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Tomasz Szkudlarek's interests circulate around relations of education, culture, and politics. He reads them through the lens of identity understood in non-foundational ways, as desire, demand, simulacrum and an object of discursive investments. His main inspirations have been critical theory and pedagogy, especially in their attempts at addressing postmodern transformations of subjectivity, and poststructuralism—with Foucault, Derrida and Laclau among frequently present in his references. His first books related to how critical pedagogy embraced postmodernity (*The Problem of Freedom in Postmodern Education*, 1993, and *Wiedza i wolność w pedagogice amerykańskiego postmodernizmu*, 1993 and 2009). Related topic was the spatiality of postmodern culture where historical formations defined by oral, printed, and visual-digital media are “flattened” into co-existing histories of profanation and fall, progressive emancipation and crisis, and of deconstruction and disillusionment (*Media: Szkic z filozofii i pedagogiki dystansu*, 1998 and 2009).

Szkudlarek was engaged in collaborative empirical projects where constructions of identity were investigated across individual, socio-cultural and political domains, with a combination of phenomenographic, discourse-analytical and hermeneutical approaches (e.g. *Dyskursywna konstrukcja podmiotu, Przyczynek do rekonstrukcji pedagogiki kultury*, 2012, co-authored), and he edited and authored works where such connections were investigated theoretically as well (e.g., *Education and the Political: New theoretical articulations*, 2013). Oftentimes, such theoretical analyses addressed current political issues. For instance, historical politics of the Law and Justice party in Poland, driven by the ambition to terminate a “pedagogy of shame” where national identity is demystified as implicated in violence, and to promote national pride instead, is analyzed as shameless politics. Shame, identified as permeating the relations between education and politics in Rousseau, is seen as indispensable in modern politics that refrains from resorting to naked power (*Pedagogika wstydu i bezwstydną polityka*, 2017, and 2020 with Maria Mendel).

In his recent works Szkudlarek analyses educational theories as sharing the space of social ontology with political theories (*On the Politics of Educational Theory. Rhetoric, theoretical ambiguity, and the construction of society*, 2017). However, this connection is rhetorically marginalized or denied. As Szkudlarek observes, educational theory must construe its political foundations, as much as political theory must imply pedagogy as their conditions of possibility. The politics of theory grounds how they make those mutual dependencies rhetorically invisible, which seems to be the condition of their publicly acceptable instrumental projects of rational politics and a-political education. Read together, they appear as operating along the lines of a quasi-Cartesian parallelism while their shared engagement in construing impossible totalities is kept behind the scene.