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ABOUT THE COVER

The cover illustrates the diversity of thought in the present volume. As TALISIK intends to promote philosophy through different academic channels, it also presupposes the need to dialogue with those outside the University of Santo Tomas. The montage forming a concrete face clearly depicts how the contribution of different academic institutions fully expresses the flourishing of philosophical research among undergraduate students in the country.

TALISIK: An Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy, 8:1 (December 2021)

Layout by Ms. Raica Reguyal Limpiado

ABOUT THE JOURNAL

TALISIK: An Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy is the official publication and research arm of the BA Philosophy Program of the Faculty of Arts and Letters - University of Santo Tomas. It aims to foster a research culture among undergraduate students of Philosophy. As a research platform primarily for undergraduate philosophy students in the Philippines, the journal seeks to publish articles across the whole range of philosophical topics, but with special emphasis on the following subject strands:

Anglo-American Philosophy

Aristotelian-Thomistic Philosophy and Scholasticism

Continental European Philosophy

Contemporary philosophical issues and trends

Feminism and Postcolonial Theory

Filipino Philosophy

Oriental Thought and East-West Comparative Philosophy

TALISIK is a Filipino word. It is a contraction of “Talas” [Keeness] and “Saliksik” [Search]. **TALISIK** then means “Katalasan ng isip na umunawa ng anuman” [Keeness of the mind to understand anything] and “Malaliman at matalinong pagdalumat sa kahulugan ng anuman” [In-depth and intelligent search for the meaning of anything]. Based on the definition of **TALISIK**, the Editorial Board intends to demonstrate the acumen of undergraduate students of philosophy through their research undertakings. The journal primarily caters to the works of the UST undergraduate students of philosophy and welcomes contributions from other fields and institutions. Today, the organization also envisions expanding its academic channels not only through publication but also with discursive spaces that will allow curiosity and polemical research to develop.

TALISIK publishes issues annually.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

The year 2021 marks the 11th anniversary of the establishment of the University of Santo Tomas' Department of Philosophy and the 8th anniversary of TALISIK: An Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy. The anniversary celebration of the Department keenly highlights how worth remembering is the value of discourse and dialogue which serve as the building block of philosophy. Through the previous years, TALISIK has established the foundation of investigative philosophical endeavors among undergraduate Philosophy students in the Philippines. Initially, the published papers in TALISIK consist mainly of the works of Thomasian undergraduates. However, through the course of publication years, the journal has eventually received papers from new researchers from other academic institutions. Tellingly, such a progressive space for philosophical research allows the spirit of inquiry to flourish, by which the students not only hold the role of apprenticeship to their respective institutions but also as freethinkers whose responsibility of scholarship transcends the boundaries of classroom-type rumination. Indeed, the preceding greatly exemplifies genuine discourse and dialogue.

Being committed to publishing excellent philosophical works of undergraduates in all research areas, the Editorial Board is grateful to announce that the present volume consists of three journal article contributors who all came from different academic institutions. The articles focused on variegated themes that range from phenomenology, political philosophy, and epistemology. Firstly, Ryan Gabrielle Balayo's article delves into Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body as a viable critique against the emergence of transhumanism and its ramifications to human agency. Secondly, Anjon Frederick Mamunta's work attempts to analyze the practice of Philippine journalism as embodying Foucault's notion of fearless speech. Thirdly, the paper of Joshua Jose Ocon offers an account regarding the insufficiency of Klein's counter-argument to foundationalism as a solution to the epistemic regress problem. For the journal's Agora Free Papers section, Rasheed Enric Itoriaga's piece critically examines the unethical practices of network marketing companies through the lenses of Kant's ethical system. True enough, the diversity of article contributors signifies the expansion of TALISIK to other universities; thus, initiating platforms for dialogue.

Moreover, We express our sincerest gratitude to the members of the Department of Philosophy for encouraging their students to cultivate a reading, writing, and research culture. The present volume together with all the preceding developments would not be possible without the guidance of our mentors, namely, Mr. Jessie Joshua Z. Lino, MA - TALISIK Faculty Lead, for his endless support to the projects and ideas of the Editorial Board together with Dr. Roland Theuas DS. Pada for his guidance in the management of the journal. We thank all the reviewers for ensuring the quality of the papers published in the journal and we wish to congratulate all the contributors for having their papers published. Lastly, the Editor-in-Chief would also like to thank the Managing Editor and Associate Editors of Editorial Board 2020-2021, Ms. Andrea Jessica Dela Peña, Mr. Stephen Marl Bayot, Mr. Nathanael Navarro, and Mr. Christian Zeus Suazo for actively participating in the review process of Volume 8 and bringing it into fruition. Gratitude is also extended to Ms. Nathalie Grace Naval for helping the Editor-in-Chief to design the published materials for their different projects, Ms. Raica Limpiado for creating the layout of the current volume, and Mr. Patrick Andre Mencias and Mr. Anton Heinrich Rennesland, MA for guiding the Editorial Board in their endeavor.

As the journal celebrates its 8th year, the Editorial Board not only intends to contribute to the practice and promotion of research culture but also to the strengthening of the reading culture among undergraduate students of Philosophy. In view of this, the Editorial Board launched its new project

last September 04, 2021, entitled *Reading Sessions (Reflective Interventions: Reading, Writing, Thinking)* to expand its horizon on philosophical activities, promote reading and writing culture, and allow curiosity among the philosophy students to develop. With this in mind, the journal is no longer limited to the publication of papers but also to encourage students to demonstrate their strong ability to engage with a wide range of research disciplines and philosophical arguments evident in the curated reading sessions. It is also attuned to the principle that reading forms a significant aspect in the creation of good philosophical research papers. Such an endeavor allows undergraduate students of the BA Philosophy Program of the University of Santo Tomas – Faculty of Arts and Letters to discourse with students from other universities.

Perhaps, if there is one thing that the anniversary of the UST Department of Philosophy and the publication of TALISIK's 8th volume both share, it is the disposition to commit to the spirit of dialogue and inclusivity. For any philosophical endeavor to ensue, one must make the I-Other potentiality possible and concrete. TALISIK has pushed forward to let our community grow and prosper by welcoming all students from across the country and outside our institution to express their ideas, represent their academic affiliations, and have their works published. Any attempt to philosophize in isolation is futile. Transcending beyond one's borders does not imply a forgetfulness of one's own but it expresses the intent to develop oneself with the help of the Other from the outside. True enough, the enterprise of philosophy should always fix its gaze on dialogue and inclusivity especially during these turbulent times of our society.

**The Editorial Board
2020-2021**

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TALISIK: An Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy

Volume 8, Number 1 December 2021

ARTICLES

- 1 RYAN GABRIELLE C. BALAYO
Altered Lived Body: A Phenomenological Critique on Transhumanism
- 16 ANJON FREDRICK C. MAMUNTA
Truth-Telling in Dangerous Times: The Practice of *Parrhesia* in Philippine Journalism
- 32 JOSHUA JOSE R. OCON
Foundations and Justification: A Response to Klein's Objections to Foundationalism as a Solution to the Epistemic Regress Problem

AGORA: Free Papers

- 46 RASHEED ENRIC T. ITORIAGA
A Kantian Evaluation of the Unethical Business Practices of Network Marketing Companies

Altered Lived Body: A Phenomenological Critique on Transhumanism

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Abstract: Perhaps, one of the greatest challenges that the modern world tries to solve is the boundaries of human beings' capacity. Their desire to escape the limits of humanity and the natural cycle of life that culminates in death brought us to a new occurring stage of history: transhumanism. With this current phenomenon, it is impossible not to see its implications in human life and the world. In his book, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty argued that the human body is an expressive space that contributes to the significance of personal actions. The body is also the origin of expressive movement and is a medium for the perception of the world. Bodily experience gives perception a meaning beyond that established simply by thought. Hence, modifying parts of a human being's body, or uploading the mind in an artificial body or a computer, will cause a different perception and experience of the world. In this paper, I aim to present how the analysis of Merleau-Ponty on human beings' perception can explain the phenomenological experience of a transhuman in the world. Within this analysis, I claim that a transhuman will experience the world differently from human beings. I will divide this paper into four sections. First, I will discuss the movement of transhumanism, wherein I will explain the goal and the vision that transhumanists have for the world and humanity. Second, I will present how a transhuman, having a modified body or living inside an artificial body or a computer in the evolutionary stage of transhumanism loses their memory and personal identity using Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the body and perception. This will further explain the difference between the phenomenological experience or perception of a human and a transhuman. Third, in line with the loss of memory, I will explore how the realities of the world will become more subjective between the two. And last, I will provide an argument on why transhumanism is possible due to the advancements and developments of technologies in the modern world but should not happen.

Keywords: *Lived body, Merleau-Ponty, Perception, Phenomenology, Transhumanism*

I. Transhumanism: The Beginning of Modern Humanism

Following Darwin's theory of evolution, humans evolved from animality to humanity. Today, after stages of evolution, humanity is in another epoch. Human beings live in a time when technologies advance and develop far from what was imagined. The fantasies of science fiction become real options for their lives and how they can live in a world facing different crises. They became developed and instead of solving such problems, they resort to saving themselves. However, these advancements of technologies raise questions, not just about the future of humanity, but concerning their present and past. The developments that technologies have provided paved the way for humans to dream of preserving their mind and consciousness while leaving their biological bodies. This way, they can live in a dying world, as long as it is alive, without any repercussions and contact with its effects. It is the new paradigm for thinking about humanity's future to save them from the consequences of their actions toward the world and live unrestrictedly by their biological bodies. These developments also created a movement with an ideology that seeks to use these technologies for the development and expansion of human capacities: transhumanism. Considering the developments and advancements of technologies and how they are used in modern society, transhumanism seeks to continue and accelerate the evolution of intelligent life beyond its current human form and limitations through science and technology guided by life-promoting principles and values.¹ Transhumanism focuses on what it is to be a human being during technological advancements and developments that are now redefining human nature.

With the development of transhumanism, a more elaborate concept of it was established by its proponents, specifically Nick Bostrom. For him, with the help of modern technologies, it is possible to alleviate human suffering and improve the human condition.² Thus, it can be concluded that transhumanism's purpose is to alter human nature to avoid pain and diseases and improve humanity's life inside a dying world.³ They want to transcend human nature and challenge the history of humanity's evolution using science and technology. Therefore, they are creating a new ideology that promises an end to all the suffering of human beings.⁴ However, transhumanism does not only want to escape the laws of nature but also the human struggle with death. For its proponents, it is the thesis that humans can and ought to use technology to alter and improve human biology. From mind uploading, cryonics, artificial intelligence, robotics, space exploration to brain and body modifications, transhumanism's mission is life extension to increase the maximum human lifespan.⁵ It is to increase

¹ Max More, "True Transhumanism: A Reply to Don Ihde" in *Transhumanism and its Critics*, ed. Gregory R. Hansell and William Grassie (Philadelphia: Metanexus Institute, 2011), 69.

²Nick Bostrom, "What is Transhumanism?," last modified 2001, <https://www.nickbostrom.com/old/transhumanism.html>.

³ This statement was inferred from the idea of the modifications—altering or changing the biological body—to prevent it from experiencing and perceiving mundane sensations.

⁴ Despite the different branches of transhumanism, its common goal and purpose are that of alleviating human suffering and to stop the struggle of humanity against death or immortality. However, because transhumanism has its own branches, it is arguable if all transhumanists' goal is to make the lives of human beings in the world indefinitely.

⁵Elmo Keep, "A Timeline of Transhumanism," last modified 2015, <https://www.theverge.com/a/transhumanism-2015/history-of-transhumanism> (emphasis added).

the length of time a human being is alive and diversify the matter in which increasing options and capabilities a person exists because a human being's life, the length of time they exist, is bounded by a single century and its matter is tied to biology.⁶ However, the idea of technologically enhancing human bodies is not new. In the past, human beings made devices such as wooden legs, hearing aids, spectacles, and false teeth to improve their living. Transhumanism is different because the purpose of their alteration of human nature and modification of the biological body.

It is not hyperbolic to simply put the goal of transhumanism as creation of immortals, as most of their proponents envision and argue about it. One of the ways they imagined it is through mind uploading or the continuity of one's consciousness on an artificial body or a computer. In this process, the mind as a collection of memories, personality, and attributes of a specific individual, is transferred from its original biological brain and body to an artificial computational substrate or a silicone-enhanced body.⁷ The argument does not only defy the laws of nature but also treats the biological body only as a vessel for the ideas of the brain and where the mind is stored. The body, through which one experiences and perceives the world, is then ignored despite it being an integral part of human identity, memories, and knowledge of the world. Transhumanism becomes a dangerous idea because it disregards the body's role in human beings' way of knowing and perceiving the world. It plainly describes objective reality as independent from human being's perception.

II. Merleau-Ponty and Transhumanism: The Lived Body and Beyond

Even though transhumanism ignores the role that the biological body plays in knowing objective reality and building identity, the debates surrounding it come only between its proponents and bio-conservatives. Transhumanism claims that by overcoming our biological, neurological, and psychological constraints, human beings will acquire much more freedom than they have before.⁸ Restricting potential modifications of the biological body will result in the invasion of individual freedom. Despite that, bio-conservatives impose a ban and restriction due to their concern that transhumanism will dehumanize humanity. For them, transhumanism will destroy the very element of being a human being and will make humanity lose morality and worthiness.⁹ However, their criticism is only rooted in an ethical argument. They fear that through the process of modifications of the biological body and mind uploading, it is not only human beings that will be changed, but also the ethical values, politics, and the whole society at large. Hence, one of their most viable criticisms is the wider division and gap between the social classes that transhumanism will create. However, these inadequacies can be realized by arguing phenomenologically.

⁶Natasha Vita-More, "The Transhumanist Manifesto," last modified 2018, <https://natashavita-more.com/transhumanist-manifesto/> (emphasis added).

⁷ Mind Uploading, "What is Mind Uploading?," last modified 2015, <http://www.minduploading.org/> (emphasis added).

⁸ Tamar Sharon, *Human Nature in an Age of Biotechnology* (New York: Springer, 2013), 42.

⁹ Vanshika Mittal, "Bioconservatism Versus Transhumanism in Environmental Ethics," last modified February 18, 2020, <https://nickledanddimed.com/2020/02/18/bioconservatism-vs-transhumanism-in-environmental-ethics/> (emphasis added).

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in his book, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, distinguishes two concepts of the body: the first is labeled as an objective body or the biological body of human beings, and the second is labeled as the phenomenal body or the lived body.¹⁰ Regardless of his distinction of two concepts of the body, there is only one body. The lived body extends from the edge of consciousness where humans are aware of things to the world in which those things are seen, felt, and heard.¹¹ Therefore, the body is an important factor in how human beings experience, act, think, and perceive their personal identity, the objects that exist outside them, the others, and the world. He infers the idea of embodiment which has a double meaning: it encompasses both the body as a lived, experiential structure and the body as the context or milieu of a cognitive mechanism.¹² Embodiment is an essential element of a human being's existence, which is defined by what he calls the symbolic function.

