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Article abstract

Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)—or sometimes styled EDID by including decolonization—is an institutionalized response to demands for access, inclusion, recognition, and redistribution by communities of people excluded from traditional centres of power. Under the banner of EDI(D), educational institutions have launched an extensive program of adult education, seeking to "train" institutional actors to adhere to policies and root out bias in practice. In this paper, Bannerji situates the relations of EDI work within the broader framing of multiculturalism, racism, and ideologies of education in Canada. Drawing from Dorothy Smith's unique articulations of ontology and ideology, Bannerji confronts the ideological praxis of EDI work and asks us to consider the politics of identity and pedagogy that constitute this particular conjuncture.

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Abstract

Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)—or sometimes styled EDID by including decolonization—is an institutionalized response to demands for access, inclusion, recognition, and redistribution by communities of people excluded from traditional centres of power. Under the banner of EDI(D), educational institutions have launched an extensive program of adult education, seeking to "train" institutional actors to adhere to policies and root out bias in practice. In this paper, Bannerji situates the relations of EDI work within the broader framing of multiculturalism, racism, and ideologies of education in Canada. Drawing from Dorothy Smith's unique articulations of ontology and ideology, Bannerji confronts the ideological praxis of EDI work and asks us to consider the politics of identity and pedagogy that constitute this particular conjuncture.

Résumé

L'équité, diversité et inclusion (ÉDI) – parfois reformulé ÉDID en y ajoutant la décolonisation – représente une réponse institutionnelle aux revendications d'accès, d'inclusion, de reconnaissance et de redistribution par les communautés de personnes exclues des centres traditionnels du pouvoir. Sous la bannière de l'ÉDI(D), les établissements d'enseignement ont lancé un vaste programme d'éducation des adultes visant à « former » les parties institutionnelles afin de les faire suivre les politiques et d'éradiquer les biais dans la pratique. Dans cet article, Bannerji situe les relations du travail d'ÉDI dans le cadre plus large du multiculturalisme, du racisme et des idéologies de l'éducation au Canada. S'inspirant aux perspectives uniques de Dorothy Smith sur l'ontologie et l'idéologie, Bannerji remet en question la praxis idéologique du travail d'ÉDI et nous demande de tenir compte des politiques de l'identité et de la pédagogie qui constituent cette conjoncture particulière.

> For, now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

St. Paul, 1 Cor. 13:12, King James Version

> Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.

Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology* (1845)

This paper explores the conceptual roles that the notions of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) play in enabling the pedagogy and curricula of the university and other institutions of higher learning. The purpose is to create a method of knowledge production, a critique, whose praxis radically changes existing social consciousness toward a truly democratic society—the implied goal of adult education. A critical method for addressing unjust social relations cannot arise merely from imagination or arbitrary interpretation, from indiscriminate theories presumed on unexamined premises and assumptions. What is actually needed is a socially grounded epistemological device that can provide an analytical and critical grasp of the material and historical reality we inhabit. Such a method could reveal a transformative relation between the subject knower and the object of knowledge that takes into account an intrinsic connection between knowledge and truth, and allows for socially transformative action. The idea of a transparent relationship between knowledge and truth is very old, as testified by the verse from St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians. Its epigrammatic use here recalls that fact and serves as an entry into the topic of an acuity of vision implied in the idea of truth. This truth requires the intermediation of a knowledge device between the seer/knower and the reality (whatever definition it may have, empirical or essentialist) that is sought to be seen/known. St. Paul's metaphor of "glass" signifies the medium's vital role in producing dimness or clarity. The allusion to St. Paul signals this truth's reliability for effecting a fundamental change at a spiritual or an individual level. It speaks to both spiritual redemption and secular revolution. The whole process depends on the medium's capacity for revealing an intrinsic relation between knowledge and truth.

However, a caution is needed because media and mediation bring with them not only certitude or truth, but also, as with the glass, the possibility of distortion and occlusion of the "real."[1] An awareness of the medium's distortive propensity animates current projects of social knowledge, as it once preoccupied spiritual truth seekers. Knowledge for redemption and revolution may point to different definitions and directions, but its ultimate concern is still for truth.[2] For St. Paul, the truth implies a moment of epiphany, an invocation of the heavenly. We, in the secular context, seek a truth in the world with an objective correlation and self-reflexivity, but we do not deny the importance of consciousness for this task.

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1   Mediation is not used here in its legal sense, as a device for dispute management. Rather, it indicates a formative process among the key aspects of the mode of production, which constitute its whole and are elements of its dialectical relations between internal and external determinations. Marx himself, in the introduction to *Grundrisse* (1973), valorized the concept in this socialized way. See Williams (1976, 1985). See also Bannerji (2020a).

2   The meaning of "truth" has been much debated. An objective materialist definition is pitted against a subjective inner truth, tantamount to belief or intuition. This essay avoids a dichotomous understanding, but retains a verifiable social character to truth.

