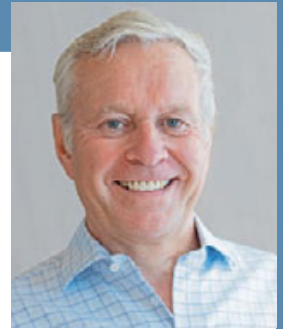


How much consensus do we need, and how much consensus do we have in aligner orthodontics?



Werner Schupp

“What can I know?” was one of the main questions posed by Kant, along with “What should I do?” and “What may I hope?”, and later “What is man?”, which he discussed in the book “Critique of Pure Reason”. Here, the term “critique” does not have negative connotations, but rather refers to a close examination of the human cognitive faculties.

Such an approach should always be applied in science, which rules out unconditional approval as well as unchecked rejection. This does not resolve the dilemma of the subjectivity of knowledge; all knowledge remains liable to subjectivity, which we must not ignore. We all have a subjective opinion and we cannot cast it out like an annoyance. Subjectivity plays a role in every lecture and every publication, and not solely in those that are sponsored by the industry and are therefore subjective per se. This conflict of interest must be mentioned in every lecture and every publication so that the listener and reader can form an opinion on it.

The diversity of subjective opinions is inherent to the system and in some ways necessary. It develops a subject area further; however, it should only be recognised and discussed. We learn about opinions and studies because there are scientific congresses and journals that enable us to examine them; however, it is impossible for any of us to fully absorb the multitude of opinions that exist in aligner orthodontics. We can form an opinion, but the question is to what extent this opinion can be considered the general consensus. Even in such a small speciality as aligner ortho-

odontics, hardly anyone deals with the entire field; rather, individuals work in the area that is relevant and interesting to them.

I believe it is necessary that we reach a common consensus, but how can we achieve this? Consensus means that truth can be defined as an agreement of opinions. This entails an agreement of statements not only with previously accepted statements, but also with the view of a subject matter that is generally accepted by scientists.¹ According to Habermas², communication primarily serves the purpose of reaching a consensus, and this consensus can be achieved through argumentation. We can only find a generally accepted view on the status of aligner orthodontics through joint communication. This allows us to review and critique statements, i.e., to assess them. In this way, consensus can be achieved through argumentation.

To this end, it is imperative that colleagues who deal with aligner orthodontics from different perspectives come together in person, perhaps at a congress or in a virtual space. I find it exciting to see what arguments are raised, what new things we learn and how we link this with what we know, and what we conclude from this. Whether a universally valid consensus can be reached remains to be seen, but it would be nice. A consensus paper would have an impact on orthodontics in particular and on dentistry in general, and also on politics and acceptance in society.

So, what can we in aligner orthodontics know? We should be able to compile this knowledge. We can only



achieve this together, through joint communication. My promise is that I will work on making such a meeting possible. Let's see if this can be realised. I look forward to hearing your ideas on this; send them to me directly or to the publisher, and I will be happy to report on them in forthcoming issues of the JAO.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Werner Schupp".

References

1. Prechtel P, Burkhard FP. Metzler Lexikon Philosophie: Begriffe und Definitionen. Heidelberg, Berlin: J.B. Metzler, 2008.
2. Habermas J. The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society. Washington DC: Bacon Press, 1985.