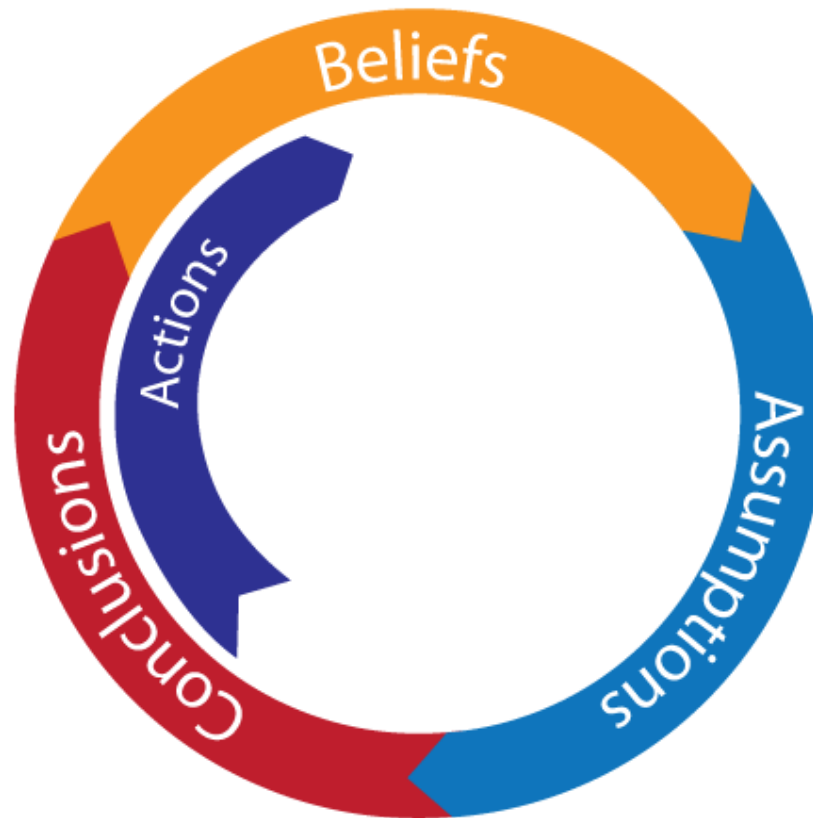
Thinking Errors: Categorization Errors

We take **cognitive shortcuts** in our reasoning to help us make sense quickly, but fail to verify the accuracy.

Categorization Errors

- Examples
 - Stereotyping
 - Biases

How Positional Thinking Errors Reinforce Themselves



Logic/Reasonableness

- What is it?
- What determines if something is logical?
- Is logic ever wrong?



Logic/Reasonableness

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- There are as many different systems of logic as there are people on the earth. (The jury's out on extra-terrestrials)



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- Logic is nothing more than the rules YOU'VE made up for navigating within your constructed universe!
- There are as many different systems of logic as there are people on the earth. (The jury's out on extra-terrestrials)
- Logic is subjective like taste. Nothing is ever “illogical”; things are just “differently-logical”



What Does All of This Mean?

We need a new of thinking about thinking, and that way is

Non-Positional Thinking

Non-Positional Thinking: An Ideal to Strive For

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- Rises above the “position” to examine all positions

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It does this by:

- Questioning the underlying thinking, assumptions, and reasoning behind and issue...and related issues



Virtues of a Non-Positional Thinker



Virtues of a Non-Positional Thinker

Humility

Virtues of a Non-Positional Thinker

Humility

Curiosity



Virtues of a Non-Positional Thinker

Humility

Curiosity

Courage

Becoming a Non-Positional Thinker: Tips

ask...

- What do I think is so?
- What assumptions have I made?
- What if my assumptions were wrong?
- What could be alternative explanations?
- Is there anything that could persuade me that I am wrong?



Parting Thought...

It ain't what we don't know that gets us into trouble,
it's what we know for sure that just ain't so.

Will Rogers

Shrink-Wrapped in Our Own Thinking

Thinking That Transforms

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Questions/Comments/Feedback

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