Creativity in the corporeal, hermeneutic and analytical domains

Christian Julmi

Christian studied industrial engineering with a focus on economic interaction and decision models as well as finance and accounting at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology. From April 2011 to May 2015 he was research associate at the Chair of Business Administration, in particular Organization and Planning, at the University of Hagen, where he completed his doctorate on "Atmospheres in Organizations". Since June 2015 he is Academic Council at the Chair.

Creativity as a domain-specific ability

The question whether someone is creative or not is quite important in daily life. People often admire other people for being creative, or they refer to themselves as being creative in social networks, CV's or job interviews. So, being creative is apparently something that we believe is a good thing. However, the ability to be creative is far from being a universal yes or no question. It is now widely accepted in creativity research that creativity is domain-specific[1-4], meaning that the question of whether someone is creative has to be connected to whether someone is creative in a specific environment or domain such as poetry, music, science or math. Of course, this does not exclude the possibility that people can be creative in several different fields of practice, but this reflects an exception rather than a rule. One reason for this is that being creative in a domain or field of practice requires a lot of experience, practice and training. According to the so-called *ten year rule*, even the most gifted individuals require about 10,000 hours of practice and training before they are able to create significant works. Another reason is that the skills, aptitudes, traits, propensities and motivations that underlie a creative performance fundamentally differ between domains. Being gifted in the mathematical domain, for example, does not imply that the same person also possesses talent in the domain of visual arts.

What do I mean by domain?

There are numerous approaches to the definition and characterization of domains. For example, we might think of the knowledge domains of different fields of professional practice like engineering, medicine, law or accountancy or the disciplinary fields of practice like history, geography or biology. We can also think of domains as distinct areas of ability and mental processing. For example, Gardner[5] differentiates between eight domains of intelligence: musical, bodily-kinesthetic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, logical-mathematical and naturalistic intelligence. However, such lists of domains may be extended or changed over time. In our research, we follow the phenomenological approach of German philosopher Schmitz[6] to explicate a structure of domains that reflects basal characteristics of human subjective experience. This structure consists of three basal intelligences: corporeal, hermeneutic and analytical intelligence.

Corporeal intelligence is the ability to deal with situations holistically without explicating individual significances or states of affairs. An example of corporeal intelligence is the driver who has to recognize and evaluate the danger of an imminent accident at a glance and to react to the circumstances (asphalt, rain, trees, cars, speed) without recognizing them individually.

In contrast, hermeneutic and analytical intelligence operate with individual significances. *Hermeneutic intelligence* explicates individual significances from situations without destroying the wholeness of situations. There are two types of hermeneutic intelligence: the adaptation to situations and the arrangement of situations. Adapting to situations is characterized by the cadence that respects situations in their wholeness. This type of hermeneutic intelligence is important in generally dealing with people, for example in politics or the family. It makes it possible to grasp which acts and words are suitable in a particular situation, or where the limits of what is achievable lie. The arrangement of situations is best reflected in poetry, which is understood as the skillful economy of speech. In poetry, individual states of affairs are retrieved to carefully form the internally diffuse meaningfulness of a situation in a manner that respects the wholeness of the situation. With *analytical intelligence*, individual significances are explicated and combined from situations as valid facts. Accordingly, analytical intelligence is the ability to extract individual significances from situations (explication) and to link them (combination). Whereas hermeneutic thought is bound to the situation, analytical thought is emancipated from the situation. Such emancipation from subjectivity and the wholeness of situations opens up possibilities of manipulation, but is exposed to the danger of the loss of subjective meaningfulness.

For creativity, intelligence is a necessary but not a sufficient precondition. An intelligent performance gets creative only when something is understood and can be processed as a whole. Only if we have the feeling of penetrating something as a whole we can deal with it as if we had found the decisive word, as if we had somehow discovered the secret and could make what it was about as a whole visible. An insight of this type is an essential component of the creative process. The following section specifies characteristics of corporeal, hermeneutic, and analytical creativity in more detail.

Corporeal, hermeneutic and analytical creativity

Corporeal creativity is integral to art (i.e., music, architecture, painting, graphics, sculpture, and dance), because it is the aim of any art to embody something that can be sensed with one's own felt body. The artist's felt corporeality guides and inspires (corporeal) creativity. Art is essentially the result of an encounter of corporeal feeling with atmospheres, which are spatially poured-out emotions in the domain of what is experienced as present.

