

merzWissenschaft | medien + erziehung call for papers 2021

Weasel Attitudes – Or: On the Nature of (Medial) Creativity

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The weasel is said to be able to suck out the entire contents of an egg without leaving a single visible trace on the empty shell. This peculiar ability brings to mind a phenomenon encountered in some forms of human activity. Weasel words pose more questions than they provide answers to. "Creativity" is a weasel word, one whose ubiquitous use is as casual as it is programmatic. One reason for this is certainly its positive connotation: A creative person is capable of performing well, someone who promotes creativity is working on behalf of something good. Creativity techniques expand the awareness of possibilities and mental freedom. Creative approaches help solve problems, generate ideas and develop visions. Free Creativity is the "driving power in times of crisis" (Muntschick 2020 [translation adapted]). It is thus no surprise that creativity is also ubiquitous in the context of media education and is anchored firmly in relevant media literacy definitions. The invocation of the creative subject has an emancipatory component. In creative acts the subject successfully achieves distance from central societal images and participates in deliberative processes with authentic expectations.

The current Maker movement put wind in the sails of those relying on the concept of creativity. Laser cutting machines and 3D printers inspire new forms of creative encounter and media-esthetic configuration. FabLabs and HackerSpaces provide new atmospheres for creative processes. Veni creator spiritus! On closer examination this anthem of creativity is based on several contradictions and ambivalences. Can Artificial Intelligence be creative? And what is the value of the creative, since it is subjected to capitalist compulsions? What values and added value does the creative subject bring forth?

If we ask what is specifically meant by the term creativity, we encounter confusion. An abundance of definitions characterizes the heterogeneous overall image of the term. The legacy of theories, for example those of Graham Wallas (*The Art of Thought*, 1926), may still inhere in the basic nuances of many creativity models (e. g. the distinction of various creative stages). But a wide variety of disciplines which see worthwhile substance in creativity for their respective fields results in an impenetrable thicket. The hodgepodge is intensified by popular-scientific usage which claims the glory of the term for itself, admittedly without providing an adequate basis for doing so.

In contrast to processes which whenever possible pursue a previously known objective along a linear path, creative processes cannot withdraw into the simple execution of a predefined or derivable plan. Much more it is absolutely prerequisite to generate something previously unknown in the mutual interaction of phases in which ideas freely unfold and phases of concrete realization. The central objective of creative processes is ultimately to develop something new, regardless of the nature of that novelty. The significance of originality is enough to give creative action a relevance exceeding a personal sense of purpose and the compensatory, which subjects the processes of esthetic education to political and structural demands. Creativity as a sensible and in some aspects crucial element in the use of media is not only relevant in the field of education in the broadest sense. Creative approaches are also obligatory in fields such as computer programming and in the development of applications.

In the current special issue of *merzWissenschaft* we would like on the one hand to discuss the subject of creativity in terms of its various theoretical relationships and reflective outlooks and on the other hand to provide impulses for scientific and practical educational work. The following focus areas and questions are for example conceivable:

Creativity and its theoretical-discursive constitution

- How is creativity understood in (media-)educational discourse?
- What positions, cognitive interests and research questions determine the shape of the current debate on the concept of creativity?
- Which analyses of the links between central societal images and creativity are essential to critical reflection on (media-)educational objectives and work methods?
- To what extent is creativity a normative term, what is the normative justification for this term and what are the associated consequences?
- What significance does creativity still enjoy as a central concept of art critique?

Creativity and media behavior

- What relationships between creativity and various media are to be observed? What is the specific significance of digital media in this context?
- What prerequisites do media generate for creative action? And to what extent do these prerequisites at the same time limit creative action?
- What is the significance of digital media which preclude options for their own deployment (as is the case in computer games) or which react adaptively to user behavior?
- How do creative processes (using media) become visible? What esthetics are manifested? How can observers participate?

Creativity and conditions for educational enablement

- What structural and temporal factors place conditions on and favor creative processes?
- How can creative processes emerge in a media landscape which already offers a surfeit of information and images?
- To what extent does a media landscape support or impede the creation of new ideas?
- How can creative approaches be made fertile, even as early as in the development of media products?
- What creativity-related perspectives are conceivable in contexts relating to personal development, societal-democratic and even economic-ecological aspects?
- What role does creativity play in the context of societal constellations of recognition?
- To what extent are alternatives to the creative imperative conceivable? To what extent can the original intention of art critique be mobilized to articulate and therefore undermine social grievances and political power structures, based on creative artifacts?

Note: There is no requirement to espouse and/or give scientific preference to a specific concept of creativity. Contributions are to explicitly explain their reference to a creativity concept formulated in the context of the investigation/presentation.

merzWissenschaft provides a forum advancing scientific analysis in media education and promoting progress in the theoretical foundation of the discipline. For this purpose qualified articles are called for from various relevant disciplines (including media-educational, communications sciences, media sciences, (developmental) psychological, legal fields and philosophical perspectives in the history of a given field), also with an interdisciplinary approach, for the continuing development of expert media-educational dialog. Of interest are original papers with an empirical or theoretical foundation, presenting new findings, aspects or approaches to the topic and which are explicitly related to one of the topic areas or questions outlined above, or which explore a separate topic within the scope of the overall context of the Call.

Abstracts with a maximum length of 800 words can be submitted to the *merz*-editorial team (merz@jff.de) until February 22, 2021. Submissions should follow the *merzWissenschaft* layout specifications, available at <https://www.merz-zeitschrift.de/manuskriptrichtlinien/>. The length of the articles should not exceed a maximum of approximately 7,000 words. Please feel free to contact Susanne Eggert, tel.: +49.89.68989.152, e-mail: susanne.eggert@jff.de

Summary of deadlines

- **Extended Deadline: March 8, 2021:** Submission of abstracts to merz@jff.de
- March 12, 2021: Final decision on acceptance/rejection of the abstracts
- June 14, 2021: Submission of papers
- June 15 to July 19, 2021: Assessment phase (double-blind peer review)
- August/September 2021: Revision phase (with multiple cycles, when appropriate)