Editorial

We are happy to present to you the 22nd edition of the ESJP! This edition features three papers written by curious and ambitious students. Max Omlo wrote a beautiful essay on short stories by Franz Kafka and Adolf Loos, analyzing the relation between self and Other from a philosophical and psychological point of view. As an editorial board, we were very impressed by the elegant writing style and argumentation. Our second essay is written by Giovanni Prins, who as an editor is no stranger to the ESJP. Giovanni chose to write about a subject that has slowly attracted widespread attention in philosophy: what is the relation between racism and philosophy? This is an important discourse to have within the field, and we are glad to see Giovanni's excellent paper contributing to it. Last but certainly not least, Jeroen de Vries has written a paper analyzing the concept of moral development in John Rawl's theory of justice. To any reader, it will be more than clear why such an outstanding writer is not only published in the ESJP, but a member of our editorial board as well. Lastly, we have included the winning essay of the essay competition "extracurricular philosophy", organised by the faculty. We congratulate Senad Delić for writing his interesting essay that impressed the competition jury and the ESJP editorial board alike. We hope you enjoy reading all papers, we certainly did.

I want to thank the lovely editors who worked very hard on this edition. Sonia, Ermanno, Giovanni, Luc, Arwen, Gideon, Lara Rose, Noor, Merel, Dimitri and Alexandrine; thank you so much for your work, inspiration, and patience. It's always challenging to publish a new edition, but with editors like you we were guaranteed to bring about something valuable and special. Our editorial board changed respective to our last edition; Ivar Frisch could no longer work on this edition, and we want to wish him all the best. And, without a doubt, I need to sincerely thank Jeroen de Vries; secretary of the ESJP. Jeroen, thank you especially for your work, patience, and care for the ESJP. Lastly, we can't forget the members of our advisory board, Thijs Heijmeskamp and Jamie van der Klaauw, and the supervisory board; Prof. dr. Hub Zwart, Dr. Constanze Binder, and Prof. dr. Han van Ruler. Thank you for your continued support, we appreciate it greatly.

We were lucky to celebrate our last edition in the Culture Hub in a joint event with ERA. Nathalie Kirch gave a speech about her article published in our last edition, which was followed by a group discussion. Religion and religious experiences are something all of us can relate to, in one way or another, but it was Nathalie who made everyone present feel at ease and excited to engage in passionate philosophical discourse. We thank the academic committee and general board of ERA for organizing the event with us, and we thank Nathalie and all students present for the lovely evening.

And, of course, we need to take a moment once again for the readers of the journal. We couldn't have this journal without you, and I am grateful for each and every one of you. Working for the ESJP has brought me experiences I never thought I would have. I remember waiting outside of the restaurant after our special edition symposium and engaging in a conversation with the invited speaker Prof. Howard Caygill. We talked about why rain smells like rain, it's probably due to the oils on the leaves and plants that get released when rain falls upon them. We talked for a long time. Sometimes, you only realize an experience was meaningful to you as time goes on. When you look back and contrast everything you've been through, you can suddenly see in clarity some memories 'feel' more than others. This wasn't one of them. Somehow, in our conversation, I knew this meant a lot to me. My memory feels the same. I wouldn't have had this experience if it weren't for the ESJP. So, when I write my thank-you's in this editorial, as every editor-in-chief has before me, believe us. We truly are grateful.

All the best,

Georgina Aránzazu Dijkstra
Editor-in-chief

About

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The Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy (ESJP) is a double-blind peer-reviewed student journal that publishes the best philosophical papers written by students from the Erasmus School of Philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam and from the Humanities Programme of the Erasmus University College. Its aims are to further enrich the philosophical environment in which Rotterdam's philosophy students develop their thinking and bring their best work to the attention of a wider intellectual audience. Aside from serving as an important academic platform for students to present their work, the journal has two other goals. First, to provide members of the editorial board with the opportunity to develop their own editing and writing skills. Second, to enable students to realize their first official academic publication during their time as a student at ESPhil or the Humanities Department of the EUC. A new issue of the ESJP appears on our website every January and June.

To ensure the highest possible quality, the ESJP only accepts papers that (a) have been written for a course that is part of the Erasmus University College or Erasmus School of Philosophy curriculum and (b) nominated for publication in the ESJP by the teacher of that course. Each paper that is published in the ESJP is subjected to a double-blind peer review process in which at least one other teacher and two student editors act as referees.

The ESJP encourages students to keep in mind the possibility of publishing their course papers in our journal, and to write papers that appeal to a wider intellectual audience.

In this Issue

In his essay **"A Phenomenologist, a Psychologist, and a Rich Man Walk into a Burrow…"**, Max Omlo examines the relation between self and Other that is nestled loosely between two short stories. One is by Franz Kafka, the other by Adolf Loos. As the essay will point out, each story runs in opposing direction to the other. By nature of their peculiarity, both stories leave ample room to be filled with questions about subjectivity. Especially those about the notion of placing oneself in another's shoes. Omlo uses this as an opportunity to examine and illustrate the confrontation between self and Other put forth by Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy and contrasted in James Gibson's theory of occlusion. In the case of this essay, this unusual synthesis results in a reassertion of Levinas' conclusion, in hopes of helping us think about the nuances of understanding.

Is there a structural relation between racism and philosophy? Giovanni Prins argues that in order to obtain a more expansive and accurate account of racism in philosophy, we must lose the contention that a structural relation exists between the two, and explore the particular philosophy of the individual instead. His essay **Racism and Philosophy:** *A Structural or Accidental Relationship?* questions Harry Bracken and Noam Chomsky's contention that rationalism provides a conceptual barrier against racism, whereas empiricism does not. Using Stephen Asma's internal and external causal metaphors, he argues that rationalism or internalism can give rise to racial determinism. Prins additonally considers the relation between rationalism and racism from the perspective of Kant's dualism between the real noumenal realm, and the phenomenal realm of experience and the works of Hegel. In their work, Prins demonstrates, the body becomes an expression of the mind, which translated into racial thinking creates the potential for a noumenal racism. Prins outlines an argument posed by Kay Squadrito, and how this creates a distinction between normal and abnormal. Furthermore, the essay outlines that attempting to find a structural relation between philosophical traditions and racism – as Bracken and Chomsky do - is reductionist. It obscures particularities and simplifies individual philosophies to categories.

In **On the Impossibility of Moral Development in John Rawls's** *Theory of Justice*, Jeroen de Vries argues that the theory employs a circular conceptualization of *moral persons*, which makes it unable to accommodate change in the moral intuitions of its subjects of justice. By postulating shared intuitions in his *moral persons*, Rawls makes it impossible to disagree with said intuitions and still be relevant to justice. This can lead to the naturalistic fallacy as well as a form of majority rule, both of which Rawls sought to avoid. Furthermore, this can lead to *moral overconfidence* when unanimity is attained, and to *moral stalemates* when shared intuitions are lacking. Lastly, the paper comments on the practical relevance of the claims it makes and remarks on the necessity of anticipating change when deliberating on principles of justice.

Senad Delić wrote the winning essay **Beyond Stalinism:** *How Kautsky inspired a modern communist movement in the Netherlands* for this year's faculty essay competition on extracurricular philosophy. The essay competition urged students to write an essay about a thinker who in their opinion can (or should) be incorporated into the philosophy curriculum. Senad wrote about Karl Kautsky and argues that anti-capitalist revolutionary socialism is possible without falling back into dictatorial party-bureaucracy or capitalist revisionism.

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A Phenomenologist, a Psychologist, and a Rich Man Walk into a Burrow…

Max Omlo

Franz Kafka's *The Burrow* (1971) tells us the peculiar story of a creature's subterranean life in its burrow, an existence of complete isolation lived mostly underground in a burrow it has meticulously designed and constructed. We find out that this construction process is never really over, as the creature constantly considers redesigning elements of its home to improve it even further (Kafka, p. 329). Most of these considerations centre around optimizing the protective functions of the burrow, which act as a barrier against intrusion. One element it considers reconstructing is the labyrinth that leads to the burrow's entrance. Any intruder is likely to get lost in the maze, whilst the creature knows perfectly the correct way through, as it knows intimately the entire layout of its burrow (Kafka, p. 331-2). Toward the end of the story the creature's isolation is interrupted by a whistling noise that confronts it with the potential presence of another creature (Kafka, p. 344, 353). The creature's thinking then runs wild as it rabidly tries its best to discern who this potential intruder is and what might motivate them, only for the story to abruptly end mid-sentence without revealing any more about the encounter it anticipates (Kafka, p. 358-9).

Kafka's story, through the creature's rabid attempts to understand the intruding Other that ultimately escapes the creature's knowing, establishes as a theme the relation between self and the Other. Whilst in the story hostility is implicit in the attempt to see through the Other's eyes, the expression "to put yourself in someone else's shoes" is generally understood to imply an experience of empathy, the sharing in the feelings of an Other. Yet, in the literal sense, nothing of the Other remains except their shoes in which you place your*self*. You simply assume their position, which constitutes an act of understanding, but in no way a confrontation with their particular being. This essay explores the phenomenon of confrontation with an Other through Franz Kafka's *The Burrow*, asking the question of whether perceiving the world from someone else's position constitutes a meeting with their being. To this end I will be drawing heavily from Laura Stahman's Levinasian reading of Kafka's story. Using James Gibson's theory of occlusion I will examine this reading through the lens of perception, which provides one possible answer to the afore-posed question.