What matters for us is that the mode of mediation should provide an access to the truth of social organization. While for us the access to truth necessarily requires a grasp of multiple mediations that construct our social, for St. Paul the path to the real truth is the least mediated one, a direct "face to face" perception, relying on total introspection that either erases the distinction between the inner self and the outer world or subordinates the outer to the inner. Our truth being secular, verifiable, neither totally subjectivist nor objectivist, is a social truth offering equal valence to what is within and outside of us, the self and the social. Here a direct perception of the social whole is not possible. We need instead an ability to grasp a highly intricate mode of mediation, whose truth is neither idealist nor empiricist. This is so not only for understanding capitalism, a system of large-scale modern society, but even for understanding pre-capitalist societies.

Method and Mediation

Being located within capitalism, then, our vision is indirect and fragmentary. Our overall understanding of it necessitates a capacity for logical and abstract thinking for analysis and critique of the mediations of social organization. Therefore, a truthful inquiry into the social, which is mundane and material, requires an epistemology that is neither idealist nor crudely materialist. This is the epistemology elaborated by Marx and Engels (1970) in *The German Ideology*, which provides a method for social inquiry that explores the far-flung and intricately mediated social organization of capitalism. Its intention is the production of an anti-ideological knowledge meant to grasp the sensuous nature of human practice. Neither consciousness nor social reality are one-sidedly emphasized, but, rather, both are formatively implicated. These subjective and objective moments are thus organizationally mediated on the ground of history.[3] This epistemology, known as historical materialism, is vital for socialist praxis, for knowing the truth about the world we wish to change. Historical materialism is, therefore, more than a discursive, interpretive, and merely rationalist theory. As a method of inquiry it calls for a rigorous examination of the social premises and axioms on which theories and their concepts and categories are based. Thus, theories are not privileged a priori, nor is the assertion of independence of ideas from real people and their socio-historical reality. The social is never an illustration of a theory or subservient to it.

For this reason, the ideology and politics of multiculturalism, and the theoretical use of the related concepts of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), need to be assessed socio-historically. Only then can we establish their relevance for producing accurate knowledge for the critical aim of all education—that is, the aim of conscientization. Multiculturalism, the staple of present-day liberal education from which EDI evolved, should therefore be assessed in terms of its capacity for addressing the social relations and cultural mediations characterizing the liberal state. This assessment will uncover how the university, a public institution, is composed of the same class and ideological relations as the state itself. All social institutions will then be visible as standing at the crossroads of the civil and political society of the capitalist state. As the civil society is composed of contradictory and consonant relations within class and culture, educational institutions should be seen as a form of their mediation The university, situated within the field of generative contradictions, is a site of

3   See Marx and Engels (1970). Here they presented their critique of ideology, which they obtained through an epistemological method that shows them to be ideas for the ruling class by the mainstream intelligentsia.

production of divergent and contesting knowledge claims (Bannerji et al., 1991). Institutional spaces of mental labour, such as the university, consist of intellectuals and academics. Their productive activities create in them a double consciousness of both an ideological and a counter-ideological nature.[4] Conventional criteria and techniques for knowledge production generally enable them to produce ruling ideas.[5] But their specialization can also direct them to critical and resistant knowledge through responses to ideas from past and present social struggles. Emerging from "below," these ideas can penetrate the bastions of "higher" or "official" learning, creating potentially transformative knowledges. They can aid in discernment of contradictory social relations of capitalism, asserting the existence of knowable though complex social truths. The idea of truth and its knowability has been at the centre of many epistemological debates over time, but it has never disappeared from any knowledge claim. In the socialist tradition it resulted in historical materialism.

Historical materialism is a method of enquiry showing us how abstract and critical thoughts are formatively related to the subject's experience. In doing so it comprehends capital as a concrete social mode. Abstraction is not necessarily an enemy of the concrete. It is an intellectual process that can penetrate the constantly ramifying composition of capital. The more mediated a social organization is, the greater the need for abstraction to connect its different aspects in material, concrete terms, because these complicated mediations are not directly visible (see Bannerji, 2020a). To "see" capital as a full mode of production is not possible, unlike in pre-capitalist societies of smaller population, where life activities are more directly apparent. "Seeing" capital concretely means bringing together multiple mediations and determinations. The implication is that individual immediate experience is our point of entry into the social, but we must situate that experience in its generative socio-historical ground. This is evident in the work of Marxist feminist sociologist Dorothy E. Smith. Unlike the socialist feminist structuralists, who face an irreconcilable contradiction of experience and structure,[6] Smith realized the crucial importance of experience for comprehending the social organization of capital. Throughout her oeuvre, from *The Everyday World as Problematic* (1987) to her last text, *Institutional Ethnography* (2005), she demonstrated how mediations, practical/organizational and intellectual, implicate and shape each other. Smith was able to connect experience to larger social relations, helping us to "see" the formative though mediated immediacy of our social life. She pondered why we often cannot "see" the real social relations we inhabit, how we internalize ideologies of ruling, why we are entrapped in an empiricist subjectivism of immediate experience or in subject-less abstractions and positivist objectivism. In her cogitation she built up a thorough analysis of mediation between the personal and the institutional in ethnographic

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4   See Du Bois (1996). Du Bois provided a metaphor for the divided self-perception of North American Blacks and oppressed people in general. Something akin is found in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit (2018) regarding master-bondsman relations. This can be central to a critique of colonial, patriarchal, and racist discourse. It is analogous to the ideas of "bad faith" and "false consciousness." See Fanon (1967, 1968), where he explored this concept in both psychoanalytic and class terms in the context of liberation struggles.

