Assessing Infinitism

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Abstract:

I will be examining the historical context in which infinitism emerged as a response to coherentism and foundationalism, focusing on the principle of avoiding circularity and principle of avoiding arbitrariness. Coherentism is the idea that knowledge is derived from the coherence of interconnected beliefs, while foundationalism holds that certain basic beliefs serve as the foundation for all other knowledge. Infinitism, on the other hand, suggests that there is no foundational level of knowledge, and that our beliefs can be justified by an infinite regress of reasons, i.e. of non-repeating infinite chains.

I will then emphasize the key arguments for and against infinitism, delving into Peter D. Klein - Carl Ginet Debate (Possibility of Non-Inferential Justification), Turri's notion on 'how foundationalist can provide for the infinite chain of justifications' and discuss Richard Fumerton's objections against Infinitism. Finally, I will evaluate the current state of the debate surrounding infinitism and consider possible future directions for research in this area. Overall, this article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the concept of infinitism and its role as an alternative to coherentism and foundationalism in epistemology.

Keywords: Infinitism, Coherentism, Foundationalism, Infinite Regress Of Reasons, Inferential Justification, .

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1. The Regress Problem.

The regress problem arises when we ask for the justification (Reason1) for a particular belief and further, a justification of that justification, and so on. This leads to an infinite regress, which can make it seem as if we cannot ever have a satisfactory explanation for how we know anything. The regress problem concerns with the ability of reasoning to increase the rational credibility of a questioned proposition.

<div align="center">

Belief (b)

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Reason (r1)

↓

Reason (r2)

↓

Reason (r3)

↓

∞

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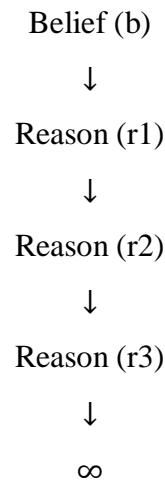
The regeress problem can be put forward as – "Which type of series of reasons and the account of warrant associated with it, if any, can increase the credibility of a non-evident proposition? Can a series with repeating propositions (coherentism) do so? Can one with a last member (foundationalism) do so? Can one that is non- repeating and has no last member (infinitism) do so?"[1]

An example of the regress problem is the question of how we can know that our senses are reliable. Suppose we claim to know that the mango in front of us is yellow. How do we know this? We might say that we can see that the mango is yellow. But then someone might ask how we know that our senses are reliable, which would require another justification. We might then appeal to scientific studies that have shown that our senses are generally reliable. But then someone might ask how we know that the studies are reliable, which would require another justification. And so on, ad infinitum.

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[1] Klein, Peter.(2005a). "Infinitism is the solution to the Regress Problem." In Steup and Sosa (Eds.).

The mango in front of us is yellow

↓

We can 'see' through our eyes that the mango in front of us is yellow

↓

It is a visual perception through our sensory organ (eyes)

↓

Senses are generally reliable

↓

∞

Another example of the regress problem is the question of how we can know that our beliefs about the external world are justified. Suppose we claim to know that there are trees outside. How do we know this? We might say that we can see the trees. But then someone might ask how we know that the trees are really there, and not just an illusion. We might then appeal to the fact that other people also see the trees, which would provide some corroboration for our belief. But then someone might ask how we know that other people are not also subject to the same illusion, which would require another justification. And so on, ad infinitum.

Pertaining to how we can know that our moral beliefs (in this case, "being kind to others") are justified, the form of the infinite regress would be -

We should be kind to others

↓

Being kind is the right thing to do

↓

Helps make the world a better place

↓

Creates a better future for everyone

↓

Ensures that people can lead happy and fulfilling lives

↓

It is just something that is inherently valuable.

↓

∞

These examples illustrate the challenge posed by the regress problem, which is to find a way to justify our beliefs without relying on an infinite regress of justification. Several solutions to the problem have been proposed, including foundationalism, coherentism, and infinitism, each of which has its own strengths and weaknesses. In this essay, I would analyze the drawbacks of foundationalism and coherentism given by Peter D.Klein and evaluate infinitism, pertaining to the objections raised by Richard Fumerton, John Turri and Carl Ginet.

The foundationalists' response to the skeptic regresss argument is that there must be some beliefs that cannot be supported by additional reasoning because, in their view, further reasoning cannot produce epistemic warrant[2], which means that some fundamental beliefs (basic beliefs) must already have epistemic warrant. According to foundationalists, the issue is usually not whether there is enough justification for knowledge, but rather how enough justification develops and is transmitted. Foundationalism attempts to solve this problem by positing that some beliefs are self-justifying or are based on non-inferential experiences, while coherentism holds that beliefs are justified by their coherence with other beliefs in a web of mutually supporting beliefs.

Infinitism proposes that there is no need for a foundation of basic beliefs or knowledge, but instead, knowledge is based on an infinite regress of reasons. In other words, every belief can be justified by an infinite chain of reasons, with no starting point or foundational beliefs. According to Klein's infinitism, the infinite regress of reasons is not a problem because it can provide an explanation for how we can have knowledge and justification without circularity or an arbitrary stopping point[3].

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[2] Klein, Peter. (1998). "Foundationalism and the Infinite Regress of Reasons." Philosophy and
        Phenomenological Research.

[3] Turri, John. "On the Regress Argument for Infinitism." Synthese, vol. 166, no. 1, 2009

2. Why Foundationalism Fails?

> "….These people demand that a reason shall be given for everything; for they seek a starting point, and they seek to get this by demonstration, while it is obvious from their actions that they have no such conviction. But their mistake is what we have stated it to be; they seek a reason for things for which no reason can be given; for the starting point of demonstration is not demonstration." [4]

From the above lines of Aristotle, Peter D. Klein structures the relationship between Aristotle's theory of demonstration and the philosophical position of Foundationalism. Foundationalism is the view that knowledge is based on a foundation of basic beliefs or propositions that are self-evident or certain. According to Klein, Aristotle's theory of demonstration can be seen as a form of foundationalism pertaining to the lines " …that reasoning, in general reaches an end because there are some privileged starting points for which no reason can be given". The essence of foundationalism is the claim that warrant or justification "arises autonomously in so-called basic propositions and is then transferred to other propositions through permissible forms of inference."

