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“Post-truth” is often used as an indication of an era. Used this way, it becomes an epoch-making concept that implies a shift from an assumed “era of truth” that is now rapidly disappearing. But the more closely one focuses on the media-political sphere, “perhaps the less the sense of shock that should be delivered by the phrase given the long and amply documented history of strategic deception here” (Corner 2017: 1100). The good old days were not that good and not everything is new in our heavily mediated and thoroughly networked society. In a much-quoted article Peters (2017: 565) concluded that “rather than speaking truth to power, Donald Trump demonstrates the enduring power of the lie”. Those who are (still) in shock that truth does not seem to matter in media and politics fail to understand that, as Derek R. Ford puts it, “politics has never been about a correspondence with an existing truth” (1). Rather, in Ford’s view, political struggle is about the formulation and materialization of new truths. Post-truth, then, must not be understood as a negation, as anti-truth, but as “an occasion to refuse the liberal nostalgia for the democratic and civil public sphere based on truthful exchange at the marketplace of ideas” (2).

With Ford’s particular conceptualization, post-truth agitates the political nature and the pedagogy of truth. It opens up a political project that implicates the power relations on which truths are composed, and a pedagogical project that “involves *how* we engage ourselves, each other, and the world in transformative processes as we formulate and

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realize these truths” (3). According to Ford, the positive position on the post-truth era can help us break out of the “democratic communicative capitalism” (a term coined through a synthesis of Jodi Dean and Jean-François Lyotard) that keeps us stuck in the present. However critical we may think ourselves, we are trapped in the reflexive circuits of democratic communicative capitalism as long as we “insist on the pursuit of the truth” (9). To be sure, Ford is no relativist. He is not saying that we should never make appeals to the truth or call out the lies propagated by the right wing. Rather, he is saying that insisting on there being a truth that “transcends our structural positions in society” (10) is a fruitless political strategy. Right-wingers do not care about what the other side thinks and they do not make appeals to the truth but to beliefs and convictions. Thus, a truth that bridges all divisions and erases all antagonisms can never be formulated. To Derek Ford, the “post-truth” era is as an opportunity to push forward into a different world. *Politics and Pedagogy in the “Post-Truth” Era* (Ford 2018) embraces this opportunity and is meant as an intervention in the present order of things. It presents a new educational philosophy and praxis from within the interconnection of social theory and political struggle. Ford theorizes the heterogeneous configuration of pedagogy and politics “as an educational resource for the collective navigation of contemporary political, social, and economic struggles” (13).

In the first chapter Ford theorizes and pushes forward a specific educational praxis of *studying*. In doing this, he reconnects to his previous book *Communist Study* (Ford 2016) in which he pointed to the need for a pedagogy based on study rather than learning. While learning, the process of acquiring preexisting knowledges, “is the pedagogical motor of the capitalist mode of production” and studying is a “pedagogy that produces [...] a break in the present by unleashing potentiality” (14). Studying is not just an alternative to learning but must be theorized as an *oppositional* pedagogical logic. Ford turns to Jodi Dean’s (2016) recent work on crowds, in which she argues that the crowd event produces a discharge of equality that introduces a gap in the present order. Studying, Ford posits, is the educational logic of the crowd. However, the gap of possibility that the study of the crowd generates is not sufficient. The question, Ford asks, is “How to make the encounter take hold, how to make it take off in a desirable direction?” (33). The answer is the organizational form of the party. As an affective infrastructure, the party maintains the gap of desire and thus sustains the practice of study. Ford sees in the Communist Party the potential to engage the whole personality in the movement, as means of mobilizing the forces of both intellect and desire so that studying does not degenerate into a mere alternative to learning.

The first chapter establishes the decisive nature of political organization. In the three following chapters, Ford articulates different educational paradigms for studying. Chapter two investigates the pedagogical times of capital as a way to extract temporal openings for political agonism and relief, and openings to generate resistance. It does this with the help of a short piece of video art that shows how gaps that create totally different temporalities can occur between just slightly different spaces. Ford explores the idea “that freedom is a particular kind of temporal potentiality that both encompasses a pedagogical force and rests on a certain educational axis” (44). He distinguishes between generic and effective potentials. While in generic potential *what is* quickly transitions into what *must be*, effective potential “opens up the realm of what

can be” (45). Turning to Marxist philosophy of language, Ford shows how individual pedagogical acts can and need to be reconstituted in a collective and transformative struggle in order to be saturated politically.

