**Modern Debate**

**Imagine that you have prepared yourself assiduously for a chess tournament. You checkmate your first opponent and say "checkmate!" And then your jaw drops to the table when you see them fold their arms, shake their head, and say "No it's not."**

**You repeat "Yes it is – checkmate!"**

**Then they pick up their king and move it across the board to safety. You protest "You can't do that!"**

**Once again, they fold their arms, look you in the eye, and say "Yes I can."**

**You show them the rulebook; you call a referee over who also tells them they can't do that; but with arms still folded, they say "Sorry, ain't buyin' it" and they refuse to concede.**

**As you move from table to table, checkmating opponent after opponent, you discover that none of them will concede defeat.**

**Your mind flashes back to the old Superman comics and the planet called "Bizarro World" where everything (including logic) is completely backwards; in other words ... insane.**

[**https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bizarro\_World**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bizarro_World)

**If you have engaged in religious and political debating then it is likely that you have already come to realize that a large number of people live in Bizarro World. It is a scary realization.**

**Many people argue by a different set of rules - facts, logic, reason, and truth are meaningless to such people. They live in an alternate universe where truth and reality are whatever ...**

**they need them to be.**

**And they draw strength from each other. That explains why "Holy Rollers" can flop around on the floor in church without feeling the least bit of embarrassment (but apparently, the Holy Ghost stops bothering them once they leave the church and go into the mall).**

**Most of these people are quite capable of rational thinking under normal circumstances, such as when they are working at their jobs. But when their beliefs are challenged, their prime directive becomes "Never admit you are wrong ... EVER."**

**So here's the dilemma: you've completely destroyed their argument with irrefutable facts. You've tried, and failed, to reason with them. Like the chess player earlier, they refuse to surrender. So what are you to do?**

**Quitting is not an option because the repercussions are simply unacceptable. Those people vote, and they take other actions that hurt countless numbers of innocent people based on their erroneous beliefs. So we have no choice but to continue our efforts to get those people to think rationally. We know that people can change. We just don't know which methods will work on which people, or how long it might take.**

**First, we must look at what is behind this epidemic of insanity where people will suffer any humiliation before they will admit they are wrong.**

**I had mistakenly assumed that the unwillingness to admit defeat was the result of an inflated ego because I was thinking in the vernacular. The key to understanding the mystery was to be found by researching the field of psychoanalysis (Yes, I know that psychoanalysis is considered “pseudoscience,” but it is considered pseudoscience because it is a theory that cannot be empirically tested. I am using it here only as a model to explain what I believe is going on in the mind).**

**EGO**

**1. Vernacular**

**a) The “I” or self of any person; self-esteem or self-image.**

**b) Conceit; self-importance.**

**2. Psychoanalysis**

**That part of the psyche which experiences and reacts to the outside world, and thus mediates between the primitive drives of the id (instincts), the demands of the super-ego (moral conscience), and the physical environment (reality).**

**The ego is that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world.**

**The farther back in time we go, the more animal-like humans were, and the more their desires and actions were driven by their ids. Over time, through parental and cultural training, and through education, human egos have learned to control the desires of the id in ways that improve behavior.**

**I have concluded that the inability to admit defeat when facing irrefutable evidence that one is wrong, originates from the primordial desire of the id to dominate and to not-be-dominated. We recognize that desire as "pride."**

**When the desires of the id are controlled properly by the ego, people are using mature ego defense mechanisms. When their ego fails to control the id, they are using either immature, neurotic, or pathological ego defense mechanisms.**

**The problem then, is not a conceited, overblown ego as I had assumed, but rather, a weak, poorly-developed ego that often fails to control the desires of the id.**

**When defeated in debate, many people will resort to defense mechanisms that protect their pride. The main ones are:**

**• denial**

**• rationalization**

**• projection**

**• compartmentalization**

**Freud's structural model of the psyche has been compared to having an angel on one shoulder (the super-ego) and a devil on the other (the id). To prevent anxiety, the brain (represented by the ego) lies between and must do its best to keep both happy.**

**In debate, the id wants to preserve self pride, while the super-ego has been taught to value honesty. When the ego yields to the super-ego, honesty wins. That means that accumulated lifetime experience and education have paid off, while the instinctual desire of the id has been suppressed. When the ego yields to the id, the honesty demanded by the super-ego is sacrificed to appease the id's desire to preserve its pride.**

**Now that the problem has been identified, how do we fix it?**

**If I knew the answer to that one ... we could all go home.**

[**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Id,\_ego\_and\_super-ego**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Id,_ego_and_super-ego)

[**http://changingminds.org/explanations/behaviors/coping/defense\_mechanisms.htm**](http://changingminds.org/explanations/behaviors/coping/defense_mechanisms.htm)

[**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defence\_mechanisms#The\_ego.27s\_use\_of\_defence\_mechanisms**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defence_mechanisms%23The_ego.27s_use_of_defence_mechanisms)