



Aesthetic Practice as Critique: The Suspension of Judgment and the Invention of New Possibilities of Perception, Thinking, and Action

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Critique is a dynamic project that does not control its own dynamics, but, as Michel Foucault (1992) says, is incessantly forming and re-emerging. This is intuitively meaningful insofar as critique embedded in its social framework also changes with the dynamics of social transformation, and as such must be described again and again in new theoretical terms. Referring to an agreed-upon condition of many scholars today, that the computational power digitally networked media has fundamentally transformed all aspects of this very world, I investigate and question not only possible sites of critique, but also of the concept of critique as such. I do not proclaim a crisis of critique, but rather ask, how and what critique in (post) digital media culture might be, to then look at specific settings of critique and critical practices. Against this background, I am concerned in

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this text, from an educational–theoretical perspective, with a first attempt to conceptualize aesthetic practice as a critical practice.

This attempt is framed and motivated by recent research on current forms of aesthetic practices. They are closely related to the research focus *Post-Internet Arts Education* at the University of Cologne, on which I have been working together with my colleagues since the end of 2016.¹ Under the term *post-internet art*, art criticism brings together artists and works of art that deal with the attitude toward life, communication, and aesthetics in times of the Internet. The “*post*” does *not* refer to art *beyond* the Internet, but rather to artistic works and artists who deal very naturally with networked digital media, their aesthetics, the corresponding symbolic forms, and the changed conditions of production, distribution and reception. The digital data (images, text, sounds, etc.), the symbolic codes, and the ways of representation of the Internet, in particular of the social media, of popular culture and advertising serve as an inexhaustible fundus for their artistic works. In addition, these artists use various social media as platforms for their self-representation, for communication and collaboration as well as for the dissemination and discussion of their works.

When reading reviews on *post-internet artists*, one repeatedly encounters statements that often attest the artists and their works an affirmative attitude toward social reality and at the same time deny a critical attitude (Arns, 2014; Droitcour, 2014; Richter, 2014) which may well apply to some works and artists (Heiser, 2015), but certainly not to everyone. The dichotomous logic of these statements follows a philosophical concept of critique as it was developed in the Era of Enlightenment and which strongly distinguishes itself from affirmation, excludes it and instead operates with negation and autonomous self-reflection.

The assumption of an affirmative and uncritical relationship of contemporary, especially post-internet artists to reality interests me from an educational–theoretical perspective as a symptom of a shift and transformation of subject forms and processes of subjectivation in digital media culture. My leading thesis here is that the concept of critique, which has been brought to the fore in professional art discourse, is still a remnant of a classical understanding of education (in the sense of the German concept *Bildung*), which, however, is no longer sufficient for the description and interpretation of contemporary aesthetic critical practices and related processes of subjectivation.

This thesis can be supported in relation to educational theories, which understand learning and *Bildung* as transformative processes. In these theories *Bildung* is neither an output of the educational system nor a determined result of learning processes, but an open and unfinished transformative process of individual views of the world and the self. These positions of educational theory (*Bildungstheorie*) conceptualize transformative processes from the perspective of enabling successful subjectivation. Therefore, these transformative processes are related to self-empowering, emancipative practices. Their fundamental assumption is that social and media-cultural transformation dynamics also change individual educational processes that take place in social, media-cultural milieus (Jörissen & Marotzki, 2009; Koller, 2012; Koller et al., 2007). This assumption was last updated from Jörissen and Meyer (2015); they heighten it when they write: “Changed mediality leads to changed subjectivity” (p. 7). From this perspective, digitalization is a process that intervenes deeply in social relations and, as it were, in the world—and self-relations of people by changing subject configurations, identity, memory practices, social configurations, ways and means of communication as well as critical references to culture.