Corporeal creativity: Artist David Hockney painting a landscape in the landscape and the atmosphere of the landscape

The quality of an artwork acquires its specific character from the artist's specific condition that he feels in his own felt body, and not from an intellectual act represented in an idea. Of course, an artist can be guided by such an idea, but this does not lend the work of art its artistic quality. Corporeal creativity consists of transferring a stimulus felt in one's own felt body into the objective form that can be sensed as a holistic atmosphere. This stimulus can have its origin in the felt-body itself (which is often the case in modern arts) or in an atmosphere that intervenes in the artist's corporeal feeling via suggestions of motion and synesthetic characters. Suggestions of motion depict the suggestion of a motion that can be felt on the own felt body (e.g., a glare, the branches of a weeping willow or an eye-stinging smell). Synesthetic characters are qualities of perception that go beyond that allocation to individual genres of perception (e.g., colors, temperatures, noise or light). A color is perceived as bright or dark (light), as cold or warm (temperature). Sounds can be heavy, dense or hard (mass). In general, it is the task of art to present atmospheres, and the ability of the artist is his corporeal creativity.

Hermeneutic creativity is possible in two forms: *adapting to* and *arranging* situations. Creativity in adapting to situations is revealed in the ability to grasp a situation in its entirety and to adapt to it. For example, hermeneutic creativity as adapting to situations permits skillful dealing in a negotiation situation, if the negotiator knows exactly when the right time has come to put forward demands, when it is better to concede or when the situation changes.

Arranging situations in poetry essentially relies on the sparing arrangements of words. In poetry, saying less is saying more. In Goethe's lines "Above all summits/Is rest", it is exactly the sparing word *is* that lets the meaningfulness of the situation shine through and makes it become alive. Such a hermeneutic sparingness is also present in Japanese haiku, but can also be found in epic and dramatic poetry. Whereas the artist presents atmospheres, poetry presents situations; by careful explication they are made accessible in their entirety. As situations are permeated by atmospheres, atmospheres do also play an important role in hermeneutic creativity (but not vice versa). Accordingly, works of art can be integrated well atmospherically into existing situations, for example when a piece of music is used to accompany a situation shown in a film.

Analytical creativity refers to seeing through the entirety of a situation so that the situation is reduced to its essence, and to combining the reduced individual significances so skillfully with one another into constellations that the situation can be brought under control. Analytical creativity enables objective correlations to be gained from subjective situations. Whereas subjective situations possess a living character through their wholeness, objective constellations (of individual significances) lack a holistic character and are thus lifeless (e.g., the constellations represented in Euclidian geometry). In principle, there are numerous ways for reducing and combining individual significances from situations, so that it is possible that the significances that are reduced independently of each other from different points of view are contradictory (e.g. Euclidian and non-Euclidian geometry). A mathematician is analytically creative, for example, when he finds a new constellation of axioms that have a significant impact within mathematics.

