

THE ART OF THE DEBATE

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It is possible that the loss of the Art of Debate has contributed to our difficulties more than any other factor. We need to relearn this and soon.

In today's political world, and in common use, the term has come to mean the presentation of two viewpoints with the intent of one being selected over the other. This is pretty close to the archaic definition, which includes arguments and contests.

I believe that debate needs to mean much more.

When we debate, especially as we debate issues, we should not be in a contest to determine which of our opinions is best. We should be engaged in a discourse in which the participants present their views and actually exchange ideas. I fear this does not happen. Watch local access television coverage of state or federal chambers of legislature and take note of how many people are even in the room when speeches are given on the floor. This is no debate. It is little more than getting an opinion in the record.

The common version of the Art of The Debate is being able to engage in these exchanges and convince your opponent that the position you espouse is better than the one he came in with. That will seldom happen. We must realize that just possibly the opponent has thought of something we have not.

Debate ought to be a process of exchange NOT to determine a winner, but to determine a *Wiser Course of Action*. The process of Debate should produce a better path to follow than either participant had held previously.

To do this, we need to speak eloquently, but we also need to listen, understand, and to adapt.

This is not compromise, but a true search for a better solution.

Debate to hone the wisdom of the action at hand, not to determine a winner.