If processes of subjectivation, including their sociocultural conditions, change, so do the conditions for the theoretical concepts that try to describe such processes. According to that assumption, I am focusing in my current research on the concept of media critique. Since Immanuel Kant’s conception of education (as a project of enlightenment), the concept of critique has been a central element of many of the following educational theories and also of more recent literacy theories. Regardless of its numerous philosophical problematizations (Schäfer, 2004), critique or media critique is also a fundamental—albeit sometimes only implicitly negotiated—component in present theories of media education (Groeben & Hurrelmann, 2002; Jörissen & Marotzki, 2009). Following the traditional concept of critique, many existing theories of art or media education and media literacy conceive media critique as a distanced approach to media that aims to decode and understand its representation and communication processes. However, this concept of critique must be questioned in the light of contemporary artistic practices as well as pop-cultural practices, which aim in particular at nearness, immersion, networking, cooperation and collaboration, and no longer at distancing and individual cognitive understanding (Gerlitz, 2017). In what follows, I explore the changed conditions of subjectification and critical practice

in the contemporary media culture with Michel Foucault's concepts of critique and of *apparatus*, as it is used and further developed by Jens Badura (2011) in his concept of *aesthetic apparatuses*.

CRITIQUE AS THE PRACTICE OF ANALYZING LIMITATIONS OF PERCEPTION AND THOUGHT AND THE POSSIBILITY OF TRANSGRESSING THEM

Michel Foucault describes critique in his lecture, *What is Critique?* (1992), as a practice that leaves behind the dichotomy of affirmative and critical references to social reality. For Foucault, critique leads to an art or a technique that also underlies it: “[T]he art of not being governed in such a way” (p. 12). But what practice constitutes this *art* of critique? Against the everyday use of the term, Foucault conceives critique initially as a practice that, instead of criticizing or condemning reality in familiar forms, suspends judgment. Judith Butler (2002) emphasizes in her reading of Foucault that critique goes beyond suspending judgment, and that it is precisely in this suspension of judgment that critique does not return to judgment but opens up a new practice—and thus first and foremost other possibilities of perception and thought (and later also possibilities of action). One result of this may be that dominant discursive orders of judgment themselves become addressable. In other words, a critical practice in relation to technologically, politically, culturally regulated and normalized modes of knowledge can only succeed under conditions that are deeply embedded in, and intertwined with, these modes of knowledge—i.e., also affirmative in parts—and at the same time pursues the goal of going beyond them. Critique therefore seeks to question certainties and orders to which it itself must refer in this act.

Moreover, in his lecture Foucault (1992) distinguishes the concept of critique from the project of Enlightenment; connected with this is the turning away from Kant's purely epistemological critical project. For the problem with Kant's position (and as a result of many scientific understandings of criticism) lies in the fact that it burdens the critical enterprise with the recognition of cognition as a preliminary task. So, if Kant is concerned with critique as a recognition of cognition, and above all as a recognition of the limits of cognition, Foucault wants the critical attitude to be understood as a transgression of precisely these limits. For

Foucault, critical stance is accordingly a border stance that brings together precise historical analyzes of the respective socially set borders with the constant test of their transgression or subversion. Thus, in the midst of the given, powerful sociocultural, political, economic, technical, and media technological conditions, a minimal space of freedom is opened up, which Foucault (2005) understands as a concrete possibility for the transformation of the conditions.

In this perspective, power relations become a field of possibilities, apparent necessities are transformed into a field of reversibility and potentiality. To put it bluntly: Foucault describes on the one hand that one can never act outside rules, regulations, or other power relations while performing critique, but on the other hand, he emphasizes that it is a matter of playing with these rules (even if one has not yet fully recognized and understood them in the Kantian sense), i.e., also subverting, modifying, or transforming them. Foucault is therefore interested not only in elements and rules that constitute the social game of subjectivations and their regularity, but above all in how these rules can be changed.