Merleau-Ponty claimed that embodiment of human being is central to their consciousness and self, pushing away from seeing objects as isolatable and reducible phenomena inside the brain and toward seeing them as more distributed and relational features of human beings' lives in the world.¹³ The world and the objects that human beings can perceive are not merely the creations of their minds and consciousness, but their experience of the world. But what determines what we perceive is the structure of the phenomenal field. The phenomenal field is not an object in the world; it presents objects in the world, the basis on which they appear.¹⁴ Hence, for him, the body, as a whole system in the co-constitution of consciousness, plays an integral role in forming and gaining knowledge. Human beings' consciousness is not exclusively formed in their minds but through the body, which is the sole instrument of perception that human beings must perceive themselves, the objects outside them, and the world.

Central to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is the idea of perception. For him, to exist as a human being means something much more complicated than exerting biological functions like breathing, feeding, perceiving, and moving. We need to understand man as an embodied sense-giver. For man who "exists," the lived body is not a functional machine that elicits an appropriate reaction to an environmental stimulus.¹⁵ It is a system of meanings by which a phenomenal object is recognized. The intentions of the person perceiving an object are reflected in the field to which the phenomenal object belongs. However, perception is only the thought that one is perceiving.¹⁶ To Merleau-Ponty then, perception is not a channel that simply filters information from a separate environment, rather it is a

¹⁰Alex Scott, "Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception," last modified 2002, <https://www.angelfire.com/md2/timewarp/merleauPonty.html>.

¹¹Ted Toadvine, "Maurice Merleau-Ponty," last modified 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/merleau-ponty/#PoliPhil>.

¹²Eleanor Rosch, Evan Thompson, and Francisco Varela, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991), xvi.

¹³Patricia Moya Cañas, "The understanding of the body and movement in Merleau-Ponty," last modified December 19, 2016, http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0101-31732019000100201

¹⁴Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (New York: Routledge, 2012), 57.

¹⁵Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 71.

¹⁶Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 40.

kind of interconnected interaction of body, an object that exists outside the body and the environment.¹⁷ He argues that consciousness is not merely a representative function or a power of signification. Consciousness is a projective activity that develops sensory data beyond their own specific significance and uses them to express spontaneous action.¹⁸ For him, the human body is an expressive space that contributes to the significance of personal actions. It is also the origin of expressive movement and is a medium for the perception of the world. Merleau-Ponty emphasized the body as the primary site of knowing the world; the body and that which it perceives could not be disentangled from one another.¹⁹ Bodily experience gives perception a meaning beyond the meaning established simply by thought. Thus, Descartes' cogito (I think, therefore I am) does not account for how consciousness is influenced by the spatiality of a human being's own body.²⁰ Merleau-Ponty also argues that existence and substance presuppose each other. Substance expresses existence, and existence realizes itself through substance. However, substance is not merely a form of signification or expression of existence, and existence is not merely what is expressed as substance. Existence and substance explain each other.²¹ Human beings must physically exist before they can think about what it means to exist.

Merleau-Ponty established the importance of biological body in knowing and perceiving the self, the objects that exist outside the body, the others, and the world. It is through the body, specifically lived body, that they acquire knowledge and consciousness. Hence, the contents of the human mind and consciousness are reflections of their perception and understanding of the world. Humans cannot separate themselves from their perceptions of the world; therefore, they cannot separate themselves from their bodies. Merleau-Ponty pointed out that when human beings enquire into their everyday experience, they always find themselves in some way involved with the world.²² The body exists both as a vessel for the mind and as a tool to experience and make sense of the world. Therefore, mind uploading, one of the processes that transhumanism aims to achieve, or any modifications of human being's biological body in ways that affect how they can perceive the world, will cause the loss of memory²³ and personal identity. The lived body, in which they experience the world, when modified, will be altered and will result in perceiving the world differently.

¹⁷ Taylor Carman, *Merleau-Ponty* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 87.

¹⁸ Patricia Moya, "Habit and Embodiment in Merleau-Ponty," last modified July 25, 2014, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnhum.2014.00542/full#:~:text=According%20to%20Merleau%2DPonty%2C%20there,a%20form%20of%20embodied%20consciousness.>

¹⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xx.

²⁰ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 422.

²¹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 338.

²² Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 317.

²³ Human beings gain knowledge through perception and making sense of the sensations and experiences they acquire from their environment. However, these knowledges do not automatically enter the mind, but rather, the biological body senses it. When the instrument to acquire these things is gone, the knowledge acquired through it will also be lost.

Transhumanism ignores the part that the body plays in human interaction with the world and in gaining knowledge about it. If the mind is transferred or uploaded to a different body, whether an artificial or computerized one, it will lose its ability to know and experience things. The mind is unable to perceive the world that surrounds it because it has lost its capacity to perceive—because it does not have a biological body that makes human beings see and experience the world. The body is an integral part of knowing and experiencing the self, the objects that exist outside the body, the others, and the world. The world is not what human beings think, but what they live through.

III. Remains: Will Memory and Consciousness Stay?

Consciousness is necessarily, through experience, embodied and derives its nature from the lived body. Modifications and alterations of the human body, regardless of its interests, such as alleviating suffering and transcendence from mundane sensations, will also alter humanity's perception and knowledge of the world. The world around human beings is an objective reality, and how their biological body perceives it is how the world introduces itself and how they experience and sense it. It is where the connection between human beings and the world begins. In the case of the phenomenon of the phantom limb, Merleau-Ponty argues that this phenomenon is explainable neither through a reductive psychological explanation, nor an irreducible psychological account, nor even an artificial juxtaposition of the two.²⁴ For him, the phantom limb is a result of a fundamental ambiguity of human beings being of experience as structured according to a tacit set of sedimentations and possibilities.²⁵ Therefore, losing a limb or a part of a human body does not alter the perception of the self; the objects outside the body, the others that live in the world, and of the world, because the body, which the amputated limb is connected before, remains the vehicle of being in the world and for a living being, having a body means being united with a definite milieu, merging with certain projects, and being perpetually engaged therein.²⁶ Hence, the body remains open to the world.

The body with an amputated limb has the same perception because it is still present in the world at a certain moment. The body remains engaged with the world, perceives it, and experiences it. The body with an amputated limb still experiences things as a whole regardless of the missing part. It remains as it is because of its same perception and experience of the world. In the case of the phantom limb, the person is aware of and inhibited by the loss of the limb. However, the body continues to operate with the motor intentionality specific to the limb because the body, in its habituation and responsiveness, continues to respond to the objects in the world that invite the use of that limb.²⁷ Hence, even with the missing part, consciousness remains because the instrument through which it is derived remains. In the case of amputated limbs, not like in the process of modification of the body or mind uploading, memory and personal identity remains because the vehicle through which these things are acquired remains in the world, experiencing it through its biological and lived body. The

²⁴ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xli.

²⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xliv.

²⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 84.

²⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 13.

difference in perceiving, experiencing, and knowing the self, the objects that exist outside the human body, the others, and the world²⁸ from before might occur. It is nothing because the body remains as a whole even when a part of it is missing. However, the case of transhumanism is different. Modifying the biological body or changing it wholly and putting the human mind in another body, either an artificial body or a computer, will cause the loss of both memory and personal identity.

The mind is an instrument of the body and not vice versa; humans can immediately influence the mind through the body. In the case of a modified body, or a mind already put in an artificial body or computer, the memory of “pain” or the consciousness of being in pain, for example, will be erased because they do not experience it anymore. Hence, any mundane sensations that the world inflicts in the biological bodies of human beings will be gone on the mind of a transhuman,²⁹ because their body or vessel through which they perceive and sense the world does not feel it. Thus, it is not embodied in their consciousness anymore. They do not perceive the world as to how they perceived it before, resulting in the erasure of those memories. It is not because they consciously forget but because it is not part of their perception and experience of the world in the present condition of their artificial body or of the computer. It becomes useless for them; hence, it fades into their reality. However, this phenomenon will affect the memory and personal identity of an individual in the evolutionary stage of transhumanism³⁰ and the history of humanity. Today, perception and experience of the world are the objective realities of it, such as the burning sun or the cold winter. However, on the modification of the human body, these mundane sensations will become subjective. A transhuman might not feel human sensations of being submerged in a cold or hot place. Either their body is modified to be immune to those sensations or, a transhuman does not have a body to experience and perceive it. Hence, the realities of the world become subjective because of different perceptions of it – the world becomes a separated two realities: one is the reality of human beings, and the other is the reality of a transhuman.

IV. The Separated Realities of the World

In the evolutionary stage of transhumanism, the objective realities of the world could become subjective because every transhuman might experience the world differently inside a computer or the compositions of the body will react and sense differently in it. Hence, the possibility of different perceptions and experiences of the world, therefore creating different realities, might happen. The different experiences of the world will result in a subjective perception of the world because it no longer perceives the world the way it must be perceived, for there is no unity between humans' subjective experience and the external, objective facts. The body loses its relationship with the world

²⁸ In this paper, the argument of what the biological body perceives is always subjected to four things: the self, the objects that exist outside the body, the others, and the world.

²⁹ Transhuman is what the modified human being or a mind uploaded in an artificial body or a computer in the evolutionary stage of transhumanism is called.

³⁰ The phrase “evolutionary stage of transhumanism” is still debatable because not all the proponents of transhumanism claim it to be an evolutionary stage. However, this will be used in the entirety of the paper to distinguish its time from today.

because its compositions are already modified or non-existent at all, hence, it moves away from the realities of the world instead of connecting with it. Changes in the compositions of the biological body will result in changes in the experience because perception is not a private mental event, nor is the body just one more material object set alongside others. Certainly, it can be argued that we lose sight of perception itself when we place it on either side of a sharp distinction between inner subjective experiences and external objective facts.³¹ The structure of perception is the structure of the body. As Merleau-Ponty says, “my body is my point of view on the world.”³² However, a body that is artificially created to avoid mundane sensations loses its real experience of the world. The body is a human being’s perspective on and of the world. And so it cannot be just one more contingent object or fact about the world.

In the evolutionary stage of transhumanism, the modifications of the body or the replacement of the body will affect human beings’ relationship with themselves, the objects that exist outside them, the others, and the world. We perceive others directly as between the pure subject personal and embodied living beings engaged with a world that we share.³³ Hence, changing the body while preserving the memories and consciousness of a human being is impossible because the lived body that the human has is the instrument to experience and perceive the world. Memories are impossible to retain in a different body, because consciously or unconsciously, the mind will be replaced with new memories and knowledge gained by the new artificial body or the computer – knowledge and memories that correspond to the needs of their artificial body or of the computer. Again, these memories are all lost not because they are forgotten, but because they became useless and inexistent in the consciousness and experience of the artificial body and the world. The artificial body or the modified body will experience new things that will also modify the contents of the mind and how it will understand and know the world. Hence, the world becomes a subjective field with subjective realities.

As transhumanism sees mind uploading as the destiny of the evolution of humanity, they missed acknowledging that this will miserably fail because the memories of the mind, including its consciousness, will not remain and cannot be retained when it is placed in an artificial body or a computer. There will be a vast difference between human life in a biological body and a transhuman that is in an artificial body or computer in terms of the realities in and of the world. Perceiving the world through compositions of the lived body and artificial body will result in a different experience of the world. In mind uploading, the data and the contents of the mind could be uploaded innumerable times. Hence, this process will erase the identity of the owner of the mind that is being uploaded. The original owner of the memories and consciousness would fade because it cannot be compared to the copies of it because the consciousness will have no difference. Therefore, death will be gone in the concept and cycle of human nature. One of the inevitable experiences of the world will not exist

³¹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xiii.

³² Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xv.

³³ Dan Nixon, “The Body as Mediator,” last modified December 7, 2020, <https://aeon.co/essays/the-phenomenology-of-merleau-ponty-and-embodiment-in-the-world>.

anymore, thus, resulting in a different perspective of the world. Yet, despite these facts, transhumanists ignore such consequences because they believe that transhumanism is the only solution to prevent the extinction of humanity.

V. The Case of Phenomenology and Transhumanism

The advancements and developments of technologies proved that transhumanism is not a just science-fiction story but a possible real-life option. Thus, the question humanity must ask is if it should happen. Transhumanism poses itself as an inevitable stage of development and realization of human being's freedom and capacity – an epoch of the retirement of limitations and human suffering. In other words, it presents itself as salvation from pain and crises. However, notwithstanding the autonomy of the human beings, transhumanism intensifies current problems that the world is facing, and at the same time, creates new crises.

If transhumanism's only purpose was to enhance the condition of human life such as to alleviate them from suffering a disease or replacing missing body parts (e.g., replacing the amputated limb with an artificial limb), it must happen. For Merleau-Ponty, the body is not simply just a biological entity, but rather the location of multiple levels of social, sexual, expressive, and emotional values that constitute and constrain the subject in their dealings with the world.³⁴ However, even Merleau-Ponty will agree to transhumanism if the case is only enhancing the human biological body since human's existence is technologically textured. Humans influence the creation of technologies, but technologies also affect how human beings act, perceive, and understand.³⁵ Technologies, such as eyeglasses, a blind man's stick, or even a telescope used to see the world beyond clearly that is not possible to be seen using the naked eye, have become part of human beings' lives to perceive and experience the world differently.

Evidently, humans can use tools and technologies to extend their capacity of perception.³⁶ Human beings use these tools and technologies to perceive the world in-and-through it. For Heidegger, they have become part of one single phenomenal experience, for which human beings cannot distinguish between diverse aspects of it.³⁷ However, tools and technologies which are used to mediate and enhance human perception of the world must be subjected to active regulation by the body. In this case, there must remain a phenomenological, biological, and social difference between the biological body as a sole entity and the tools and technologies that are used by the body. However, transhumanism's goal surpasses this limitation. They do not just want to enhance the body by using tools and technologies to help human beings perceive the world clearly, but to modify it, the means

³⁴Ron McClamrock, "Notes on the Introduction to The Phenomenology of Perception," last modified 1990, <https://www.albany.edu/~ron/papers/mp-intro.html>

³⁵Ron McClamrock, "Notes on the Introduction to The Phenomenology of Perception," last modified 1990, <https://www.albany.edu/~ron/papers/mp-intro.html>

³⁶ However, there is a difference between enhancement and modification. The former's goal is to amplify the experience and perception of human beings, while the latter aims to alter and change it.

³⁷ Michael Wheeler, "Martin Heidegger," last modified 2011, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heidegger/>.

of being in the world, and alter human nature by uploading one's mind into an artificial body or a computer. Thus, issues concerning humanity (of the self and the others) and the world arise. Transhumanism treats the body as a disposable vessel with no integral role in perceiving and knowing the world or a material that has no connection with it.

Disconnecting it through modifying the body to prevent perceiving mundane sensations causes it to lose its relationship and connection with the world. The body is not a container for the mind and consciousness but a constant constitutive part of the world. The body is important in the perception and experience of the world. For example, when the mind is put into an artificial body or in a computer, the mind will no longer be distinct because it cannot perceive the world anymore; thus, it is nothing but a material substance that carries data and knowledge.

