

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

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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 racist 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 rationalism's 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 racist 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 racist 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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