Critical practice outlined here with Foucault is thus always a media practice, a practice mediated in many ways. It is structurally similar to what I understand by aesthetic practice: a practice that is characterized by devotion to things and, as it were, by sensitization at all levels of experience, i.e., perception, feeling and thinking, and ultimately also by resistance. In an aesthetic experience, our perception and thinking are no longer solely focused on how we judge a situation. We resist an economic logic and evaluate an event, a situation not according to what goals and purposes we pursue in it, what benefits we derive from it, or what we can achieve by acting in this situation, but rather pay attention to perceptions, sensations, thoughts, and imaginations, which in everyday contexts are mostly excluded from perception by the aforementioned reduction mechanisms. Aesthetic practices are thus inseparable and linked to perception in a very specific sense. The specificity of the coupling consists in a practicing, reflexive, and ultimately differentiating reference to one's own and others' modes of perception *in, with* and *through* the various aesthetic practices. They refer to perception *as* perception, examine it in terms of its nature and its becoming, in terms of what they are capable of compared to other forms of hearing and understanding, and how they help shape our world and self-relations. Thus, aesthetic practice already has a critical potential on the level of perception. Not only does it play into aesthetic judgment, but rather aesthetic practice, in the sense of Foucault, develops

new possibilities of perception and representation within the field of perception.² In many respects, the more recent art educational works of Paul Duncum (2015) point in a similar direction.

Aesthetic practice does not only take place in the professional field and discourse of the arts, but can in principle always take place everywhere and with any objects. More recent aesthetic, media-aesthetic, and media-ecological approaches extend the significance of aesthetic experience and practice even further, when, like Jacques Rancière (2006), they assign to it, from a political perspective, the possibility of *dividing the sensual*, which arises in the complex interplay and interaction of different aesthetic regimes (e.g., art, politics, science). Recent research in media studies on media ecology, which, based on Felix Guattari's (2012) reflections on a new aesthetic paradigm of subjectivation, go one step further and examine the complex connections between technical developments and the modes of human perceptions and experiences, their feeling and thinking, again tie in with the concept of aesthetic regimes (Hörl, 2016; Hörl & Hansen, 2013). These investigations focus on a subjectivity other than classical subjectivity, and on cartography of "transpersonal, non-subjectivist, pre-cognitive and pre-perceptive structures of human and non-human actors" (Hörl & Hansen, 2013, p. 11, translation by the author) that produce a subjectivity that can no longer be brought into line with the notion of an autonomously perceiving and judging individual subject, but is also technologically pre-configured and co-generated.

APPARATUSES: SUBJECTIVATION AND AGENCY FROM A MEDIA-ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

According to the outlined media-ecological perspective above, aesthetics and aesthetic practices do not (only) address ways of seeing, hearing, saying, feeling, etc., but in particular the production and events of (non-)audibility, (non-)sayability, (non-)visibility, (non-)sensitivity, etc., and thus what can be understood as an "aesthetic milieu."³ In order to better understand the complex, also technical and media-technological mediation of aesthetic milieus and aesthetic practice and to describe their complex expositions, I refer to another term of Foucault (2003), which was taken up and further developed by thinkers such as Gilles Deleuze (1992) and Giorgio Agamben (2009): the concept of the apparatus (*dispositif*).

Like his contemporaries Jean-François Lyotard and Gilles Deleuze, Foucault was concerned with the concept of the *dispositif* in order to get a kind of apparatus, a structure into view, which, in addition to diverse discourses, institutions, architectures (i.e., spatial arrangements), can also encompass techniques, practices, and the like. The apparatus is “the network that can be made between these elements” (Foucault, 2003, p. 392, translation by the author). The concept of the apparatus is located on a *meso level*, which also includes concepts such as structure, system, and discourse. The apparatus is also “smaller” than episteme, culture, or society and again “larger” than event, statement, or action. It undermines all attempts to think about the subject without society or society without its subjects by opening up a middle field of indifference of both levels. If one describes technical connections as a material apparatus, then the directed, but ultimately not completely determined effectiveness of technical and technological devices and devices comes into theoretical view. The effectiveness of technology becomes visible above all as or through its social effectiveness, through its cultural effects. Thus, networked computers not only process information, but also always produce or subjectify a certain type of user as well as a world corresponding to this user. The latter is currently of great importance, since the worldwide techno-ecological networks produce perceptibilities (percepts and perceptions) and sensitivities (affects and affections) that exist *before* any sensual experience and perception of human bodies (Hörl, 2016). Jan Jagodzinski (2017) comes to similar considerations in his book *What is Art Education? After Deleuze and Guattari*. He defends, with reference to Deleuze and Guattari, the difference between percepts and perceptions as well as affects and affections (feelings), and thus the possibility of artworks/visual culture to entangle their viewers in percepts and affects that enables new perceptions for them. I return to this idea later in the chapter.

