

The second brain

When I embarked on an art career about thirty years ago, the environment I worked in was still one of sheet metal and screws. I came from a world in which things had to work, where solutions had a concrete purpose and mistakes were avoided as much as possible. And yet there was already something in the back of my mind. A certain non-conformity, perhaps, that led me to think outside the box. At that time, I didn't know that this view in particular could one day become more important to me than much of what I already knew.

In my first creativity course for my employees, it was still specifically about the sheet metal and the screws. To finish, I used a sentence from Picasso:

"I don't seek, I find." A contradiction? Apparently.

Because consciously or unconsciously, we are constantly searching. In the chaotic office for the car key. On the Internet for a recipe for potato soup. For a solution to a technical problem. Or for an explanation for something that eludes our previous experience. I cannot think of art in any other way than as a permanent search process. A process in which failure is not necessarily the opposite of success, but sometimes its prerequisite.

In addition to all the methods and techniques for solving a wide variety of problems and in addition to AI, which is now believed to be rapid and occasionally fetishistic, there is something that cannot be easily transformed into a method: intuition.

A problem-solving technique for lazy people? Maybe.

Or perhaps it means taking seriously a skill that we have forgotten.

In business, too, important decisions were and are not made solely on the basis of figures, facts and calculations. Experience, feeling and intuition play a role – sometimes a decisive one.

During the above mentioned creativity training courses at the time, I came across the concept of implicit knowledge, also known as "tacit knowledge". At that time, I took note of it rather casually, without thinking about its actual implications. Today it seems much more interesting to me.

Tacit knowledge is a knowledge that we possess and use without being able to fully explain it. We know something without being able to say exactly how we know it. We recognize something without being able to describe the path to this knowledge step by step.

A knowledge that we don't know about ourselves.

The philosopher and theorist of science Michael Polanyi has described this phenomenon in detail. He points out that especially in scientific work, an essential part of the cognitive process is not completely absorbed in rules and

formulas: a problem is recognized, approached and guided by an inner sense of orientation.

I would replace the word **scientist** in this description with the word **artist** without any hesitation. And then, when this article was almost finished, I came across a thought in the works of Aristotle. That was something of a surprise to me. Aristotle distinguishes between *epistēmē*, knowledge in the narrower sense, and *téchne*, art or skill. So he does not simply equate the two. But he treats them as different forms of rational cognition. Particularly interesting is his description of *the téchne*: it is aimed at producing something – at something that could also be novel.

This comes surprisingly close to the artistic process. The artist decides – and sometimes only knows why afterwards. And sometimes not at all.

Perhaps this is exactly where the path leads us to the title of this text.

The second brain.

It's nice to know that we have a friend who can help us in many situations. A friend we can trust if we give him some air and time. Above all, however, we must not overwhelm him with our knowledge.

Because knowledge has a strange property: it directs our gaze to what is already known. It shows us what has worked, what has been proven and what we have learned from the past.

Those who focus exclusively on existing knowledge therefore run the risk of remaining trapped in the boundaries of the known. You may make fewer mistakes. But you don't take a step forward either.

The second brain, on the other hand, seems to be doing something else. It connects experiences, impressions, feelings and knowledge with each other without asking us for permission every time. It works in the background. It searches for connections, while our consciousness still believes that it is not looking at all.

In this sense, Picasso's famous sentence could also take on a different meaning:

"I don't seek, I find." Perhaps Picasso simply left the searching to his second brain.

And finally, a sentence, this time from a scientist:

"Imagination is more important than knowledge, because knowledge is limited."

Albert Einstein

It's worth thinking about.

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