

Paradox

“A statement or proposition, seemingly self-contradictory or absurd, and yet explicable as expressing a truth.”

Paradox

A classic paradox is one that contains statements or propositions that alone are not problematic but taken together create a “strange loop” that cannot be resolved to our satisfaction, such as:

“The following sentence is true.”

“The preceding sentence is false.”

Paradox

“We stand in turmoil of contradictions without having the faintest idea how to handle them: Law/Freedom; Rich/Poor; Right/Left; Love/Hate - the list seems endless. Paradox lives and moves in this realm; it is the art of balancing opposites in such a way that they do not cancel each other out but shoot sparks of light across their points of polarity. It looks at our desperate either/ors and tells us they are really both/ands - that life is larger than any of our concepts and can, if we let it, embrace our contradictions.”

Colorado Rights Paradoxes

“Wildlife belongs to all the people.”

“The land belongs to me.”

“The land belongs to all the people.”

“The cattle belong to me.”

Paradoxical Splitting

When we experience both the contradictory, opposing forces and the connections between them, the simultaneous experience traps us in the circularity of paradox. Since the contradictions are usually more salient than the connections, our response is to sever the connections, thereby splitting the contradictory forces. Splitting thus frees us from the paradoxical experience but transforms paradox into conflict. We then endlessly debate the contradictions, without discovering the interconnected problem.

Restoring the Paradox

“We have a right to use all the trails!”

“We have a right to solitude!”

Restoring the Paradox

“How can we satisfy multiple-use recreational objectives on Vail Pass while respecting needs for solitude and a wilderness experience?”