Gibson was a psychologist whose research focussed on the field of visual perception. In chapter eleven of *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (1986), Gibson calls to attention the discovery of the occluding edge. The discovery refers to an experiment where participants watched the coming together of two planes of texture on a screen. As the planes met, the participants observed how one plane appeared to move behind the other as it gradually disappeared from view upon the edge of the other plane. In reality, there was no depth to the display that the participants were shown. The plane that disappeared upon the edge of the other plane never moved behind it, but was simply progressively *deleted* upon that edge, gradually shrinking until it was fully removed from the display and only one plane remained. So although the plane had in fact been entirely deleted at the end of the display, the participants perceived it to persist in occlusion behind the other plane (Gibson, p. 180-2). An implication of this discovery is that perception does not have to coincide with sensory input. A hidden surface, by its occluded nature, does not provide sensory input by which it can be perceived: it can only be *remembered* from previous sensory input when we observed it from a position where it was not occluded. Yet in the experiment, no sensory input ever existed for the hidden plane because it was never hidden but simply deleted. The fact that the participants nonetheless *perceived* the deleted plane to persist as being behind the other plane puts into question the assertion that perception needs to be caused

by a basis of sensory information. Therefore, when Kafka's creature attempts to see the world through the eyes of its imagined intruder, this is not a futile effort. Gibson argues that orientation is constituted not only by perception of the space that one can see, but it also includes space that one cannot observe but which can nonetheless be perceived (Gibson, p. 188-90). This also means that without having to place yourself in someone else's exact position, you can perception-wise put yourself in their shoes and adopt their point of view to share an experience of the world without having to receive the exact same sensory input as they do (Gibson, p. 191).

Alternatively to this psychological understanding, another approach to the relation between self and the Other is found in phenomenology. "Other" here is used in the sense of something that is fundamentally beyond the grasp of the subject, separated by a gap that cannot be bridged by perception, visual or otherwise. To alleviate this dissonance the Other is reduced to object. Levinas points out that as soon the subject tries to understand the Other, the Other is subsumed: understanding happens in relation to the self and is an objectification (Levinas, 1996, p. 9). This conclusion is not a novel position in the field of phenomenology. However, Levinas' thought does distinguish itself from that of other thinkers like Sartre in reversing the approach to the constitution of a subject. According to Levinas, it is not the case that the pre-existing subject is the original source of meaning in relation to which objects are placed. Rather, the constitution of a subject requires in the first place an object in relation to which the subject can place *itself*. It is only in encounter with the Other that we acquire subjecthood as we are invoked to express ourselves as an "I" before the "you" of the Other (Levinas, p. 7-8; Stahman. 2004, p. 25-6). Stahman provides us with a reading of *The Burrow* that uses this approach to the subject as a lens to view Kafka's creature. She points to Levinas' insistence that prior to this experience the self exists only as an interiority, and it is through the act of speech that the self is externalised as a personality presented before the Other. Before a meeting with the Other, the self exists only in the sense of "being there", "*Il y a*", as opposed to the exterior "*me voici*" of a personality that presents itself situated as "I am here" (Stahman, p. 26-8). In Stahman's reading, the creature in Kafka's *The Burrow* exists only *there*, as a non-externalised self, self-identified and isolated from any interaction (Stahman, p. 28). The prospect of being confronted with an Other, having to present itself as an "I", induces the greatest anxiety in the creature. Its inner monologue foregoes any possibility of expressing itself as subject before the Other: "the instant when we see each other, more, at the moment when we merely guess at each other's presence, we shall both blindly bare our claws and teeth, neither of us a second before or after the other, both of us filled with a new and different hunger, even if we should already be gorged to bursting" (Kafka, p. 358). If the relation between subject and object is symbolised in Kafka's story, then it is represented, as Stahman points out, as a violent struggle (Stahman, p. 31).

Throughout Kafka's story, the burrowed creature continually shows itself to be capable of excellent orientation and perception. By Gibson's logic it should be equally capable of perceiving the world from another creature's perspective, placing itself in someone else's shoes. One of the conclusions Gibson draws from the discovery of the occluding edge is that the ability to place yourself in someone else's shoes in perception means that egocentrism is not something that comes naturally to humans (Gibson, p. 191). Yet, no empathy is to be detected in the inner monologue of Kafka's creature. It is capable of perceiving the world from another's position, and yet remains deeply egotistical. What Stahman's reading of Kafka has shown us is that the two are in fact not mutually exclusive. Perception is an act of understanding: not a meeting with the Other by externalisation of the self, but an internal grasping at the Other, like the egotistical speculation Kafka's burrower undertakes upon the disturbance of its isolation. It has no interest in a meeting with the Other. On the contrary – that is its biggest fear. Indeed, it tries its hardest to alleviate the uncertainty of this interaction by subsuming the Other in its understanding.

To conclude, I would like to compare *The Burrow* to a different but matching story: Adolf Loos' *The Poor Little Rich Man* (2003). Stahman has shown us how Kafka's story can be read as an account of an interiorised self, skilfully perceptive but exclusively self-relational, that comes to be called upon by an Other through which its subjectivity is threatened to be drawn out. Loos' story, in contrast, tells of a socially accomplished rich man with a faithful wife, plenty of children and loving friends. Suddenly enamoured by art, the man has an architect fill his house perfectly with art to the extent that even the slightest change would ruin its composition. This aesthetic perfection that leaves no room for expression makes the man isolated, his subjectivity locked out from the rest of the world. When he receives presents for his birthday, he is unable to place them in his house, which leaves him deeply unhappy. He can no longer interact with his relatives the way he used to, as his social capacities – empathy perhaps among them – come to be affected (Loos, p. 18-20). Loos' story is in this sense a reversal of the account of Kafka's burrower in that it tells of an externalised self that is forced into its interior, a subject that can no longer express himself as an "I" before an Other but whose existence is now solely a "being there". The story tells not of a loss of perceptive ability which Gibson hails as proof of empathy. When it comes to the relation between self and the Other, it is therefore not productive to think of the idea of placing yourself in another's shoes as a meeting. In Loos' story, the suddenness with which art entered the poor little rich man's life left him more or less unknowing and ignorant to its meaning, certainly compared to the architect. When the architect visits, he finds the man wearing the slippers designed for the bedroom in a different part of the house, completely unaware that he has placed himself in the wrong shoes (Loos, p. 21).

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Racism and Philosophy: *A Structural or Accidental Relationship?*

Giovanni Prins

Is there a structural relation between racism and philosophy? It is true that many philosophers have been guilty of presenting racist – or at the very least racialised – ideas, theories, or doctrines. Think of John Locke, for instance, who was a profound defender of, and contributor to slave trade (Valls 2005, 3). Think of David Hume who argued in his infamous footnote that he suspected "all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites" (Ibid., 128). Or think of Kant and Hegel who, throughout their theories, proposed and theorised explicit racial hierarchies (Ibid., 173, 196-197). In light of this, a substantial debate has been taking place over the past decades about the existence of a structural relation between racism and philosophy.

On one side of the debate, Harry Bracken and Noam Chomsky – among others - have argued that this structural connection is certainly present, but not throughout the entirety of philosophy. Throughout history, empiricism has been the leading force behind racial theories, whereas rationalism has not. Rationalism, through its conception of an eternal and innate human essence, provides a conceptual barrier against racist doctrines (Valls 2005, 2). Empiricism, on the other hand, denies the existence of such an innate essence, and therefore is more liable to formulate racist theories. This, then, would explain why empiricists have historically been more engaged in racist and racialised thinking than their rationalist contemporaries. However, is that really the case?

Throughout this paper, I argue that no structural relation exists between racism and empiricism, nor between racism and philosophy as a whole. I will pose a threefold argument to do so. Firstly, I borrow from Stephen Asma to argue that rationalism inevitably leads to polygenism and racial determinism. Secondly, I explore Asma's idea of a noumenal racism that we find in the development from Descartes to Kant, and subsequently Hegel. Thirdly, I present the ideas of Kay Squadrito, who, as I will argue, proposes that there is no structural relation to be found between philosophical traditions and racism. Rather, racism is influenced by the socio-political climate of the particular thinker. As such, I suggest that in order to obtain a more expansive and accurate account of the relationship between racism and philosophy, we must lose the contention that a structural relation exists between the two, and explore the particular philosophy of individuals, rather than traditions as a whole.

1. Racism, Rationalism, and Empiricism

The schism between rationalism and empiricism strongly influences the debate on racialist thought in philosophy. To put it simply, rationalists and empiricists offer two diametrically opposite epistemological methods. While the debate between these traditions is somewhat more complex, this idealised view of these schools of thought holds that rationalists pose that knowledge is attained *a priori* through rational operations, independent from the senses, whereas empiricists argue that knowledge acquisition largely – if not entirely – relies on sensory experience.

The dispute between the two philosophical traditions has taken many forms. One such form relates to the relationship between racism and philosophy. Harry Bracken and Noam Chomsky have posited that rationalism provides a conceptual barrier against racist doctrines, whereas empiricism does not. Hence, we find a structural relation between empiricism and racism (Squadrito 1979, 105; Valls 2005, 2). This

connection, however, is not immediately evident: both schools of thought are first and foremost epistemological methodologies. How, then, is this connected to racist thought?

