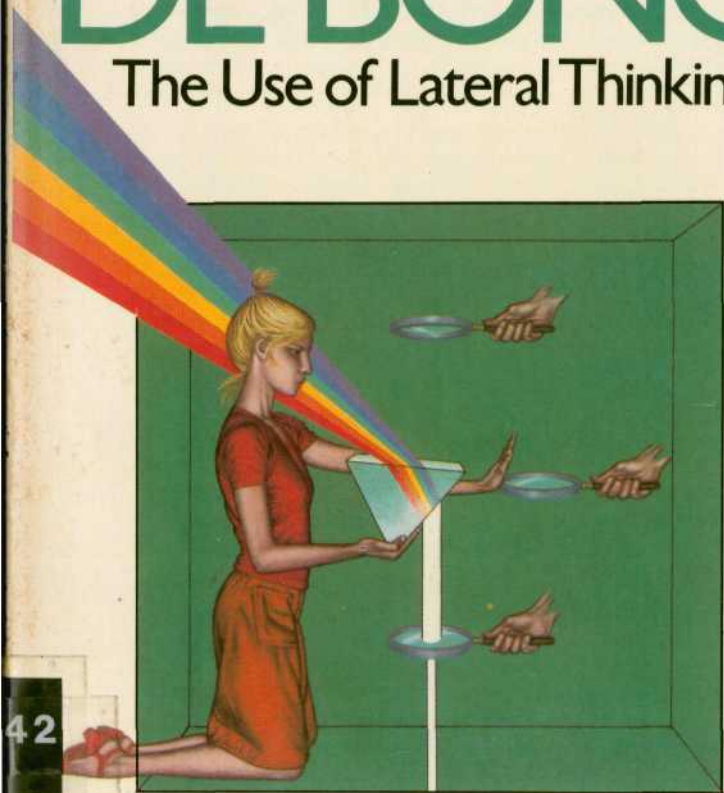


EDWARD DE BONO

The Use of Lateral Thinking



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Summary

It is possible to deal with a subject by carefully proceeding from one point to another. It is possible to describe a building by studying the architect's plans, starting first with one elevation and then going on to another, working one's way methodically over the details. But there is another way of getting to know a building, and that is to walk around it, looking at it from all sorts of different angles. Some of the views will overlap, but in the end a good general view of the building is obtained and it may turn out to be more real than that obtained by detailed study of the plans. In this book the lateral method has been used to describe the idea of lateral thinking. Instead of the neat niceties of analysis of the logical method, a succession of images and approaches has been tried in the hope that in the end a definite idea of the purpose and nature of lateral thinking may come about. A certain amount of overlapping, a certain amount of repetition, a certain amount of imprecision are inseparable from the process of bringing about an idea in this way. At this stage it may be useful to ink in a firm outline to that idea by summarizing the main point of each chapter :

Chapter 1. The difference between vertical thinking as high-probability, straight-ahead thinking, and lateral thinking as low-probability, sideways thinking.

- Chapter 2. The way ideas do not, unfortunately, come about through sheer vertical effort.
- Chapter 3. The polarizing effect of dominant ideas.
- Chapter 4. A visual exercise in thinking.
- Chapter 5. The deliberate search for the many different ways of looking at something.
- Chapter 6. The arrogance of vertical thinking that prevents the emergence of new ideas.
- Chapter 7. The use of chance by acknowledging its value, not interfering, encouraging chance processes, and harvesting the outcome.
- Chapter 8. Illustrations of the practical use of one aspect of lateral thinking.
- Chapter 9. The disadvantages of doing without lateral thinking.
- Chapter 10. The exploitation of lateral thinking and the use of new ideas.

Although these chapter summaries are an attempt to divide up the subject, the same three basic themes run through all the chapters, for they are the basic themes of lateral thinking:

1. The limitations of vertical thinking as a method of generating new ideas.
2. The use of lateral processes to generate new ideas.
3. The purpose of lateral thinking to produce new ideas that are simple, sound and effective.

The techniques must, inevitably, seem very artificial, for the natural way of the mind is the vertical way. Until lateral thinking becomes habitual it can be helpful to use these artificial channels quite deliberately in order to divert the flow of ideas from the natural high-probability paths.

To my mind the charm of lateral thinking is that it is an exciting search for the simplicity of a good idea and that it is

open to everyone, since it is not dependent on sheer intelligence.

The need for lateral thinking does not arise from the semantic antics of descriptive word-play, but is dictated by the functional organization of the brain which determines the pattern of thinking. These aspects will be discussed in a later work, for the first step is to examine the usefulness of lateral thinking and that is independent of its origins.