Gilles Deleuze (1992), in his re-reading of Foucault’s works, clearly emphasizes the “lines of cracks, fissures, and ruptures” (p. 157, translation by the author) that permeate the apparatus and open it to the possibility of subversion and transformation. With regard to the technical apparatuses, this means that every attempt at a totalizing (essential) determination of their functioning and their effects must fail. They *are* each in specific geographical, historical and sociocultural contexts and struggles, and their destinies depend on what they do to us humans and what we do to them. Humans and technology *become* together in an inextricable

entanglement and interrelation; they lead into the paradoxical tension, already mentioned by Foucault, of subjectifying submission and subjective power to act. Accordingly, in transgressing the simple difference between humans and technical machines, Deleuze (1992) discovers other hybrid actors with whom alternative possibilities of critique and subversion are connected.

The apparatus therefore does not stand for a technique of complete and successful control. Its manifold, often contradictory effects rather open up the apparatus to possibilities of critique, subversion, and transformation, in the sense of a redefinition and re-evaluation or other forms of resistive agency. Subjectivation and agency in apparatuses thus do not form opposites, but are reciprocal conditions of possibility and impossibility at the same time. *Agency*, however, should not be interpreted in an instrumental sense in terms of action theory; rather, it stands for a capacity for the critical appropriation of the situation potential of apparatuses, from which subjects emerge first and foremost.

AESTHETIC APPARATUSES OF CRITICAL PRACTICE

Jens Badura's (2011) reflections on *aesthetic apparatuses* can be connected to my sketch of the apparatus as a relational context of interdependencies that enables both subjectivation and *agency*. With reference to Foucault and Deleuze, Badura (2011) conceives his concept of aesthetic apparatuses as "a conceptual support for the description of connections and interactions between heterogeneities with the aim of alternative options of world disclosure" (p. 1, translation by the author). He goes on to explain that the

discussion of factor constellations that 'make' subjects or structure dynamics of subjectivation and the formation of world relations in a particular present and cannot be conceptualized solely in what has made a steep career in cultural studies as 'discourse', but requires other – also and above all aesthetic [...] – attention. (p. 2, translation by the author)

What can one now understand by "aesthetic attention?"—Aesthetics, together with its performative mode of aesthetic experience, opens up to dimensions of experience of world and self, which remain closed to hermeneutic, discursive, and conceptual-rational approaches—without

completely turning away from conceptual reflection. The aesthetic experience *arises* and *becomes* rather in the tension between matter and sign, sensuality and meaning. Badura continues:

Seen in this light, aesthetic practice only ‘functions’ as an interplay of these forms of knowledge that each stand alone. At the same time, however, this interplay of aesthetic practice provides a specific motivation to try again and again precisely the impossible ‘translating’, i.e. to continually dent the boundary walls of the conceptual - which is why an aesthetic world relation is always a transformative world relation and an aesthetic practice always triggers shifts in sensibility and conceptual creativity. (p. 4f, translation by the author)

One can also describe this specific attention to the aesthetic world relationship as a “becoming aware” of the momentary experience beyond a functional orientation. In our perception and imagination, we are then no longer solely focused on what we can achieve in this situation by recognizing or acting, but also pay attention to perceptions, sensations, and imaginations that are otherwise excluded by the everyday mechanisms of reduction. For Badura, the term “aesthetic apparatus” is used accordingly to describe such to comprehend “apparatuses” composed of heterogeneous factors in which aesthetic opening up of the world in the sense just described above is possible and ideally favored. In other words: Aesthetic apparatuses are production units for enabling transformative experiences.