1.1 Theories of the Self – Essentialism and Anti-Essentialism

In order to fully grasp the connection between these philosophical traditions and racist ideology, it is crucial to understand the theories of the self that follow from them. For rationalists, the self resides within. Arguably the most influential rationalist of early modern times has been René Descartes. While certainly not the first dualist – indeed, Plato had already proposed a dualist ontology – Descartes was the first to argue for a strict substance dualism between matter and mind. According to Descartes, the self – the thinking 'I' - is a non-material substance. The body, on the other hand, is of a material substance. It is basically a machine that is subject to natural laws, and more importantly, the mind (Descartes 1996, 17-19, 68-69). Our mind is an independent and autonomous entity that 'determines but is not itself determined' (Asma 1995, 14). Consequently, this mind is essential, meaning that it is completely immune to experience and unchanging. The crucial point here is the following: humans are in their very essence thinking beings. Anything human is, therefore, attributed to the mind or soul. In turn, material circumstances play no role in our personhood. Thus, to have this essential rational mind is to be human (Descartes 1996, 14-15). It is this notion of the self that broadly delineates the rationalist tradition I am outlining here.

Empiricists, however, oppose this. For empiricists, everything is derived from experience. According to John Locke, for instance, a human is initially a *tabula rasa*, or blank slate, rather than an autonomous mind with integrated and developed mental structures. Over the course of one's life, empirically obtained information is imprinted on this blank slate, and as such the human mind develops (Duschinsky 2012, 524). Thus, humans are ongoing projects, with their only means of development being through experience. It is important to note that empiricists do not necessarily reject rational capacity as an inherently human characteristic, or even a dualist notion of the world. The point is, however, that a rational mind is nothing by itself. It cannot be autonomous and independent from the material world, for humans are always subject to, as well as determined by, external conditions. As such, empiricists deny the rationalist conception of an innate and eternal human essence, and argue for an anti-essentialist conception of the self instead (Asma 1995, 15).

1.2 Cartesianism – A Conceptual Bulwark against Racism?

As stated above, from a rationalist perspective, the human being is in its very essence a thinking being - humanity resides wholly within. Consequently, external factors can only be regarded as contingent. The question that remains, however, is how rationalism, empiricism, and their respective conceptions of the self relate to racist ideology.

One's physical properties – such as skin colour - do not determine one's humanness. Indeed, if the human essence is internally situated, it is logically inconsistent to discriminate or judge one's humanness on the basis of external properties. As such, Harry Bracken (1973) has argued that "if one is a Cartesian, a defender of mind/body dualism, it becomes [logically] impossible to state a racist position." (83).

Empiricism, on the other hand, has been accused of lacking this 'modest conceptual brake' against racist doctrines (Bracken 1973, 93). It has been argued that by rejecting essential innate mental structures, empiricists are more liable to formulate racist opinions, or even arbitrarily essentialise external elements such as physical properties (Asma 1995, 20). Bracken's argument is substantiated by Noam Chomsky (1977), who similarly poses that 'it is not an exaggeration to see in Cartesian doctrine a conceptual barrier - albeit a modest one, as Bracken carefully explains - against racism' (86). He too states that it is conceptually and logically incoherent to adhere to racist doctrines while being a serious dualist (Ibid., 85-86). For the

rationalist, then, physical differences are superficial and insignificant, whereas for the empiricist this is not the case.

Furthermore, Chomsky argues that rationalism is less apt for racism because the Cartesian notion of the independent and autonomous mind leads to a conception of human beings characterised by their free will and rational capacity. Conversely, empiricism reduces humans to simple machines that solely process sense-data. In other words, by denying an internal essence, empiricism undermines the rationalist position that promotes human dignity and freedom (Chomsky 1977, 85-86; Valls 2005, 3). Therefore, empiricism is potentially stifling, and more liable to be oppressive and racist (Squadrito 1979, 106-107).

It is important to note that this does not mean that every empiricist is automatically doomed to be a racist. Indeed, as Chomsky (1977) states, the empiricist framework makes it 'somewhat easier to formulate racist beliefs' (86). Conversely, this does not mean that every rationalist is automatically safeguarded from formulating racist doctrines. Yet, both he and Bracken emphasise the *possibility* that a structural relation exists between racism and empiricism because of the simple fact that the latter facilitates the former, whereas rationalism makes this logically incoherent and conceptually impossible. In the following section I will argue against this position.

2. Polygenesis, Noumenal Racism, and (Ab)normalcy

At first glance, the argument made by Bracken and Chomsky seems appealing. Indeed, if all humans are essentially characterised by identical innate mental structures, racism should be a logical impossibility. However, as I illustrate now, the issue is not so one-sided. Many have attempted to dispute the claims made by Bracken and Chomsky. Among those, I mention Stephen Asma, John Searle, and Kay Squadrito and elucidate three arguments: (1) the influence of internalism on polygenist thought, (2) the development of noumenal racism, and (3) rationalism's political production of normalcy and abnormalcy.

2.1 Internal/External Metaphors and Polygenesis

Arguing against the idea that rationalism is safeguarded from racism, Stephen Asma (1995) first reformulates the debate. This reconceptualisation, Asma states, is a more accurate point of departure in the debate regarding racism in philosophy, and in particular with regards to evolutionary thinking about race.

On the one hand, he proposes, we should adopt internalism, or the internal causal metaphor of the self. This perspective is guided by the idea that human agency resides wholly within the person. The self is thus what it was for Descartes, innate, independent from external factors, and bestowed by nature or God (Asma 1995, 14, 16-17). Asma argues that Cartesianism should actually be understood as part and parcel to this 'wider and more fundamental metaphor of internalism' (Ibid., 21). On the other hand, externalism, or the external causal metaphor of the self should be adopted. This point of view is based around the idea that human agency comes from outside. As such, the human entirely – or at the very least significantly - relies on external factors and experience (Ibid. 13-14).

In order to contextualise Asma's reconceptualisation of the rationalism/empiricism schism, we must turn to an important question regarding racism and evolutionary thought that arose in the nineteenth century: are racial differences created or do they develop over time? Within this discourse, two groups emerged. Firstly, monogenists, who believed that all humans descended from a common ancestor, and secondly, polygenists, who argued that different races stem from different ancestors. Observing significant physical differences between races, a concern emerged with regards to human ancestry. Prior to Darwin's evolutionary theory, this related to Christian notions of genesis. All humans were thus considered to be descendants of Adam and Eve, or, from multiple other 'first humans' (Asma 1995, 17).

After Darwin, however, the question became whether racial variations were the result of evolution within the same species, or whether racial differences implied a difference in the species altogether (Asma 1995, 17). As Asma argues, the externalist notion of the self allowed for the rise of Darwin's evolutionary theory of natural selection. Darwinist mechanisms posit that for humans to evolve, they must react, and consequently adapt to their environment. Indeed, this can only be possible when employing an externalist notion of human development (Ibid., 13, 17).

Moreover, this Darwinism poses that all of humanity descended from a common ancestor, thereby qualifying as a monogenist theory. Conversely, Asma argues, internalism gave rise to polygenist thought. As mentioned above, internalism is guided by a conception of the self that is independent and autonomous. Therefore, it is inherently unchangeable. However, racial differences evidently exist. In turn, these differences can only be explained by the fact that different races must descend from different ancestors (Asma 1995, 17). Through this perspective, then, race becomes connected to one's innate mental structures. As with the self, race becomes internally located.

Consequently, an internalist conception of race implies a second problem. Indeed, if races are intrinsically different from one another, and mental structures are essentially immune to external factors, racial differences become insurmountable. What follows from this, then, is an eternalised conception of race. Ultimately, this sets the stage for racial determinism (Asma 1995, 17). This becomes palpably clear when we take the example of Nazi ideology. Rejecting monogenism, the Nazi ideology was driven by a polygenist idea of race. Polygenism allows for a conception of other races as subaltern in their very essence. Thus, Jews, Asians, or Blacks were seen as inherently unlike, and ultimately lesser than the German race. The crucial point here is that this racial determinism is only possible if one employs an internalist notion of the self. It is through rationalism, not empiricism, that absolute and fixed racial categories can come to exist. John Searle (1976), who similarly argues against rationalisms protection from racism, illustrates this when he states that: 'If anything, it is a shorter step from the Cartesian theory of the mind to the theory of racial inferiority than from the Humean, because once you believe that there are innate human mental structures it is only a short step to argue that the innate mental structures differ from one race to another' (1119, quoted in Squadrito 1979).

Moreover, as I will elucidate in more detail below, the production of essential racial categories allows for the production of normalcy and abnormalcy. In other words, rationalism makes it possible to differentiate these essential racial classifications on a *normative* level, thereby setting the stage for the creation of an essentialised racial hierarchy. An externalist perspective, on the other hand, based on empiricist theorisations of the self, opposes the notion of unchanging and eternal innate mental structures, consequently making it conceptually impossible to reach deterministic racial classifications, categorisations, and hierarchisations. Indeed, when following this train of thought that racial traits are viewed as historical and contingent – as externalists do – it becomes logically inconsistent to think in terms of a racial hierarchy. As such, racial egalitarianism is only possible when one rejects essentialism, rather than embraces it (Asma 1995, 20).

2.2 Noumenal Racism

Asma (1995) proposes a second argument in opposition to Bracken and Chomsky's claim that rationalism provides a conceptual bulwark against racist doctrines. Related to the argument presented above, Asma argues that Immanuel Kant's distinction between noumena and phenomena – and in particular, their interaction – has paved the way for a kind of racial thinking he dubs *noumenal racism* (20). To gain a proper understanding of this type of racism, however, we must first turn to what this distinction entails precisely.