5   The notions of ruling ideas and ideology are the same. They are not applicable to all ideas. All ideas are not ideological, though all ideologies are constellations of ideas. See Bannerji (2020b and 2020c).

6   For the paradoxical perception of experience and structure that are felt by socialist feminists, see Hartman (1979). For a critique of this position see Bannerji (1995).

terms. She prevented the occlusion of the social, of its concreteness, effected by complexities of intricate mediations and their determinations. Like classical sociologists, Smith pointed to capital's structural and institutional aspects, but she refused to discard the subjective and experiential aspects, thereby making the social both a subjective and structurally implicated phenomenon. This is essential for a fuller understanding of the social as a whole; otherwise a hyper-institutionalization of the individual would be the only option. Surrender to the mediational modes of capital would truncate our subjectivity. A fractured or partial view of the social would not enable us to find our way through the mediations of capital's shape-shifting visible and invisible formation.[7]

The social in capitalism is not only interpersonal but also majorly institutional, as individuals are primarily brought together through institutions' interlocking processes. Of these institutions, the foremost is the state, as it facilitates capital's mode of production and reproduction. Its main functions of social organization and ruling are elaborated through a legal system that networks the institutions with each other. For example, hospitals, schools, prisons, banks, and other financial institutions interconnect us in various capacities. Living in the system, individuals manifest two personalities, one of the everyday kind and the other institutional, analogous to a person and a persona. They shape the consciousness of the same individual. Examples of institutionally structured roles are found in such functions as students and teachers, patients and doctors, criminals and the judiciary, etc. These differ from everyday activities of friendship, nurturing, and other relations we have with each other. Violating or acting outside of institutional order will put subjects outside the system. However, individuals' personal experiences, their interactional sentiments, collective moralities, and religious beliefs, cannot be wholly independent of the institutions' regulatory apparatus and must be inserted into them through various mediations.

Capitalist institutions' structural and ideological forms and functions arise in response to the existential needs and relations in the civil society, which provide their content. The double consciousness within the individual is paralleled by antagonistic relations between the institutional forms and their existential content. Thus, personal experience is used as fuel for capital's institutional production and reproduction. This qualitative opposition between experience *qua* personal and *qua* institutional becomes the necessity and knowledge for critique and social transformation. In this situation, a subject is at once an individual person and a member of institutions such as the state. Only as such a member—for example, as a citizen—do institutional law and order apply to them. The personal and the institutional thus exist in a non-reconcilable tension with each other. As capital ramifies, individuals' experiences are increasingly drawn into the orbit of institutions. Though these articulating and mediatory processes cannot be "seen" in the ordinary sense, they are lived through, and a commonality exists among individuals because of shared experiences. That is why, though our experiences may be unique and random, their open-endedness is regulated by institutions. This spells out commonality among people at two levels, and their oppositions and similarities signal to their being "classes." This truth is obscured by ideology, which asserts severance of ideas from personal and material life, leaving us caught in the contraries of idealism and empiricism. This bifurcation of consciousness into personal and institutional, private and public, can be watched at work in the formation of the capitalist

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7   For capital's highly mediated composition see Marx (1954), especially his explanation of commodity fetishism.

state. We see here how the bourgeois state relies on an ideological separation between political and civil society. It uses this as a technique for politicizing culture in erecting the ideological state apparatus, an instrument of hegemony. To explain this development in liberal democracy, the base for multiculturalism, we need to take a detour into capitalist state formation.

The Capitalist State and Multiculturalism

Our common sense of the capitalist state is that it was always liberal democratic. Factually, liberal democracy is a latecomer in capital's history, which is neither linear nor teleological.[8] The early phase of capital's rule was draconian and autocratic, nor are those tendencies conclusively left behind. In any state based on class domination they continue to exist—in latent and explicit fascism, for example. This truth was captured presciently by Thomas Hobbes (1929) in *Leviathan*, a blueprint for a state of sublimated war through individual competition and trade, a war of each against all. "Primitive accumulation" (see Marx, 1954, Part 8, chapter 26) in Europe,[9] along with colonialism and global imperialism, shows how inherently undemocratic capital is. It is only "liberal" in its liberality of allowing fierce competition for the market and profit accumulation by any means necessary.

Initially the capitalist state was entirely non-representational. It took long maturation of capital, and frequent violent resistance against it from below (see Linebaugh & Reddiker, 2000), for the liberal democratic state to emerge, and even that did not occur in the colonies. Class conflicts forced the bourgeoisie to create a manageable mechanism of exploitation in the metropolitan countries to blunt the edge of class oppression and avoid an open class war. A degree of flexibility in the forms of ruling became urgent. Liberal democracy is this variant of bourgeois rule in which individuals participated only as citizens, and only in a formal sense—being at once citizens with rights while actually remaining subjects of capital, divided into antagonistic classes. This liberal state both produced and relied on differences in exclusionary and inclusionary terms, reflecting the dynamics of class relations. As long as class could be kept out of sight for politics, the state could make some adjustments in capital's domination without disturbing bourgeois rule. This separation of spheres into formal equality and actual inequality was analyzed by Marx, especially in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1970) and "On the Jewish Question" (2012). He explained how the political sphere is composed of capital's self-reproducing institutions, while the everyday life of civil society, economic and cultural, is relegated outside of the polity, thus constructing public and private spaces, the latter considered a shadowy nether zone. This spatialization occludes class and its constituting socio-cultural relations, named as gender, race, and so on, as material factors of political life. The occlusion of mutually formative relations between social spheres serves as an ideological sleight of hand necessary for liberal democracy. The separation of political and civil society is an organizational rather than an organic form.