Badura (2011) distinguishes the aesthetic apparatuses with regard to their enabling in apparatuses of the first order, “as a condition of the possibility of aesthetic world relations” and those of the second order, which can be understood “as a staging context for the deliberate provocation of aesthetic world enclosure” (p. 4, translation by the author). With this theoretical view on apparatuses I now approach an artistic work of *post-internet art* and ask whether and *how* it can show us, far from being a mere illustration or affirmation of social media-cultural reality, critical practice and at the same time open up other possibilities of perception, thought, and action.

AN EXAMPLE: RYAN TRECARTIN’S “RE’SARCH WAIT’S”

Ryan Trecartin is a Texas-born artist who lives and works currently in Athens, Ohio. Since 2000, together with the sculptor Lizzi Fitch, among

others, he has produced a considerable number of video works which can be seen on online video platforms such as *YouTube* and *vimeo*, and—after Trecartin was presented to a broad public interested in art at the Whitney Biennale in New York in 2006—in numerous representative museums and galleries worldwide.⁴ Over the years, the videos have evolved from a home movie aesthetic of the first works to complex, expansive video installations with multiple screens. For many curators, museum directors, and collectors Trecartin is the showpiece artist of *post-internet art*. The focus of my observation is the four-part series “Re’Search Wait’S,” which was created in the years 2009–2010.

In a first approximation, Trecartin’s videos (he calls them “*Movies*”) can be described as *mashups*, which impose some media complexity and intertextuality on their viewers. *Mashup* is the term used because one can still recognize individual samples of cultural artifacts and media content as well as symbolic codes of their representation integrated into the videos, even though Trecartin, together with his ensemble of participating artists and actors, appropriates, mixes, and modifies them in collective individuation. The videos follow Lev Manovich’s definition of digital film from his book *The Language of New Media* (2001) pretty closely, according to which conventional film recordings, the so-called live-action, such as the performances of Trecartin and his actors, are only raw material for further processing (in the sense of digital post-production): Animated and manipulated in the post-production process, they are assembled together with other already existing found images, sounds, and 3D animations. Almost no setting, no image that we see in his work, no sound, no voice that we hear was not edited and manipulated using digital editing software.

Trecartin also works with overlays and compressions of the forms and symbolic codes of current global media culture, as they appear on social media platforms from *YouTube*, *Instagram*, *Twitter* to *Facebook*—this is most evident in the frontal addressing of the camera, as we see it from *Selfie culture* and the *YouTube channels*. All in all, in Trecartin’s videos the camera gains the significance of an actor who initiates, promotes, and transforms social actions: among colleagues, friends and in the family, in museums, on journeys, business meetings or at parties. On the level of editing, the moving images, text, and sounds are superimposed layer by layer or presented side by side in split screens, creating a densely woven web of quotations and allusions. In this way the videos achieve a complexity of statements and simultaneous audiovisual articulations that exceed the attention of their viewers who have (still) formed them

primarily with books and narrative films—more generally with linear, successively processing symbolic forms. Trecartin's videos can (or must) therefore be seen over and over again. Repeated viewing then unfolds the multiple stories of his *movies*, opening up serial references within the videos and to other media articulations and cultural products.