Kant argues that we cannot know the world beyond our own experience. Therefore, he poses a distinction between the noumenal realm, which contains *real* substances, and the phenomenal realm, which is the world as we experience it (Kant 2001, 51, 53-54; Wilkerson 1980, 52-53). Our real essence, then, is to be found in the noumenal self. Reminiscent of Descartes, this is the 'I' as a thinking being. Just like the mind or soul in Descartes, Kant's noumenal self is an autonomous, free, and independent entity, residing in the realm beyond our senses. As such, the self becomes intangible, unknowable, and therefore, as Bracken and Chomsky would argue, entirely safeguarded from any form of racialist thinking. To reformulate this in the notions mentioned above, Kant can thus also be characterized as employing an internalist conception of the self (Asma 1995, 21). While this allows Kant to fall into the same trap as other internalists, the point made here is of another nature. It is only after Hegel takes up Kant's theory and revises it that a new type of racist thought becomes possible.

Hegel argues that the distinction between real yet ungraspable noumena and phenomenal experiences results in the former becoming an empty placeholder (Asma 1995, 22). If the phenomenal realm consists of nothing but mere attributes, abstracted experiences disconnected from the things in themselves, the distinction itself becomes meaningless. Therefore, Hegel does not accept Kant's distinction, but rather argues that the noumenal realm must be approachable. At the first stage of the Hegelian dialectic, the noumenal realm is indeed, as Kant stated, closed off from our experience. However, when we progress through the stages of Hegel's dialectical method, the Absolute – i.e., the *real* – can be approached. In other words, through inspection, experimentation, and rational contemplation it becomes possible to comprehend the noumena (Ibid.).

Moreover, while Hegel accepts Kant's position that phenomenal experiences must be preceded by a real essence, he argues against Kant that the phenomena are mere abstractions of the noumena. Rather, he posits, phenomena are *expressions* of the noumena. When we approach the noumenal essence of things over time – e.g., by measuring, numbering, qualifying, etc. - reality and experience move ever closer together. As such, the true essence of things – i.e., noumena - is revealed in the phenomena themselves. Through the development of our knowledge, then, it becomes clear that noumena manifest themselves in phenomena. If we formulate Hegel's reconceptualisation of Kant's transcendental idealism somewhat differently, the external becomes an expression of the internal (Asma 1995, 22). In this light, it becomes more easy to see how this relates to racial thought. The quality of one's inner essence, of one's noumenal self, is directly represented in one's external properties. Furthermore, through inspection of phenomenal experiences, it becomes possible to approach the essence of things. Therefore, a causal connection is established between one's body and mind.

This is further illustrated by Hegel when he argues in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (2018) that the body 'stands as an expression of his own actualization posited by the individual himself, or the traits and forms of his self-active essence (180). Thus, through this mechanism, a noumenal racism is brought to life. As such, from the Cartesian innate essence we come to Kant's noumenal self and Hegel's reformulation of it. Finally, whereas Bracken and Chomsky argued that external traits such as racial varieties are mere accidents from a rationalist perspective, the opposite seems to be true. Internalists, as opposed to externalists, pose a theory of the self that is free from external influences. Thus, the self is never at the mercy of historical contingencies. Indeed, it is a cause in and of itself. Being an expression of the respective innate mental structures, this must also be true for physical traits. For externalists, the self, as well as bodily characteristics, are entirely historically contingent. Racial varieties, then, must also be entirely accidental. They are simply effects of random processes throughout history. However, for the internalist, who argues against this historical contingency, race can never be just an effect of history. Instead, race becomes a cause in and of itself as well (Asma 1995, 23). In a word, through noumenal racism, race becomes essentialised, and a racial

hierarchy becomes possible. As such, racial varieties are not accidents, rather they are causes. They are expressions of the inner, unchanging nature of a person (Ibid.).

2.3 The Political Project of Normalcy and Abnormalcy

A third and final argument is posed by Kay Squadrito (1979), who argues that rationalism – or 'innatism' – leads to the creation of normalcy and abnormalcy (110). It allows for the stabilisation of moral properties, and ultimately the production of an abnormal other. Empiricism, on the other hand, does not seek to fix innate principles, and as such leads to toleration.

To reiterate part of Bracken and Chomsky's argument, through a Cartesian conception of the self as an autonomous entity, an innate and essential sense of human dignity and freedom is established that safeguards humans from external influence, oppression, and ultimately, racism (Squadrito 1979, 106). Conversely, empiricism, through its anti-essentialism, deprives humans of an innate character or essential autonomy. Consequently, empiricism 'reduces the human person to a machine, an alienated, unproductive being that lacks freedom' (Ibid.).

Squadrito points out, however, that empiricism should actually be seen as the more progressive school of thought. Taking John Locke as an example, Chomsky himself has noted that empiricism – in particular British empiricism - was initially developed to counter traditional religious and moral doctrines. Indeed, Locke's perception of the human as a *tabula rasa* allows for a conception of persons as projects of perpetual development. Thus, as stated above, empiricism counters deterministic accounts of humanness, and ultimately of race. While Locke's argument was targeted specifically at the Church, it can also be applied to race. Closely resembling Asma here, Squadrito thus argues that the empiricist conception of the self is fundamentally more free than the rationalist conception (Squadrito 1979, 109).

In addition to this, Squadrito argues that rationalism is not as free from oppressive and racialist thought as Bracken and Chomsky claim it to be. As mentioned above, Asma (1995) has argued that the rationalist self is immune to the effects of history, and as such is eternally unchanged and unchangeable (23). Squadrito agrees with Asma's claim that rationalism leads to determinism, yet envisions this to be fundamentally inseparable from historical discourse. Whereas Bracken and Chomsky have presented rationalism as an almost airtight model shielded against oppressive and racialised thought, Squadrito proposes it to be inherently arbitrary. The Cartesian mind or the Kantian noumenal self cannot be seen as theories acquired *a priori*. Rather, they are always situated within, and based on a particular historical discourse. In effect, this leads to a certain arbitrariness in the conception of the human essence (Squadrito 1979, 109-110). Certain elements will be considered to be essentially human, whereas others will not. Particular norms, values and virtues that are prevalent in society will be incorporated in the meaning of humanness.

Furthermore, and most importantly, I suggest that we should interpret Squadrito's argument as being Foucauldian in nature. My contention is that she goes as far as to argue that this is a political project, in which favourable moral characteristics become eternally fixed in that which is considered to be human, and those unfavourable properties are disavowed. Borrowing from John Yolton, Squadrito poses that the formulation of innate human properties are always informed by, and therefore dependent on, the contemporary socio-political discourse. To phrase it differently, what is defined as the human essence is necessarily a derivative of the prevalent norms and values in society (Squadrito 1979, 109-110). The human essence thus serves as a codification of these norms and values. As a consequence of this, all characteristics that fall outside of that scope of normality – i.e., the essential human properties - become wrong, inhuman, and abnormal. Ultimately, an essential distinction is produced between normal and abnormal (Ibid.). Through this project, then, it becomes possible to manifest a racialised conception of the human essence, in which other races are placed 'outside the realm of normalcy', thereby providing the possibility to

hierarchise racial characteristics (Valls 2005, 3). Empiricism, on the other hand, poses a shield against this doctrine. By emphasising that there are no such things as inherently fixed mental structures, 'empiricists have provided a methodology which leads to toleration' (Squadrito 1979, 110).

While this seems to indicate that Squadrito is proposing that rationalism is oppressive and empiricism is not, I propose that her point is more elaborate than that. Bracken and Chomsky's endeavour is to argue for a structural connection between empiricism and racialised thought. I argue that, in going against them, Squadrito is claiming that there is no connection between racism and philosophy *at all*. Empiricist 'theories of human malleability *might* be put to the service of totalitarian doctrine (…), but the fact remains that they might not' (Squadrito 1979, 111). This, then, also goes for rationalism. In showcasing rationalism's potential for theoretically grounded racism, I claim that Squadrito is rejecting a structural connection between empiricism and racial thinking. Thus, contrary to for instance Andrew Valls, who claims that Squadrito simply 'argues that historically it is empiricism that has been the more progressive force', my contention is that her argument goes beyond this (Valls 2005, 3). Rather, it must be seen as a total rejection of a structural relation between racism and philosophy. Ultimately, the conclusion is that 'the charges Bracken and Chomsky level against empiricism are not well founded', and a structural relation between racism and philosophy does not exist (Ibid, 115).

3. Racism and Philosophy – A Structural or Accidental Relationship?

Above I have presented three arguments against the position forwarded by Bracken and Chomsky. With these arguments, I have shown that it is difficult to argue that rationalism poses 'a modest conceptual brake to the articulation of racial degradation and slavery', whereas empiricism does not (Bracken 1973, 93). However, it cannot be denied that the famous empiricists – Locke, Berkeley, and Hume – have explicitly forwarded racialised and racist thoughts, whereas the great rationalists – Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz – have not (Valls 2005, 3). What, then, is the conclusion that is reached? For this, a few final considerations must be underscored.

First and foremost, it is important to emphasise that a sharp distinction between rationalism and empiricism is in itself problematic. For instance, Locke himself was heavily influenced by, as well as preserved a lot of Descartes' rationalism. While their epistemologies seem to be opposites, Locke proposed, as did Descartes, that humans are inherently rational beings (More 1996, 111). Any person that behaves irrationally is, therefore, closer to an animal than a human. By virtue of this universal capacity for rational thought, humans are inherently free and moral subjects. This position is also articulated by David Goldberg (1987), who similarly argues that there is an 'identical intellectualism and naturalism' within both traditions, characterised by a notion of 'truth as the correspondence of idea to reality', and 'knowledge as mind mirroring nature' (65). As such, a sharp distinction between the two philosophical traditions is difficult to maintain. The conclusion Goldberg reaches, then, is that 'contrary to the beliefs of Chomsky and Bracken, (…) rationalism and empiricism are equally prone to racist conjecture' (Ibid.).