Furthermore, human beings' minds could be altered, experimented on, and even replicated without their autonomy through technological manipulation and modification. The DNA humans have led to its composition and the different organs of the body if replaced with a computer substrate or an artificial body goes against all laws of nature.³⁸ It is impossible for human beings to perceive and experience the world if they do not have the body or their body does not have the compositions to do so. A transhuman can live indefinitely, as long as they want, but they will lose their human nature and connection with themselves, the objects outside them, the others, and the world. Moreover, why would someone want to live for so long? Unless they are studying philosophy or waiting for the destruction of the world. Again, it is not the question of transhumanism's possibility or impossibility that one must answer. It can happen. But the question must be is if it should happen. In the evolutionary stage of transhumanism, the subjects they try to alleviate from suffering and pain will be gone. In the process of losing those things, human beings also lose their human nature. Thus, in the stage of transhumanism, there will be no more humans.

VI. Transhumanism: An Open-Shut Case

In the process of mind uploading, transhumanism gives the evolution of man's finite and definite progress while making them live indefinitely. They gave it finality, thus, contradicting their perception of human beings as creatures capable of transcending their limitations and human constraints. Human beings continually progress; discontinuing their evolution is impossible to be put in a certain stage. Furthermore, one of the questions that arise with transhumanism, modifying the biological body or uploading the mind to an artificial body or a computer, is if transhumans are humans or machines. It is already argued that transhumanism alters humanity's human nature, hence, causing the disappearance of their subjectivity. However, considering the term 'human' in transhumanism, it is easy to conceive that human beings will remain with either a modified body or an artificial body.

³⁸ Thomas Too, "The Cons of Mind Uploading," <https://transhumanism102.weebly.com/the-cons-of-mind-uploading.html> (emphasis added).

Notwithstanding, transhumanism's visions, claiming to be guided by life-promoting principles and values, the biological body of a human being and humanity's human nature have characteristics that align with their humanhood and personhood. It is within their relationship with themselves, with the others, their perception, and experience of the objects outside their biological body, their connection with the world, and their experience of life and death.³⁹ Hence, altering these things that make human beings who they are and what they are in and to the world annihilates their humanhood and personhood.

Human beings' perception and experience of the world are unique. Both because of the compositions of the biological body to the world and their lived body. For example, only the human's body can feel the warmth of a cat's furs when being touched or held. The human being's body can feel the comfort of a dog's kiss when they are playing with it or just sitting and making them feel that they are not alone. There are many unique and unexplainable things that only the lived bodies of human beings are capable of feeling, experiencing, and perceiving. However, the world is not solely created for human beings. Creatures experience and perceive it as well using their biological bodies. Yet, the capacity of human beings to make sense of the world and how they perceive and experience it is what makes their perception of the world different from other creatures. Hence, modifying human beings' bodies to be replaced with tools and technologies that cannot experience those things, or the mind being transferred in a computer where perceiving the world is impossible, in the evolutionary stage of transhumanism, knowing, experiencing, and perceiving the world will be different from how it was once experienced by the lived body. The world will be seen through a different lens and instrument of perception; hence, it will not align anymore with its relationship and connection to the body.

Transhumanism can happen, but it should not happen. The crises and conflicts of the world cannot be solved by transforming human beings into technologically modified beings or a consciousness uploaded to a computer. It is not true that the age of carbon-based life is coming to an end, and the only solution for human beings to withstand this change is to become silicon-based entities themselves or by uploading their consciousness into computers/supercomputers.⁴⁰ Being a transhuman, or a consciousness inside a computer, will not end poverty, famine, wars, and injustices. Becoming an immortal being will not solve but will intensify existing problems and will create new ones. One must not forget that the world is dialectic; it is always in motion. Hence, these contradictions can be solved, not just by saving human beings from it, making them not feel it anymore by modifying or changing the compositions of their bodies, but by solving its core origin and its root cause. It is not by altering human nature that these man-made crises are to be solved, but by changing the system to one that will serve humanity and ensure security, freedom, justice, and provide basic means of subsistence. The world will not be saved by losing our connection and relationship to it. The

³⁹ These things that constitute the human nature of a human being is derived from the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty.

⁴⁰ Generation Byte, "The Universal Risk of Mind Uploading," <https://generationbyte.co.uk/universal-risk-of-mind-uploading/> (emphasis added).

body is human being's means to experience the world. Losing it will result in the disappearance of the experiences in and with the world.

Imagine the world in the stage of transhumanism. What will only remain of human beings is the word 'human' in terms of transhuman and posthuman. However, the sphere of becoming a human being is not only affirmed through the use of language. Being a human being transcends the word "human." Hence, it is impossible to argue that human beings remain humans in the stage of transhumanism without the bodies and compositions that make them human beings that feel, experience, and perceive themselves, the objects that exist outside them, the others, and the world. The sensations that human beings feel and experience make them who they are and create their perception of the world. It is only possible by having a biological body, with its complexities and compositions, that is connected with and in the world. Lastly, the goal of transhumanism to attain immortality is not the opposite of death but a contradiction of life. Their finality and finitude define human beings; this short existence makes them live their lives in the world with a purpose and what makes life worth living. This limitation of living is inherent to human beings; it is inevitable and must not be inverted and contradicted. Death, or the finitude of life, universally knocks on human beings to remind them of their connection to the world—nothing will remain, for it is a cycle that accords with the laws of nature.

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Truth-Telling in Dangerous Times: The Practice of *Parrhesia* in Philippine Journalism

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Abstract: This article asserts that Philippine journalism practices parrhesia by exploring the present situation of the Philippine press vis-à-vis Foucault's concept of Parrhesia (fearless speech). Foucault's concept of Parrhesia is a feasible practice that gives a description as to why the Philippine press experience a curtailment of their rights in their duty to speak truth to power. Foucault claims that the practice of parrhesia is a critique of present circumstances, or what Foucault calls 'history of the present,' where a specific regime of truth is imposed by power via a variety of strategies that run through both institutional and non-institutional practices. In contrast, the Philippine press battles the Duterte administration and its machinery of misinformation in social media amidst the repercussions they might face, all in the name of their duty and obligation to the truth. At present, as the Philippine press continues to do the duty of monitoring Duterte's political power, journalists and press workers continually face dangers and harassments in striving to fulfill their duties as independent monitors of power, and resisting the fascistic tendency of the present government that does everything in its power to control and repress anyone that dares to challenge his power.

Keywords: *Philippine journalism, Foucault, parrhesia, truth-telling, critique, governmentality*

Introduction

A country might be considered democratic and free when its press and media are able to provide the citizens information that will make them have the capacity to see what is happening in society. And in reporting, the press must be able to provide both sides of a story. This is where an antagonistic relationship between the press and those in politics develops.

In the Philippines, the press has been pivotal to many events in the history of the Filipino people. Intersecting with Philippine politics, it gives rise to antagonism between media and government. This antagonism results from the media's role to ensure that the elected officials keep their electoral promises and uphold the highest standards of their oath of office.

Yet, when one speaks of the Philippine press, it can be certain that it is one of the oldest and freest in Asia, while at the same time a press that is highly partisan.¹ News reports in the television

¹ Raul Pertierra, *The New Media, Society & Politics in the Philippines* (Germany: Fesmedia Asia, 2012), 13.

focus more on specific personalities with the belief that their interests will only be fulfilled if they have access to the media and the press either by owning a station, or through other under-the-table deals which can either be economic or political in nature.²

Now, what does the press have to say about this? Despite being owned or controlled by oligarchic individuals, the Philippine press tries its best to serve not only these owners, but the consumers as well. Members of the press assigned to cover Philippine politics try their best to write objectively that would cater to the release of information that is unbiased for their company or organization at the risk of being removed from the specific news beat.

Worse than losing the news beat, the member of the press might even earn the ire of the people in power that one is writing about, which might lead to intimidation or even death. This is the culture of impunity, whose victims are not those coming from the mainstream or public press but are local or junior members of the profession in local and alternative media.³

If such is the case of the plurality of mainstream Filipino press and journalism, what then can be made from the slate of the numerous attacks on press freedom by the current regime? It is apparent that the present administration of the country has begun numerous tirades against the press, especially politicians who have vested self-interests (who rather use their positions as a way to increase their wealth and their standard of living) and are under scrutiny from the press. But such attacks are not directed to all members of the press and have been present even in previous administrations. A study in 2005 revealed that in the history of the Philippine press, beginning in 1986 onwards, two tendencies of the Philippine Press came out: a progressive one which featured “a radical critique of Philippine society and a vision of an alternative economic, political and social system,” and a conservative tendency that relied on “a reformist outlook and a basic faith in the justice and wisdom of the existing system.”⁴

Out of the two, the latter speaks of the timid press (a press who would rather be merely reporting what was said rather than be critical about the information) brought about by “ideological assumptions of the political and economic system of which they are a part,” are shackled by the manipulations and pressures from extralegal forces: the government’s influence over the business of media owners, of their advertiser, and even an unseen ideological shackle each media practitioner possesses which “often shape their responses to public issues, thus hindering the flow of information during a crisis.”⁵

² Pertierra, *New Media*, 13.

³ Pertierra, *New Media*, 14.

⁴ ARTICLE 19 and CMFR, *Freedom of Expression and the Media in the Philippines*, (2005), <https://www.article19.org/data/files/pdfs/publications/philippines-baseline-study.pdf>, 26.

⁵ ARTICLE 19 and CMFR, *Freedom of Expression*, 27.

The critical press looks on the government's accomplishments and even its failures, the shift from propaganda journalism⁶ to becoming watchdog journalism⁷. These members of the press are seen as more critical with the way they report as they are bestowed on a certain role of being a watchdog journalist as a guardian, which supplies the citizens information they must have to prevent the abuse of power, to warn citizens about those that are doing them harm, and even to "persuade government agencies, mired in bureaucratic inaction, into doing their jobs."⁸

With the present administration's crackdown and constant attacks on the press, there is a need to reconsider the critical role of the media and the press. While it is a reflection of society, the press must rediscover and review their values in fulfilling their duty to speak the truth and be independent monitors of power. To merely rely on "recording what 'he said-she said does the job with less questioning, less probing scrutiny of the subject,"⁹ it merely echoes an authoritarian impulse that "lets the elected powers to do as they please, *without question or criticism*."¹⁰

A constant power struggle is seen between the Philippine press against Duterte's strongman populism and his blind followers. The Duterte administration attempts to impose their own truth by peddling disinformation to keep the administration in power. The Philippine press, in its capacity, battles this through critique. This critique highlights a power-relation between the ruling alternative truth imposed by a fascistic government peddled by its army of trolls and bots and a resistance to the Philippine press who is providing the objective truth in alternative facts and fake news peddled by the government.

Taking the position of a strong commitment to a practice of fearless speech, we could read the Philippine Press' critical stance of truth-telling through the optics of Michel Foucault's concept of *parrhesia* which he uncovered from its Greek origins. The present-day Philippine press attempts to become truth-tellers against the imposed regime of truth of the current administration by means of critique or, in the Foucauldian sense, resistance to domination. For Foucault, there is a need for critique because it is a "resistance against dominant articulations of time, power and knowledge find inspiration in his definition of critique as the refusal to 'be governed like that' (also, but not only) by and through time."¹¹ And this resistance is characterized by how the Philippine press has now become critical, rather than timid, to a repressive state: the ruling propaganda journalism is becoming more of a watchdog journalism. The press' partisanship has been focused on serving its consumer rather than

⁶ Propaganda journalism focused on being state propagandists and organizers of socialist construction situated in a Russian perspective. Svetlana Pasti, "Two Generations of Contemporary Russian Journalists," *European Journal of Communication* 20, no.1 (2005): 89-115, doi:10.1177/0267323105049634.

⁷ A term that had arisen in the US in the 90s, watchdog journalism is by no means just occasional selective, hard-hitting investigative reporting. It starts with a state of mind, accepting responsibility as a surrogate for the public, asking penetrating questions at every level, from the town council to the state house to the White House, in corporate offices, in union halls and in professional offices and all points in between. Murrey Marder, "This is Watchdog Journalism," *Nieman Reports* 53-54 (2000): 78-79, <https://niemanreports.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/99winter-00spring-opt.pdf>.

⁸ ARTICLE 19 and CMFR, *Freedom of Expression*, 28.

⁹ Melinda De Jesus, "2021 State of Press Freedom in the Philippines," Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, May 5, 2021, <https://pcij.org/article/5208/2021-state-of-press-freedom-in-the-philippines>.

¹⁰ Melinda De Jesus, "2021 State of Press Freedom in the Philippines" [emphasis mine].

¹¹ Jürgen Portschy, "Time of power, knowledge and critique in the work of Foucault," *Time & Society* 29, no. 2 (2020):392-419, 396, doi:10.1177/0961463X20911786.

the pockets of the press' owners. They become more duty-bound rather than pursuing reports for their reputation, and have even transcended working to tell news even at the cost of their lives. As it shows a congruence with Foucault's description of a *parrhesiastes* (truth-teller), it also expounds how critique is used as a resistance against the current administration's regime of truth.

The Situation of Philippine Journalism

Following the above-mentioned transformation within the confines of media and its confrontation with the contemporary prismatic reality of truth's sources, its position as a transmitter of information was challenged even more in the advent of social media, whose new form of discourse continues to shape the public. As a matter of fact, the line between private from public greatly diminished. With the rise of social media, the press had to take on this new platform to continue its relevance. But with the rise of social networking sites, also began the flooding of personal opinions in the social media platforms. The once respected press became a target of mockery by everyone from all walks of life in social media, through the prompting of the government itself.

Attacks on the Philippine press began during the electoral campaign in the Philippines, it could not be denied that the media had been a great help for the voters to choose their candidate for the highest position in the state. The media had done this by giving the public an unbiased view of each candidate. Each candidate's background was researched thoroughly, but usually, people would easily be attracted to the controversial issues rather than the good side of a candidate.

Enter former Davao Mayor Rodrigo R. Duterte, with his nationalist and "will-get-the-job-done" attitude, who would oftentimes get much media exposure by his nonconformist attitude as a politician, numerous press and media outlets would cover his stunts. From cursing the Pope,¹² to catcalling women,¹³ and to even vilifying the press.¹⁴ From that moment, it seemed that the love-hate relationship between the press and the government ensued.

To put it into context, Filipino journalists adhere to their Journalist's Code of Ethics,¹⁵ a document approved by the Philippine Press Institute, National Union of Journalists in the Philippines, and National Press Club in 1988. The JCE contains rules on verification and fact-checking, the need for a balanced reporting, respecting confidentiality, proper identification, professional integrity, against plagiarism, and many others that involve the close relationship of being a journalist and the truth.¹⁶ With journalists adhering to the truth in public matters, it had clashed with Duterte's machinery during his election, namely: trolls, bots, fake news, and disinformation.

¹² Pia Ranada, "Duterte Curses Pope Francis over Traffic during His Visit," Rappler, November 30, 2015, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/politics/elections/2016/114481-rodrigo-duterte-curses-pope-francis>.