The symbolic codes and media articulations to which Trecartin's videos refer, from whose set pieces and samples (images, sounds, sounds, music, postures, gestures, mimics, accents, statements, etc.) they are composed, are, however, not simply repeated by him, his co-authors and actors, but, as one can say in relation to art and film historical precursors, changed and shifted. The queer travesties and performances of the actors in Trecartin's videos are reminiscent, for example, of Cindy Sherman's photographic series, for example, *Untitled Film Stills*, 1977–1980, or of cinematic ensemble works by John Waters. If Sherman's disguises reveal the influence of society and the leading media of the time, cinema and television, on subjective identity formation, and if Water's films question the norms of consumer society, Trecartin's travesties also include the influence of digital media and the Internet. Although Trecartin's works refer in their exaggerations to a future world, it no longer seems far away: a world in which everything we do, what we perceive and communicate in/with/via digital media, can potentially be recorded as a data track and evaluated, replicated or mixed and remixed with other data at an indefinite time. From this future point of view, casting shows, *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *Twitter*, selfies, *YouTube* videos, data clouds, and listening programs will only have been preliminary exercises for a world in which everything living will be recorded as code, replicable and changeable at will.

The predominant symbolic forms of digital culture are the series and the database⁵. And I understand Trecartin's videos as a transition, as a hybrid between cinematic narration, series and database-generated remix video. Although we still see a kind of cinematic action with drama and characters, this can no longer be understood as a narrative or linear narration (as we know it from cinema and television films), but rather presents itself as a multilayered time sculpture, as audiovisual montages of digital material from the largest global database: the real-time archive of the *World Wide Web*.⁶ In his videos, nothing and nobody really seems to be in the right place, rather the things, images, and signs that were created to give us orientation buzz around us as viewers. Trecartin's videos consistently deny their viewers trained dichotomous structures and orienting binarities such as real–virtual, male–female and further identifications such

as geographical, ethnic, and social origins of the figures appearing. In this process, the aesthetic figures of the videos lose a stable identity. Often one fictional character is performed by several actors, even more often an actor plays several fictional characters of different gender, age, or social origin.

Figures can appear several times in the picture or cancel the physical laws of time and space, they can change their appearance, their gestures and facial expressions, voice colors, speed of speech, etc., in the course of a video or over several videos of a series. Thus, it appears that the physical, habitual, and linguistic abilities of the figures are separated from their origin as soon as they exist as audiovisual digital data in the global hypersphere. It is not only gender that has detached itself from the biological body, but also certain behaviors and gestures of the person have become independent of social origin and the accent has become independent of geographical origin. In addition, Trecartin's characters can apparently easily acquire these various physical gestures and facial expressions as well as behavioral and speech patterns, using them like *software* or an *app*.

This interpretative traces of Trecartin's videos could be followed even further and could still be differentiated. However, this must be done elsewhere. It could be shown that Trecartin's videos—as an example of aesthetic practice—allow us to experience current reality in a parodistic way and *critically* refer to its possibilities and deviations, precisely to what is not yet. This is what Trecartin and his co-authors do above all by inventing a new aesthetic practice and thus also other artistic works, here creating a new variation of video. In addition, they show us, as viewers, something about our condition in post-digital media culture, in which what we call reality is closely intertwined with the *World Wide Web*. At the same time, they refer to a different subjectivity or to other subjectifying practices—on the one hand by negating stable, clearly defined identities and existing symbolic orders as permanent, and on the other hand in the manner of their collective appropriation and reinterpretation of existing pop-cultural material and knowledge.

CONCLUSION

How can the experiences of Trecartin's videos be further thought of for determining today's educational challenges in current media culture? Digital platforms of social media such as *YouTube* can become aesthetic

apparatuses in the sense of Badura through the different aesthetic practices of their users. This is articulated by Trecartin's presented remix videos—but this does not mean that the aesthetic forms invented by Trecartin (and his creative collective) are the only ones to articulate critically in an aesthetic practice. It has further aesthetic practices and interesting articulations in the wide field of social media (from glitch to the numerous forms of remix to subversive and transformative forms of hacking and modding) that can unfold similar critical potential.