However, while this argument is meant to oppose the beliefs of Bracken and Chomsky, Goldberg falls in the same trap. Goldberg still upholds the idea that a structural relation between racism and philosophy does in fact exist. The only difference is that it is no longer limited to empiricism, but is extended to rationalism as well. Instead, my contention is that no structural connection between racism and philosophy exists *at all*. In this sense, my perspective is close to Squadrito. Racism in philosophy has much more to do with the socio-political discourse than with epistemological traditions. Therefore, it remains important to analyse particular philosophers rather than aggregated categories or traditions.

As Andrew Valls (2005) states, having philosophers classified together into categories of rationalism and empiricism obscures 'important differences among philosophers classified together, and perhaps

similarities between those classified apart' (4). Moreover, it causes particular thinkers to be reduced to a mere category. In order to gain a more expansive account of philosophers and their connection to racism, I agree with Valls that one should explore their particular thought. This does not mean that we should isolate individual thinkers. Dominant societal norms and values always inform and influence individuals and their philosophical work. Therefore, it remains important to consider the socio-political and historical context of the thinker as well.

This, however, is a much different project than the one Bracken and Chomsky endeavoured on. In a word, then, a structural connection between racism and philosophy requires, and consequently leads to a reduction of all philosophy into categories and traditions. In order to avoid this, we must first and foremost lose the idea that such a structural relation exists. Instead, we must consider the particular philosophy of the individual thinker, while taking into account the socio-political discourse of the time. As such, a more expansive and accurate account of the connection between one's thought and racism can be obtained.

Conclusion

Is there a structural relation between racism and philosophy? This question underlies both this paper, as well as the arguments proposed by Harry Bracken and Noam Chomsky. As they would have it, rationalism – and in particular, Cartesianism - poses a conceptual bulwark against racist thought. Because human agency and identity resides in the mind or soul, physical characteristics such as skin colour play no role in determining our humanness as these properties, are strictly accidental. Thus, racial thinking is logically impossible. Empiricism, which denies the existence of essential and innate mental structures, is therefore much more liable to formulate racist doctrines.

In this paper, I have aimed to explore and refute this position on several grounds. Firstly, through Stephen Asma's utilisation of the internal and external causal metaphor, I have argued that rationalism/internalism gave rise to polygenism, and consequently racial determinism. Secondly, through Cartesianism we reach Kant's dualism between the real noumenal realm, and the phenomenal realm of experience, in turn leading to Hegel's later reformulation of phenomena as expressions of the noumena that lay behind them. As such, a connection is made between the external attributes, and the internal essence. Translated into racial thinking, the body becomes an expression of the mind. In other words, the inspection of an inferior body would then lead to the 'discovery' of an inferior mind. Thus, we reach a noumenal racism. Thirdly, I have outlined an argument outlined by Kay Squadrito. I have claimed that her argument must be interpreted as follows: the rationalist idea of an innate human essence is a political project in which prevalent societal norms are fixed into an eternal human nature. As such, a distinction is created between normal and abnormal. Additionally, this showcases that what is deemed to be the human essence is arbitrary and entirely historically contingent.

Using this threefold argument, I have claimed that this does not only lead us to believe that Bracken and Chomsky's positions not well-founded, more importantly, it illustrates that no structural relation between racism and philosophy exists *at all*. Attempting to find such a structural relation between philosophical traditions and racism – as Bracken and Chomsky do - is reductionist. It obscures particularities and simplifies individual philosophies to categories. In order to obtain a more expansive and accurate account of racism in philosophy, then, we must lose the contention that a structural relation exists between the two, and explore the particular philosophy of the individual instead.

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On the Impossibility of Moral Development in John Rawls's *Theory of Justice*

Jeroen de Vries

Consider the following scenario. You are again a 10-year-old child, and there is a family dinner party. All other guests at the party are adults, and have been for quite some time. You are having a blast, engaging in clever conversation, and even learning some new dirty jokes. But then, as the evening draws further, the unimaginable happens: you are told it is time for bed. However, this flies right in the face of your subjective wellbeing: you are having a great time, and you do not feel tired yet, anyway.

So, you do as any child in this situation would: you try to get your way. Being a smart child, and having learned from experience, you opt for rational discourse, rather than tumultuous complaint. It quickly becomes manifest, however, that the adults deem you 'too young' to determine your own bedtime. They are 'older,' have been in your position before, and therefore know what is best for you. Or so they argue. Besides the initial surge of frustration, you notice something different. The only way to convince the adults that you are, in fact, wise enough to determine, or at least influence, your own bedtime, is through showing them that you are 'mature' enough. In other words: you need to become like them – adopt their *framework*, if you will – before you can raise your voice about such matters. Matters, to be clear, that significantly impact your wellbeing!

Abstractly, this essay considers whether the situation described above constitutes an injustice. It does so by investigating the moral implications of positing normative criteria for rationality. The essay argues that John Rawls's conceptualization of moral persons in his A *Theory of Justice* (Rawls 1999) (*TJ*) is circular, which makes the theory unable to accommodate change[1].

The essay is structured as follows. Section 1 sketches the context in which *TJ* was written. Section 2 investigates Rawls's conceptualization of *moral persons*, and argues that it is circular. Section 3 briefly introduces the notion of *Reflective Equilibria*, and illustrates how the circular conceptualization of moral persons makes *TJ* conducive to the naturalistic fallacy. Section 4 discusses how this can lead to a form of majority rule, and considers two possible consequences. Section 4.1 considers the notion of moral overconfidence, and Section 4.2 relates this to the notion of a moral stalemate. Section 5 offers some nuance, and comments on the limitations and practical relevance of the arguments made.

1. From Natural Law to the Original Position: An Outline.

Historically, the most prominent class of theories of justice, known as natural law theories, have justified inequalities in terms of necessity, based on historical consistency, or from the tacit assumption that the wellbeing of some outweighs that of others (Finnis 2020). *Utilitarianism,* however, which emerged in the 18th century, departed from this view. It perceives all people as identical in their moral worth, as well as (or because of) their identical capacity for experiencing pain and pleasure (E.g., Mill 1998, chap. 4). This was progressive, perhaps even radical, in its time: it was unprecedented for a theory of justice to explicitly place identical intrinsic value on every individual (Driver 2014). Progressive as it was, utilitarianism, as critics were quick to point out, is not without its flaws. One of its largest main flaws is its inability to respect the

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[1]   N.B., this paper restricts itself to Rawls's work as presented in TJ; it does not consider the possible responses put forward by Rawls in later works, e.g., in (Rawls 1993). Moreover, change (in moral intuitions) will be used interchangeably with moral development; it does not strictly imply improvement.

separateness or inviolability of people (Schneewind 1990, 44–46). No constraints exist regarding who experiences pleasure or pain, and from what source: as long as the outcome in terms of pleasure or pain remains the same, there is no discernable difference between a sadist enjoying the abuse he inflicts upon a victim, and the wholesome joy a good Samaritan experiences after helping the elderly cross the street.

In light of this, Rawls attempted to find the principles of ideal social justice (Rawls 1999, 4–5). In *TJ*, he sought to establish a theory that would respect the inviolability and separateness of persons, placing limits on the sacrifices that could be asked of individuals, whilst maintaining the incentive of increasing one's possessions through productive labor (Wenar 2021). He did so by positing his *Original Position* in which people are to choose the principles of justice for the society in which they will live (Rawls 1999, 15–17). To prevent people from seeking personal advantage over distributive justice, they make this decision from behind a hypothetical *Veil of Ignorance*. This veil makes them forget all that is particular about themselves as individuals, and even their conception of the good (Rawls 1999, 11). They strictly remember the "general facts about human society," namely the "basis of social organization and the laws of human psychology," (Rawls 1999, 119). This should ensure that the agreed-upon principles are acceptable regardless of the position from which they are perceived. Rawls believed the inhabitants of the *Original Position* would agree upon the following principles[2]: those of equal basic liberties, equal opportunities, and the difference principle (Rawls 1999, 65).

Crucially, Rawls sought to prevent majority rule (Rawls 1999, 200–203)*,* where the preferences of a majority justify the violation of a minority's rights. Allowing for this would effectively reduce Rawls's theory to utilitarianism. Therefore, the principles of *equal basic liberty* and *equal opportunities* ensure that individuals' basic rights and liberties are not violated. The *difference principle* guards against the harmful exacerbation of inequalities (Rawls 1999, 53).

Through rational deliberation from shared assumptions, *moral persons* can arrive at *Reflective Equilibria.* This is a state of harmony between considered convictions, moral intuitions, and moral judgments (Rawls 1999, 18). To reach this harmony, convictions are revised to improve coherence between them. It is important to note that no conviction is *a priori* exempt from being revised: in principle, any conviction, at every level of abstraction, can be revised, if it serves to improve the coherence between the convictions, and thus further approximates a *Reflective Equilibrium* (Daniels 2020). The next section illustrates how Rawls's conceptualization of *moral persons* is circular.