¹³ Paterno Esmaguel II, "Catcalling: Duterte Broke the Law in Own City." Rappler. June 2, 2016. <https://www.rappler.com/nation/135111-duterte-catcalling-mariz-umali-ordinance-davao>.

¹⁴ Yuji Vincent Gonzales, "Threatening Journalists Criminal-NUJP." Inquirer News. October 4, 2016. <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/821510/threatening-journalists-criminal-nujp>.

¹⁵ To be referred to as JCE for the rest of the article.

¹⁶ Philippine Press Institute, "Journalist's Code of Ethics", Philippine Press Institute. June 6, 2017. <https://philpressinstitute.net/journalist-code-of-ethics/>.

Duterte's candidacy is one that has been promoted so much in social media, even to the point of the formation of what could be called as alternative social media news. The formation of these alternative "media outlets" was brought about by how Duterte's supporters are utilizing the leading social networking site, Facebook, and using "trolls or fake accounts and paid for them, along with "influencers" on social media, essentially people or accounts that had a huge following."¹⁷ In turn, these became trolls who

"seed" messages taken from blogs and pages, and which are then amplified by other trolls and spread through members of bigger groups. The messages are beneficial to various political camps and interests, creating a false notion of what is true and what is real.¹⁸

Most of the time, these messages took the form of faux news where it either presented an over-exaggerated but blatantly obvious lie praising Duterte and his administration or a blown-up issue against the opposition who critiques the government's policies. The Philippine press was stationed at the center of these disinformation wars as they constantly attempted to uphold their duty towards what is true. This was done by providing an objective truth against the presently imposed regime of truth by the administration.¹⁹

While some media outlets continue to become timid with their news reports, their media personnel would take a critical stance by disassociating themselves from the outlet and resisting the imposed truths. One key issue which highlighted the notion of the journalistic duty versus the interests of the media outlet was when an editor of The Manila Times resigned over an issue on the ouster matrix bared by the outlet's chair emeritus. Felipe Salvosa II, the managing editor of The Manila Times and a journalism professor and coordinator of the Journalism program of the University of Santo Tomas, was quoted saying:

A diagram is by no means an evidence of 'destabilization' or an 'ouster plot.' It is a very huge stretch for anyone to accuse PCIJ, Vera Files and Rappler of actively plotting to unseat the President. I know people there and they are not coup plotters.²⁰

But one could stop journalists from being biased on certain issues that they cover, and it could not be denied that journalists indeed showed bias at one point or another. One author wrote that:

Journalists – admittedly – are not perfect. Neither is media as an infallible institution. But what is important is that journalists remain focused in their objectives and confident in their methods [...] journalists are biased, as all human beings are – but their stories should not be. No, bias is not the most

¹⁷ Chay Hofileña, "Fake Accounts, Manufactured Reality on Social Media," Rappler, October 9, 2016, <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/investigative/fake-accounts-manufactured-reality-social-media>.

¹⁸ Hofileña, "Fake Accounts."

¹⁹ An example of this is the case of Maria Ressa who was recently awarded as a Nobel Peace Prize laureate for her effort in defending freedom of expression in the country. Despite international recognition, the government continuously denies the existence of a curtailment of the freedom of expression in the country. See later discussions for examples of attacks on press freedom in the country and Francis Wakefield, "No press freedom curtailment – Roque." Daily Tribune. May 8, 2020, <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/05/08/no-press-freedom-curtailment-roque>.

²⁰ Rappler.com, "Manila Times Editor Resigns over 'Matrix' Story," Rappler, May 5, 2019, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/228942-manila-times-editor-resigns-over-duterte-ouster-plot-matrix-story>.

important characteristic of journalism. Accuracy, fairness, and yes, truth are — and readers must understand this.²¹

The importance of this brought out an impartial yet information-loaded article. These types of articles were mostly found in advocacy journalism, reflected in the way the news was reported by Bulatlat (www.bulatlat.com), Manila Today (www.manilatoday.net), Kodaio Productions (www.kodaio.org), and Pinoy Weekly (www.pinokweekly.org). These news outlets focused more on a people-oriented type of reporting. Despite being considered as left-leaning organizations, these gave us a fresher perspective on viewing matters rather than the available sources in the mainstream media. Those in the alternative media who practice critical journalism do their best to be objective and fair in the reports they are tasked to do.

From focusing on giving the people a balanced view on news and opinion, here arose the watchdog type of journalism that the Philippine press employed. Newcomers and fresh college graduates who took up journalism would think twice about exercising this role because of being frightened of the attacks. One author explained this as:

The violence perpetrated against journalists is an important problem, as it can also have a chilling effect among current and future journalists. For example, current journalists might be more wary about exercising their watchdog role, for fear of being attacked. Those considering journalism as a career might also think twice about joining the profession, given the level of impunity with which attacks on media workers are carried out in the country.²²

The watchdog journalism being employed in the Philippines was attacked by the culture of impunity rampant in the country. The current problem of impunity also added to eight other problems ranging from corruption in their ranks to the violence committed against them, sensationalism, or the erosion of the quality of journalism, the issue on information access, even the earlier said business pressure, the influence of their audience and new technology, and lastly the level of professionalism of journalism in the country.²³

Adding to such a scale of impoverishment in the journalistic trade, the hatred of the government towards the Philippine press became increasingly rampant since the time of President Marcos even until the current administration. Strangely, one could also notice the seeming congruence with how the Marcos administration treated the press vis-à-vis Duterte's treatment of the press. Marcos' mosquito press could be compared to the present's biased media or *dilawan*.

Attacks on the media had been highlighted with what is happening with online news outlet, Rappler. The media outlet was attacked by the Securities and Exchanges Commission, accusing them

²¹ Ryan Macasero, "Is the Media 'Biased?' Journalism in the Time of Duterte," CDN, January 7, 2017, <https://cebudailynews.inquirer.net/118273/media-biased-journalism-time-duterte>.

²² Edson Tandoc Jr., "Watching over the watchdogs: The problems that Filipino journalists face." *Journalism Studies* 18, no. 1 (2017): 102–117, 10, doi:10.1080/1461670X.2016.1218298.

²³ Tandoc, "Watching Over the Watchdogs," 6–8.

of violating the Constitution's restriction on foreign ownership of local media, and violating the anti-dummy law, the Corporate Code, and the Securities Regulation Code.²⁴

Another attack on the media was the case of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, Ellen Tordesillas of Rappler, Vera Files, and even the National Union of People's Lawyers, maligning these groups and individuals as plotters for the ouster of the president. The reason that PCIJ was linked is brought by the fact that they had investigated the discrepancies in the SALN of the president.²⁵

The seeming culture of impunity is also highlighted in the different types of attacks and threats against the press, which could be seen in a data collated by the Freedom for Media, Freedom for All Network, comprised of the following groups: Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR), National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), Philippine Press Institute (PPI), MindaNews, and Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ).

In the data they gathered from June 30, 2016 up to April 30, 2019, there had been 12 cases of killings, 18 cases of online harassments, 16 cases of intimidation, 12 cases of threat by SMS, 12 cases of libel, ten cases of website attack, eight cases of being barred from coverage and slay attempt, five cases each of verbal threat/assault, physical assault, arrest and cyber libel, three cases each of physical harassment and corporate-related issues, and two cases each of bomb threat, strafing/shooting, and article takedown.²⁶

Currently, the Philippine press is now in its darkest time since the Marcos era marked by the conviction of Maria Ressa, Rappler CEO, and former Rappler writer-researcher, Reynaldo Santos Jr., of cyber libel in publishing an article that implicated a businessperson being involved in illegal drug smuggling and human trafficking, and the continued harassment in the renewal of the franchise of ABS-CBN from congress. The case of Ressa and Santos' conviction is noted as a systematic attack on the opposition, "the verdict is not only a singular event, "[t]his is Duterte consolidating power."²⁷

The case of the renewal of the franchise of ABS-CBN has been denied by congress brought by disputes around the terms and conditions of the franchise renewal agreement²⁸ and the National

²⁴ The current administration focused its tirades against Rappler by implying that foreigners who want to destabilize the country owns the institution. Doris Dumlao-Abadilla, "SEC Orders Closure of Rappler Site," Inquirer.net, January 16, 2018, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/960631/sec-orders-closure-of-rappler-site>

²⁵ The Philippine Center of Investigative Journalism has been targeted by attacks because of an alleged investigation on the discrepancies in the SALN of the first family, prompting the current government to create the issue that the PCIJ, together with other organizations are plotting to oust Duterte. PCIJ, "PCIJ on 'Oust-Duterte Plot': Wrong Report, on Many Counts," Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, April 22, 2019, <https://pcij.org/article/1572/pcij-on-oust-duterte-plot-br-wrong-report-on-many-counts>

²⁶ For a more comprehensive discussion on the state of Philippine media under the present administration, see PCIJ. "The State of Philippine Media, under Duterte." Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, May 3, 2019. <https://pcij.org/article/1596/the-state-of-philippine-media-under-duterte>.

²⁷ Ana Santos, "Philippines: Maria Ressa's cyber libel verdict 'a method of silencing dissent,'" DW, June 15, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/philippines-maria-ressas-cyber-libel-verdict-a-method-of-silencing-dissent/a-53811284>.

²⁸ Issues revolving the renewal of the franchise of ABS-CBN revolved around violations of labor and securities laws, tax evasion, foreign ownership, despite having been disproved decisively, the congressmen who don't

Telecommunications Commission issuing a cease-and-desist order to immediately cease the network's broadcasting.²⁹

It is apparent in the characterization of the state of the Philippine press that they are under threat by the present administration since a critical stance of journalism will, in turn, put them at risk. An institution challenging a prevailing regime of truth imposed by a government that displays a nostalgia for authoritarianism, through the exposure of truth and critique, is a point analyzed by Michel Foucault. To view the power-relation between the Philippine press and the Duterte administration, it is better first to understand Foucault's concept of *parrhesia*.

Foucault's *Parrhesia*

Parrhesiastes comes from the word *parrhesia*, which generally means someone who tells the truth, from the Greek word 'pan' (everything) and 'rhema' (that which is said).³⁰ Foucault's conception of *parrhesia* and the *parrhesiastes* gives an image of a certain person who speaks without withholding his thoughts and expresses such an account that those who listen to him will understand what he is saying. The idea of *parrhesia* has been partly problematized especially in pre-Christian philosophical musings, heavily founded in ancient Athenian democracy, wherein it has evolved from being utilized in the areas of rhetoric, politics, and even leading to being in the realm of philosophy.³¹

To begin understanding *parrhesia*, to consider a certain person or entity as performing *parrhesia*, it must first have the characteristic of frankness. Foucault notes that a *parrhesiastes* must not speak rhetorically but rather utilize the most simple and direct words to convey the idea to his audience.³² At the same time, *parrhesia* suggests that the *parrhesiastes* "emphasizes the fact that he is both the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the *enunciandum* — that he himself is the subject of the opinion to which he refers."³³ Frankness is needed in the *parrhesiastes* thoughts and that he must convey his idea and opinion as clearly as possible to his audience. The *parrhesiastes* is someone who owns what he says since he is the subject of his own words. As someone would assert that what he speaks is what is on his mind, does that mean he practices *parrhesia*?

A person may assert that what he is saying is the truth while explaining it in the simplest terms for his audience, but is it enough so that the speaker will be a *parrhesiastes*? To this, Foucault would refer us to the second characteristic of *parrhesia*, that is, truth. Being offered with two definitions of *parrhesia*, Foucault adheres to a positive expression of the concept, which is to "tell the truth". This

want the franchise renewed have had their last veil of disguise peeled off to reveal Rodrigo Duterte's face contorted in vengeful and narcissistic contempt for ABS-CBN, all for an old slight — it had no airtime to spare for a couple of campaign advertisements for his successful presidential run in 2016. Vergel Santos, "[OPINION] The ABS-CBN hearings: A theater of the absurd", Rappler, July 3, 2020, <https://www.rappler.com/thought-leaders/265591-opinion-abs-cbn-hearings-theater-absurd>.

²⁹ There have been two issuances of cease-and-desist order for ABS-CBN. The first was on the ABS-CBN not having a valid Congressional Franchise required by law, the second being to stop the direct broadcast of the satellite service (Sky Direct). Ralf Rivas, "NTC shuts down ABS-CBN's Sky Direct, TV Plus channels, Rappler, July 1, 2020, <https://r3.rappler.com/nation/265299-ntc-orders-sky-cable-stop-operating-satellite-tv-service>.

³⁰ Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2001), 11.

³¹ Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 20–24.

³² Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 12.

³³ Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 12–13.

happens because the *parrhesiastes* is sincere in his opinion and the opinion he holds is the truth.³⁴ Moreover, Foucault asserts that a *parrhesiastes*, in his capacity to get the truth, assumes that the truth-teller possesses “certain moral qualities: when someone has certain moral qualities, then that is the proof that he has access to the truth and vice versa.”³⁵ In short, the truth has an intrinsic relationship with being moral.

Another criterion for one to be called a *parrhesiastes* is to speak the truth despite the possible risk or danger to the speaker in his act of telling the truth. Simply stating the truth, as in a professor lecturing to his students, does not amount to one becoming a *parrhesiastes*. However, if a speaker expresses his thoughts and/or opinions in the face of strong opposition or against a person in power (e.g., politicians, etc.) he takes a risk, which might get him prosecuted, imprisoned, punished or, worse, killed. This makes a speaker a *parrhesiastes* since the speaker speaks the truth in the face of danger. How Foucault explains danger is through examples of telling a friend he is wrong, the truth-teller’s relationship with his friend might suffer and an orator in a debate might lose popularity because his opinions are against the majority’s truth.³⁶ In other words, *parrhesia* has a relationship with the truth and the courage to tell the truth in the face of danger. The speaker must have courage to speak the truth for him to be a true *parrhesiastes* even to the point of risking his own life for the truth.

Parrhesia also involves an element of criticism. As mentioned above, there is a certain risk for the *parrhesiastes* in committing *parrhesia*, so criticism also involves the same risk. The *parrhesiastes* must speak the truth regarding the interlocutor regardless of causing possible hurt or injury to the interlocutor. This certain element of danger stems from the fact that *parrhesia* offers a truthful and criticizing idea or opinion of the *parrhesiastes* to the interlocutor or himself. The greater the power of the interlocutor over the *parrhesiastes*, the greater the danger. *Parrhesia*, then, is not simply a demonstrative method of truth but is applied to a more practical manner in terms of offering criticisms to the interlocutor or to the speaker himself provided that the *parrhesiastes* is in a lower position (i.e., less powerful position) than that of the interlocutor. “The *parrhesia* comes from ‘below,’ as it were, and is directed towards ‘above.’”³⁷ This implies that a person of higher authority or power does not commit *parrhesia* if he is simply criticizing those who are “below” him, as in the case of a manager berating an employee.

