Persönliches PDF für Werner Schupp, Kundennummer 314125, Account-ID 809176, erstellt am 02.08.2025
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The true is the Bacchanalian revel

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Medicine, and thus orthodontics, is largely an empirical science in which we should apply the term "truth" in a precise manner. What is truth, and how can we define the term? Can we speak of truth in empirical science? How do we deal with error, which is always immanent? What can we know and how should we use error to constantly develop science based on our experience in order to get closer and closer to the truth?

Hegel[1] describes truth allegorically as a Bacchanalian revel: "The true is thus the Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk; yet because each member collapses as soon as he drops out, the revel is just as much transparent and simple repose". Several people are sitting at a table celebrating and drinking, and no one is not drunk. If someone passes out under the table, the next person comes and takes their place. The revel is the restless pressing of obligations that have been revealed as incompatible. Those we segregate are subjected to the transformation of experience and discarded in order to maintain rational self-regulation and simple calm. The celebration continues as the place of those commitments that drop out is immediately taken by others.[2] Truth as a process evolves as error is established and replaced by a new judgment.

Empirical judgments as a whole are de facto incomplete. Each one is in itself susceptible to the possibility of error. However, every single judgment could also be completely true and correct, even if we can never be sure that any one of them is so. The experience of error is equally a process of truth. Truth is not about getting something right once and for all, but rather about getting it more right at each stage.[2]

Every belief we have held and every judgment we have made has ultimately been proven wrong, at least in detail. From this, we can draw the conclusion that all beliefs and judgments we will ever have, and only could have, will ultimately prove to be flawed in an analogous manner, if only we subject them to sufficient critical scrutiny. Brandom[2] calls this "fallibilist meta-induction".

We should always bear in mind the possibility of fallibilism if we think that our present opinion is the perpetually correct one, as this always becomes problematic when the "opinion learns that it is meant differently than it meant".[1]

References

1. Hegel GWF. Phänomenologie des Geistes. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1986.
2. Brandom RB. Im Geiste des Vertrauens. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2021.