In the case of foundationalism, warrant is considered as arising from the autonomous basic propositions and the 'warrant' being transferred to other propositions through inference. Peter D. Klein's main objection against foundationalism is that it "cannot be employed by a self-conscious practitioner to increase the rational credibility of a questioned proposition"[5] Klein provides an interesting imaginary dialogue between Fred (the foundationalist) and Doris(the doubter).

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[4] Klein, Peter D. (2011). Infinitism. In Sven Bernecker & Duncan Pritchard (eds.), Routledge Companion to Epistemology. Routledge. pp. 245-256.

[5] Klein, Peter.(2005a). "Infinitism is the solution to the Regress Problem." In Steup and Sosa (Eds.). Contemporary debates in Epistemology(2014).

Fred (the foundationalist) and Doris(the doubter).

Fred : **Proposition (P)**

Doris: Any reasons?

Fred: (**Reason R1**)

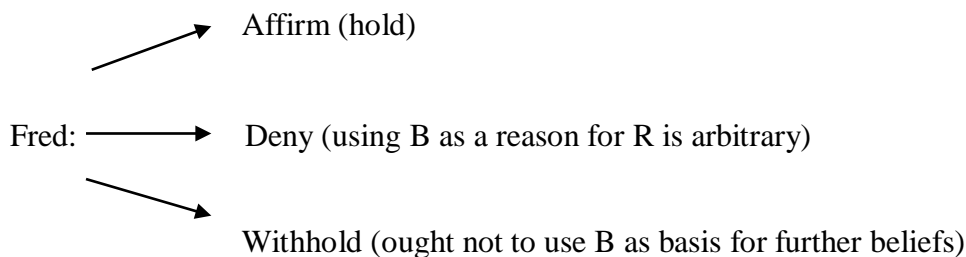Doris: How ? Any reasons? Why R1?

Fred: (**Reason R2**)

Doris: How R2?

…….

…….

Fred: **Statement B**- Basic Proposition that gives an autonomous warrant (properly **basic belief B** having a **foundational property F** and therefore no reason needed)

Doris: Are autonomously warranted basic beliefs at least likely to be true?

Affirm (hold)

Fred: ⟶ Deny (using B as a reason for R is arbitrary)

Withhold (ought not to use B as basis for further beliefs)

When Fred denies by stating that the autonomously warranted basic beliefs (propositions) are not likely to be true, it raises a question regarding the nature of truth of the first non-basic proposition. But if Fred believed that such propositions were not even somewhat likely to be true in virtue of being autonomously warranted, how could he think that b could provide a good reason for thinking that the penultimate proposition was likely to be true? Fred thinks that the warrant for all of his beliefs rests on basic propositions. If he thought that b's possession of F was not the least bit truth conducive, then why is he using b and all the other basic propositions on which the warrant for his non-basic beliefs rests?[6]

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[6] Klein, Peter.(2005a). "Infinitism is the solution to the Regress Problem." In Steup and Sosa (Eds.). Contemporary debates in Epistemology(2014).

Even in the case of withholding the statement 'autonomously basic beliefs are at least likely to be true', there are no viable options. Fred ought not to use B as a basis for further belief as there is no specific stand regarding its truth and falsity. If Fred affirms, then according to Klein, the regress has continued. Given that b possesses F (foundational property) and that propositions with F are more likely to be true, Fred has a very solid reason to believe that b. But after affirming, Fred may be questioned about why he believes that b has characteristic F and that basic propositions have a chance of being true in virtue of having the property F, thus continuing the regress.

In the context of foundationalism, the non-originating principle and the inheritance principle are two key ideas related to the foundationalist theory of justification.

The **non-originating principle** holds that certain beliefs can be justified without requiring any further justification, i.e. "reasoning, alone, cannot produce epistemic warrant". [7]These beliefs are known as basic beliefs or foundational beliefs, and they are not justified by appeal to any other beliefs or principles. Rather, they are self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses.

The **inheritance principle**, on the other hand, holds that other beliefs can be justified by inheriting their justification from basic beliefs. "Reasoning can transmit the requisite epistemic warrant for knowledge from other beliefs". That is, a belief can be justified if it can be logically derived from one or more basic beliefs, or if it is supported by empirical evidence that is based on basic beliefs. "The key to understanding infinitism is that neither of the principles, though they motivate and imply foundationalism, is required by all accounts of epistemic warrant". [8]

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[7] Klein, Peter D. (2011). Infinitism. In Sven Bernecker & Duncan Pritchard (eds.), Routledge Companion to Epistemology. Routledge. pp. 245-256.

[8] Klein, Peter D. (2011). Infinitism. In Sven Bernecker & Duncan Pritchard (eds.), Routledge Companion to Epistemology. Routledge. pp. 245-256.

3. On Coherentism – Warrant Transfer and Warrant Emergent

The regress problem concerns with the ability of reasoning to increase the rational credibility of a questioned proposition. Therefore, any theory that does not increase the rational credibility does not solve the regress problem. In "The Coherence Theory of Empirical Knowledge", Bonjour argues that there are no foundations, and since justification is inferential, there must be a circle of beliefs that mutually justify each other. But an objection arises when asserting that justification is inferential and then claiming that the system that confers justification is an enclosed circular system, therefore it appears that the coherentist has not solved the regress problem. Bonjour argues that if justification moves in a circle and if each belief is justified by other beliefs, then some beliefs that serve as conclusions in justification will also function as premises in justifying other beliefs. Thus no belief is justified. For example if a justifies belief b, and b justifies c, and c justifies d, and d justifies a, then no beliefs are justified. This argument against coherentism, Bonjour maintains, rests on a linear conception of inferential justification and generates the regress problem.