The multiculturalist state manages underlying social inequality by translating it into a matter of cultural discontent and adjustment. A critique of liberal multiculturalism calls for

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8   For an in-depth history and discussion of the capitalist state and liberal democracy, see Macpherson (1962, 1977).

9   The notion of primitive accumulation unravels the historical process of divorcing the actual producer from the means of production for the needs of capitalist development.

an anti-ideological epistemology that is able to expose direct and indirect mediations that translate class into culture. This critique bares the solipsistic nature of liberalism, which is unable to provide social redress or emancipation because the bourgeois state is inherently incapable of doing so. The bourgeois state cannot argue a general liberatory principle from a particularist position. A politics resting on particularist demands centred on cultural identity is self-defeating, because a cultural mediation of inclusion is simultaneously a ground for exclusion. A multiculturalist/ethnoculturalist liberal state with a hidden cultural centre is still a demographic, not a democratic state.[10] Such a multicultural state meant to occlude real inequality is an ideological device for legitimation of bourgeois class interest and rule.

Recognizing official multiculturalism as a hegemonic device helps us see how EDI is an incorporative instrument to seize on cultural diversity and blurs the difference between social critique and a theoretical projection as subjective interpretation and narration. To say this is not to negate the role of ideas and culture in class politics and capitalist formation, but culture must be seen from a historical materialist standpoint. A structuralist approach also needs a similar reframing through a historical materialist perspective. Espousing a dualist approach between structure and culture can only produce an ideological and reifying way of reading the social. Cultural categories converted into official identities serve simply as institutional codifications. They name and grade us as citizens and subjects of the state and activate us differentially as political participants (Mamdani 2018). These cultural identities are not natural facts on the ground, but rather discrete objects of ideology. A paradox results whereby manipulated diversity gives an impression of equality while actually dividing the society into majority and minority, socio-culturally superior and inferior. Racist patriarchal and colonial capitalist discourses underwrite this diversity, incorporating power-inscribed difference in the state and society.

In Louis Althusser's (1968) theory of the ideological state apparatus (ISA), we find how the liberal democratic state is composed by ideology for an effective hegemony. He shows how the state apparatus is organized through ideological interpellations of cultural stereotypes. Multiculturalism keeps out of sight the repressive state apparatus (RSA) until the last instant. It hides relations of systemic power and treats culture as a mode of pacification of open class struggle.[11] But scrutiny of hegemony shows that in spite of efforts to overcome capital's crises through cultural accommodation, hegemony is always incomplete and needs constant renewal; otherwise it faces collapse. A nervousness regarding maintenance of hegemony is evident in the constant vigilance and concern for "security" against an ever-present popular resistance. A fear of destabilization of power equilibrium haunts capitalism, and when the ISA fails, the RSA is violently employed. This is manifest in hyper-incarceration as the liberal state morphs into the neo-liberal state.[12] Thus in North America, resistance of Black, Indigenous, and non-white populations elicits

10   For grasping the nature of a demographic state, such as Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia, see Bannerji (2011).

11   See Althusser (1968) and Miliband (1973). Gramsci (1971) concurs that the capitalist state is a constantly incorporative one, which expands its hegemony by constituting legal subjects in various manners to produce both inclusion and exclusion (see particularly the chapter "State and Civil Society"). This hegemonic dimension is demonstrated by Noam Chomsky in the film *Manufacturing Consent and the Media* (Wintonick & Achbar 1992).

12   On the carceral state in the U.S. see, among others, Gilmore (2007).

crushing punitive measures. Something of the same nature penetrates educational and cultural institutions as well. An ongoing negative relation from experiences of oppression and discrimination pervades the social space. Struggles against ascribed official identities develop in individual and collective terms. This antagonism is a form of class struggle, even when people themselves are unaware of it as such.[13] Thus hegemony and counter-hegemony grow incrementally, though not linearly, as capital morphs and changes occur in state forms. Strategies and tactics of feminist anti-racism and labour movements are at the core of this counter-hegemonic politics of knowledge and practice.