2. Moral Persons and Where to Find Them

For Rawls, morality requires *reciprocity*(Rawls 1999, xv, 13; cf. 88). Correspondingly, children are taught morality through reciprocating loving and caring acts they receive from moral adults (Rawls 1999, 433, 436). Furthermore, reciprocity requires *equality* or *equal respect*: there needs to be some recognition of similarity between agents to allow for reciprocity (See Rawls 1999, 513; cf. Pritchard 1977, 60–61).

The importance of equality and reciprocity, then, necessitates some criterion for evaluating equality. Rawls offers two such criteria from his conceptualization of the inhabitants of the *Original Position*. He assumes them to be "*moral persons*, […] creatures having *a conception of their good* and *capable of a sense of justice*" (emphasis added) (Rawls 1999, 17).

This conceptualization is circular. There is no mention of where the first moral persons came from; Rawls postulates the first moral person and writes only that children become moral through reciprocating moral acts (E.g., Pritchard 1977, 61–63; cf. Brennan and Noggle 1998, 212–13). Moral persons are said to

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[2]   N.B. this is a brief and perhaps superficial representation of the principles; they are more sophisticated, but the representation above suffices for the purposes of this paper.

be capable of a sense of justice, and justice is that which moral persons have a sense of. As such, they constitute each other. When a dominant majority agrees upon a necessary condition for a moral person, or upon what justice entails, this can cause this majority to disregard a minority if this minority does not share their conviction. Since moral persons have a sense of justice, and the minority does not agree with the majority, either can call the other unreasonable. When, for example, two subgroups in a society, agree, among themselves, that their fundamental criteria for morality and rationality are crucial for intelligible communication, this can support the inhabitants of both subgroups in deeming the other inarticulate, unreasonable, and not to be taken into consideration for further discussion.

Alternatively, if the child at the dinner party has some peers sharing their opinion on the necessity of delaying their bedtime, yet the parents nevertheless insist on sending them to bed at this instant, the children have no possibility of demonstrating that they are sufficiently rational and moral, except for conceding to their parents' opinion. Moral persons agree on the shared intuitions that make up moral persons, and reasoning that does not start from those convictions, ought not to be included in deliberations of bedtimes – or any moral issue, for that matter.

Admittedly, there are legitimate reasons for parents to be paternalistic towards their children – they are, after all, their parents. Furthermore, adults and non-adults might still agree on the preferred consequences of a decision – feeling well-rested tomorrow morning versus feeling very tired, or growing strong and healthy versus suffering from over-exhaustion, for example. The point I seek to make is that the insistence on a shared moral conviction as a necessary condition for treating others as subjects of justice can have harmful consequences, and aid polarization rather than pluralism.

I contend that the circular conceptualization of Rawls's *moral persons* makes *TJ* unable to accommodate change in the subjects of justice and their moral intuitions. The next section illustrates how this can be problematic, as it invites both a *naturalistic fallacy* and a form of *majority rule*.

3. Hume's Guillotine and Inhumane Democracy

Reflective Equilibria serve to give insight into justice through the explication and subsequent analyzation of shared moral intuitions (Rawls 1999, 16, 18). Starting from considered judgments – i.e., judgments made under conditions favorable for clear and rational thinking (Rawls 1999, 40–42)[3] - intuitions are scrutinized to improve their consistency with convictions at different levels (Daniels 2020). Through repeated revision, the considered convictions[4] of the members of a society become increasingly more coherent with each other. When this happens, a *Reflective Equilibrium* is attained[5]. Subsequently, judgments can be made in terms of consistency with this equilibrium; if something is inconsistent with it, this is deemed irrational.

Importantly, Rawls points out that moral sentiments stem from natural attitudes (Rawls 1999, 428). The considered convictions are therefore derived from the moral intuitions of moral persons. As such, a theory of justice must correspond with (shared) moral intuitions (Baldwin 2006, 249). I agree with this: God really is dead, and moral transcendentality has become a distant memory. However, I believe Rawls overvalues human intuitions and overlooks that human intuitions can be idiosyncratic, mistaken, or otherwise inadequate. Rawls seems to acknowledge this when he writes how children develop morality through exposure to, and subsequent reciprocity of, moral acts (Pritchard 1977, 68–69).

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[3] N.B. considered judgments are not assumed to be infallible, but they are more reliable than those made under e.g., stressful conditions.

[4] N.B. "considered convictions" and "considered judgments" are used interchangeably.

[5] sN.B. A full Reflective Equilibrium is not assumed to be reached. Instead, it is approximated, with improved coherence leading to a "wider" Reflective Equilibrium – See (Daniels 2020).

The following section argues that this overvaluation of human intuitions makes *TJ* conducive to committing the naturalistic fallacy and a broad form of majority rule. Consequently, this makes it conducive to an attitude of moral overconfidence; furthermore, it can lead to moral stalemates when shared intuitions are absent.

3.1 The Naturalistic Fallacy: Turning an "Is" Into an "Ought"

In *TJ*, the attainment of a *Reflective Equilibria* is synonymous with attaining justice[16]. This implies that all that is relevant to justice has been addressed from within this position. Furthermore, it implies that whatever is agreed upon in the *Original Position*, is just.

Throughout history (and geography), however, different moral consensus and norms have existed; entire peoples have condoned and agreed-upon practices that are unambiguously condemned nowadays. There have been societies where slavery was condoned and never seriously questioned, whereas contemporary Western societies wholeheartedly condemn this practice. Similarly, the notion of animal rights is much more prominent nowadays than a mere fifty years ago. There might be no consensus on these matters, but it is demonstrably clear that moral intuitions change over time; consequently, that agreement on intuitions does not equate to perfect and permanent justice.

Hume famously made the *is-ought* distinction (Hume 1985, book 3, Section 1, Part 1), arguing that mere observation cannot deliver a normative judgment[7]. However, using shared intuitions as the sole input for moral deliberation and evaluation risks doing precisely that: perpetuating practices by virtue of their historical existence. It is impossible, then, to move beyond our current intuitions in *Reflective Equilibria*; we can only improve their consistency.

This leads to theoretical lacunae when it comes to explaining development in intuitions over time. If children acquire their moral intuitions through the reciprocating of moral acts, how can it be that contemporary Western societies generally condemn slavery, whereas the Greeks and Romans did not?

Thus, the naturalistic fallacy in Rawls's *TJ* allows for the justification of practices through their historical occurrence, as well as by their being intuitive to *moral persons*.

3.2 Shared Intuitions and their Discontents

Regarding his *Original Position*, Rawls writes that "no complaints will be heard at all until everyone is roughly of one mind as to how complaints are to be judged," (Rawls 1958, 171)[28]. His *moral persons* share a framework of intuitions, according to which they can rationally and transparently engage in moral deliberations. Rawls does not, however, spell out what these basic intuitions are. Furthermore, his theory does not comment on situations where the intuitions are *not* shared, which brings us to the topic of majority rule.

4. Majority Rule

Rawls's *TJ* has not escaped the threat of *majority rule*, because its conceptualization of moral persons excludes whoever does not adhere to the dominant set of intuitions. In a society, there will indubitably be degrees of disagreement about moral matters. Therefore, the intuitions that are to be explicated will not have complete overlap. Because justice is determined by the reasoning of moral persons, who share a set of intuitions, the result is that there is no way for a minority to disagree with the dominant set of intuitions whilst still being regarded as a subject of justice. Recall that moral persons are postulated to have a "*conception of their good*" and

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[6]   N.B. Perfect Reflective Equilibria are unattainable, but the procedure of arriving at them aids deliberations on justice. Cf. (Rawls 1999, 44).

[7]   Cf. (Hunter, 1962, 149–50).

[8]   N.B., this citation is from a different work of Rawls, but illustrates my point regarding 'majority rule' clearly.

to be "*capable of a sense of justice*" (Rawls 1999, 15, emphasis added). If the overwhelming majority shares certain intuitions, and the intuitions of a small minority do not match with theirs, this can mean one of two things. Either they are not moral persons – for their intuitions diverge from those deemed constitutive of moral persons – or their intuitions are ill-considered. Essentially, both mean the same: they must "adapt" their intuitions (i.e., conform to the dominant set of intuitions), or they lose their say in matters of morality. Effectively, this means that Rawls's *Reflective Equilibria* are constitutively deductive, and can, in tautological fashion, contribute nothing to the dialogue that was not already implicit in the intuitions of those members of a society that are relevant to justice. Therefore, *Reflective Equilibria* aid in systematizing the status quo, and exclude the possibility of change in moral intuitions, and thus of moral development. Below, I argue that this can lead to moral overconfidence when shared convictions are present, and to moral stalemates when they are lacking.

4.1 Moral Overconfidence

Crucial to *Reflective Equilibria* is the tacit assumption that moral persons possess sufficient information relevant to the topic at hand. Perhaps the most striking illustration of the falsity of this assumption comes from climate science. Virtually all inhabitants of the 21st century have heard mention of climate change. It is striking to consider, then, that the (modern) environmental movement began less than 100 years ago; before that, the general perception was that mankind could not significantly impact the oceans, as it was deemed too vast to be threatened by mere human beings.(E.g., Hays 1981, 219)[39]. This illustrates how an exclusive focus on consensus between *moral persons* can lead to moral overconfidence*,* where a consensus within a group leads its members to consider themselves morally sufficiently informed, making them less inclined to consider unconsidered perspectives. A society-wide consensus still lacks normative force when it comes to the physical part of reality, and it is important to be attentive to what might be overlooked, both in the moral realm and in the physical realm. Although *TJ* does allow for the incorporation of new variables and considerations in the light of new information, the emphasis on establishing consensus can cause unconsidered issues to remain overlooked.