Peter D. Klein, in his paper 'Infinitism is the solution to the regress problem' addresses the same issue with warrant-transfer coherentism being unable to solve the regress problem. "The first form, the warrant-transfer form, is easily seen to be unable to solve the regress problem because Carl, the Coherentist, cannot increase the credibility of some proposition, p, by citing p in its own evidential ancestry. If the reasoning is to increase the credibility of the questioned proposition for Carl, then that credibility will not already be cathected to the proposition. For if it were, then it is pointless to begin reasoning in the first place. Presumably that is what is wrong with circular reasoning. It cannot increase the credibility of a questioned proposition". [9] Therefore in the case of warrant transfer (transference coherentism), it takes individual beliefs to be the primary bearers of warrant and leads to circular reasoning.

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[9] Klein, Peter.(2005a). "Infinitism is the solution to the Regress Problem." In Steup and Sosa (Eds.). Contemporary debates in Epistemology.

According to Bonjour, if the coherentist were to redefine inferential justification as non linear, then the Coherence Theory of Empirical Justification avoids the criticisms imparted to the linear conception of inferential justification. Bonjour therefore opts for a holistic or systematic conception of inferential justification and rejects the linear model. In the global justification of the belief system, while individual beliefs all contribute to the justification of other individual beliefs, these beliefs ultimately derive their justification from the justification of the whole system. Thus there is no ultimate relation of epistemic priority among the members of such a system and consequently no basis for a true regress.[10]

Against the Warrant- Emergent Coherentism of Bonjour:

In the case of warrant emergent coherentism of Bonjour, simply by virtue of being a part of the right kind of coherent set, all beliefs in it are justified. As a result, warrant is not passed from one belief to another but rather develops as a result of mutual support that each belief in the set offers, thus avoiding circular reasoning. But in the 'Raft and the Pyramid' debate between coherentism and foundationslism, Ernest Sosa has pointed out, that form of coherentism shares a formal structure with foundationalism.[11]

In ' Infinitism is the solution to the regress problem', Peter D. Klein offers his argument against the Warrant-Emergent coherentism of Bonjour – "The warrant for propositions could increase as the number of threads in the web of propositions increases and/or the web becomes more tightly woven. But there is one problem with this form of coherentism. As others have pointed out, it is nothing but a type of foundationalism – one-step foundationalism. In this case, the foundational property, F, which all warranted propositions have, is that each is a member of a set of coherent propositions. The Carl–Doris discussion

[10] Bonjour, Laurence. "The Coherence Theory of Empirical Knowledge." *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, vol. 30

[11] Sosa, Ernest (1980). The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge. Midwest Studies in Philosophy 5 (1):3-26.

would follow the same general pattern as the Fred–Doris discussion where the foundational property, F, is simply the proposition's membership in the set of coherent propositions".[12]
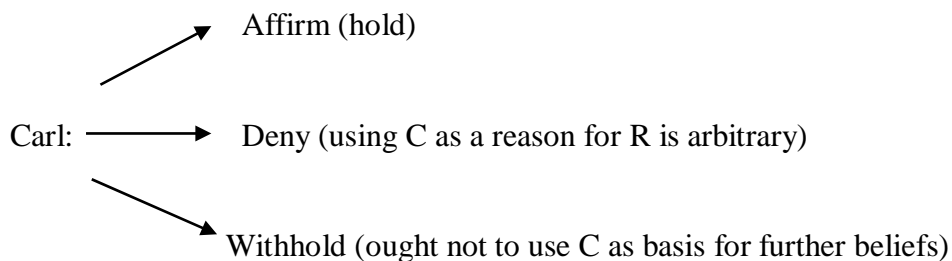

Klein projects the objections for Bonjour's Warrant – Emergent Coherentism akin to that of his earlier critique of the foundationalist model. His earlier conception of an imaginary dialogue between Fred, the foundationalist and Doris, the doubter is applied, the only significant difference being that of Carl-the coherentist. As Carl faces the same "trilemma" (Klein, 2005) of affirming (hold), denying and withholding the statement "Coherent propositions are likely to be true in virtue of the fact that they are coherent". I have given my own example of the penultimate dialogue of the conversation between Carl and Doris, i.e.-

….
….
Carl: **Statement C**- Coherent Proposition that gives a warrant (In virtue of being a member of the set of coherent propositions, that gives warrant)
Doris: Are the mutually coherent propositions likely to be true?-

Affirm (hold)

Carl: ⟶ Deny (using C as a reason for R is arbitrary)

Withhold (ought not to use C as basis for further beliefs)

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[12] Klein, Peter.(2005a). "Infinitism is the solution to the Regress Problem." In Steup and Sosa (Eds.). Contemporary debates in Epistemology.

4. Infinitism as a viable option.

Peter D. Klein forms his argument for Infinitism where the accent is toward fulfilling the limitations of Foundationalism and Coherentism. "Infinitism is like the warrant-emergent form of coherentism because it holds that warrant for a questioned proposition emerges as the proposition becomes embedded in a set of propositions. Infinitism is like foundationalism because it holds that some propositions are epistemically prior to others." [13] Although there are certain similarities of Infinitism with the prior theories, Klein's Infinitism develops not as reconciliation of Foundationalism and Coherentism but rather with a distinct form of "Warrant-emergent Infinitism".

According to Klein, the key argument in favour of embracing infinitism is that, in contrast to the two main alternatives, foundationalism and coherentism, it adequately upholds two principles that a theory of the structure of justification should uphold. Therefore, Infinitism results from adopting the following two principles:

Principle of Avoiding Circularity (PAC)

"Principle of Avoiding Circularity (PAC): for all propositions, x, if x is warranted for a person, S, at t, then for all y, if y is in the reason-ancestry of x for S at t, then x is not in the reason-ancestry of y for S at t."[14]

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[13] Klein, Peter D. (2005a). "Infinitism is the solution to the Regress Problem." In Steup and Sosa (Eds.), Contemporary debates in Epistemology.

[14] Klein,Peter D. (1999). "Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons." Philosophical Perspectives , 1999, Vol. 13, Epistemology (1999), pp. 297-325

It is through the Principle of Avoiding Circularity (PAC) that Klein rejects the earlier Coherentist approach of question begging and circularity. From the earlier objections of coherentism, there cannot be a case where x justifies y , and y in turn justifies x , thus engaging in circularity. E.g. "I'm a good driver because I've never been in an accident, and I've never been in an accident because I'm a good driver." This argument assumes the truth of the conclusion it is trying to establish, namely that the person is a good driver.