Implications for practice

In sum, corporeal creativity deals with atmospheres, hermeneutic creativity with situations, and analytical creativity with constellations. In this sense, creativity is domain-specific and three domains have to be differentiated on the uppermost level: corporeal, hermeneutic, and analytical creativity. These three domains characterized by a fundamental difference between creative processes and underlying abilities. Starting from this, and in descending hierarchical order, further subdomains can be differentiated (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Domains of creativity
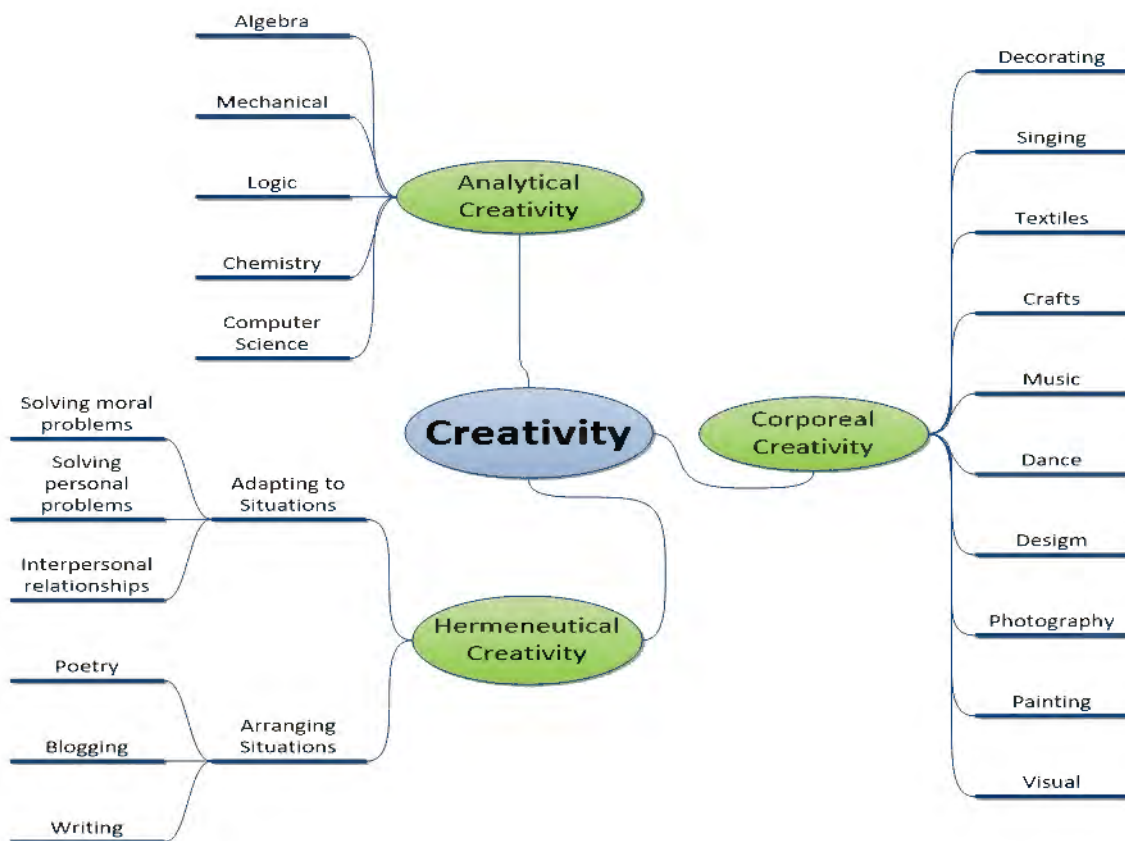
With regard to persons, one can speak of corporeal, hermeneutic, and analytical abilities but this model of creativity does neither imply that someone who is corporeally creative cannot be analytically creative as well, nor that someone who is corporeally creative in one domain (e.g., music) is automatically also creative in other domains of corporeal creativity (e.g. painting).

Creativity in any domain still needs a lot of experience, practice and training, regardless of whether someone is creative in a corporeal, hermeneutic, or analytical domain. Besides talent, nurturing creativity means doing hard work in the first place. If someone wants to improve his or her creativity as a painter, one has to paint, just as a writer has to practise writing and an algebraist needs to study algebra. However, creativity practice and training does not lead to an increase in creativity across domains. Nurturing creativity is different in different domains.[2]

Apart from that, some differences can be made between practice and training in corporeal, hermeneutic and analytical domains. Being creative in a *corporeal domain* is inextricably linked to one's subjective felt body and sense of atmospheres. Corporeal creativity is about emotionality in the first place and requires an increase and cultivation of one's sensitivity and use of senses. Due to its subjective nature, corporeal techniques (such as yoga) or body psychotherapy may help to overcome corporeal blocks and routines that may hinder a free flow of creativity.

Being creative in a *hermeneutic domain* is essentially based on an intuitive and holistic understanding of personal and interpersonal dynamics and may be improved by making different experiences. Personal involvement seems to be especially suited for developing such an understanding, although reading classical literature can also lead to a deeper understanding of human nature. Whereas corporeal creativity is essentially based on one's own subjectivity and corporeal feelings, hermeneutic creativity needs a deeper understanding of social reality.

Analytical creativity, in contrast, is impersonal and is best improved through the extensive study of domain-related explicit knowledge. For *analytical domains*, Wallas'[7] classical four stage model of creativity can be used as a helpful heuristic to increase creativity. According to this model, the creative process consists of four stages—preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. In the first stage, one has to extensively study the relevant systems of constellations within the domain of interest. Then, in the incubation stage, distraction is needed in order to get some distance from the acquired constellations. While the mind is wandering, the connections within the constellations loosen slightly and can then be rearranged—a process that largely operates unconsciously. In case of success, a sound and coherent rearrangement emerges which then passes the threshold of consciousness in the incubation stage (also known as the "eureka" moment). In the concluding verification stage, the value of the outcome has to be assessed.

Understanding the fundamental difference between the three domains of creativity presented here can help to customize creativity training. However, such an understanding is not a substitute for intensive practice and training in the domain of interest. In fact, the most important ingredient in improving one's creativity is and will remain self-discipline.

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