4.2 Moral Stalemates

In *TJ*, justice has been attained in *Reflective Equilibria*, where the shared intuitions of moral persons are coherent with each other at all levels. However, this implies that there is no possibility of attaining justice when these shared intuitions are lacking. When two parties with different shared intuitions, both deeming themselves moral, each attempt to attain a *Reflective Equilibrium*, this amounts to a moral stalemate, where both parties hold on to their intuitions, and no consensus can be found. Because the subjects of justice base their deliberations on rationality and morality, it implies that any divergent position must lack either, or both, of these qualities.

The assumption of shared intuitions can be conducive to an unwillingness to engage in discussions with those who appear *too* different from us in terms of moral intuitions. Deeming those who diverge from the shared assumptions irrational and immoral for having different opinions places the contemporary intuitions of a given group on a pedestal and precludes the potential insights from vastly different worldviews. Given the turbulence and diversity of the world, it is unrealistic to expect that an overlapping consensus in moral intuitions between different people can always be arrived at. The modern world is markedly plural in the worldviews it offers; there is increased communication, faster travel, and more international trade than there has been in the past. Encountering people with convictions different from one's own is increasingly

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[9]   Cf. Sloterdijk's notion of 'backdrop ontology': (Sloterdijk 2015, 334–35)

common; therefore, the requisite shared intuitions might realistically be unattainable. Consequently, an insistence on shared intuitions can endanger meaningful plurality instead of being conducive to it.

Consider, for example, that a subgroup of children, having experienced a childhood vastly different from that of their parents, come to agree among themselves on different moral convictions than those deemed constitutive of moral persons in their society. If the 'traditional' shared convictions become normative, and thus cannot be questioned by those not subscribing to them – remember that "no complaints will be heard at all until everyone is roughly of one mind as to how complaints are to be judged," – this can cause both subgroups to view the other as barbaric, unsophisticated, and not to be considered in deliberations on matters of morality. Consequently, new and unexpected issues, values, and perspectives might not be addressed, or not be addressed appropriately[10].

5. Pragmatism and Being Reasonable

The points made above reason within the confines of *TJ*; therefore, they are primarily theoretical. The pragmatic consequences, however, might differ. Admittedly, *TJ* is not applied dogmatically; its influence in political philosophy is undeniable, but is not followed to the letter. Therefore, it is unlikely that such strict demarcations regarding *moral persons* will arise in practice. Moreover, *TJ* is a *contract theory*; presumably, the emphasis on public reason[11] invites an attitude of open-mindedness and willingness to listen to what might be neglected. Rawls describes "considered convictions" as well-contemplated and generally undisputable moral positions, such as that discrimination is wrong (Rawls 1999, 17–19). He is silent on where they originate. However, it seems that these *considered convictions* imply the possibility of change in moral intuitions – Rawls endorses the disapproval of slavery, for example – although it is not explicated. Rawls presumably did not deem moral development impossible or undesirable; however, it is not incorporated into *TJ*.

Realistically, therefore, changes in moral intuitions will occur and be incorporated into moral reasoning, and the contractarian spirit stimulates open-mindedness in moral deliberations. Nevertheless, it is important to be aware of transience and the possibility of overlooking matters of importance, in both the subjects of justice and the information considered relevant. Similarly, it is important to consider that wholly different convictions might be rational for reasons currently unconsidered.

Conclusion

I have argued that Rawls's *Theory of Justice* employs a circular conception of *moral persons*, which makes the theory unable to accommodate change or development in the subjects of justice and their moral intuitions. It risks committing the *naturalistic fallacy* and is vulnerable to a form of *majority rule*. Consequently, it can be conducive to an attitude of *moral overconfidence* within groups, and it can lead to *moral stalemates* between groups when shared intuitions are lacking. However, the theory is not applied literally, and the *contractarian* emphasis stimulates an attitude of open-mindedness when engaging in moral deliberations. Therefore, the risk of becoming dogmatic and completely removed from the corporeal realm is small. Nevertheless, the approach might be conducive to overlooking what might be unexpected, as well as disregarding what is uncomplying. This can be particularly problematic considering the increasing interwovenness of people with different convictions, creeds, and cultures. When it comes to deliberations on justice in a diverse and transient world,

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[10]   N.B. although Rawls does discuss intergenerational justice in *TJ* – e.g., Rawls, 251-258 – his approach still seeks a form of consensus, e.g., a savings rate that counts for all generations. The example above emphasizes that such axiomatic forms of consensus, with their consequent normative accounts of rational behaviour, can be harmful to meaningful pluralism of world views within societies.

[11]   TJ, in contractarian fashion, emphasises the importance of transparent and rational reasoning. For further reference, cf. Horton, 'Rawls, Public Reason and the Limits of Liberal Justification', 9–13.

the inevitable necessity of adapting to change should be embraced, and attentiveness to what falls beyond the current conceptualization of justice should be stimulated.

Regarding the example at the start: there might be legitimate reasons to make an exception to the child's bedtime, or society-wide changes might make a delayed bedtime appropriate. Its unlikeliness need not equate to its impossibility; a valid but unconsidered reason can never be excluded. Precisely *how* seriously the bedtime complaints of children at dinner parties must be taken, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

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WINNER OF THE EXTRACURRICULAR PHILOSOPHY ESSAY COMPETITION

Beyond Stalinism: *How Kautsky inspired a modern communist movement in the Netherlands*

Senad Delić

> "We hebben tesaam nog zoveel te leren
> En wat ook gebeurt, het is politiek
> We zullen de machten moeten bezweren
> Het einde der klassen, het eind der paniek"
> *De lange weg*, BOTS (1988)

In 1991 the ideological battle between the two geopolitical superpowers, the East and the West, came to an end. The Soviet Union dissolved into multiple successor states as the triumph of capitalism and the Western lifestyle had many an American representative pop a bottle of champagne in celebration. The need for an ideological distinction became superfluous, which made capitalism the predominant ideology without any noteworthy competition. Its biggest ideological opposition, socialism in the form of Marxism-Leninism, had drawn its terminal breath. The geopolitical community bid farewell to a number of people's republics, including the German Democratic Republic. This conclusion to a period of geopolitical paranoia and unrest would go down in history as the "end of history", a term coined by Francis Fukuyama in 1992.

More than thirty years later, the societal effects of the triumph of capitalism linger in Western society: active political engagement has become the pastime of the idealist dreamer, labour union memberships are at an all-time-low and "socialism", let alone "communism" have amounted to swear-words within the domain of political discourse - after all, they are too reminiscent of a geopolitical threat that "we" managed to vanquish. Young people who reject the existing societal structure have become a rarity in public discourse. Just when socialism seemed dead and irresurrectible, unexpected events awaken the otherwise silent far left of the Netherlands - a new communist youth movement emerges, causing internal turmoil within the established, moderate Dutch Socialist Party (Socialistische Partij, SP). The Socialist Party loses members and seats over the rising influence of young communists who have spent their student-days building an elaborate movement, which includes a publishing house, a web-shop, a recreational organisation and educational events. At the heart of this movement? Czech-Austrian Marxist theoretician Karl Kautsky.

In this essay, I shall make a political-philosophical case for the importance of Karl Kautsky, whose recently rediscovered work has sparked a politically influential communist movement within the Netherlands, spearheaded by organisations like ROOD, Communist Platform (Communistisch Platform) and Marxist Forum (Marxistisch Forum). This movement is notorious for being revolutionary and militant in its views, whilst simultaneously rejecting Stalinist authoritarianism and bureaucracy and embracing a form of mass-democracy rather than focussing on armed revolution.

I believe that the early work of Karl Kautsky should be discussed in EUR courses like "Social and Political Philosophy" and "The High Enlightenment" since his work is experiencing a surge in popularity that causes a major stir on the political left wing in the Netherlands. His Marxist framework provides socialist youth with an anti-capitalist alternative that does not lean on authoritarian or Stalinist political structures. Kautsky's Orthomarxist views pose a solid argument against the mainstream assumption that communism

is inherently authoritarian. It can also be seen as a refreshing alternative to "soft" and revisionist social-democratic politics which ruin any prospect of fundamental change through participation in elections and coalition governments. This way, Kautsky manages to fill a political niche by promoting a non-bureaucratic, less hierarchic and more mass-democratic communism.

Kautsky's magnum opus: The Road To Power

Soviet bureaucracy versus mass-democracy

Since the Russian Revolution in 1917, a new type of ideology was formed which would go on to forever influence the mainstream idea of what constitutes communism. The Bolsheviks, who saw themselves as the intellectual vanguard of the working class, seized power in Russia and made the first steps in building what would come to be the Soviet Union. They did this under the model of what socialist intellectuals define as "party of the new type", which is a top-down centralistic political party embodying the will of the proletariat and guiding it towards revolution. This is often associated with a dictatorial kind of rule that allows little to no political freedom.

What is widely unknown is that the Bolsheviks (under Lenin) allowed a right to factions and diversity in opinion until 1921, but ultimately banned factions in the aftermath of civil-war-woes that obliged them to rule their territory with more of an iron hand. Soviet Russia was under attack of Western interventions and went into further isolation because the proletarian revolution in Germany ultimately failed. This caused the Bolshevik Communist Party to become more authoritarian in its nature, which is a natural development in times of crisis (Macnair 2008).