Another example- a person who holds the belief that God exists. They hold this belief based on the reason that the Bible states that "God exists". They believe that the Bible is infallible because it is the word of God, which is based on their implied and already existing belief that God exists. So, they believe A because of B, they believe B because of C, and they believe C because of A. This was Bonjour's earlier argument against linear conception of inferential justification-that if justification moves in a circle and if each belief is justified by other beliefs, then some beliefs that serve as conclusions in justification will also function as premises in justifying other beliefs. Principle of Avoiding Circularity (PAC) is against the warrant-transfer view that is unable to solve the regress problem. Therefore the reason Klein rejects Coherentism is that – it does not satisfactorily abide by the PAC. However, infinitism does satisfy and honors the PAC, because one does not use one reason in the evidential ancestry of itself, but rather the structure of justification is like a chain that does not delve into the circular loop of reasoning.

Principle of Avoiding Arbitrariness (PAA)

"Principle of Avoiding Arbitrariness (PAA): for all propositions, x, if x is warranted for a person, S, at t, then there is some reason, r1, available to S for x at t; and there is some reason, r2, available to S for r1 at t, etc., and there is no last reason in the series.[15]"

Peter D.Klein's rejection of Foundationalism being able to solve the regress problem lies in its failure to adhere to the Principle of Avoiding Arbitrariness (PAA). Klein is implying that if we have justification for a belief, then we have a reason for accepting that belief. And if we

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[15] Klein, Peter D. (2005a). "Infinitism is the solution to the Regress Problem." In Steup and Sosa (Eds.), Contemporary debates in Epistemology.

have a reason for the original belief, then we must have another reason for accepting that reason and so on ad infinitum. To say that one reason is primary and not dependent on another is in Klein's view, arbitrary. More specifically Klein defines an arbitrary reason as "one for which there is no further reason". Klein rejects foundationalism, because he claims the stopping of a justificatory chain at a basic belief is, ultimately, arbitrary. However, to Klein, infinitism does honor the PAA. This is because, for his view, there is no arbitrary stopping point in the justificatory structure. For any reason, r1, infinitism will say there is an r2 in support of r1. So, foundationalism fails to honor the PAA, while infinitism does.

Klein brings forth the concept of "available reasons" in his paper, "Infinitism is the solution to the Regress Problem". There are two prerequisites required for a proposition to be available to S as a reason for x at t. The First condition being that of 'availability' (the proposition must be available to S at t) must fulfill the condition that it be both objectively and subjectively available. Regarding the accounts of objective availability, Klein states - "Each specifies either some normative or non-normative property or, perhaps, a mixed property that is sufficient to convert a belief into a reason. For example, one could say that a belief, r, is objectively available to S as a reason for p if (1) r has some sufficiently high probability and the conditional probability of p given r is sufficiently high; or (2) an impartial, informed observer would accept r as a reason for p; or (3) r would be accepted in the long run by an appropriately defined set of people; or (4) r is evident for S and r makes p evident for S; or (5) r accords with S's deepest epistemic commitments; or (6) r meets the appropriate conversational presuppositions; or (7) an intellectually virtuous person would advance r as a reason for p. Infinitism, per se, is compatible with each of these depictions of objectively available reasons.[16]" But it is important to know that not any given proposition will function as a reason for other belief.

Here, I give an example, similar to Klein where the reason for believing that 'all arthropods have jointed appendages' lies in the belief that 'all arthropods are scary and anything scary has jointed appendages', the offered- reason entails that all arthropods have jointed appendages, but on the accounts mentioned above by Klein, it is not an objectively available reason as - it has a low probability of being true; an impartial observer would not accept it; it

[16] Klein,Peter D. (1999). "Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons." Philosophical Perspectives , 1999, Vol. 13, Epistemology (1999), pp. 297-325

would not be accepted in the long run by any appropriately defined set of people; there is no evident proposition that makes it evident; accepting it does not accord with my deepest epistemic commitments; there is no actual context in which appealing to that proposition will persuade anyone that all fish have fins; and an intellectually virtuous person would not offer it.[17]

Whereas, in another case- My belief that dark clouds are gathering and it is the month of July in Delhi could satisfy the objective availability constraints contained in all of the accounts mentioned above for functioning as a reason for the proposition that a rain is likely to occur.

Klein, in his paper "Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons", implies that there is second feature of "availability" to S that is subjective. "There might be a good reason, r, that is objectively available for use by any person, but unless it is properly hooked up with S's own beliefs, r will not be subjectively available to S. Humans have many beliefs that are not occurrent. It is in the non-occurrent sense of "belief" that the members of an infinite series of reasons might be subjectively available to S. For example, S may not now be thinking that she is in Montana in mid-winter looking at dark clouds gathering, but if asked why she believes a snowstorm is immanent, she will consciously affirm that she is in Montana in mid-winter looking at dark clouds gathering. The point is that she has the belief even before she forms the conscious thought." [18]

[17] Klein,Peter D. (1999). "Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons." Philosophical Perspectives , 1999, Vol. 13, Epistemology (1999), pp. 297-325

[16] Klein,Peter D. (1999). "Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons." Philosophical Perspectives , 1999, Vol. 13, Epistemology (1999), pp. 297-325

5. Objections to Infinitism

The Peter D. Klein- Carl Ginet Debate (Possibility of Non-Inferential Justification – A priori and a posteriori)

Carl Ginet, in his paper "Infinitism is not the solution to the regress problem", argues about the possibility of non-inferential justification. A contrast to the earlier Klein's notion of infinitism where every justification must be infererntial and that no other kind of justification is possible. Carl Ginet's "Finitism" as he calls it, progresses with the two examples of a priori and a posteriori.

A priori

A: Anything that lasts exactly one hour lasts exactly 60 minutes.

