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**Sapere aude**

**Dare to be wise - or Enlightenment 2.0**

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"Have the courage to use your own mind," is how Immanuel Kant, born three hundred years ago, translated this Latin proverb from ancient Rome. Neither Kant nor the Roman philosophers had any idea how relevant this exhortation would be in our 21st century. We are inundated with information every day, much of it dubious, false and manipulative.

In his work "Critique of Pure Reason", Kant conducts a comprehensive investigation into how we gain knowledge, i.e. how we distinguish truth from falsity, and what the limits of our cognitive ability are. He identifies twelve categories, which he regards as fundamental principles that structure how we absorb information. The most important filters are substance, causality and modality, through which we rationally organize the diversity of information into correct knowledge.

In the Kantian sense, substance is that which is always present and cannot be

traced back to other things. While Kant sees this metaphysically, today we could perhaps understand it as basic general knowledge. Causality is what allows us to understand the world in the first place. Without a strict knowledge of cause and effect, it is impossible to interpret information meaningfully. Modality, on the other hand, refers to the way we think and make judgments. According to Kant, this includes three types. Firstly, we must ask ourselves whether something is conceivable at all, whether it is possible or not. Secondly, we must determine whether something actually exists or takes place. And thirdly, we should critically analyze whether something is necessarily true or whether we only wish it to be true.

Kant is one of the pioneers of the Enlightenment, which for him means the necessary renunciation of man's self-inflicted immaturity. According to Kant, immaturity is self-inflicted when there is a lack of courage and decisiveness rather than a lack of understanding. In Kant's day, such theses were an attack on mysticism, the authorities and the clergy.

This is precisely the reason why Kant's thinking is more relevant today than ever before. In our time, the propagators of conspiracy theories and misinformation in particular are those

who profit from the new immaturity of many people. We therefore need a new Enlightenment 2.0. If we follow Kant's fundamental principles, we must first and foremost significantly improve the education of all people if we want to sensibly counter the manipulation by deliberately misrepresented pseudo-facts. Raising the basic education of eight billion people is a mammoth task that cannot be successfully achieved in just a few generations. Nevertheless, we must tackle it because we are running out of time. The world's population is currently growing by 0.8 percent a year. Consequently, the education system must grow more strongly in order to avoid constantly lagging behind.

However, education is only the most important prerequisite for reason. This in no way guarantees that knowledge will be applied impartially in order to analyze and examine information. Let's generalize and call it intelligence, with which we have to filter information. The Latin "intellegere" literally means "to read between the lines", i.e. to recognize something. There is a huge lack of this. The intellectual application of knowledge also requires an ethic of reason. Ideally, people must be free from constraints and subservience. Kant derives his vision of the free citizen of the world from this demand, for whom particular interests, such as national egoism, no longer play a role.

Similarly, in his so-called North-South Report to the United Nations in the 1980s, Willy Brandt called for citizens in a world community, a global domestic policy, the "One World". Kant and Brandt see the vision of such a world citizenship as the only chance - in modern terms - to harmonize economy and ecology and thereby create world peace.

In our digital world, I see Kant's causality and modalities in the evaluation of information as algorithms of reason. This immediately brings me to artificial intelligence, which harbors great risks, but also new, often still unknown possibilities. How about a futuristic app that I can use to instantly assess the veracity of my information? The killer question is, of course, who formulates the universally valid algorithms? The most credible and neutral algorithms would have to be drawn up by a council of experts from the global citizenry. Theoretically, such an approach to artificial reason is conceivable, but its implementation is (still) science fiction.

No matter how, we need to find a solution to filter the massive influx of information we receive in a sensible way. In our digitally networked world, it is practically easy for anyone to disseminate unchecked information. If we don't find an adequate means of structuring the information, we will very soon end up in an information super disaster.

***The lack of judgment is actually what is called stupidity,  
and such an infirmity cannot be remedied.***

Immanuel Kant (1724 - 1804), footnote in Critique of Pure Reason, 2nd edition 1787

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