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### Topic II

Today, the truth is dispersed across many universes of discourse which can no longer be arranged in a hierarchy. However, in each of these discourses, we search tenaciously for insights that can convince all.

Jürgen Habermas

Some time ago, a man - dressed like a gold-digger - came running towards me, crying from the top of his lungs: "I found it! I found it!"

Trying to calm him, I asked: "What did you find?"

"The truth", he answered exhausted, "I found the one, the only truth..."

Although I must admit that, as you might already suspected, this incident never actually happened, it is nonetheless a handy way to approach a very complex problem and as a result of that problem a very difficult question: Does the one truth, which the gold-digger claimed to have found exist? Is there an insight, which, as Habermas stated, could convince all?

To me, the idea of one particular insight in a discourse, which would convince all persons, groups, or even cultures involved, is a very troubling and, more important, unrealistic concept, because it is based on the assumption that there actually is one answer, one truth, or one insight to each question to be found, or at least a compromise which would satisfy all parties involved.

But could, for example even only two people (which is most likely the smallest group), engaged in a discussion, be expected to end up with one statement, one opinion, or - as stated before - one compromise, which would convince both of them?

We find ourselves not only asking "How could they?", but as a result "Why should they?"

Is a compromise, even if it is a shabby one, always the goal we should try to achieve?

Far from it.

In the search for truths or insights in a, for example, philosophical discourse the aim to reach a compromise is not only a big hindrance to the discourse itself, but it also, probably unconsciously, causes a serious lack of variety and "substance" of the conversation, because it reduces the value of all views and ideas involved before the discussion even begins.

So, what should be the goal in all these discourses about the truth?

To answer that question, it is essential to answer another - fundamental - one first: "What is the truth really and how is it formed?"

Of course, the mere try to answer that question properly would require another essay, but just like the gold-digger, another picture could provide a sufficient answer for our cause here. From the day they are born, all humans try to define their place in the world, or more specifically, in the systems (like family, neighborhood, professional environment, etc..) they are a part of. Humans therefore create (influenced by culture, social background, education, etc..) a picture, or a map of the world and how it works, or should work, in their minds combined with a legend to read that map to provide them with the orientation they are looking for.

This "map", which includes our views, opinions and values, form our truth, which is the way we see world and also a set of instructions on how to react to this world and its inhabitants.

This image is very helpful in discovering that there is more than one truth, just because there is more than one map for every human on the planet. Every human has his/her own map, which is constantly developing and changing based on the experiences humans make every minute. What we come to realize is the mere impossibility that two people on earth share the same map.

Is it therefore likely to find a way (i.e. an insight) that would find its place on both maps (of the two people engaged in a discussion)? Not at all.

We must realize that this "way" could not just be drawn on all maps involved without affecting other parts of the map as well, which are very likely to be important parts the map's owner is not willing to abolish.

That means, to leave the picture's sphere again, that no compromise works without more or less radical incisions on both sides.

Why should the compromise be then the desirable goal to look for, if it is that unsatisfying?

That is the point. It is not.

The first and foremost goal in a discussion must not be to agree on one shared insight but to agree on differences between our insights. That might sound rather troubling, but it is the only way to create a basis for a desirable discourse, which moves beyond mere tolerance, which is likely to turn into a "false friend", when it is reduced to just the acceptance of the existence of another map, or like J.W.Goethe put it: "Tolerance has to be a temporary view (...) to tolerate means to insult."

Therefore the goal should not only form a basis made of tolerance, but made of respect for the other "maps" we are facing in a discourse. This simple presupposition enables us to evaluate the map without obligations to find a shared view, to question it and even include parts of it into our own map, if we feel like those parts would enrich our views.

The one insight (of this particular discourse) is getting clearer and clearer: The one truth in a discourse does not exist, because there are as many truths as there are participants, which, when combined, examined and shared enrich all people involved, much more than the lowest common denominator of their views.

So the goal is not to find the one truth, but to find as many as there are. Those, who are looking for the truth are no gold-diggers, but collectors who seek to not only see the whole world with their own eyes, but with many others as well.

After thinking about it for a while, I said to the gold-digger: "You found the truth? Great, let me see it, do you want to have a look at mine?"

The gold-digger smiled a knowing smile