The fact which constitutes his being justified in believing it is simply the fact that he understands what the sentence says. That he understands what it says entails that he believes what it says. The fact that he understands it is his justification for believing it, because that fact entails his believing it. This sort of justification does not appear to involve any sort of inferential justification: it does not entail any (available) belief in any premise such that what the sentence says is properly inferable from that premise. Therefore, one who understands, hence believes, what sentence A says is one who has a non-inferentially justified belief. This belief and a similarly non-inferentially justified belief that

B: Anything that lasts 60 minutes lasts longer than anything that lasts just 55 minutes. might provide the ultimate premises for an inferential justification for believing (what A and B obviously entail) that

C: Anything that lasts one hour lasts longer than anything that lasts just 55 minutes.

In such a case the subject's justification for believing C originates in her understanding, hence believing, A and B: the regress ends there.

A posteriori

Carl Ginet gives an argument from non-inferential 'a posteriori' that can be put forward as follows-

(1) My visual experience is as if (my visual experience represents that) I see a blue smear on a white surface in good light a few feet in front of me.

(2) I am not aware of any reason to think that in this instance things may not be what they visually seem to me to be.

If these facts do constitute a justification for that belief, that justification is obviously not inferential. It involves no further beliefs at all.[19]

In Klein's 'Reply to Ginet'(2005), he evaluates the areas of agreement and disagreement between the Infinitist and the Finitist. For S to be epistemically rational in holding a proposition p, the finitist claims that no further reason is required other than the autonomously warranted reason B. While answering the objection of Ginet, Klein emphasizes the infinitist is not denying that b is actually justified to some degree or that p is justified by b to some degree. The infinitist is claiming that S would be better justified in believing p on the basis of believing b, if S also had a further reason for holding b. Klein structures an area of potential agreement between infinitism and finitism where, "if S has reasons for believing that p and S* has those reasons plus some additional ones, then S* is more reasonable in believing that p than S is in believing that p."[20]

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[19] Ginet, Carl (2005). Infinitism is not the solution to the regress problem. In Steup Matthias & Sosa Ernest (eds.), Contemporary Debates in Epistemology. Blackwell. pp. 140-149.

[20] Klein, Peter D. (2005). Reply to Ginet. In Steup Matthias & Sosa Ernest (eds.), Contemporary Debates in Epistemology. Blackwell.

Ginet's "Instrumental value problem"

Carl Ginet in one of his arguments against infinitism states "Inference cannot originate justification; it can only transfer it from premises to conclusion. And so it cannot be that, if the justification actually occurs, it is all inferential. Inferential justification is analogous to instrumental value in this respect. ….The relation 'p can-be-properly inferred from q' can only transfer to p whatever justification q has; it cannot create any justification. But there can be no justification to be transferred unless ultimately something else, something other than the inferential relation, does create justification." [21]

The basic difference between Ginet's finitism and Klein's infinitism is that reasoning can originate warrant as per infinitism. Klein rejects Ginet's analogy of inferential justification and instrumental value. In his view, the justification of beliefs is not instrumental in the way that value is instrumental. Klein argues that the analogy fails because it treats beliefs as mere means to an end, rather than as an end in themselves. According to Klein, beliefs have inherent value that is not reducible to their instrumental value. Beliefs are not simply a means to achieve some other goal; they are valuable in and of themselves because they contribute to our understanding of the world.

Furthermore, Klein argues that the analogy fails to capture the crucial difference between inferential justification and instrumental value. Inferential justification is a logical relation between beliefs, whereas instrumental value is a causal relation between means and ends. According to Klein, the analogy fails to capture this distinction because it treats the justification of beliefs as a causal relation between means and ends.

"This objection would be conclusive if inferential justification were correctly construed (as Ginet suggests) as analogous to instrumental value. Just as there must be noninstrumentally valued objects, there must be non-inferentially justified beliefs. But infinitism rejects (or ought to reject) this analogy." [22]Therefore, Klein rejects Ginet's analogy because he believes

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[21] Ginet, Carl (2005). Infinitism is not the solution to the regress problem. In Steup Matthias & Sosa Ernest (eds.), Contemporary Debates in Epistemology. Blackwell. pp. 140-149.

[22] Klein, Peter D. (2005). Reply to Ginet. In Steup Matthias & Sosa Ernest (eds.), Contemporary Debates in Epistemology. Blackwell.

that beliefs have inherent value that is not reducible to their instrumental value, and because the analogy fails to capture the crucial difference between inferential justification and instrumental value.

Carl Gilet quotes an argument provided by Jonathan Dancy (1985) that brings forth the conundrum in this manner – "Justification by inference is conditional justification only; [when A is inferred from B and C] A's justification is conditional upon the justification of B and C. But if all justification is conditional in this sense, then nothing can be shown to be actually non-conditionally justified." [23]

Klein's reply "…Although every proposition is only provisionally justified, it is good enough if one does not insist that reasoning settle matters once and for all" [24]is deemed inefficient by Ginet. There is a denial by Klein that reason or justification can ultimately resolve things and therefore an infinite chain (or a branch) of inferential justifications cannot explain why any of the link in the infinite chain is justified. Klein's reply to Dancy (the objection that nothing can be shown to be actually non-conditionally justified) is unsatisfactory and vague. While Klein gives his assent to partial justification through 'extended use of reason- perceptual states, memories,etc'(Klein 2005) as an area of agreement between the finitist and the infinitist , he does not provide a convincing answer for non-conditional justification as objected by Darcy Jonathan.