With Stalin seizing power in 1924 after Lenin's death, the dictatorial and top-down structure of the Communist Party was solidified. Suspected traitors were executed, the secret service grew immensely and the state went on to control the most minute aspects of individual life. The idea of how a communist party should function would from there on be defined by these developments.

Some would list organisations like the NCPN (Nieuwe Communistische Partij Nederland) and its youth-wing CJB (Communistische Jongerenbeweging) as current examples of this top-down bureaucratic socialist party in the Netherlands. The NCPN/CJB is prominently criticised for an inflexible and unalterable form of democratic centralism by ex-members like Gijs Muis, but the NCPN/CJB reject those claims since the actions and thoughts, that come to be controlled by party-discipline, were formed in a democratic manner through congresses and member-assemblies on which discussion is quite present (Rosu 2020). According to Rosu, this guarantees a common political strength. It is therefore up to another discussion what one would consider to be entirely bureaucratic and dictatorial.

Kautsky, who followed the developments in Soviet Russia with disgust, believed that communists had much different tasks than simply "leading" the working-class like some sort of enlightened intellectual minority. He held these beliefs as early as 1909 when he first published *Road To Power,* a work that, next to real-life political analysis, informs the reader of a Marxist framework of philosophy that not only is an example of sharp historical materialism, but also emphasises the importance of mass organisation and bottom-up class politics. Communism would unfortunately become depleted of these ideals, starting in 1921, although it is a subject of heavy scholarly debate among socialists as to where exactly "it went wrong" with the Soviet Union in terms of democracy and freedom.

This bottom-up culture is to be realised by building a mass-movement, which is managed not by an "enlightened minority" such as the Soviet politburo, but by the working class itself through democratic means.

"We are revolutionists, and this not simply in the sense that the steam engine is a revolutionist. The social transformation for which we are striving can be attained only through a political revolution, by means of the conquest of political power by the fighting proletariat. The only form of the state in which Socialism can be realized is that of a republic, and a thoroughly democratic republic at that."

(Kautsky 1909)

Revolutionary patience

Whilst insistent that revolution is inevitable and that the proletariat shall one day overcome the economic, legislative and social shackles of the bourgeoisie, Kautsky states that the revolution does not necessarily have to be of military nature. He gives two reasons for this proposition: firstly, it is due to "the colossal superiority of the weapons of the present standing armies, as compared with the weapons in the possession of civilians", which renders any armed effort on the side of the proletariat futile. Secondly, Kautsky states that the bourgeoisie has itself introduced effective means that the proletariat can use for promoting revolutionary values - freedom of association, freedom of press and freedom of speech. These means of promoting revolution were not present under absolutism and therefore pose an advantage that the bourgeoisie - before its own revolution - did not have (Kautsky 1909).

This theory was further developed by the British communist academic Mike Macnair in his book *Revolutionary Strategy*. Macnair proposes that, since the presence the powerful the military industrial complex highly decreases the chances of military revolution, the revolution needs to adopt a cultural, social and therefore "patient" character. Marxists, primarily occupied with ideologising the working-class, should invest in the creation of a "parallel society" by setting up own publishing houses, banks, schools, hospitality facilities, and other components of a functioning society. As time passes, this parallel society outgrows the old capitalist society. This way of political agitation, which is somewhat reminiscent of the Black Panther party, has the potential to propagate revolutionary thought in a sustainable manner. This is directly based on Kautsky's belief that the proletariat first needs to win a political majority amongst the people before it can move on to actively seizing power in the form of a government.

Dutch communism and Kautsky's political philosophy

Media frenzy and radicalisation

Dutch politics, especially on the left, were shaken up when the following headline appeared on the national news: "SP [Socialistische Partij] expels dozens of members due to communist conflict". Amongst the members expelled were Tijs Hardam, then-candidate for the position of party chairman, and Michel Eggermont, an elected member of the Provincial Council of Utrecht. The person writing this very essay also happened to be amongst the expelled (NOS 2021).

This desperate move of the SP, nowadays known to be a rather moderate party on the left with growingly revisionist values (refusing to exit NATO, striving for manageable capitalism rather than socialism), was the consequence of long internal turmoil at the epicentre of its power structures. The SP seemingly deemed these structures threatened by a large group of socialist youth in their ranks who were members of the Communist Platform (a Dutch communist propaganda-group), the Marxist Forum (a political sub-group in the SP that also ran for party elections) and ROOD, which used to be the SP's youth wing until this conflict.

ROOD (which has about 1200 members) was detached from the SP as its youth wing when the chairman candidate Olaf Kemerink (despite having been expelled by the SP) and his Marxist fellow candidates were democratically elected to the board of ROOD in November 2020, with a support of 75% of the 110 members present (Nieuwsuur, November 22, 2020). Their success was a sign of the large support

within ROOD for the Communist Platform and its determined anti-capitalist views, prompting the party-secretary Arnout Hoekstra to proclaim that "we [the SP] do not want to host a group of radicalised communists who live in attics" (Nieuwsuur, November 16, 2020).

Communist Platform attracted a lot of criticism from the SP due to their ambitions to "arm the proletariat", calling for the removal of the standing army and its replacement with democratised people's militias (Communistisch Platform: ons programma, n.d.).

The reason why the Dutch SP's ties to its own youth organisation ROOD grew strained in the first place was a proposal that was democratically accepted on ROOD's general assembly in June 2020. This proposal was a critical reaction to the SP parliamentary faction leader Lilian Marijnissen's statement that she would not exclude a coalition with the VVD, a right-wing neoliberal party (Bakker 2020). This prospect angered the majority of ROOD enough to accept the proposal, stating that "ROOD must publicly oppose the possibility of coalition with the VVD".

This move was also inspired by the teachings of Kautsky and Macnair, with the essence being that capitalism cannot be overcome only by participating in parliamentary democracy, and that the struggle is hindered by joining coalitions with pro-capitalist parties.

In Kautsky's words:

> *"It is to ask the Socialists to commit political suicide to demand that they join in any coalition or "bloc" policy, in any case where the words "reactionary mass" are truly applicable. It is demanding moral suicide of the Socialists to ask them to enter into an alliance with capitalist parties at a time when, these have prostituted themselves and compromised themselves to the very bottom. Any such alliance would only be to join in furthering that prostitution."* (Kautsky 1909)

Entire local SP chapters ended up splitting from the SP, destabilising the SP heavily on a local level (AD 2022). The downfall of the SP-chapters in Amsterdam, Utrecht and Rotterdam directly led to the founding of new party-projects there which embrace Marxism more openly and explicitly call for radical policies such as the expropriation of landlords. How did these radicalised Marxists attain enough influence to destabilise one of the Netherlands' established leftist parties?

The parallel society

If we analyse the strategy of the radical former SP members, we can find significant parallels to the socialist doctrine of Kautsky and, by extension, Macnair. The young Marxists, moving dynamically between the organisations of ROOD, Marxist Forum and Communist Platform, had built an intricate infrastructure that can be likened to Macnair's strategy promoting a sort of parallel society, which is in turn based on Kautsky's non-bureaucratic, bottom-up Orthodox Marxism (called "orthodox" because of its adherence to the principles of Marxism as originally formulated by Marx and Engels).

The Dutch orthomarxists, or (Neo-)Kautskians, as they are often called derogatively by critics, garnered momentum through the following initiatives:

o The Society of Comrades (Kameraadschappij): a recreational society which organises sporting events (like kickboxing and hiking) and cultural events (visiting historically relevant sites and museums) (Fraanje 2020). The Society currently has approximately 100 members.

o De Rode Lap: a leftist webshop which is most known for its agitprop (political agitation material) like stickers. Busts of communist icons (like Marx and Lenin), books (including Macnair's *Revolutionary*

Strategy) and merchandise are also part of the assortiment. The revenue is directly invested in creating more political propaganda.

o Proletaris: a publishing house that edits and publishes socialist/communist literature.

Several educational initiatives: frequently, educational events are hosted by Communist Platform.

Whether these events are publicly accessible, depends on the event itself. ROOD, the socialist youth organisation (welcoming communists, but certainly not limited to their ideology), also has an educational committee (Horst 2021).

These initiatives are the first attempts on the left to create a social and cultural space which is conditioned to politicise those who enter it. Whatever the participant encounters is highly politicised and provides systemic critique, a low-threshold gateway to developing class consciousness. Be it through books filled with theories of historical materialism and Marxist party movement or a recreational organisation in which socialists can discuss their views whilst engaging in physical exercise.

> *"It is important to be clear that the movement that the centre tendency [Orthodox Marxism] sought to build was not the gutted form of the modern social-democracy/Labourism, which is dependent on the support of the state and the capitalist media for its mass character. The idea was of a party which stood explicitly for the power of the working class and socialism. It was one which was built up on the basis of its own resources, its own organisation with local and national press, as well as its own welfare and educational institutions, etc."* (Macnair 2008)

Conclusion

In contemporary socialist politics, youth are mostly torn between a dictatorial Stalinism and a moderate social-democracy that is still tolerant of capitalism. Karl Kautsky's political philosophy as laid down in "Road to Power", and further extended by Mike Macnair's "Revolutionary Strategy", offers a radically democratic, non-bureaucratic and, most of all, anti-capitalist alternative.

This rekindled hope for a democratic socialism put into practice by a steadily growing Marxist movement in the Netherlands, which identifies itself with Kautsky's Orthodox Marxism and performs politics in harmony with his political theories, aiming to prevent a dictatorial mindset and truly engage the masses in the political process.

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