Trecartin's *Movies*, as an example of remix videos, show an extensive popular knowledge of the symbolic and aesthetic structures of the audiovisual images to which they refer repeatedly, but also to experiment with and play with the recombination of technological apparatuses, bodies, techniques and practices, as well as the symbolic-imaginary material, and to try out new possibilities of representation and perception. The remix videos thus open up possibilities of aesthetic world disclosure that can inspire their recipients to perceive and think differently and thus entangle them in aesthetic experiences.

In that sense my inquiry of Trecartin's aesthetic practice resonates with questions concerning our present situation raised by Kevin Tavin and Juuso Tervo (2018). They are also referring to the artistic work of Ryan Trecartin and other post-internet artists as examples that can help to explore and understand the present conditions of the post-internet or post-digital media culture and its formative effects on human beings. In contrast to chronological conceptions of art education, in which the Now serves as a transition for an autonomous, empowered subject to project a future, the New, they understand post-internet art as a possible example of a Now without a perpetual recourse to the New. In their understanding:

The Now is not solely in the hands of people (offline) or technology (online), but it forms through the interplay between different actors (human, non-human, artificial, etc.) and the different temporalities of their actions (movement, repetition, frames/kilobytes per second). Simultaneously offline and online, the Now becomes a moment of action where it is not clear whether the effects of these actions are virtual or real or both or neither. In order to mobilize this indeterminacy (to move in it rather than with it), it becomes crucial to explore not only the (im)material conditions of agency (e.g., online or offline), but also what kind of times these actions occupy. We see post-Internet art as something that might, at

least initially, help art education navigate within such contested terrain of differing temporalities in the Now. (Tavin & Tervo, 2018, p. 289)

For every aesthetic practice and every artistic work, however, the question arises anew whether it actually functions as a subversive liminal event and as a border-experience in the sense of Foucault, opens up spaces for play and interpretation, or contributes to a trivialization of critique (Masschelein, 2003). Critique is then fitted into the given and allows its continuation, it has the function of optimizing what is given and thus forms its own trivialization. Thus, the question is raised as to how their critical practice in the forms of showing, or in the broader sense of representation and perception, can overlap with epistemological, political, or ethical questions. I consider Trecartin's videos to be a good example of how aesthetic and ethical questions can be intertwined.

Let's begin by noting that in Trecartin's videos, in the world they represent, the identity of persons, animals, and things seems to be both precarious and unstable, as well as extremely malleable and can be shaped at will by the subjects acting *in* and *with the* digitally networked media. I do not follow Trecartin's optimism about technology, which creates a society of freely shapeable, flowing identities, which in the near future will not only be able to shape their biographies and their social gender, but also their bodies by means of digital technologies and the consumer objects of a hypercultural industry. With reference to Deleuze and Guattari (1997), however, it can be said that the videos stage a structurally *schizoid* subjectivity. This divided subject exists without a stable identity, so it is no longer individual, but *dividual*. Although this dividuum is still recognizable as individual, it is not closed, not undivided, not *in*-dividualized in the world, but more or less consciously entangled in manifold references, participation and division processes of various magnitudes, which in turn incessantly *inform* it (also in the sense of *bringing it into form*) and subjectify it. It is therefore constantly becoming, seized and formed in relation to other people, media technologies, cultural practices, things, and conditions (Ott, 2014).

Trecartin's videos thus make it possible to think of the visual potential of a social, cultural, and media technological *outside* of the subject—this is also their provocation in educational theory. Before we perceive, think, speak, or act as human beings, today we are always in a digital, audiovisual field of image production, reflection of glances, visibility, and audibility. This image production functions on a global scale and in close relation

to the digital hypersphere for which the distinction between inside and outside, real and virtual as well as geographical, national, and cultural borders no longer makes any sense, and in whose functioning one participates as a human being by following its movements. In other words, the experience of Trecartin's video works no longer allows viewers interested in educational theory (as a possible scientific observer's perspective) to think of subjects as the intentional center of their actionally opened up world. In addition, they suggest that the subject below the linguistic-discursive subjectivation should be understood as a singular, specifically assembled (composed of heterogeneous elements) audiovisual moving image, which in turn refers in a special way to all other audiovisual moving images around it.