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[23] Dancy,J.(1985) Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology. Oxford: Blackwell
[24] Klein,Peter D. (1999). "Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons."
Philosophical Perspectives , 1999, Vol. 13, Epistemology (1999), pp. 297-325

Carl Ginet – Inferentialism Drives Out Infinitism

While Klein claims that the longer the chain of inferential justification, the greater the justification created and that inferential justification is the only possible justification, Carl Ginet has an objection regarding these passages of Klein-

> "Warrant increases not because we are getting closer to a basic proposition but rather because we are getting further from the questioned proposition. … Warrant, and with it rational credibility, increases as the series lengthens."[25]
>
> "Now, if knowledge required actually completing the series, knowledge would not be possible. But why suppose that knowledge requires the highest possible degree of warrant or absolutely credible belief? As the series lengthens, warrant and credibility increase. Nothing prevents it increasing to the degree required for knowledge."[26]

Ginet's argument is based on Klein's notion that if the chain is long enough (but still finite), the justification can 'increase to the degree required for knowledge.' Although there is knowledge, there is no such requirement of infinite chains of justification anymore. As Ginet puts forward his line, "Infinitism gives way to Inferentialism"(Ginet 2005). Ginet uses Klein's own statement against Infinitism, where it is only through Infinite chains that the regress problem is solved. If the justification has increased to the degree required of knowledge (long chain yet finite), then this brings into question the importance of an infinite series of justification and creates an anomaly where a non-infinite (finitism as Ginet called it) chain attains the degree required for knowledge. This is in contrast with Klein's earlier statements of infinitism being the only solution considering the fact that inference alone can create justification.

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[25] Klein, Peter.(2005a). "Infinitism is the solution to the Regress Problem." In Steup and Sosa (Eds.). Contemporary debates in Epistemology.

[26] Ginet, Carl (2005) Reply to Klein. In Steup Matthias & Sosa Ernest (eds.), Contemporary Debates in Epistemology. Blackwell.

Answering Richard Fumerton's Objections - Against Completion Requirement

Richard Fumerton's account of inferential justification states that to be justified in believing one proposition P on the basis of another proposition E, one must be -

1. Justified in believing that E
2. Justified in believing that E makes probable P (Klein 1998)

Considering these accounts of inferential justification, Klein assess Fumerton's reasons for rejecting infinitism, which include-

 A. - "finite minds cannot complete an infinitely long chain of reasoning, so, if all justification were inferential we would have no justification for believing anything"

 B. - ".... If finite minds should worry about the possibility of completing one infinitely long chain of reasoning, they should be downright depressed about the possibility of completing an infinite number of infinitely long chains of reasoning"

 C. - Finally, "it is terribly difficult to even imagine how one might continue to appeal to still more and more beliefs in justifying one's belief that one is in pain now"[27]

While assessing the above argument, Klein objects to Fumerton's use of the 'Completion Requirement' (i.e. in order for a belief to be justified for someone, that person must have actually completed the process of reasoning to the belief) in argument A and B. Thus, Klein puts forward his defense of infinitism by stating that the Completion Requirement demands more than what is required to have a justified belief. 'Completion requirement would rule out most of, if not all, of my beliefs as justified – even on foundational grounds' (See Klein 1998)

The very same argument can be used against Ginet's objection - if the chain is long enough (but still finite), the justification can 'increase to the degree required for knowledge', and therefore infinitism gives way to inferentialism. Ginet's notion, being that of a finitist (or a foundationalist) suffers from the same 'Completion Requirement' as that of Richard Fumerton (a foundationalist).

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[27] Klein, Peter D. (1998). "Foundationalism and the Infinite Regress of Reasons." Philosophy and Phenomenological Research.

Klein, in his rejection of the Completion Requirement, while testing the same principle on a foundationalist conception of justification, states that the result would be that "most, if not all, of our beliefs are not justified." Considering Fumerton's requirements for justification, i.e. an appropriate causal history (causal ancestry) and an appropriately structured set of supporting reasons, there is no necessity in accepting the completion requirement.

> "For a belief to be justified, we might want to require more than that the believer have justification for holding the belief. We might want to require in addition that there be some legitimate chain of reasoning leading from non-inferentially justified beliefs to the conclusion in question, the existence of which is causally sustaining the belief."[28]

A major reason why Fumerton's 'causal ancestry' cannot reject infinitsm according to Klein is that Fumerton fails to give an argument that totally falsifies infinitism , i.e. "where we can never have an infinite, non- repeating set of beliefs that serve as reasons for and causes of the succeeding beliefs in the chain of reasons." [29] Klein's view reflects that infinitism does not hold that an infinite number of reasons must be presented in order for a belief to be justified. Rather, the view holds that there is always the potential for an infinite regress of reasons for any given belief, even if we only present a finite number of reasons in practice. (See Ginet 2005) This means that a belief can be justified by a finite number of reasons, even if an infinite regress is possible.

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[28] Fumerton, Richard (1995) Metaespistemology and Skepticism, Boston and London: Rowman &Littlefield Publishers.

[29] Klein, Peter D. (1998). "Foundationalism and the Infinite Regress of Reasons." Philosophy and Phenomenological Research.

Turri- How foundationalist can provide for an infinite chain of justifications?

John Turri in this paper critically analyzes Peter D. Klein's 'the regress argument of infinitism'. According to the Klein, only an infinitist can, without being dogmatic, enhance the credibility of a questioned non-evident proposition. Turri responds by demonstrating that a foundationalist can do this equally well by providing for an infinite chains of justification. According to Klein, the regress problem "concerns the ability of reasoning to increase the rational credibility of a questioned proposition."

In an interesting dialogue provided by John Turri in his article – "On the regress argument for infinitism", modeled on Peter D.Klein's work, Turri puts forward the needs for avoiding circularity and arbitrariness[30].

Fran- the foundationalist , Dan - the skeptic doubter.

Fran : **Proposition (P)- 'the tree just fell off the ninth green is an elm'**
Dan: Any reasons for believing P?
Fran: The tree has leaves characteristic of elms.(**Reason R1**)
Dan: How? Any reasons? i.e. How R1?
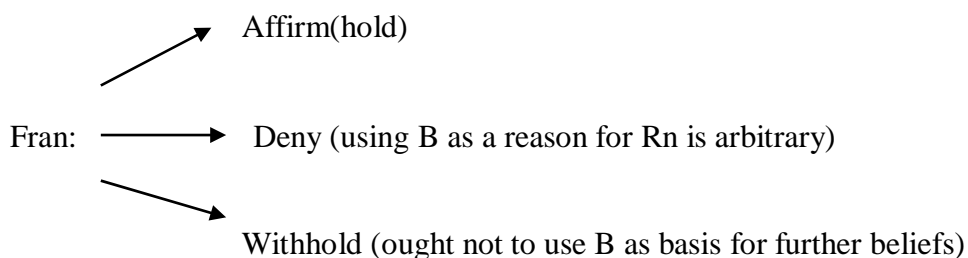Fran: Shape and texture of the leaves (**Reason R2**)
Dan: How R2?
…….Rn
…….
Fran: Statement B (properly **basic belief B** having a **foundational property F** and therefore no reason needed)
Dan: Are properly basic beliefs at least likely to be true?