Lastly, the duty aspect of *parrhesia* is illustrated when the *parrhesiastes* speaks of the truth as he finds that he, free from any duress or coercion, ought to speak it to others. If the speaker is compelled to speak the truth, as in the case of being tortured into testifying against another person, it is not qualified as *parrhesia*. The same is true when one is compelled to admit one’s own fault or crime; one is not committing *parrhesia* despite the risk of harm to oneself in telling the truth. However, if the person admits his crime out of a sense of duty, then he is committing *parrhesia*:

³⁴ Foucault had earlier described in his work that the verb form of *parrhesia* is *parrhesiazesthai* (to speak the truth) and this is why he adheres to this conception of *parrhesia* rather than the pejorative one of merely saying anything one has in mind without qualification. Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 14.

³⁵ Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 15.

³⁶ Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 16.

³⁷ Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 18.

A criminal who is forced by his judges to confess his crime does not use *parrhesia*. But if he voluntarily confesses his crime to someone else out of a sense of moral obligation, then he performs a *parrhesiastic* act.³⁸

Parrhesia, as a sense of duty, involves a certain degree of freedom of the *parrhesiastes* to express the truth, as he believes it to be. The *parrhesiastes* can only be committing *parrhesia* when he tells the truth out of his feeling of moral obligation, free from outside influence, voluntary and willing by himself.

In short, *parrhesia* then puts the *parrhesiastes* into a series of connections through the presented aspects or factors for a discourse or utterance to be considered as *parrhesia*. Foucault offered a vivid illustration as to how the *parrhesiastes* is connected to the truth (a truth that the *parrhesiastes*' moral quality can only bring) in being frank. Frankness embodies the *parrhesiastic* relationship of the speaker to the truth inasmuch as the speaker expresses himself without obstruction, intending to cut his message across his audience clearly. *Parrhesia* also connects the speaker to his life in the dimension of danger. The *parrhesiastes* must be someone who risks his life in speaking the truth. *Parrhesia* also gives the speaker a relationship to others and to himself in its aspect of offering criticism. The *parrhesiastes* offers the truth about others or of himself as he expresses the truth in a *parrhesiastic* utterance. Lastly, *parrhesia* has a connection to one's moral duty, being free to speak the truth out of one's sense of obligation to tell the truth.

The Practice of *Parrhesia* in Philippine Journalism

There is a strong similarity between the five characteristics of the Philippine press and that of the *parrhesiastes*.

In terms of frankness, with the rise of alternative news outlets and fake news sites, the critical stance of the Philippine press is strongly at play as they constantly attempt to challenge the regime of truth imposed by the government and the mechanisms of disinformation rampant in social media. From the usual attempts of objective news reporting, other media outlets have engaged in fact-checking the information being spread by supporters of the government online. As a *parrhesiast* is frank and honest, one only speaks of what is objectively true, rather than mere subjective rhetoric to win over one's target audience.

Secondly, the Philippine press' duty to author well-researched articles based on true and factual information is rooted in the journalistic obligation to tell the truth. Every article must only contain true information. These kinds of information, which are true and reliable, require long periods of research and verification. At the same time, today, the Philippine press are morally inclined to speak the truth about power brought about by how the prevailing regime of truth is challenging the very values that the Filipinos hold dear. For this aspect, this shows the second characteristic of the *parrhesiastes*, and that is the truth. The *parrhesiastes* focuses only on relaying the truth and this truth is his opinion, since he knows it is the truth. The *parrhesiastes*, then, can communicate information that is true because he knows that it is the truth, in the same way, the Philippine press will draft the article because they have exhaustively researched the information. They know that it is the truth and they have morally acquired the truth.

³⁸ Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 19.

The prevalent culture of impunity to the Philippine press³⁹ shows how many powerful persons are trying to silence them just because the press holds the truth that can lead to the downfall of these powerful groups or individuals.⁴⁰ The slate of persecution of the press has been rampant just because the press is a powerful institution that can enact change, and the truth will cost them their very lives. The *parrhesiastes*, on the other hand, is endangered because he holds the truth, and that truth will necessitate risk. The truth that a *parrhesiastes* holds must be equitable to something that will cost him to show courage in the face of danger.

Next comes the watchdog journalism that is employed by the Philippine press which makes them an independent forum for criticism; one of the basic duties that journalists and persons in the media must be able to enact. They must become the voice of the voiceless, and they must show impartially, the inequalities that the status quo is causing. They are similar to how a *parrhesiastes* is a vehicle for criticism, and this critical notion of the *parrhesiastes* is brought by the inequality between the *parrhesiastes* and his interlocutor. The *parrhesiastes* can even be simply shrugged off and be labeled as a dissenting opinion, but still he continues, as he knows it is the truth. This is likewise displayed in the press that despite being labeled as *bayaran* or *dilawan*, they continue the work that is tasked to them. Foucault recognizes the importance of critique as a form of resistance to power where it is a “moral and political attitude,” an “art of not being governed, or the art of not being governed like that and at this price”⁴¹ and to some extent it is a “political *ethos*” against the rationalities of Nazism and Stalinism, both of which Foucault categorizes as fascistic regimes.⁴² In the same way, the rationality of fascism which makes one crave power, is seen in how Filipinos continue to support Duterte; thus, they still fall victim to the lies and deceit imposed by the regime of truth. Duterte and his machinery of disinformation and fake news continue to peddle. It is how the Philippine press acts as a critique to such a regime of truth and at the same time resists the domination of the Duterte administration that they become *parrhesiastes*: a power-relation as *parrhesia* thrives when the truth is spoken to someone in power, which in this case, the Philippine press towards Duterte.

Lastly, the Philippine press is guided by the JCE that shows how they must act and do news reporting for the sake of the truth. They are duty-bound to follow these rules which are very much reflective of how important the truth is in the journalistic trade – reports must be done truthfully – and so guidelines were made: the JCE. In the same manner, the *parrhesiastes*, in his quest for truth-

³⁹ Current issues of the culture of impunity faced by Filipino journalists includes a divided press (the conservative-libertarian divide), restrictions in the Covid-19 crisis (such as the need for accreditation, quarantine conditions, market collapse for community press, visible militarization, a limited information flow, digital package information instead of briefings, and even low response to FOI request), the draconian Anti-Terror Law (which could be used by police and military to curtail legitimate criticism), a culture of fear (which involves the closure of ABS-CBN, red-tagging of journalists, and police action on media organizations and critical reporting), incidents of threats and attack (killings, intimidations, and libel cases). De Jesus, “2021 State of Press Freedom.”

⁴⁰ The long tradition of Philippine journalism as becoming mouthpieces that could trigger the downfall of power began as early the Spanish colonial period, with *La Solidaridad* as an influence for revolutionary sentiments against Spain. The next prominent period where crackdowns occurred against journalists who do their duty was the Martial Law where the rise of the mosquito press against Ferdinand Marcos’ machinery of censorship and crackdown led to the autocrat’s downfall. See A. Lin Neumann, “The Philippines: Amid troubles, a rich press tradition”, *Committee to Protect Journalists*. August 15, 2005, <https://cpj.org/reports/2005/08/neumann-sidebar/>.

⁴¹ Deborah Cook, “Adorno, Foucault and critique.” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 39, no. 10 (2013): 965–981, 975, doi: 10.1177/0191453713507016.

⁴² Cook, “Adorno, Foucault and critique,” 977.

telling, is guided by the idea that he needs to tell the truth because it is his duty, and he is morally and even spiritually bound to do it for the betterment of the community and society.

With such actions being done by the Philippine press, they pose a threat to the state as an institution since:

[b]eing a *parrhesiast* is a threat to institutions because he/she challenges the truth which is essential for the existence and survival of the society and of the state. All societies and states and their institutions are tied on certain principles that are tied to the truth. [...] Hence, it is expected that they may react violently to the one who has the courage to tell the truth that challenges their current “regime of truth.”⁴³

When the Duterte administration reacts violently to the Philippine press who challenges its regime of truth, it becomes a natural reaction which can be taken from Foucault's conception of governing. Having three types, it is more suitable to have governing as the “science of governing well,” which is seen as an establishment of an economy⁴⁴ at the level of the state as a whole.⁴⁵ Since Duterte acts as the head of the government, he sees fit to regulate and control the society he rules over by suppressing and repressing anyone who dares challenge the way he rules. The Philippine press, as a *parrhesiast*, provides a critical stance against the regime of truth of Duterte. To put it in the words of Foucault, *parrhesia* is “a technique in counter-balancing” where

[i]t is a counter-balance to the deployment of power in the dynamics of power-relations of institutions because someone has the courage to check the utilization of power over individuals, particularly, if it is excessive, by telling the truth that challenges institutions. [*Parrhesia*] is a counter-balance, or counter-conduct, to the politics of truth. [...] The *parrhesiast* may introduce revolutionary discourses that are tied to the truth by criticizing society and its institutions as well as the prejudices and norms that prevailed in the society and its dominant institutions, [...] or may also put into question the current “regimes of truth” using moral discourses and even challenge the prevailing truth and its influence on social situations and their strategies, techniques, processes and procedures.⁴⁶

Conclusion

From the discussion, it has been argued that, indeed, present-day journalism in the Philippines practices *parrhesia*. As an institution, the Philippines upholds the journalistic obligation to objective truth-telling against Duterte and his machinery of disinformation and lies found in the many faux news outlets in social media. Despite numerous attacks and the threat of being endangered, the Philippine press continues to fight for the truth as espoused by their moral obligation to truth-telling. Foucault's *parrhesia* provides the characteristics of a truth-teller while at the same is presenting the need for critique as a form of resistance against the prevalence of fascism embedded in society. A ruling regime of truth must be subjected to critique especially if the institution that controls it becomes oppressive.

⁴³ Christian Bryan Bustamante, “Truth-Telling, Caring, and Governing: The Significance of Foucault's Interpretation of Parrhesia to Governance,” *SCIENTIA: The International Journal on the Liberal Arts* 8, no.1 (2019): 1–15, 11, url:<https://scientia-sanbada.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/v8n1.03-Bustamante.pdf>.

⁴⁴ This refers to the “regulation and control of the inhabitants, wealth, and conduct of all and each.” Bustamante, “Truth-telling, Caring, and Governing,” 4.

⁴⁵ Bustamante, “Truth-telling, Caring, and Governing,” 4.

⁴⁶ Bustamante, “Truth-telling, Caring, and Governing,” 11.

While an institution adheres to a specific way of governing, the truth-teller must act to counter-balance discourses imposed by dominant institutions by having a critical perspective of society. Journalism in the Philippines under the Duterte administration attempts to provide a critical take on the rampant disinformation wars in social media by practicing *parrhesia*. Despite the threat of danger in speaking the truth to power, the press continues to do so as it is their moral obligation. In telling the truth, they provide a critique against the ruling regime of the truth of Duterte and, in turn, try to awaken the masses who have been blindly following and enduring an oppressive regime.

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Foundations and Justification: A Response to Klein's Objections to Foundationalism as a Solution to the Epistemic Regress Problem

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Abstract: Since the resurgence of infinitism in contemporary epistemology, Peter Klein has been consistent in providing arguments against the three other possible solutions (i.e., foundationalism, coherentism, skepticism) to the Regress Problem, which in turn is a key aspect of the justification condition for the traditional account of knowledge as justified true belief. Klein's successful effort in reviving the often-dismissed solution and further advancing it as the sole solution to the Regress Problem cannot be ignored as he finds it necessary to not only raise problems for the viability of the three contenders but, more so, definitively invalidate them as equally possible solutions. This paper responds to Klein's objection to foundationalism, the crucial reasons for which he offers in several of his works concerning infinitism and the Regress Problem: i) that foundationalism inevitably leads either to arbitrariness or to the continuation of the regress of reasons; ii) that a proposition continuously enhanced by reasons has more epistemic warrant than a proposition supported by a chain of reasons which ends at basic beliefs, and; iii) that basic beliefs are not tantamount to fully justified beliefs. For each, certain problems can be raised by employing foundationalist arguments in order to arrive at the conclusion that in spite of his astute reasoning, Klein's objection is insufficient to rule out foundationalism as a possible solution to the Regress Problem.

Keywords: *epistemic justification, regress problem, foundationalism, infinitism*

The Regress Problem (RP)

The traditional account for knowledge holds that the tripartite conditions – belief, truth, and justification – must obtain knowledge.¹ Introduced by no less than Plato,² this account is still widely accepted by many despite some issues raised against it by contemporary epistemology.³ Among these three, the justification condition holds the place of criticality since much of the

¹ Robert Shope, "Conditions and Analyses of Knowing," in *The Oxford Handbook to Epistemology*, ed. Paul K. Moser. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 27.

² Cf. *Theaetetus*, 201, c-d – "Knowledge is true belief based on argument."

³ Perhaps the foremost issue that can be cited as reference is Edmund Gettier's infamous "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" in *Analysis*, 23, 1 (1966).

recent epistemological works focus on justification as a necessary condition for knowledge.⁴ Regardless of the breadth of its scope, the justification condition for the traditional JTB⁵ account of knowledge can be explained as follows: Suppose a person P holds a belief *e* that P also believes to be true, P must provide a reason *b*, and then reason *c* for *b*, and so on, in order for P to *know e*.

Hence, justification is simply providing reasons for a true belief to constitute knowledge. As modest as it may seem, the problem does not necessarily lie in the process of justification but in assuming that the belief is justified. The question “what makes a belief justified?” then arises. When another person Q asks P his reason for believing *e*, P would simply bring up *b*; the query, however, does not end here. P would also be asked concerning the grounds by which he accepts that *b* justifies *e*, to which P may raise *c* as a response. From here, the series of queries would go on *ad nauseam*.

Such a scenario reasonably raises the question: “Why can’t a single reason provide enough justification for a belief?” Justification necessitates inference as it follows the Principle of Inferential Justification (PIJ). It states that for P to be justified in believing *e* based on *b*, P must have more than one reason in support of *b* where it is inferred from, and then a further reason for, say, *d*, and so on.⁶ This is problematic for two reasons:⁷ First, if at any point in the process of justification, P admits that one or more of the reasons that he provides to support *e* is/are not justified, then the whole chain of reasons becomes invalid, leaving *e* unjustified and knowledge unattained. Second, if P continues to provide reasons for *e* and its supporting reasons through inference, then there is the threat of regression of reasons *ad infinitum* known as the Regress Problem.⁸

This epistemological problem gives way to the development of at least four theories posing as its solutions: i) Foundationalism, claiming that there must be a belief that is non-inferential or justified *per se*, which will terminate the regress of reasons for a belief; ii) coherentism, suggesting that justification can only be achieved if the belief in question and its reasons are mutually justified because of their coherence; iii) skepticism, claiming that no beliefs are justified, hence, no regress of reasons, and; iv) infinitism, proposing that an infinite series of reasons be provided for the justification of a belief in question.

The first two, belonging to the internalist theory of justification, have been considered the foremost solutions. In coherentism, the justification of a belief depends entirely on its connection with

⁴ Noah Lemos, *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 13.

⁵ i.e., Justified True Belief.

⁶ Richard Fumerton, “Theories of Justification,” in *The Oxford Handbook to Epistemology*, ed. Paul K. Moser. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 211.