The Multicultural State and the Canadian Experience

My life in Canada since the late 1960s bears testimony to the vicissitudes of struggles around hegemony, contestation over knowledge for both ruling and resistance, sometimes insurgent and at other times within the political space of liberal democracy. This manifested in the state's compulsion to morph from settler colonialism into liberal democracy. The state felt the pressure of expanding population and labour needs. New immigration laws were put in place and the family was redefined regarding family unification. Public awareness of entrenched white supremacy and all manner of sexist-racist class inequalities seeped into popular consciousness and catalyzed people's political participation. Demands for a real democracy developed new popular political agencies. The Canadian state, in turn, sought to manage, deflect, and suppress these transformative aspirations. A major tactic was cultural manipulation through the discourse of liberalism, rephrased in the language of EDI. *The Dark Side of the Nation* (Bannerji, 2000) shows this containment process, which blunted the sense of popular entitlement. These manoeuvres fractured feminist, anti-racist, and working-class activism. The discourse of class was replaced by "community" and cultural categories as ideological codes for administration and social regulation. The notion of citizenship thus penetrated by discourses of culture and heritage created a hierarchically differentiated citizenship. This cultural reification attached to different communities gave rise to "identity politics." The prescribed ethnicist, racialized, and colonial stereotypes also involved religion (see Bolaria & Li, 1988; Dua & Robertson, 1999; Razack, 2008). The multicultural state used these "identities" as hegemonic devices to incorporate immigrant subjects into state institutions. These multicultural identities, deprived of the fluidity and porosity of actual cultures, were internalized or used by such designated groups. Typologies emerging from Europe's imaginary of "others" smuggled into official multiculturalism the liberal state's employment of patriarchy, racism, and class. While liberationist anti-racist movements sought to eliminate the very idea of "race" from social analysis, they were forced to engage in the politics of cultural identities. Thus, multiculturalism became a political tool of dividing and ruling. The alibi of culturalism opened a path for essentialized versions of religion into the polity, interpreting the religion of "others" through centuries of colonial, racist common sense. Offices of race and community relations marked the governing process of redress, relying on reactionary discourses of tradition and heritage. There was an unspoken dominance of European high cultures. This is multiculturalism from above, counterposed by social praxis of "multiculturalism from *below*." Liberal democracy could

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13 In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels (1985) speak of open and hidden struggles of classes; they are sometimes manifested as anti-capitalist movements and sometimes as hidden micro struggles and sabotage. See also Braverman (1974) and Lukács (1971).

only offer narrow channels for recognition and reconciliation, incapable of delivering social justice.

Scrutiny of the ISA thus reveals an elision between culture and politics, and prompts queries about the truth of lives in the reality of capitalism. We need to avoid the seduction of empiricist, culturalist perspectives of liberalism to reconnect the severance of culture from society. Empiricism is the main pitfall of liberalism's particularist ideological stance, positing a fractured, disconnected view of reality. In liberalism, where formal equality substitutes real inequality, justice becomes a ritual of law for the reproduction of the capitalist state. Thus, we are directed to interpret democracy in the bourgeois sense. Stuck between the normalcy of liberal discourse and the need for true social justice, our fight must be against ideology, because it is vital for structuring capital.

Ideology obscures the real reasons for our myriad existential problems, including those of imperialism and an ongoing history of global primitive accumulation and wars. It hides the truth about Canada's "settlement" by Britain and France as a ruthless expansion of European capitalism through territorial seizure, occupation, and the creation of a racializing state. Thus the conglomeration called "Canada" formed at the behest of the world market, whether "settled" or not. The state forms and ruling particularities shifted over time through various stages of mercantile, industrial, and financialized capitalism, culminating in neo-liberalism. The specificity of modern capitalist colonies is evident when compared with pre-capitalist ones. Even within capitalism there are variations—for example, between mercantile capitalism of chartered monopolies and industrial capitalism of Britain. Modern colonialism could not survive and reproduce without a capitalist state. Though it began as naked conquest, violent appropriation of territories arbitrarily "settled," ultimately a suitable state was indispensable. What resulted, in present-day parlance, was an apartheid state of dual spaces of "settlers" and "Indigenous others," and marked spaces of exclusion. The "nation" state of colonizers was dotted with "reserves." This process of development is in the history of the Royal Proclamation, land treaties, and the Indian Act and its amendments.[14] The extermination of Indigenous peoples was normalized through various means, and their land, social rights, and humanity were denied. A class of super-exploited workers was added to the stratification by the northern migration of former U.S. slaves and imported segregated labour from Asia. This fringe labour lay below the white working class from past to present. These factors complicated the establishment of a liberal state in Canada, and explain why racialization is ingrained in Canadian class formation. The template works for the West as a whole, making sense to talk of racial capitalism.

Demand for cultural equality in Canada was a project of whiteness raised by non-Anglo Europeans. It was meant to seek parity with the Anglo national culture and had little to do with class. Cultural discourse here conflated nationality and whiteness, and spoke through a "northern" civilizational ideology that instituted a commonality among the occupiers.[15] Present-day multiculturalism retains something of this earlier whiteness

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14 The Indian Act, enacted in 1876, derived from the Royal Proclamation of 1763. These have continued to affect Indigenous peoples in Canada in dire ways with regard to land, governance, reservations, schooling, and so on.

15 After confederation (1880) the idea of the North, symbolized by pure whiteness, became central to the Canadian settler-colonial discourse. The Group of Seven presented us with a new visual ideology that is racialized.

project, fraught with a common sense of race and colonization. The 1960s, with its "open-door" importation of "free" labour from the West Indies and other former colonies, adapted a blatant racial discourse to euphemism by substituting polite appellations such as "people of colour," "immigrant," and "new Canadian." With this, multiculturalism appeared on the scene. Signalling an exclusion and discrimination among workers, it generated a toxic atmosphere for the incoming population, matching the hierarchy between white citizens and immigrant subjects. This resulted in discrimination and marginalization, subverting political movements against the status quo, which foregrounded Canada's character as a settler colony, inspiring a wide array of anti-racist politics and a nexus between Indigenous and anti-racist labour struggles. This anti-status quo politics had two directions: one oriented toward capitalist democracy, and the other, smaller in number, toward a radical social(ist) democracy. The Canadian state bolstered the first group, with its state-ascribed cultural identification, which wanted access from the margin to the centre, asking capital to deliver what it is generically unable to give. A segregationism underscored the state patronage, with limited representation based on a racialized cultural perception.