Fran: Affirm(hold)

Deny (using B as a reason for Rn is arbitrary)

Withhold (ought not to use B as basis for further beliefs)

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[30] Turri, John. "On the Regress Argument for Infinitism." Synthese, vol. 166, no. 1, 2009

If Fran affirms, then B non-arbitrarily can serve as a reason Rn, but only because the regress has continued. It would now be legitimate to ask Fran to offer a reason for thinking that B is F, and a reason for thinking that F-Beliefs are likely to be true. Therefore, "a foundationalist cannot increase the rational credibility of a questioned proposition through reasoning and cannot solve the regress problem"[31].

According to Peter D. Klein, Infinitism is a way to avoid both circularity and arbitrariness in epistemology. Circularity is a problem that arises when we attempt to justify a belief by relying on another belief that presupposes the belief we are trying to justify. Infinitism avoids circularity by positing an infinite regress of reasons, where each belief is justified by another belief, which is in turn justified by yet another belief, and so on, ad infinitum. In this way, no belief is presupposed or taken for granted, and the justification for each belief is always external to that belief. Arbitrariness is a problem that arises when we try to justify a belief without having any reasons or evidence to support it. Infinitism avoids arbitrariness by asserting that there is always a reason or evidence for every belief, even if that reason is not the ultimate justification for the belief. In other words, each belief is justified by reasons or evidence that are themselves justified by other reasons or evidence, and so on, without any belief being arbitrarily asserted or taken for granted. Klein argues that infinitism provides a way to avoid both circularity and arbitrariness, while also preserving the idea that knowledge and justification are grounded in reasons and evidence.

Pertaining to the question whether a practicing infinitist could increase the credibility of a questioned non-evident proposition, Turri comments that Infinitism is not categorically superior to foundationalism until it successfully provides answer that it increases the credibility.

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[31] Klein, Peter. "What 'IS' Wrong with Foundationalism Is That It Cannot Solve the Epistemic Regress Problem" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (Jan., 2004), pp. 166-171

Turri assess Klein's response to Sextus and comments that the practicing foundationalist can, and in Fran's case does, increase the credibility of a questioned non-evident proposition. (Turri 2009)

> Sextus : The Mode based upon regress ad infinitum is that whereby we assert that the thing adduced as proof of the matter proposed needs a further proof, and this again another, and so on ad infinitum, so that the consequence is suspension [of judgment], as we possess no starting-point for our argument.

> Klein: Warrant increases not because we are getting closer to a basic proposition but rather because we are getting further from the questioned proposition….Warrant, and with it rational credibility, increases as the series lengthens; but the matter is never completely settled.[32]

From Klein's arguments for infinitism, we find that warrant and rational credibility increases because we get further from the questioned proposition and that the rational credibility increases as the series of reasons offered in support lengthens (See Klein 2005). Turri, in his quest to prove that foundationalist too can enhance the credibility of a non- evident proposition, analyzes his dialogue between Fran- the foundationalist and Dan - the skeptic doubter.

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From the very first proposition P given by Fran, a series of reasoning follow, i.e. R1, R2, etc. At a certain point Fran reached the Statement B (properly **basic belief B** having a **foundational property F** and therefore no reason needed). What Turri infers from the sequence is that Fran lengthened the series supporting P, and thus increased the rational credibility of P as per Klein's earlier statement regarding increasing the credibility of a questioned non-evident proposition. Therefore, Turri states that the self-practicing foundationalist can enhance the credibility of a non-evident proposition. "In consistent with

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[32] Turri, John. "On the Regress Argument for Infinitism." Synthese, vol. 166, no. 1, 2009

foundationalism, the length of the series can increase to any arbitrarily large finite cardinality, so the prospects for increasing it to the level required for knowledge are at least hopeful." [33]To quote Klein, "As the series lengthens, warrant and credibility increase. Nothing prevents it increasing to the degree required for knowledge," since it is implausible "that knowledge requires the highest possible degree of warrant or absolutely credible belief," which only an infinitely long series could provide.[34]

This argument of Turri is similar to that of Carl Ginet (See Ginet 2005) where the objection is based on Klein's notion that if the chain is long enough (but still finite), the justification can 'increase to the degree required for knowledge.' Although there is knowledge, there is no such requirement of infinite chains of justification anymore, thus the statement "Infinitism gives way to inferentialism"[35]"I am not defending the standard in question. My point is that such a standard provides no basis for preferring infinitism to foundationalism."(Turri 2009) Therefore, Turri is not convinced by Klein's regress argument for infinitism. As infinitism does not solely (all by itself) increase the credibility of a questioned non- evident proposition, foundationalism provides just as satisfactory a solution to the regress problem as does infinitism.

Pertaining to the objections held by both John Turri and Carl Gilet against infinitism, Klein might argue that such arguments are nothing but an argument from 'Completion Requirement'. Both John Turri (foundationalism) and Carl Gilet (finitism) are foundationalists at the core considering the way they structure their objections against Klein's infinitism. 'Completion Requirement' although being a tenet of the foundationalist Richard Fumerton, a rejection of this model is given by Klein in his article "Foundationalism and the Infinite Regress of Reasons." where Completion Requirement demands more than what is required to have a justified belief.

[33] Turri, John. "On the Regress Argument for Infinitism." Synthese, vol. 166, no. 1, 2009

[34] Klein, Peter.(2005a). "Infinitism is the solution to the Regress Problem." In Steup and Sosa (Eds.). Contemporary debates in Epistemology.