⁷ Michael Huemer, “Foundations and Coherence,” in *A Companion to Epistemology*, 2nd edition, ed. Jonathan Dancy, Ernest Sosa, and Matthias Steup. (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2010), 22.

⁸ With this in mind, it is fitting to discuss the historically important argument closely linked to this problem – the regress argument. Lest one be confused between the Regress Problem and the Regress Argument, the latter is that which is often brought up as a solution to the former. Traces of the Regress Argument, or at least, reasoning similar to what the Regress Argument holds, can be observed in the ideas of some philosophers (e.g., Democritus’ indivisible *atomos*, Plato’s hierarchy of being, Thomas Aquinas’ *quinque viae*, Charles Taylor’s transcendental arguments, and in a way, Ludwig Wittgenstein’s form of life), but it must be noted that this argument is widely attributed to Aristotle in *Posterior Analytics*. From here onwards (except for section headers and footnotes), the ‘Regress Problem’ will be referred to as RP.

other beliefs in a mutually coherent set of beliefs.⁹ Usually discussed in contrast with foundationalism, coherentism is also considered as its alternative. Foundationalism, meanwhile, is tied with two interrelated concepts, namely, regress and basic beliefs.¹⁰ In foundationalism, reasons raised for the justification of a belief are ultimately inferred by regression from a belief/s which is/are said to be non-inferential or justified *per se*, hence, foundational. These beliefs are characteristically basic and are considered the ultimate foundations of knowledge.

Least held among the four possible solutions, skepticism claims that there are no justified beliefs. With the Pyrrhonian Sextus Empiricus as its notable representative, the reasons for such a stance are fundamentally the avoidance of arbitrariness and dogmatism, and the suspension of judgment on the justification of beliefs. Those who tried to provide solutions to RP have dismissed it,¹¹ and so will I as it does not seek to 'solve' the question at hand. Finally, infinitism is the theory that claims that an infinite regress is possible in solving RP, contrary to what is commonly held by epistemologists. As there are sound arguments in support of infinitism, it stands as a viable solution to RP.

Since skepticism has been disregarded, there are now three possible ways of solving the RP. One of these must be correct¹² and this is precisely the point of contention: which among these three provides an adequate solution to RP?

Klein on Infinitism and Infinite Regress

Peter Klein, the foremost proponent of infinitism, employs the following to ascertain infinitism for RP: i) arguments against the unviability of foundationalism and coherentism for RP, and ii) rebuttals to the objections raised against infinitism. Such a method can be seen in almost all of his writings which concern either infinitism or RP. Infinitism, however, has been given little to almost no consideration by epistemologists,¹³ for many of them have taken foundationalism as foremost among the solutions, albeit others consider coherentism as the better alternative. Justification formerly appeared to be attainable only through either foundationalism or coherentism. The revitalization of an often-dismissed solution is Klein's contribution to contemporary epistemology, and this did cause significant repercussions to the structure of justification.

Infinitism is committed to increasing the warrant of a questioned proposition through an infinite series of reasons in solving RP. Infinitists believe that the series of reasons should be infinite

⁹ John Greco, "Virtues in Epistemology," in *The Oxford Handbook to Epistemology*, ed. Paul K. Moser. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 241.

¹⁰ One should not be confused regarding the concept of regress as something exclusive to foundationalism as some forms of coherentism also exhibit the need for such. Klein describes the warrant-emergent form of coherentism as a one-step foundationalism. In his notes, he clarifies that the claim that some of its forms are actually foundationalism is not original to him. ("Infinitism Is the Solution to the Regress Problem," in *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, ed. Matthias Steup and Ernest Sosa, Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005, 135).

¹¹ Cf. Peter Klein's "Infinitism Is the Solution to the Regress Problem" in *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology* (2005), Carl Ginet's "Infinitism Is not the Solution to the Regress Problem" in *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology* (2005), John Turri's "On the regress argument for infinitism," *Synthese* (2009), and Laurence Bonjour's *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (1985), to name a few.

¹² Huemer, *Foundations and Coherence*, 22.

¹³ Klein, *Infinitism is the Solution to the Regress Problem*, 132.

and that it is possible to enhance each reason with a further reason, and so on. Infitism, therefore, shuns foundationalism for its reliance on non-inferential beliefs.

Evolution of Klein's Objections to Foundationalism

Klein's earliest objection to foundationalism appears in his response to Richard Fumerton's argument against infinitism. For Klein, one of Fumerton's reasons for supporting foundationalism is infinitism's failure to solve RP.¹⁴ It follows that once Klein has refuted the problems raised by Fumerton against infinitism, Fumerton's argument that foundationalism should be supported on account of infinitism's inadequacy would be invalidated. Fumerton's argument, Klein believes, can only be understood in relation to his account of inferential justification.¹⁵

Fumerton provides three arguments against infinitism. First, according to the "finite mind" objection, the infinitely long chain of reasoning endorsed by infinitism is impossible for humans, given that a person P must be justified in believing a proposition e that serves as a basis. The underlying statement here is that not all justification is inferential. Second, if we accept that an infinitely long chain of reasons is impossible for a finite mind, it would be even more challenging to consider the possibility of an infinite number of these infinite chains of reasons. Third, Fumerton recognizes the difficulty of appealing to even more beliefs to justify a single belief.

The first two reasons share a common appeal to what Klein refers to as the 'completion requirement.'¹⁶ He acknowledges that even the infinitist could not accept this principle, leading to the rejection of infinitism itself. However, he claims that foundationalism suffers under the same fate because such a requirement inevitably leads to the ruling out of most justified beliefs. Fumerton recognizes the necessity of an appropriate causal relation between non-inferential beliefs and the propositions that are to be made probable. Although he acknowledges the possibility of requiring apt causation in justification, Klein rejects it because of Fumerton's lack of arguments against the possibility of having an "infinite, non-repeating set of beliefs that serve as reasons for and causes of the succeeding beliefs" in a chain.¹⁷ He also demonstrates that even when this possibility is granted, and infinitism's identification of what is required for beliefs to have the "appropriate normative pedigree,"¹⁸ right, a trilemma still arises: i) the revision of sound reasoning's normative structure concept; ii) the adoption of a form of Pyrrhonism, and; iii) the acceptance of a contradiction between two generally accepted philosophical principles.

Klein's objection to Fumerton's second argument is more related to foundationalism, for the justification of the propositions with the form similar to the statement " e makes probable [proposition] p " should be non-inferential. For instance, a person P's belief that something τ appears to be a tree makes it probable that τ is a tree. The truth of this statement depends on something that is "true in

¹⁴ Peter Klein, "Foundationalism and the Infinite Regress of Reasons," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58, 4 (1998), 919.

¹⁵ "To be justified in believing one proposition p on the basis of another proposition e , one must be: (1) justified in believing that e and (2) justified in believing that e makes probable p ." Klein, "Foundationalism and the Infinite Regress of Reasons," 919.

¹⁶ Completion Requirement – "In order for a belief to be justified for someone, that person must have actually completed the process of reasoning to the belief" Klein, "Foundationalism and the Infinite Regress of Reasons," 919.

¹⁷ Klein, "Foundationalism and the Infinite Regress of Reasons," 922.

¹⁸ Klein, "Foundationalism and the Infinite Regress of Reasons," 922.

general about how things appear and how they are.”¹⁹ That truth which is ‘general’ serves as a reason for thinking the truth of that which is instantiated. Klein rejects this because he considers such propositions as inferential beliefs, following that such affirmations still appeal to reasons prior to them, to reasons that are ‘general truths.’ Another objection that he raises is the requirement that “in order for P to be justified in believing a proposition p based on another proposition e , it should be true that e makes p likely to be true,” is just too much for anyone since it would require one also to justify the beliefs which make propositions likely to be true. Only P’s being justified in believing e should be necessary.

Lastly, Klein believes that to appeal to more beliefs in order to justify a single one is not difficult, contrary to what Fumerton claims. He provides an argument that echoes the Pyrrhonic objection to foundationalism. He repeatedly brings up in his succeeding writings: If a proposition should be given the status of being foundational φ , then either φ has something that makes it likely to be true or it does not. If something makes φ likely to be true, then it should be offered as a reason for φ , therefore continuing the regress. If there is none, then it becomes arbitrary to hold it as φ .²⁰

Not long after, Klein formally introduces infinitism as that which “can provide an acceptable account of rational beliefs...held on the basis of adequate reasons,”²¹ something that neither foundationalism nor coherentism can do. Directly addressing foundationalism, he claims that it could not avoid a regress by “appealing to a meta-claim that a belief having some property [i.e., foundational] is likely to be true.”²² Foundationalists appeal to this ‘meta-justification’ to avoid arbitrariness and show how the supposed foundational beliefs are likely to be true.²³ Klein, likewise, proposes a dilemma for foundationalism similar to the one mentioned above. If meta-justification provides a reason for the foundational belief to become likely to be true, then the regress continues just the same. On the other hand, if it does not provide any reason, then the foundationalist becomes arbitrary in holding a belief as foundational, even without supporting reasons.

In another work,²⁴ Klein argues that even if foundationalism is true, it still does not solve RP. He recalls the problem of arbitrariness in the foundationalist claim that there are reasons for which no further reasons can be given. This is not the only thing that he points out as he eventually grants that foundationalism is valid for the sake of argument. He permits that some beliefs possess a property that makes a belief incapable of proof by further reasons, and this he refers to as ‘autonomous warrant.’ The problem now for foundationalism is that even though it halts the regress, it still does not offer a basis for believing the proposition in question. Klein’s point here is that reasons are being given so that the proposition in question may become believable; a discontinued regress of reasons does not seem practical and worthwhile in achieving this epistemic goal.

Klein provides a trilemma for the foundationalist to consider through an imaginable scenario. Think of Fred (the foundationalist) as being asked whether or not he thinks that autonomously

¹⁹ Klein, “Foundationalism and the Infinite Regress of Reasons,” 922.

²⁰ Klein, “Foundationalism and the Infinite Regress of Reasons,” 922.

²¹ Peter Klein, “Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons,” *Philosophical Perspectives, Epistemology* 13 (1999), 297.

²² Klein, “Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons.” 304.

²³ ‘Meta-justification’ refers to the characteristic that makes an allegedly foundational belief likely to be true.

²⁴ Cf. “What IS Wrong with Foundationalism is that it Cannot Solve the Epistemic Regress Problem.”

Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 68, 1 (2004).

warranted beliefs are likely to be true.²⁵ Fred may respond with either a “yes,” a “no,” or an “I don’t know.” Choosing either “no” or “I don’t know” makes Fred’s reasoning incapable of providing any basis for believing the proposition in question. He is then left with the sole option of answering “yes,” but this suggests the continuation of the regress since Fred has to provide a reason for thinking that the autonomously warranted belief is likely to be true.

Klein enhances this trilemma in a later essay which focuses on his proposal that infinitism alone solves RP. Firstly, he demonstrates that neither foundationalism nor coherentism’s two forms, warrant-transfer and warrant-emergent, can solve RP. This claim stems from the assumption that RP is concerned with “increasing the rational credibility of a questioned proposition.”²⁶ Neither way provides this demand towards justification.

In arguing against foundationalism, he imagines a dialogue between Fred the foundationalist and Doris. Doris asks Fred regarding his reason for the belief that proposition p is basic β . Klein grants the truth of foundationalism’s claim on the existence of basic propositions that possess an autonomous warrant and are warranted *prima facie*. However, he questions whether these autonomously warranted beliefs are likely to be true. In response, a foundationalist may choose from the following: i) accept that these propositions are likely to be true; ii) deny such, or; iii) withhold judgment. Among these three, only the first option is possible for the foundationalist without being arbitrary,²⁷ but choosing it, according to Klein, will only continue the regress, given the foundationalist’s supposed reason for granting an autonomous warrant. His rejection of foundationalism for RP is rooted in its incapability to “increase the rational credibility of a questioned proposition through reasoning” without being arbitrary.²⁸

Concerning the infinite progress of reasoning, Klein describes the foundationalist view of justification as truth-conducive albeit without guaranteeing truth. Foundationalism holds that inferences only transmit truth from the basic belief to non-basic beliefs. Following this premise, Klein questions the truth-conduciveness of the autonomous warrant for a belief, and then proceeds to pose two problems, first, for the foundationalist view of propositional justification, and second, for the foundationalist view of doxastic justification. Regarding the former, his concern is that truth may be diminished as it is being transferred by way of inference. “Many inferences are not completely truth preserving” – the further the inference goes along the path of justification, the “less likely it is to be true.”²⁹ He shuns the foundationalist’s possibility of using other epistemic properties such as coherence so that the amount of propositional justification may be restored. Second, Klein raises the argument that foundationalism can lead to skepticism because of the unapparent paths of good inference from beliefs that are said to be foundational to the propositions that are believed to be within our knowledge. Although he admits the prevalence of foundationalism in justification, he

²⁵ Klein, *What IS Wrong with Foundationalism*, 170.

²⁶ Peter Klein, “Infinitism Is the Solution to the Regress Problem,” in *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, ed. Matthias Steup and Ernest Sosa. (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), 132.

²⁷ Choosing options ii) and iii) will make a foundationalist face the Principle of Avoiding Arbitrariness (PAA), given that if he denies that the autonomously warranted propositions are likely to be true, then he could not use it as the basis for all the other beliefs; if he withholds judgment, then he is simply clinging to his supposition that autonomously warranted beliefs do not need any reasons.

²⁸ Klein, *Infinitism is the Solution to the Regress Problem*, 134.

²⁹ Peter Klein, “Human Knowledge and the Infinite Progress of Reasoning.” *Philosophical Studies* 134 (2007), 7.

claims that “if it cannot provide the basis for solving the epistemic RP, the primary reason for its dominance will have been eliminated.”³⁰

On the other hand, doxastic justification considers a person’s epistemic responsibility in holding a specific belief. It is concerned with one’s being justified in believing a particular proposition. Klein rejects the foundationalist view that doxastic justification can be obtained through a basic belief that a person considers causally based on doxastic states. This requirement of causality from doxastic evidence might lead the beliefs not having the “required type of causal history.”³¹

Klein’s more salient objection to foundationalism presents the regress argument based on his understanding of both its traditional and contemporary accounts:³²

- 1) Only three structures are possible for reasoning – i) finite with a beginning point, ii) circular, or iii) infinite;
- 2) circular reasoning is unacceptable, for no belief found in its own evidential ancestry could serve as a reason for another belief in the same ancestry, and;
- 3) an infinite chain of reasons is impossible for finite minds.
- 4) Thus, if reasoning leads to knowledge, it must be finite, and;
- 5) the beginning points of which must be known by the person.
- 6) Therefore, if reasoning leads to knowledge, there should be “beliefs that are known by some other than reasoning.