A regime of pacification was reached, consisting of repression and co-optation, in which the latter activated the pluralist aspect of liberalism in resorting to multiculturalism. Processes of co-optation are increasingly at work now as insurgent social, economic, and climate justice movements give a sharper edge to anti-corporate demands. Revolutionary possibilities of anti-racist feminist movements were co-opted into bourgeois feminism, re-articulated and modified through the discourse of institutional representation. The state's bottom line is to domesticate any potential or actual anti-capitalist struggle and, instead, to contribute to middle-class formation among the marginalized "others." Only a politics of class and capital would have provided the bedrock for social struggles toward equality. It was this that the state sought to undercut.

Ideology and Politics

To grasp how ordinary ideas change into ideological categories for ruling that mediate capital's institutional structure, converting equality into equity, class into hierarchical cultural diversity, we get profound insights from Dorothy Smith's method of institutional ethnography (IE) compounded with social organization of knowledge. Her key texts (1987, 1990, 1999, 2005) analyzed the institutional constitution of capital's sociality through interpellations of everyday experiences into the ruling apparatus of the state and its reproduction. Smith emphasized the resulting consciousness from the dynamics of institutional and non-institutional experiences. Nobody lives outside this social dynamic, neither those who are incorporated into the system as producers of ruling discourses and practices, nor those antagonistic to them. The idea of a double consciousness, previously discussed, alludes to this. This was what Smith meant by "institutional capture" and what she analyzed through her ethnographic study of mothering young children within the purview of public schooling.[16] Her query primarily drew upon the conflicting relationships between mothers of young students and teachers as professional enforcers of the institution's rules.

16   For institutional capture, see Smith (2005, pp. 155–157). The individual person is at the nodal point of multiple institutional belonging. Their friction also produces sources of knowledge—for example, a person as a citizen and a criminal, or a citizen as a woman. The issues of abortion and motherhood are powerful examples. See also Bannerji (2022).

She displayed in the process the ideological interlocking between people in their personal and institutional lives. In order to be considered competent mothers, the mothers had to be well-versed in the discipline of the school and regulated curricula, and teachers had to be adept at enforcing ruling categories coherent with state education policies.[17]

Dorothy Smith's critique of ideology, which has strong political implications, along with other critiques of the effects of liberalism on education provided by critical pedagogy are powerful resources for developing transformative knowledge. But this has been done inadequately because of the academicization of ideas generated by liberationist social movements, both in theoretical and administrative terms. The rapid rise of postmodernism among Western academics and intelligentsia is responsible for this. Disconnecting accountability of knowledge to truth, this epistemological turn from materialist critique and social analysis, from resistance politics to versions of liberalism, was characterized by indecision and lack of socio-historical reference. Ultimately, such an approach of separation between culture and society could only "trouble" and "destabilize," or at best interrogate, existing forms of inequality. Such a linguistic turn could not take a stand on the causes of social ills. Its popularity, in fact, lay solely among the intelligentsia, whose stake in overthrowing capitalism and imperialism is not high. Postmodernism is problematic on counts of both theory and practice because it lacks a socio-historical ontology, which prevents the very ideas of society, social subjectivities, and agencies from arising within its scope. What is needed, on the contrary, is an epistemology of change, a social analysis which demands that experience and other particularities be assessed in terms of their mediated involvement in capital's social organization.

But postmodernism denies its own social ontology because it rejects the concept of ontology itself. It is reliant, therefore, on a variety of techniques of narration and linguistic resources. This, of course, is immaterial for the purpose of social transformation, as postmodernism has no such agenda and lacks a grounded critique. Substituting and conflating discourse with social relations, it cannot be activated for political action. Thus, postmodernism, rejecting social truth as the end of knowledge, becomes an exercise in interpretation and speculation, with various degrees of finesse. Its radical posture ends up in a refined liberalism, denying a determining link between knowledge and truth, and thereby sabotaging truth-seeking knowledge by adopting an equivalence between different kinds of narrative or seeing all accounts as narratives. Due to its ideological basis, postmodernism cannot grasp the actualities of social contradictions and, therefore, the mutual implication of cultural and class struggles. In this framework, adjustments to capitalism and imperialism are possible, because their overthrow is not conceivable. Difference, in this context, is disconnected from class and becomes merely passive diversity. Postmodernism's reliance on plurality gives it a radical guise, but it functions within the paradigm of liberalism's indirect and limited representation, incapable of delivering equality. It can speak to violence and power, but only at a phenomenal level. Therefore, it cannot serve as an anti-capitalist intellectual force, which Dorothy Smith's method so powerfully does.