[35] Ginet, Carl (2005) Reply to Klein. In Steup Matthias & Sosa Ernest (eds.), Contemporary Debates in Epistemology. Blackwell.

Critique from Ernest Sosa's "The Raft and the Pyramid."

Ernest Sosa's article "The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge" is a critique of both foundationalism and infinitism. While he argues against both views, he focuses his critique of infinitism on the idea that it fails to provide a satisfying account of justification. Sosa uses the metaphor of a raft and a pyramid to describe the two different approaches to knowledge. The raft represents the coherentist approach, where beliefs are justified by their coherence with other beliefs in a web-like structure. The pyramid represents the foundationalist approach, where there are certain basic beliefs that serve as the foundation for all other justified beliefs. Infinitism, according to Sosa, is a third alternative that attempts to avoid the problems of both foundationalism and coherentism by positing an infinite regress of reasons.

Sosa, in his 'Raft and the Pyramid' states that every normative property has its basis in non-normative properties.

> "Thus, if a car is a good car, then any physical replica of that car must be just as good. If it is a good car in virtue of such properties as being economical, little prone to break down….. Similarly, if a belief **is** epistemically justified, it is presumably so in virtue of its character and its basis in perception, memory, or inference (if any)." [36]

In contradiction, we find that for the infinitist, a justified belief is justified because of its relation to other justified beliefs (i.e. an infinite chain of reasons). Sosa argues that the infinitist approach fails because it cannot account for what he calls substantive justification. Substantive justification refers to the idea that some beliefs are justified by the nature of their content, rather than just by their place in a web of beliefs. For example, the belief that one's own experiences are real and not illusory is justified by the content of the belief itself, rather than by its coherence with other beliefs.

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[36] Sosa, Ernest (1980). The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge. Midwest Studies in Philosophy 5 (1):3-26.

Although the foundationalist could agree that some justified beliefs can be justified because of their relation to other justified beliefs (inferential beliefs), the foundationalist still recognizes the need for this chain of justification to end in some non-normative property. According to substantive foundationalism, as it is to be understood here, there are ultimate sources of justification other than relations among beliefs. Traditionally these additional sources have pertained to the special content of the belief or its special relations to the subjective experience of the believer.[37]

A car is a good car because it possesses some non-normative features, but for an infinitist a good belief is a good belief because it possesses a relation to another good belief. There has to be a relation between justification and some non-normative property in order for justification to be a meaningful concept. The infinitist claims that a belief is justified because of its connection to something else that is already justified, but they are unable to explain what non-normative characteristics initially give rise to epistemic justification.

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[37] Sosa, Ernest (1980). The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge. Midwest Studies in Philosophy 5 (1):3-26.

Conclusion

Amidst the many objections against Infinitism, Peter D. Klein has relentlessly answered his critiques. Some of arguments from Richard Fumerton, John Turri and Carl Gilet have instead aided in the progression and a deeper understanding of Klein's Infinitism. Most of the objections against Klein seem to unveil a foundaitionalist stance whether it was the 'Completion Requirement' of Richard Fumerton, John Turri's notion on Foundationalism enhancing the credibility of a questioned non-evident proposition or that of Carl Ginet's Instrumental Value Problem. Ginet's objections and replies against Klein can be termed as a dialogue between Finitism and Infinitism. Although Klein has successfully replied to most of his objections, the argument provided by Ginet , i.e. 'Infinitism gives way to Inferentialism' is a major challenge to Klein. Klein's statement "Warrant increases not because we are getting closer to a basic proposition but rather because we are getting further from the questioned proposition….Warrant, and with it rational credibility, increases as the series lengthens; but the matter is never completely settled" [38] continues to plague him.

The argument given by Turri is similar to that of Carl Ginet (See Ginet 2005) where the objection is based on Klein's notion that if the chain is long enough (but still finite), the justification can 'increase to the degree required for knowledge.' Although there is knowledge, there is no such requirement of infinite chains of justification anymore. Therefore a long but 'finite' chain of foundationalism too can provide a solution to the regress problem. But it is of considerable importance that both Turri and Gilet have likely ignored Klein's defense against Richard Fumerton's Completion Requirement, thus these objections. The arguments seem to indulge in mere refutations of infinitism but no significant answer is given to Klein's arguments against foundationalism and coherentism. Klein structures his 'Infinitism' as a failure of foundationalism and Coherentism in solving the regress problem. Ernest Sosa's dialogues in 'Raft and the Pyramid' further aggravate the issues of foundationalism and coherentism as he paves way for a reliabilist approach. While Klein acknowledges the possibility of non-linear nature of infinitism , there are some considerations to be revised if he has to answer to the skeptics regarding the uncertainty of infinitism.

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[38] Klein, Peter.(2005a). "Infinitism is the solution to the Regress Problem." In Steup and Sosa (Eds.). Contemporary debates in Epistemology.

Although Klein has responded to his critiques in his "Infinitism" [39], the replies to 'The no-starting point objection', 'skepticism' and 'Infinitism paves way for Inferentialism' have not been quite satisfactory and require further clarifications. Nonetheless, Peter D. Klein has managed to defend Infinitism from the Foundationalist attacks of Carl Ginet (Finitism), Richard Fumerton and John Turri, although his statements require some more clarifications pertaining to nature of warrant and rational credibility as the series lengthens increases.

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[39] Klein, Peter D. (2011). Infinitism. In Sven Bernecker & Duncan Pritchard (eds.), Routledge Companion to Epistemology. Routledge. pp. 245-256.

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10. Klein,Peter D. (1999). "Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons." Philosophical Perspectives , 1999, Vol. 13, Epistemology (1999), pp. 297-325

11. Dretske, "Two Conceptions of Knowledge: Rational Belief vs. Reliable Belief," Grazer Philosophische Studien, 40 (1991), pp. 15-30, especially p. 18.

12. Dancy,J.(1985) Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology. Oxford: Blackwell.

13. Klein, Peter D. (2005). Reply to Ginet. In Steup Matthias & Sosa Ernest (eds.), Contemporary Debates in Epistemology. Blackwell.

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