For him, foundationalism claims that just as there is knowledge as a result of reasoning, there should be knowledge not arrived at by reasoning. Klein then considers the Inheritance Principle³³ the core of the foundationalist solution to RP. It renders infinitism incapable of explaining how the justification for beliefs arises as justification is only inherited from a belief prior to it in an infinite chain of reasons.³⁴ Klein points out that if this principle is true, then what seems to be an argument for foundationalism promotes skepticism if it is granted that “contextually basic propositions do not, thereby, gain full epistemic justification.”³⁵

Klein mentions an objection that recalls that of the Pyrrhonians, demonstrating an example wherein there is a belief *e* that appropriately ends regress, given its foundational property φ . A person P holding *e* may ask why *e* properly stops regress. If P has no reason for *e*’s termination of regress, then holding *e* is arbitrary. If P cites φ as that which makes *e* an appropriate terminus, then P also has to ask if φ makes *e* likely to be true. Klein’s problem with foundationalists is that they pick truth-

³⁰ Klein, “Human Knowledge and the Infinite Progress of Reasoning,” 9.

³¹ Klein, “Human Knowledge and the Infinite Progress of Reasoning,” 9.

³² Cf. “Infinitism and the Epistemic Regress Problem” in *Conceptions of Knowledge*, ed. Stefan Tolksdorf (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, 2012), 492.

³³ Klein describes the Inheritance Principle as that wherein “reasoning cannot originate any form of justification but merely transmits justification from one belief to another” (*Infinitism and the Epistemic Regress Problem*, 493).

³⁴ Klein cites Carl Ginet and Jonathan Dancy to show how foundationalism employs this principle. The former claims that: “inference cannot originate justification, it can only transfer [justification] from premises to conclusion,” while the latter says that: “Justification by inference is conditional justification only; [belief] A’s justification is conditional upon the justification of [beliefs] B and C.” (Klein, *Infinitism and the Epistemic Regress Problem*, 494).

³⁵ Klein, *Infinitism and the Epistemic Regress Problem*, 494

conducive φ 's from which arguments can be formulated. He claims that foundationalists acknowledge that the regress does not end at e and that e is not founded on φ .

Having discussed Klein's arguments against foundationalism as a solution to RP, the common reasons regarding such an objection can be summed up as follows:

- i) Foundationalism inevitably leads either to arbitrariness or to the continuation of regress;
- ii) a proposition continuously enhanced by reasons has more epistemic warrant than a proposition supported by a chain of reasons which ends at basic beliefs, and;
- iii) basic beliefs are not tantamount to fully justified beliefs.

I argue that specific problems can be raised against each objection which, if adequate, refutes Klein's conclusion that foundationalism is not a capable solution to RP.

Reply to Klein's Objections

Let us first consider that foundationalism comes mainly in two forms: classical and modest. The former states that the foundational belief is justified *per se*, possessing indubitability, incorrigibility, and infallibility.³⁶ The latter, especially the version introduced by William Alston,³⁷ may respond to Klein's first reason for rejecting foundationalism. In Klein's works discussed previously, no consideration has been given to this account of foundationalism, implying that he might not have thought of its possible implications for infinitism. Since the basic beliefs in this account need not be indubitable, incorrigible, or infallible, the charge of arbitrariness can be avoided by appealing to a possible modification of modest foundationalism, that is, with fortification by general principles.

Concerning the knowledge of such principles, Bertrand Russell posited that:

There is a common impression that everything that we believe ought to be capable of proof, or at least of being shown to be highly probable. It is felt by many that a belief for which no reason can be given is an unreasonable belief. Almost all our common beliefs are either inferred, or capable of being inferred, from other beliefs which may be regarded as giving the reason for them.³⁸

Russell's words capture two crucial principles: The Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR), generally attributed to Leibniz, and the Principle of Inferential Justification (PIJ).³⁹ These two reasons prove to be thorns to the claims of foundationalism, since they both tarnish the foundationalist concepts of basic beliefs and non-inferential justification. Russell's seemingly distant and unconnected thought can enlighten the foundationalist concerning such a difficulty: "[In providing reasons], we

³⁶ Cf. William P. Alston, "Has Foundationalism Been Refuted?" (1975), and Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (2001). Classical foundationalism, as Plantinga considers it, *is* foundationalism; Descartes' foundationalism (Cf. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation II), falls under this form of foundationalism.

³⁷ Alston specifically calls this form of foundationalism as 'Minimal Foundationalism,' although at the same time, he refers to it as the "more modest and less vulnerable form" ("Has Foundationalism Been Refuted," *Philosophical Studies*, 29 (1976), 302-3.

³⁸ Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 64.

³⁹ The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy gives a simple formulation of this principle: "For every x , there is a y such that y is the sufficient reason for x " (Martin Lin & Yitzhak Y. Melamed, "Principle of Sufficient Reason." Retrieved from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sufficient-reason/>).

must sooner or later... be driven to point where we cannot find any further reason, and where it becomes almost certain that no further reason is even theoretically discoverable...to some general principle, or some instance.”⁴⁰

These general principles⁴¹ are “luminously evident,” incapable of “being deduced from anything more evident,” and beyond which “there seems to be no further regress.”⁴² They form part of our noetic structure, reminiscent of Aristotle’s “already existing knowledge.”⁴³ In addressing the foundationalist objections to infinitism, Klein himself acknowledges that there are “general truths” to which inferential beliefs appeal for reasoning.⁴⁴ For a foundationalist, these general principles serve as meta-justifications for basic propositions. Combined with classical foundationalism, these principles may stand as foundations themselves, basic beliefs from which other beliefs are inferable.

Consider this situation: Dan, an “insistent Socrates,”⁴⁵ asks Fon the foundationalist regarding his belief *e* that the puddle in front of them is water. Fon provides reasons for his belief: *r*₁ that the puddle is liquid in form; *r*₂ that liquid is clear; *r*₃ it has no odor reminiscent of any other transparent, liquid substances, and so on. Dan continually asks until Fon arrives at that reason *r*_{*n*} for which no further explanation can be given. On the other hand, employing modest foundationalism, let us take, for instance, that *r*_{*n*} is “water is wet” and that Fon believes that *r*_{*n*} is considerably basic. For the reason that this belief need not be indubitable, infallible, or incorrigible, a reason can still be provided for it in case Dan still finds *r*_{*n*} insufficient for belief in *e*.

This reason may come in the form of a general principle and in this case, the law of contradiction can be cited in support of *r*_{*n*}. The regress of reasons moves one step further but the general principle becomes its definitive end, following the problems raised for Klein above. This reason, nevertheless, may or may not be cited by Fon (in the spirit of classical foundationalism) as he may not recognize it as a justification for *r*_{*n*} since “its obviousness is so great that at first sight it seems almost trivial.”⁴⁶ This supports the possibility of maintaining the belief’s being basic notwithstanding the reason provided for it, thus avoiding both arbitrariness and the prospective continuation of regress.

On Klein’s second reason for his objection, a query can be particularly raised: “Is the process of justification tantamount to the raising of a belief’s epistemic warrant?” It must be reiterated that the end of solving RP is to obtain justification for any belief in question so that it may constitute knowledge, and that to justify any belief subjected to query is to simply make it likely to be true, thus, believable – Klein himself believes such to be the goal of “reason-giving.”⁴⁷ The problem essentially is that he seems to conflate the process of justification with the tedious endeavor of raising a belief’s

⁴⁰ Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 64.

⁴¹ Three of these general principles, “for no very good reason,” have been referred to as the “Laws of Thought”: i) law of identity: “Whatever is, is;” ii) law of contradiction: “Nothing can both be and not be,” and; iii) law of excluded middle: “Everything must either be or not be” (Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 40).

⁴² Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 64.

⁴³ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 71a 1. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 263.

⁴⁴ Klein, *Foundationalism and the Infinite Regress of Reasons*, 923.

⁴⁵ I borrow here Russell’s useful phrase; *The Problems of Philosophy*, 64.

⁴⁶ Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 40.

⁴⁷ Klein, *What IS Wrong with Foundationalism*, 170.

warrant by implying the preferability of infinitism with its capability of continuously enhancing a belief with reasons. This simply cannot be the case if it is to be granted the strength of the notion that there are certain beliefs from which “there seems to be no further regress.” It dispels completely, the mere possibility of increasing the warrant of a belief that finds its roots in a foundational belief already held and accepted by a person.

If he indeed agrees that “every actually cited chain of reasons ends,”⁴⁸ then there is no reason to think that a certain belief capable of ending such a chain would be lacking truth-conduciveness and incapable of providing optimal warrant for a belief in question. What need is there for a continuous provision of reasons for a belief if the proposition in question is already believable, hence, justified, based on basic beliefs? In addition, Klein’s demand to increase the credibility of the questioned proposition by providing an “appropriate kind of epistemic warrant”⁴⁹ is met without difficulty by foundationalist justification, which aims, not merely to stop a regress *ad infinitum* but, more so, give warrant and assert truth-conduciveness. Nothing hinders a basic belief, or specifically, a general principle, from providing the warrant required for a questioned proposition. For Russell:

The principle itself is constantly used in our reasoning, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously... Their truth is evident to us, and we employ them in constructing demonstrations; but they themselves... are incapable of demonstration.⁵⁰

Now, suppose these general principles are used for reasoning and demonstrating certain beliefs, either consciously or unconsciously, then there should be no qualm on whether they can provide the “appropriate kind of epistemic warrant” for a questioned proposition.

Concerning Klein’s third reason for objection which is more salient than the other two, the crux is that knowledge, even in the foundationalist account, requires that beliefs be fully justified and that basic beliefs fail to obtain justification in their being immune to further interrogation.⁵¹ While to an infinitist, no reason “is immune to further legitimate challenge,”⁵² this is not the case to a foundationalist. A possible rapprochement settling this discord and dismissing Klein’s dichotomy that seems to invalidate the viability of foundationalism in its preference of basic beliefs over fully justified beliefs, lies in this distinction: a) foundationalism’s reliance on basic beliefs as the ultimate sources of justification, and; b) foundationalism’s reliance on warrant-sufficient reasons present along the process of justification. Concerning (a), it has to be clarified that in its modest form, foundationalism does not commit itself to any particular belief that is basic and incapable of being improved if the prospect of supporting it by reasons is attainable. In this regard, the foundational belief to which a foundationalist assents can be warranted further.

Another consideration arises if the primary aim of justification is highlighted, that is, to make a belief truth-conducive. The infinitist may be correct in that as long as reasons can be given continuously, one must do so, following the pretext that a belief that reasons can support is more fully

⁴⁸ John Turri and Peter Klein, *Ad Infinitum: New Essays on Epistemological Infinitism* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014), 2.

⁴⁹ Klein, *What IS Wrong with Foundationalism*, 170.

⁵⁰ Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 64.

⁵¹ This follows the Pyrrhonian criticism of Aristotelian foundationalism. Klein, *Infinitism and the Epistemic Regress Problem*, 493.

⁵² Klein & Turri, *Ad Infinitum*, 2.

justified than that for which no more reasons can be provided.⁵³ Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that a belief initially considered foundational by a person has already made whatever questioned proposition he has believable, hence, conformable with the foundationalist dependence on basic beliefs. It is indeed good that if employing infinitism, beliefs can still be subjected to improvement by being reinforced by reasons.⁵⁴ Foundationalism does not need the limiting of justification to a finite series of reasons as it can integrate with the supposed infinite chain of reasoning in infinitism, especially if its modest form is taken into account wherein basic beliefs can be improved by reasons which may include non-doxastic evidence that has no truth value.

The reason for (b) is akin to what has just been said. A person P's capacity to infer from what is already available in the mind, be it occurrent or dispositional,⁵⁵ can be considered. RP is about making a certain proposition believable. Practically, not everyone believes propositions in the same way. Person P may believe a proposition e at, for example, reason r_3 . In contrast, person Q, despite the sufficient warrant given by r_3 for e , may be capable of making more inferences, thus making e "more fully justified" before finally terminating the process at a reason r_8 . Klein's contention from an unnecessary contrast between basic beliefs and fully justified beliefs is dispelled by the RP criterion which he accepted: justification increases the epistemic warrant of the belief in question so that it may constitute knowledge. As in the case given, it can be said that although e is already sufficiently warranted by r_3 , hence making it foundational for P, nothing stops Q from giving more possible reasons for e , therefore making it "more fully justified," even though r_3 in itself is already fully justified as to account for the sufficient epistemic warrant of e . Such a scheme conforms adequately to modest foundationalism.

Conclusion: Foundationalism IS still a Viable Solution to RP

Klein, although unsuccessful, manages to challenge the epistemological enterprise of foundationalism by attacking its premises which rest on the concepts of regress and basic beliefs. Klein's contention throughout the years, accumulating within it both the objections to foundationalism and arguments for infinitism, is as follows: i) Foundationalism leads either to arbitrariness or to the continuation of the regress; ii) enhancement of reasons grants more warrant to a proposition than a chain of reasons that terminate at basic beliefs, and; iii) basic beliefs are not tantamount to fully justified beliefs. Drawing from the concept of general principles as offered by Russell, together with Alston's modest foundationalism, I argue that these three contentions fail to rule out foundationalism as a possible solution to RP, regardless of whether or not Klein's arguments for infinitism are successful.

In response to Klein's first contention, modest foundationalism may be employed wherein basic beliefs, not limited by indubitability, incorrigibility, and infallibility, can be improved by further reasons before finally arriving at the definitive general principles for which no other reasons can be given. These general principles, in addition, can also be acknowledged by classical foundationalists as

⁵³ Klein, *Infinitism and the Epistemic Regress Problem*, 495.

⁵⁴ John Turri employs this aspect of infinitism to affirm how foundationalism can be accommodated by it. Cf. "On the regress argument for infinitism," 157.

⁵⁵ The difference, simply put, is that an occurrent belief is that which a person actively entertains at any given moment, while a dispositional belief is that which is held in a person's memory or embedded in the noetic structure itself. Cf. Lemos, *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*, 8.

the foundations of knowledge themselves, possessing the three properties of basic beliefs as mentioned above. To the second contention, I argue that there is a distinction between justification and the warrant-raising of a belief. Infitism is more preferable for Klein on account of its supposed capability of continuous warrant-raising, but this is not necessarily the end of justification, as Klein himself holds. Citing general principles as beliefs from which there is “no further regress” and evident truths that are “incapable of demonstration” as present in our noetic structure, anyone who is capable of arriving at such principles already achieves the goal of justification, that is, making any belief likely to be true.

These general principles suffice for providing an “appropriate kind of epistemic warrant” enough to make a proposition in question believable. As this is achieved, infinitism, in this case, does not fare any better than foundationalism concerning justification. To the third contention, I propose a possible conciliation between the foundationalist’s reliance on basic beliefs and the infinitist’s requirement for full justification by continuously providing reasons through a distinction between basic beliefs and warrant-sufficient beliefs. The version of foundationalism adapted from Alston does not limit the process of justification at any belief that reasons cannot further support. Thus, warrant-sufficient beliefs effectively provide for justification. Even if basic beliefs are employed, modest foundationalism still allows further improvement if a questioner so requires. The truth-conduciveness of any belief in the chain of reasons for a proposition in question also addresses justification’s goal. Given the variety of noetic structures present in persons, full justification may be arrived at by a person differently from another. These responses are enough to refute Klein’s dismissal of foundationalism as a possible solution to RP.

