

## Frame Size

Including all parts of the elephant sounds like a good idea in an *Ancient Wisdom* sort of way. It is also something everyone does from time to time. How can you go about doing it *better*?

The answer is frame size. Too small a frame cuts out whatever doesn't fit. An elephant frame, for example, precludes understanding other mammals. *What's that little knob where the trunk should be?* Too large a frame includes too many irrelevancies. A mammal frame, for example, allows elephants to eat steak.

To Cross Divides, expand the frame until all ideas fit—while keeping it small enough to maintain focus. For example, to resolve a conflict between *hot* and *cold*, expand the frame to *temperature*.

To put ideas into practice, shrink the frame as much as possible. Just don't shrink it too much.



## Elephant Story

*Crossing Divides*



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# Blind Men and the Elephant

## A Poem by John Godfrey Saxe

It was six men of Indostan  
To learning much inclined,  
Who went to see the Elephant  
(Though all of them were blind),  
That each by observation  
Might satisfy his mind.

The First approached the Elephant,  
And happening to fall  
Against his broad and sturdy side,  
At once began to bawl:  
“God bless me! but the Elephant  
Is very like a WALL!”

The Second, feeling of the tusk,  
Cried, “Ho, what have we here,  
So very round and smooth and sharp?  
To me ’tis mighty clear  
This wonder of an Elephant  
Is very like a SPEAR!”

The Third approached the animal,  
And happening to take  
The squirming trunk within his hands,  
Thus boldly up and spake:  
“I see,” quoth he, “the Elephant  
Is very like a SNAKE!”

The Fourth reached out an eager hand,  
And felt about the knee  
“What most this wondrous beast is like  
Is mighty plain,” quoth he:  
“’Tis clear enough the Elephant  
Is very like a TREE!”

The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,  
Said: “E’en the blindest man  
Can tell what this resembles most;  
Deny the fact who can,  
This marvel of an Elephant  
Is very like a FAN!”

The Sixth no sooner had begun  
About the beast to grope,  
Than seizing on the swinging tail  
That fell within his scope,  
“I see,” quoth he, “the Elephant  
Is very like a ROPE!”

And so these men of Indostan  
Disputed loud and long,  
Each in his own opinion  
Exceeding stiff and strong,

Though each was partly in the right,  
And all were in the wrong!

MORAL,  
So, oft in theologic wars  
The disputants, I ween,  
Rail on in utter ignorance  
Of what each other mean;  
And prate about an Elephant  
Not one of them has seen!

# A Story So Trite

If you’re going to spew *Ancient Wisdom*, couldn’t you at least choose a version that isn’t written in humorous verse? How about a version that is actually *ancient*? A version closer to the original?

Well, no. That’s the point. There isn’t a *right* way to tell a story. This version is well known, says what we need—and it’s amusing.

But why tell such an overused story at all? We know that *one* part of something is not *all* the parts. We know that the sum of parts adds up to a greater *whole*. Both ideas are very simplistic.

This is a perfectly reasonable point of view. The problem is that it excludes *other* points of view. Other points of view that might be worth considering.

Yeah, yeah. But not all points of view *are* worth considering. What if someone *pretends* to be describing part of an elephant, but is making it up? Or what if someone *believes* what she is saying, but is simply *wrong*? Or what if she isn’t wrong, but is touching elephant *food* rather than an actual elephant?

Good point. That’s another view. Keep it in mind. But don’t discount *other* views because of it.

Conflicting ideas aren’t good ideas conflicting with bad ideas. *All* ideas are good in their place.