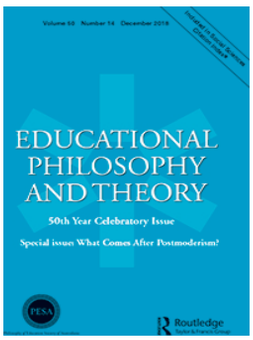

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Postmodern communism: An educational constellation

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Inexhaustible, the postmodern not only lingers after the death of postmodern*ism*, but actually emerges triumphant. Whereas, postmodern*ism* tried to in some sense to systematize—or at least capture—the postmodern, creating works of scholarship, lines of debate and contention, temporal designations, and so on, the postmodern escaped it. The postmodern is, after all, not something that comes *after* the modern, but something that—as an excess of thought, feeling, and being—*inhabits* and *interrupts* the modern. It does so not to uncritically celebrate the different, the new, or the unpresentable, but rather to ask after it in order to, as Jean-François Lyotard (1992) put it once, 'better produce the feeling that there is something unpresentable' (p. 12). In this sense, I want to propose first that educational theory hasn't yet been postmodern, and that what comes after postmodernism should be an educational embrace of the endless embryonic state of the postmodern.

Postmodernism has, however, done away with the modern. Instead of modernity, we today find ourselves unmistakably within what Jodi Dean (2012), following García Linera, calls 'the communist horizon.' Although the Soviet Union hasn't existed for over 25 years (a memo liberals in the US have yet to read, it seems), communism nonetheless determines our political juncture, framing our contemporary moment through embrace as well as disavowal. Yet educational theory finds itself in the same position politically with communism as it does philosophically with the postmodern, namely, in a state of yet to be. While the names and theories associated with 'Marx' are scattered with more or less care across educational theory, these remain disconnected from and unconcerned with the actual communist project. The best attempts in this vein have tried to subject education to Marxist politics, but in doing so have not only neglected the entire African, Asian, and Latin American communist traditions, but also deprived education of that which is fundamental to it: the postmodern. To say that the postmodern is fundamental to education is to assert that the guiding force in education is always the monstrous, the excessive surplus of the social and the subject. In this sense, I want to propose second that educational theory finally account for the communist horizon. This is a thoroughly postmodern horizon in that communism continues to name a project that constantly interrupts imperialism to remind us that there is something *else* present that we are missing in a fundamental way.

Both of these—the postmodern and the communist horizon—condition educational theory after postmodernism. Yet conditions are not constituents. Educational theory is neither politics nor philosophy. Rather than collapsing education into politics (critical pedagogy) or into philosophy (postmodernism), I want to suggest that educational theorists see our work not so much as a prescriptive field, but as a collective cartographic endeavor that charts out and navigates a postmodern communist horizon. On this reading, pedagogy becomes an untameable process of journeying through constellations in which disparate and even contradictory commitments and concerns hover together.

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Derek R. Ford is an assistant professor of education studies at DePauw University, where he teaches classes in philosophy and history of education. His research revolves around the knot of pedagogy, subjectivity, and revolutionary movements. He has written and edited seven books, including "Education and the production of space: Political pedagogy, geography, and urban revolution" (2017). He is chair of the education department at The Hampton Institute, an organizer with the Answer Coalition, and coordinator of LiberationSchool.org.

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