Much can still be discussed about foundationalism and RP, especially Alston’s distinction between mediately justified beliefs and immediately justified beliefs, and the capability of non-doxastic states to serve as reasons for basic beliefs without necessarily continuing the regress and affecting the status of basic beliefs. Nevertheless, the primary goal of this paper is to respond to Klein’s rejection of foundationalism as a possible solution to RP on account of the reasons prevalent in his works on infinitism. This paper is not an attempt to invalidate infinitism as a possible solution, nor an attack against Klein’s claim that it is the only solution to RP. What is being suggested is that from the foundationalist purview, certain problems can be raised against Klein’s reasons for rejecting foundationalism as a possible solution to RP. These arguments cannot be applied to coherentism that Klein also rejects. Its defense is left to those who stand for it as a solution to RP. The arguments in this paper defend foundationalism from Klein’s objections, therefore reviving it. Claiming it as the best possible solution, or even the only solution to RP, is a different matter that requires a more rigorous argumentation. It is best to conclude that foundationalism is still a possible solution to RP.

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A Kantian Evaluation of the Unethical Business Practices of Network Marketing Companies

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Since the Covid-19 pandemic started, millions of people worldwide have lost their jobs. Businesses either shut down or fire their employees to survive. In almost every crisis, whether it is natural or man-made, this is inevitable since transactions between customers and businesses become almost non-existent since any crisis would greatly interfere with such an interaction.

However, companies that practice a marketing strategy known as Network Marketing, have presented that they are barely affected by the pandemic. While Network Marketing is not a new practice, it has been gaining popularity during the pandemic by being marketed as a way to earn stable and massive income whether one does it part-time or full-time from the comfort of one's home.¹

There have been many allegations and criticisms against businesses that practice Network Marketing since it functions as a pyramid scheme. Other than that, stories and claims show that Network Marketing brings financial harm and psychological harm to many of its members and promotes taking advantage of its customers and members. However, there are those who claim that Network Marketing is a better business practice than traditional business models because working in a Network Marketing business allows a flexible working environment to be present and helps one earn more income than most traditional jobs. What is Network Marketing? How does it function? What practices do Network Marketing companies promote? Are its practices ethical or not?

For this essay, I will be analyzing the practices of Network Marketing companies and its ethical implications from a Kantian perspective. I believe that Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative is the best concept to use when criticizing these practices because Kant's ethical concept focuses on what ought to be done and if such actions are means that can be practiced universally. Throughout Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant provided formulations that help one determine if an action is ethical or not. These formulations, unlike many religions, use reason rather than authority for one to know if a particular action is unethical. I will first give a brief and detailed summary of these formulations. Then, I will explain Network Marketing and how companies practice it. Finally, using the formulations provided by Kant, provide arguments as to why these practices are unethical. While I intend to explain why such practices are immoral, I intend to convince the readers not to join Network Marketing companies.

The first formulation of Kant's Categorical Imperative, the Universal Imperative of Duty, states that one must "act only on that maxim though which one can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."² Based on this formula, one would have to consider the outcomes of one's actions and would also have to practice the maxim all the time. In other words, the actions that we

¹ Abby Vesoulis, Eliana Dockterman, "Pandemic Schemes: How Multilevel Marketing Distributors Are Using the Internet—and the Coronavirus—to Grow Their Businesses," *Time*, July 9, 2020, <https://time.com/5864712/multilevel-marketing-schemes-coronavirus/>.

² Immanuel Kant, "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals," trans. Mary Gregor and Jens Timmermann, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 31.

willingly do are to be considered actions required by universal laws. Therefore, it is something that everyone must do. However, if everyone does that particular action, and these actions no longer help one reach their ends, then it cannot be considered a universal law.

To demonstrate this formulation, Kant provided a few scenarios. In one of the scenarios, a man finds himself wanting money. Because of this, he decides to ask for money from someone else. He would not be given money unless he promises to repay. This makes him think of making that promise even though he knows that he will not be able to repay. Kant further explains that by making a promise that he cannot fulfill, he is making it a universal law to make promises one knows he/she can't do. Once this becomes a universal law, at some point, no one would believe that the ones promising to pay back their money will pay back causing them not to be willing to offer money. The practice, then, cannot become a universal law.³

The second formulation, the Formulation of Humanity, states that one should “use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.”⁴ It states that treating others as a means to achieving a goal without the proper consent and knowledge of the person is unethical. We use tools as objects because they are not autonomous. Humans are autonomous, so they should not be treated as objects. In other words, if the action involves getting one to do an action without them willing to do so or depriving them of choice of whether to do it or not, the action is considered unethical.

Using the same example as earlier, Kant stated that lying to the other person robs that person of choosing not to provide money. The person then thinks that he will get his money back. He does not know that the liar is not capable of paying him back. Because the liar intended for this to happen, the liar used the person as a means to gain money. This further demonstrates how such actions rob one's free will to decide whether to do a specific action making the act of lying unethical.⁵

The last formulation, the Formulation of Automation, states that “to do no action on any other maxim than one such that it would be consistent with it to be a universal law, and hence to act only so that the will could regard itself as at the same time giving universal law through its maxim.”⁶ In other words, the action should be done not because it is dictated by those holding superior positions, like political and religious figures, but, rather, because the rational mind knows that. For Kant, the moral law can be discovered by ourselves using reason. In his hypothetical state known as the “Kingdom of Ends,” everyone in the state wills a moral action to be done for it to become a universal law which all are subject to, in which no one is used as a means to an end, and in which all can practice.⁷ For this to be possible, the first two formulations must be applied when deciding whether an action is right or wrong. The judgement on whether the act is right or wrong is determined by reason alone, not by a higher authority figure like God for humans are autonomous and are capable of reasoning.

³ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 32.

⁴ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 38.

⁵ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 38.

⁶ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 42.

⁷ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 41-43.

Before analyzing the practices of Network Marketing businesses, it is essential to know what Network Marketing is. According to Investopedia, “Network Marketing is a business model that depends on person-to-person sales by independent representatives, often working from home.”⁸ These members act as distributors who sell their companies’ products directly to customers. They receive these products by first buying them from their respective companies at a discounted price, then sell them for the official price. This helps these members earn some profit. But this is not the only way to earn. The other way they can earn is by recruiting other people into the company. In the company, representatives are referred to as either “uplines” or “downlines,” depending on when they joined and on the relationship among the members.⁹ In order to earn by recruiting, representatives have to convince their potential members to purchase a “starter kit” that contains the company’s products in order for them to join. Once the purchase is made, the customer automatically becomes a member. Uplines who have successfully recruited will receive a portion of the payment while the rest goes to the company. But it does not just end there. If any of the uplines manage to recruit a certain number of downlines, they will earn bonuses. They would also qualify for higher tiers depending on how many members they have recruited.¹⁰

Network Marketing companies present themselves as an easier way to earn income. All the members have to do is sell the companies’ products or recruit more people into the company. If members can sell well and recruit more people into the company, they will be able to earn a lot more money than they will ever get in regular jobs.¹¹¹² The only qualification is that they need to be of legal age. They can enter by simply purchasing a package containing the products from the company or any of their members. While they do not have fixed wages unlike most jobs, their earnings come primarily from the profits that each member makes.

Because of the nature of this practice, Network Marketing companies would then show that they are capable of functioning as they normally would even during a pandemic. Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, many have lost their jobs. Because of the need to earn income, they would sometimes resort to joining Network Marketing businesses. These businesses, then, show that they can still have good income by selling their products and by recruiting members while staying at home. This, then, attracts more potential workers because they see it as either a good source of extra income or an alternative for their jobs. Other than the way it functions, some businesses, especially those that sell food supplements, would claim that their supplements, like multivitamin tablets, can help one have a stronger immune system that can effectively combat COVID-19.¹³

⁸Adam Hayes, “Network Marketing”, *Investopedia*, last modified March 16, 2021, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/n/network-marketing.asp>.

⁹ “Uplines” are what members refer to those who recruited them and have joined the business before they did. “Downlines” are what members refer to those they have recruited.

¹⁰Adam Hayes, “Network Marketing”, *Investopedia*, last modified March 16, 2021, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/n/network-marketing.asp>.

¹¹ John Oliver, “Multilevel Marketing: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (HBO)”, Youtube video, 31:57, posted by “LastWeekTonight”, November 7, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6MwGeOm8iI>.

¹² Jon M. Taylor, “The Case (for and) against Multi-level Marketing”, PDF File, *Federal Trade Commission*, (https://www.ftc.gov/sites/default/files/documents/public_comments/trade-regulation-rule-disclosure-requirements-and-prohibitions-concerning-business-opportunities-ftc.r511993-00017%C2%A0/00017-57317.pdf), Intro-4.

¹³ Vesoulis and Dockterman, “Pandemic Schemes.”

However, there are specific issues that former members of Network Marketing companies and critics raised when confronting these companies. A common accusation is that Network Marketing functions exactly like a pyramid scheme. They argue that whenever one pays, part of the money goes to the one who recruited the new member, another part goes to the upline of the one who recruited, and another part goes to the uplines' upline, and the rest goes to the owner of the company. Like pyramid schemes, those who have recruited many members and the owners of the company earn the most income, while the downlines lose or do not earn income. It is reported that 99% of members barely earn any income, have no income, or lose income.¹⁴ Like pyramid schemes, the owner of the company and those with many downlines earn the most revenue.

Since recruitment is considered a reliable way of earning, uplines would advise their downlines to recruit their family, friends, former classmates, colleagues, and anyone they may know. In a study examining if members of Network Marketing businesses take advantage of their relationships with others to earn money via recruitment, they found that many of those whose family members, friends, colleagues, and others that they know who are members of Network Marketing businesses attempted to persuade them to join by stating the benefits of the company, by showing cases in which members did achieve success, and by using their trust to persuade them.¹⁵ Findings show that they use their relationships with others to increase their chances of recruiting the person, especially among those who have been members of Network Marketing businesses for five years or less.¹⁶

Another issue raised is that Network Marketing companies control and brainwash their members for them to continue this practice and for them not to leave. Uplines advise their downlines to keep joining their meetings or sessions in order to be trained. However, former members would say that their uplines were brainwashing them by playing on their emotions and by constantly insisting that they can become financially successful if they stay and guilt trip those who think of leaving by stating that those who do will not have as much income as those who stay. Other than that, downlines are expected to be obedient to their uplines for uplines are considered smarter and more experienced than the downlines in order to be financially successful. These practices are similar to that of cults that aim to control their followers and prevent them from leaving and so that they will think that they can achieve salvation.¹⁷

Finally, there is the issue that members are required to purchase a certain amount of products. The usual explanations are that they need to do this to be recognized as active distributors or so that members can qualify for specific bonuses. What makes this an issue is that members usually could not consume or sell all these products before the next time they have to purchase more again. Other than

¹⁴ Taylor, "The Case," 1-7; 1-8.

¹⁵ Geevarghese K. Mathews, et. al., "Network Marketing: Exploitation of Relationships – Myth or Reality?," *Research Gate*, April, 2007, (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242379518_Network_Marketing_Exploitation_of_relationships_-_Myth_or_Reality), 162.

¹⁶ Mathews, et. al., "Network Marketing: Exploitation of relationships – Myth or Reality?," 162-163.

¹⁷ Casey Bond, "How MLMs And Cults Use The Same Mind Control Techniques," *The Huffington Post*, August 13, 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/multilevel-marketing-companies-mlms-cults-similarities_1_5d49f8c2e4b09e72973df3d3.

the expensive package that each member purchases before joining, this also brings financial harm to the members.¹⁸

With all these in mind, one can begin to see questionable habits that Network Marketing promotes. As stated earlier, Network Marketing businesses promise potential recruits that they can provide anyone the opportunity to earn much money. However, the chances of doing so are slim. Usually, the owners and some members of the business are aware of this. However, they continue not to acknowledge this to increase the chances of one joining the business while not knowing about the huge risks. Yes, this does benefit the ones recruiting and the owners, but would they be alright with being treated the same way? For sure, they do not. This means that the practice cannot be a universal law. For this reason, the practice already violates the Universal Imperative of Duty.

The practice of using others as a mere means to an end is prevalent in Network Marketing businesses. Members of the company tend to urge others into joining because recruiting them (non-members) gives them (members) money. They encourage them by stating promises that they could earn much income without saying that, realistically, chances of doing so are slim. This robs the autonomy of the former, for they are unable to decide knowing the fact that they are about to take huge risks and most likely suffer financial loss. The business also takes advantage of its members by forcing them to keep buying their products to maintain their status as active distributors. These members are led to believe that they are like investors for they are “investing” in something they could profit from. However, they are actually “customers” for they are buying products that they may not likely be able to sell or use. The ones who benefit the most from this are the owners of the business. In the end, every member of the company has been taken advantage of, usually without them knowing that they do not benefit as much as the company owners.

Finally, there is the fact that they brainwash their members to stay and continue the practice. Not only is this a violation of the previous two formulations, but also is a violation of the Formulation of Autonomy. Members are being led to stay and to continue the practice just because it is what their uplines would tell them to do. Their decisions to stay and their companies’ practices are based solely on the influence of the companies and of their uplines. Because of this, these members barely, if ever they do, critically rationalize since they insist that being obedient to their uplines is what will help them become successful soon.

What I find disturbing about this practice is that these businesses reward those who do so while keeping most of their profits to themselves. Whenever one successfully recruits, that member gets paid. This is one of the major reasons why members are usually on the lookout for anyone who could join, then do what they can to convince them to join. That way, they could earn some income or, at least, get back the same amount of money they spent joining.

Other than the ethical arguments, I believe it is worth pointing out that Network Marketing companies will not last long. Eventually, they will run out of people to recruit and their members will run out of money to keep buying the companies’ products since that is where most of the companies’

¹⁸Darren Ferneyhough, “Why are MLM products so expensive?,” *LinkedIn*, January 9, 2019. See at https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-mlm-products-so-expensive-darren-ferneyhough?trk=related_article_Why%20are%20MLM%20products%20so%20expensive%3F_article-card_title.

income comes from.¹⁹ Once that happens, the company goes bankrupt and most members do not gain as much as they paid while those on the top of the “pyramid,” including the owners of the company, get to keep the earnings to themselves. However, Network Marketing companies do not usually share this information to avoid discouraging their members from recruiting and increase the chances of potential members to join. Because of this, not only is the practice unethical, but also not financially sustainable.

To conclude, the practices of Network Marketing companies are unethical. By using Immanuel Kant’s Categorical Imperative to analyze their practices, I found that these Network Marketing businesses have violated all formulas and continue to harm those who join these businesses. The practice of making others think that they can find more success by joining and participating in Network Marketing businesses cannot be something done universally. It robs one’s autonomy to decide on whether to join or not. And it plays on one’s emotions more than it uses reason to convince one to join. Not only do they perform these unethical practices, but they also reward such actions by paying them for every time they do so. While it is true that you can earn income without recruiting anyone, that alone is very difficult. So, because of the unethical practices they promote and the financial harm they bring, I hope that I can convince the readers not to join Network Marketing companies.

¹⁹ Multilevel Marketing: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6MwGeOm8iI>

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