Smith's work generated a world view that cannot be incorporated in that of capital, and does not reduce social subjects to objects of capital's institutions. Financialized and neo-liberal capitalism is not only an economic phenomenon but also changes our very

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17   How civil society enables the capitalist state's reproduction is demonstrated in Dorothy Smith's joint study with Allison Griffith (2022).

subjectivity. The subject's sense of self changes into that of prospective entrepreneurs, shareholders, and stock owners. In this context, where ideology seems to disappear in economic instrumentalization and consumerism becomes the ultimate social good, commodity fetishism flourishes as common sense, and aspirations for fundamental social change and true equality are sacrificed for enhancing the GDP, profit making, and upward mobility. Thus equity, substituting for equality, serves as a mediational device, a nexus between different aspects of capital. Institutions of higher learning are intrinsic to this circuit. The category of equity, combined with diversity and limited inclusion, is the attraction of official multiculturalism, though in reality it is a mode of pacification of social discontent. The embedding of centres of learning and culture erodes the relative autonomy that they once enjoyed in capital's high bourgeois earlier stages. Though the earlier liberal democracy was always market oriented, certain institutions had not been wholly annexed by the raw workings of capital. They stood on its margin, indicating an uneven development of the mode. In neo-liberalism, the social has become transparently economic. The neo-liberal subject's identity and agency have become deeply submerged in the market, giving consumption a greater role than production. Lingering traces of the Enlightenment sense of "liberal" have disappeared from the present neo-liberal state and society. Ethical liberals, such as John Stuart Mill, who tried to accommodate self-developmental freedom with market freedom, seeking the best of both worlds, have ultimately failed. Thus, educational institutions are fast mutating into packaging units for commodified knowledge, converting students into buyers and teachers/professors into knowledge vendors or service providers.

Neo-liberalism has made the idea of social good, of humanity, epistemologically unthinkable. The idea of society itself is equally unthinkable in this epistemology of hyper-empiricism. Learning spaces are the production centres of ideology, concealing the commonality of people's interpersonal experiences and the social nature of oppressions. In this way race, gender, and class are occluded. If visible at all, they are seen in the mode of intersectionality, but not mutually formative. Politically speaking, therefore, cultural producers, including university teachers, have been dis-identified as dedicated scholars of non-commodified knowledge, or as "workers," albeit "mental workers," and inducted into an entrepreneurial self-image and agency. It has become increasingly difficult for them to enter the arena of class struggles, their identity as producers having been substituted by professionalization and expertise. The profound social deformation that this has given rise to cannot be solved through corrective legislation, multicultural representation, or unenforceable human rights. There is no legislation against class, and all rights are centred in the right to private property.

Recourses available under liberalism for dealing with social inequality and oppression are simply band-aids, since the problem lies in the very system of capitalism itself. The idea of representation unconnected to class camouflages the fundamental social relations of capital. Under liberalism, class exploitation/oppression is dealt with in a symptomatic manner, leaving its reason unaddressed. The collective cause of the problem of inequality can only be addressed in a collective form. The most that can be done through indirect representation is to increase the bandwidth of the middle class through inclusivity. Inequalities of class placed in a legal civil, individual, and cultural rights discourse cannot correct the exclusionary wrongs of capital. Relations of property and power, which construct and are diffused in the workplace and society at large, can only deal with inequality cosmetically. Therefore EDI,

which activates multiculturalist ideology, can only perform systemic exclusion in the guise of inclusion.

If we don't want to play within the rules of the ISA, we need to consider EDI in a larger socio-political context and see if we can assign it a transformative role. This pragmatic approach is being adopted by progressive teachers and intellectuals who are expanding their syllabi, research projects, and interdisciplinary and multiple perspectives, and are administratively creating caucuses and committees with internal democracy. They try to link up with larger bodies, such as trade unions, radical social movements, and social democratic political parties. But this has not been effective enough to counter the state ISA, including the universities. Though a critical consciousness has developed in the university to counter higher education as a mere vector for transmission of facts and skills and ideologies that convey capital's legitimation,[18] it has not been enough to push back against the pressure of neo-liberalism. With all these efforts, what has been achieved is a productive schizophrenia, signalled above as double consciousness, whose contradictions may generate the initial steps of social and self-transformation. Being functionaries of the system, our aspirations as educators and cultural workers can be a beginning of self-searching and critical pedagogy.[19] But all this will only equip us to become aware of an anti-capitalist struggle that still needs to be forged.

Conclusion

Years have passed since the initiation of official multiculturalism and the installation of the mantra of EDI for managing social contradictions. Non-state bodies were the first to join this covertly political cultural project, and others followed. Universities became contested spaces. Upheavals in the humanities and social sciences seeking accurate social analyses and critiques were sought to be pacified through ideological devices like EDI. The subjects that we now consider indispensable for university curricula, such as Postcolonial, Women's, Black, and Indigenous Studies, were absent not so long ago. Efforts were made to introduce theoretical innovations and interdisciplinarity. But all these developments were not very productive at linking us back to larger social movements against capital. My own experience testifies to this. I learned about feminism in a non-academic environment, in a basement that housed a small collective called Women's Place. There we met to explore the meaning of the slogan "the personal is political." There we read Sylvia Plath's and Anne Sexton's poetry, Doris Lessing's novels, Betty Friedan's and Kate Millet's critiques of patriarchy, and so on. Other liberationist theories that influenced feminism were inducted through teach-ins and marches on the Vietnam War, and discussions on U.S. civil rights and Black power politics, on anti-apartheid politics, racism, and violence against women.[20] Together they taught us to critique capitalist colonialism and racist patriarchy. When these topics were

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18 See Freire (1970). This volume is the primary source for the idea of critical pedagogy and the notion of conscientization, implying liberatory, self-emancipating knowledge.

