

**“Universal toleration becomes questionable when its rationale no longer prevails, when tolerance is administered to manipulated and indoctrinated individuals who parrot, as their own, the opinion of their masters, for whom heteronomy has become autonomy.”- Herbert Marcuse**

The main point in Herbert Marcuse’s argument is stated in the very first line. *Universal toleration becomes questionable when its rationale no longer prevails*. The concept of tolerance must be limited to a part with rational grounds. We must therefore examine, when this rational ground is missing and thus tolerance cannot be applicable to an issue. In the following lines of the quote he offers a criteria by which we may determine whether the argumentation of an individual is based on rational grounds or not. (...) *when tolerance is administered to manipulated and indoctrinated individuals who parrot, as their own, the opinion of their masters, for whom heteronomy has become autonomy*. The key criteria for Marcuse seems to be the individual arguing, or more precisely whether this individual has thought for him- or herself or is just repeating what he or she’s heard before and appeals to. In that case the individual has lost the sovereignty over his thoughts and mind and must be manipulated and indoctrinated. These individuals – oftentimes holding strong controversy opinions – cannot be asked to be tolerant, in Marcuse’s opinion.

The argumentation in the second part of his quote seems problematic to me. When faced with an individual with rather controversy opinions, I will be challenged greatly with determining whether he is manipulated or not. This is why such a criteria doesn’t seem to be enough in order to decide if a particular belief should be tolerated. I am therefore proposing a more practical criteria in this essay, by which we may make this decision more precisely. In order to do this I will need to consider two separate theories, of which I believe that they could be helpful in trying to understand the quote stated above in a better way as I join the two theories and conclude from them on these following few pages,.

Firstly, I would like to consider a concept of tolerance as brought forward by Rainer Forst, a contemporary German philosopher. Forst differentiates between different components of tolerance. As we analyse examples of practised tolerance we find, that its basis is a form of disagreement, or even more strongly a form of objection. We are never called to be tolerant towards a person with which we share all our worldviews and opinions. This is why Forst rightly argues that the first and foremost component to tolerance is objection; objection to a differing worldview, a different lifestyle a particular practice and so on. The second component to tolerance is acceptance. Even though we may differ in these respects just mentioned, we are willing to accept our opponent’s opinion to some degree. Up to a certain point we find reasonable, we accept disagreement that naturally occurs in pluralistic societies as ours. At the limit of our acceptance the last component of tolerance sets in: restriction. In order for the belief we firstly objected to not to get in conflict with our own or third-parties’ believes, we restrict each one – mainly through law. It is important to note here, that this limit is dependable of others principles within the society we live in. Tolerance therefore is never a concept standing alone, but rather on a common basis of shared values and principles. This last part – even though it is fundamental to understand tolerance as a whole – will be neglected for this essay, as it is secondary to understand the quote given.

The second theory I’d like to introduce, is the theory of disagreement, particularly the differentiation of epistemic and moral (or value) disagreement. Insight in these two concepts will help

us to better understand, in what cases acceptance as a component of tolerance is valid and in what cases it is not. Let us therefore look closely in the differentiation of epistemic and moral disagreement. The two concepts differ mainly in the reason for their occurrence. Epistemic disagreement between parties is believed to root in a different set of evidence considered, the mental abilities of the people disagreeing, or a differing set of background information. The epistemic disagreement between two individuals is therefore always due to an asymmetry in these factors. On the other hand, moral disagreement occurs when other factors don't line up perfectly between two parties. These factors for moral disagreement might be a different upbringing and socialisation, differing worldviews or more generally the difference in taste and preference. These two forms of disagreement must be separated from each other, in order to understand tolerance more clearly.

As we bring these two theories together we find, that the interesting part in regard to the first line of the quote, is the acceptance-component of tolerance. Marcuse rightly argues that universal tolerance is questionable when it is not based on rational ground. This phrase raises the question, under what circumstances a rationale is not given anymore. In combination of the theories outlined above I'd argue, that such a rational ground does not longer exist in question of epistemic disagreement, when they're resolved. While the rational ground prevails in moral and value disagreement-issues – because there is no reason to privilege any few over the other -, epistemic disagreement can be resolved, clearly leaving one argumentation less reasonable than the other. For those views the rational ground is then lost. That means, that the acceptance component cannot be validly applied, as all rationale lacks. A very common example for this are race issues. In the event of racial discrimination we would entirely be misled to ask the discriminating person to be more tolerant. Rather we should want them to state their reasons, why they believe that a race should be denied a particular right. In resolving the problem and proving that the opponent has no rational basis for his argumentation they no longer will be able to validly state their case, that acceptance could be applied as a component. In short; racist people are not to be asked to be tolerant, but rather to be reasonable.

Herbert Marcuse rightfully points out, that tolerance may not always be the right response to believes that we object to. In other words; we shall not be tolerant towards the intolerable. Marcuse thinks that this distinction must be made by examining the individual articulating his opinion. In doubt he or she is drawn to his or her opinion through manipulation from others, we are not to ask them to be tolerant. The key point to Marcuse's argumentation is the autonomous individual, thinking as demanded by Immanuel Kant in his famous proclamation: "*Sapere aude!*" - *Have the courage to use your own mind*. However, reducing this issue to the individual does not leave any room to look deeper into the sort of content that lies behind it – a crucial part as far as I'm concerned. Lessing's work *Nathan and the wise* ends with one of the most famous parables of the eighteenth's century enlightenment: The three men – as representatives of the three monotheistic religions – are given each a ring, of which everyone believed that theirs is the true one. In their incapacity of actually finding out which one is the actual original ring, their left in believe that it is the one each is holding in his own hands. At the same time, they are asked to accept the other two men's believe as well and tolerate it. The question of tolerance therefore seems inseparable with the form of disagreement between the parties. Moral or value disagreement gives reason to tolerate, while epistemic disagreement asks us to look closely into the subject and constitute a common basis, that sets the limits of our tolerance towards others.