

John Skrentny - The Blind Men and the Elephant

John Skrentny: [00:00:00] In a paper I wrote as an undergrad I made a reference to this old story that comes out of India originally. A bunch of blind men who encounter an elephant for the first time. One blindman touches the leg of an elephant and he thinks: "what is this? I'm touching a tree". Another blind man touches the tail of an elephant. He says, "well no, an elephant is like a rope".

John Skrentny: [00:00:21] And each one of them touches different parts of it and have a completely skewed and incorrect idea of what the whole elephant is like because they're only getting one part of it. Sociology I think when it's done well doesn't make those mistakes. When we're at our best we bring all that stuff together. So we don't make the mistake of the blind man touching the one part of the elephant and getting the big story completely wrong.