19 See Corrigan & Sayer (1985); also Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (2004). Scholars of Canadian multiculturalism and law have exposed the role played by culture historically in providing and diffusing moral regulation through state formation. See Backhouse (1999); Mackey (2002); Razack (2002).

20 For an excellent critical overview of this development in the U.S. context, Taylor (2019) is a must read.

introduced in the universities, there was a paucity of teaching material, so we produced our own material in Canada instead of always turning to the United States and Britain.[21] The near total absence of non-white people, particularly women, in full-time academic positions, and their scarcity even in part-time positions, doesn't feel like a long time ago. Eventually, through the pressure of social movements outside the university that empowered us to demand a radical change in these directions, the "diversity"-related disciplines mentioned above became not only respectable but also the staple of current university curricula. What is tragic, however, is that with the growth of this respectability, academic pursuits and social movements/direct politics began to part company. The idea of decolonization, for example, initially introduced in the West through anti-colonial/anti-imperialist struggles and political writings, such as those of Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Che Guevara, and others, was unmoored from its historical context and became just a theory, a way of embellishing intellectual excursions.

With capital now consolidated in its neo-liberal phase, times are harder than when multiculturalism and EDI gained their ideological ground. As militaristic imperialism spreads globally, multicultural liberalism has yielded place to the onslaught of neo-conservatism, right-wing populism, blatant white supremacism, and, finally, fascism. In this interregnum, where the ideological state apparatus is in decline and socialist options are not clearly articulated, should we adopt the previously mentioned pragmatic approach and cling to multiculturalism and EDI? Can we really steer these means towards some alleviation of the social crises? Should we now consider revitalizing the ISA to facilitate entry into a limited political activism? Would the old social democratic adage, that the state is a flexible structure with relative autonomy from class relations, provide any meaningful recourse in the current situation? My answer would be no. After all, at the moment a certain type of bourgeoisie is in high ascendancy and the RSA dominant, working-class struggle is sporadic and at a low ebb. It seems unlikely that we would get anywhere with this stance. It behooves us now to inquire deeply into how we can build and strengthen militant and critical social movements and push back at the neo-liberal state. This is only possible when knowledge is defined as truth.

Neo-liberalism is rolling back the gains from earlier struggles, and attempts to retrieve these gains are our present ambition. After all, radical social change cannot be produced from deep immiseration and political disentitlement, from the victimhood of surveillance and incarceration. Though we may choose a rearguard action of rethinking multiculturalism as a better option, one cannot move history backward. We may hope that liberalism is self-correcting and can connect us back to class struggle. But there is always the danger of being overwhelmed by a pervasive and viciously competitive and consumerist culture. At this point, institutional instruments of mediation need to be re-articulated to match the changes in capital's mode. Therefore, new social movements against power relations sustaining capital must invent new forms, and perhaps modify some old ones. Culture is

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21   In the Canadian context, see my edited anthology (Bannerji, 1993), Vorst (1992), Dua & Robertson (1999), Brand & Sri Bhaggiyadatta (1986), among other texts. It might be amusing for readers to know that the manuscript of *Returning the Gaze* (Bannerji, 1993), which contained writings by now respected writers Lee Maracle, Winnie Ng, Linda Carty, Dionne Brand, Roxanna Ng, May Yee, and me, was rejected by Between the Lines Press at the time on the grounds that these authors did not know how to write.

not a negligible weapon in this context, but the multiculturalism of our time must be from "below." This process may begin by calling on the university to deliver on its promise of actualizing a democratic version of knowledge.

Ultimately, we must leave liberalism behind for socialism, choose revolution over reform. Demand for equity must be translated into struggle for equality both in everyday and organized politics. The control of land, natural resources, labour, production, and reproduction must be in common hands. We also need to reimagine our social situation beyond hierarchy, think collectively beyond individualism. The identities that mark our agencies have to be those of resistance, not of birth or ethnic belonging, uncritical of the use of the past. We must have a hand in shaping our identities, not merely rely on inherited ones and insert old traits in a new historical condition. Only in this way will subjectivities and agencies for an uncompromised socialism emerge.

In conclusion, it should be evident that this essay is a reflection on the development of ideology and the role it plays in politics by preventing the discernment of actual and existing social relations and culture. The "dimness" that St. Paul alluded to comes from the glass that only allows for a "dark" vision. Ideology is that disturbing mirror in and through which we misunderstand the reality that surrounds us. The issue of truth remains the chief criterion in the designating of mental activities, forms of consciousness, as knowledge— what Marx called "sensuous, practical, human" knowledge. This knowledge, which lets us "see" reality face to face, lets us bare and unravel the complexity of mediation, arises from real life and gives us tools for changing that reality.

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