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# The paradox of post-postmodernism

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Post-postmodernism is a paradox. The zeitgeist of twenty-first century ecologically resides not in a void or a predictable space. Rather, the 'is-ness' of being exists in a paradox—paradox refers to the irrational, mystical, contradictory juxtapositions of being in the cosmos. A paradox is engendered discursively while moving beyond a stable, dichotomous format of being as Western Enlightenment movements imply. A paradox of being debunks any binary of body-mind, self-other, or conscious-unconscious. Such denial of existential dichotomy pries open a space where a paradox resides with imagination. I argue that a paradox of being and/non-being shifts discourse in educational theory in the era of post-postmodernism. *Tao Te Ching* [道德經] illustrates the paradoxes of living and existence. Linguistic, metaphoric name of *Tao* is not *Tao* anymore [道可道, 非常道]. *Tao* exists as *Tao*; yet *Tao* does not exist as *Tao* (Jung, 2001). *Tao* itself is void in that it shifts being, embodiment, and operations. This paradox of being/non-being and action/non-action of *Tao* is implemented in the non-action philosophy of *wuwei* [無為]: 'No action is undertaken, and yet nothing is left undone' (Chan, 1963, p. 162). A paradox of post-postmodernism embraces not-knowingness of knowing and knowingness of not-knowing. This epistemological blind spot of knowing/un-knowing becomes an open-ended space to imagine multiple approaches to interpreting who/what educational theorists are.

By living in this paradox, educational theorists revisit a label of subjectivity or action circulating in institutions. This paradox of Taoist being encourages educators to revisit a normalized usage of 'social justice' in theorizing a just society and education. In Taoist tradition, people do not fully experience social justice if social justice is linguistically determined and institutionalized. Paradoxically, the goal of taking a socially just action aims to remove the term of 'social justice' all together from our lexicon. This provocative idea challenges the reproduction of bifurcated notions of self-other, oppressed-oppressor, and subjectivity-alterity in social justice education. *Donghak* [Eastern Learning]—Korea's nineteenth century indigenous religion—is an example of applying this paradox of being driven from the blurred boundaries of self-other. The ontological complexity of self-other is generated from Su-un's (the founder) spiritual experience of god's message, 'my heart-mind is no other than your heart-mind' (吾心即汝心). This apophatic approach to God from within and without oneself explicates a non-dualistic relationship of self-other (Lee, 2014). This

blurred, interwoven approach to self-other in the cosmic world challenges bifurcated approaches to self-other or subjectivity-alterity regardless if one follows critical theory or poststructuralist traditions (Wang, 2013). Self-other is interwoven interdependently with the paradox of being that thus cannot be labeled within an anthropocentric approach to human as part of cosmos or *qi* (Lee, 2014). Educators live in a paradoxical space of Tao and wuwei: Tao is not Tao once it is labeled. Post-postmodernism resides in this unknown space—space where multiple, unknown angles exist in creating *us-ness* (which is never a uniformed, exclusive format of it). Indeed, a paradox *is* and *is not* post-postmodern.