Revolutionary movements require “not only critique and inquiry, but also the generation and organization of possibility, imagination, and hope” (57). Ford characterizes the structure of capitalism as a triumvirate of capital, learning, and debt. To break out from this triumvirate we need to “imagine and enact different pedagogical forms that disrupt its rhythm and that actualize and organize a gap in the world as it is” (58). Ford turns to Lee Edelman’s (2004) searing polemic in *No Future* for inspiration. Parsing through Edelman’s polemic, Ford proposes a particular pedagogical praxis for collective defection that he terms *sinthomostudying*. Studying, unlike learning, is necessarily a queer thing to do. Queer study is “a method of educational engagement that wrests us from our endless learning and from the indebtedness that keeps us wedded to the present through the logic of the future” (66). For queer study to be communist it has to be organized and for it to work as a strategy against the capital-debt-learning triumvirate, it must not play a secondary role. “The educational logic of queerness”, Ford writes, “has to be mobilized [...] as a way of being and relating that can bring about an entirely new order” (72).

In Chapter 4 Ford proposes an “urbanist pedagogy”. With the help of Lefebvre and Lyotard, he advances a concept of the urban as an “incommunicable process that entails two distinct and interrelated creative educational elements: explosive confrontation and stupor” (75). Ford defines urban struggles not by their location but by the endless confrontations that come out of encounters with differences as they negotiate the “right to the city”. This negotiation produces a shifting centrality and an excessive event. However, in order for resistance to useful thinking and acting to arise, “the right to the city” must be accompanied by a “a right to the *domus*”. The *domus* has no utility and it is where the “stupid”, i.e. uncommunicative and, from the perspective of communicative capitalism, useless, resistance can exist.

There is, Ford argues throughout the book, “a taut connection between capitalism and democracy that consists of a shared logic that revolves around communication, inclusion, and transparency” (92). In chapter five, Ford shows that there is also an aesthetic connection that has to be grasped to prevent anticapitalist struggles from becoming liberal reforms that end up reinforcing capitalist production relations. To sufficiently respond to this, Ford wants to articulate a communist aesthetic pedagogy that brings about a new alignment between radical politics and aesthetics of the sublime. The connection between capitalism and liberal democracy that rests on the aesthetic of the beautiful has to be broken to push democratic struggles for equality toward a communist horizon. While Lyotard “is a point of intersection between communist pedagogy and sublime aesthetics”, the “Communist Party provides an example of how this aesthetic is figured politically and organized concretely” (92). By articulating a sublime aesthetic dimension to the party, “we can develop a crucial resource for educators and organizers in our struggle for a different world along radically different aesthetic lines” (93–94). In order to realign radical politics through the sublime, Ford turns to Lyotard whose conception of philosophizing is more about interrupting communicative circuits than about being communicative. Philosophy is, in this reading, not an epistemological experience but a fundamentally aesthetic one. Thus, philosophy is a practice of *sinthomostudying*. However, this practice is in itself

not enough to get us out from democratic communicative capitalism. Again Ford emphasizes the need for organization and asks for the construction of an (un)communicative communist aesthetic pedagogy, “an aesthetic education of, in, and for the communist party” (104).

In the last chapter, Ford turns to the three volumes of Marx’s *Capital* (1867/1967, 1892/1972, 1894/1981) searching them for references to communism. It is not a systematic reading, however, but a scattered one meant to highlight “the pedagogical problematic that Marx unconsciously lays out for us” (110). Ford demonstrates that, at the heart, Marx poses communism as a pedagogical problem. By examining the question of what is other to capitalism or neoliberalism, Ford proclaims that “we have already been postcapitalist” (108). This neglected insight should be a starting point for reclaiming the history of the international struggle of the oppressed and exploited, but also to imagine a future beyond and after capitalism: “Our history and our present have to be the real stuff of our magical studying, learning, experimenting, and doing” (108). Critical education has failed and Ford hopes that his last chapter will invigorate and provoke action. At the end of his book, Ford takes the Party for Socialism and Liberation as an example of magical Marxist educators who try to move from traditional critique to imagination in order to save Marxism from becoming too stagnant, predictable, and explanatory. It is also an example that shows why organization is essential. Without it, and without a clear connection to the actually existing socialist struggles, the Left will continue to be unable to “adequately confront the problems (capital and its state) that we face” (123). Ford concludes by suggesting that “the Left has retreated from the question of power and politics precisely because it has not acknowledged the communist project as a pedagogical one: how to chart and navigate the heterotopic constellation of transition” (123).

Politics and Pedagogy in the “Post-Truth” Era is a well-written, yet challenging read – at least for those of us who have not quite given up on liberal democracy. However, whether or not one agrees with Ford’s radical political views; with his innovative deployment of certain theories and philosophers; with his blocking together of aesthetics, queer theory, urbanism, postmodern philosophy, and radical politics – his book is still an essential read for anyone who believes that educational theory has something important to offer in today’s post-truth society. Ford assigns to education its rightful importance as something much more than “learning” how to become this or that or increasing people’s employability. Proper education, in elementary schools as well as in universities, should open up gaps that disorient, disorder, or disrupt our ingrained opinions and conceptions. One of the most rewarding things about Ford’s book is that he clearly shows that we cannot leave problems of education, learning and pedagogy to schools of education (and certainly not to educational bureaucrats and politicians). Proper analysis of education and its role in a post-truth society must be based on more than just mainstream pedagogics.

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