Following Gilles Deleuze, I described this subjectivity elsewhere as *cinematographic subjectivity* (Zahn, 2012, 2015, 2016). The cinematographic subject must be conceived as a montage of movements and thus alternations, deviations, changes, as well as an energy-intensive production of continuity and identity. In and with Trecartin's videos, therefore, something becomes perceptible and conceivable that generally applies to educational processes in contemporary media culture. We connect with images, sounds, texts, and data or with parts of them (*samples*) that have caught our attention and remained in our memory, and then "cut," "assemble" and reissue them. We change and form these audiovisual images in our imagination and memory and they change us, the way we see ourselves, see ourselves in relation to others and the way how others should see us.

Accordingly, aesthetic education, and art education could also be reformulated theoretically: as a differentiating practice of the *dividuum* in and at the different situational, material, medial, social relations, interdependencies, and transmissions in which it has formed and continues to form—in search of other, new possibilities of perception, articulation, and action as well as ways of use in complex media technological milieus. These milieus and our positions as becoming (in-)dividuals within them can be understood as a network or, to put it in deleuzian terms, a rhizome (Duncum, 2015).

Here connections can be made to the media-ecological position of Katja Rothe (2016), who proposes to critically examine the use of media from a praxeological as well as ethical-aesthetic perspective and, in addition, to think of the design of questions of media use following Foucault as an ethical project in which one forms a stance, a style in

dealing with the world, the other and one's own life. From a media-ecological perspective, the shaping practice of ways of existence or life shifts from the anthropological question of the successful or happy life of the individual to media-anthropological questions which "under the precondition of technical-human coexistence sound out the possibilities of 'care for oneself'" (p. 51, translation by the author). Such a project would no longer be conceived as self-education, as an individual educational process, but rather as a complicated, inter—or even multisubjective, distributed event of the interconnected subjectivities. Thus, paraphrasing Adorno (1959) and expanding him at the same time, would again be concerned with a political concept of education as the institution of human *and* non-human things.

NOTES

1. The research focus *Post-Internet Arts Education* at the University of Cologne focuses on the strongly changed conditions for art pedagogy and cultural media education in the horizon of the *Internet State of Mind* (Chan, 2011) and aims to develop consequences for the practice and theory of education in dealing with arts and media in the advanced twenty-first century. It was initiated in 2015 by Torsten Meyer, Kristin Klein, Gila Kolb and Konstanze Schütze. For more information see <http://piaer.net>.
2. This understanding of critical practice can be linked to Irit Rogoff's (2006) concept of (embodied) criticality, which she conceives as a thoroughly risky, speculative collective production of cultural artifacts, modes of representation and forms of knowledge. It must remain here with the reference, and it is reserved for another paper to elaborate the similarities and differences between the two concepts of critique.
3. By "aesthetic milieus" I understand technological, cultural, thus also symbolic-imaginary milieus which make perception first and foremost possible and thus subjectivations in the context of aesthetic practice. Perceptions, affections and feelings then appear as different actualizations of this previous differential. These pre-individual, media-technological milieus are to be examined in more detail in media aesthetic and media-ecological studies.
4. See <https://vimeo.com/trecartin>, <http://www.youtube.com/user/WianTreetin> or <http://www.ubu.com/film/trecartin.html>.
5. Central perspective, bivalent logic and the linear narrative still exist as symbolic forms, but lose their social and cultural significance.

6. His movies differ from other artistic works, which force the abundance of digital information from the internet into other (maybe more familiar) forms in order to harmonize and tame them, such as the project *Life in a day* (2011), which edited and at the same time transformed the spatially, temporally, and culturally heterogeneous video data of *YouTube* users into the format of cinema.

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