

# OPINION

## Counterbalancing disinformation

Over the past few decades, we have seen an exponential growth in the use of technology and along with it, the amount of information that is being made available at the fingertips of people. A while back, the amount of content an individual can consume was dependent on his or her capability to pay for subscription to the internet, which back then was very expensive. Now, access to the Web has become easier and cheaper. All you need is a smartphone and a minimal amount of money to go through your favorite social media apps.

This ease of access to the Web and the widespread use of social media in the Philippines has also created its own set of issues. Foremost among these is disinformation that has become widespread across all popular social media platforms. Many of us are now aware of disinformation as a serious issue that can have an impact across different segments of society.

During elections, there is a heightened awareness of disinformation because of how different groups of people have used this to either promote or malign certain candidates. We have yet to see definitive data about how the spread of disinformation affects polls but the matter has become serious enough to garner the attention of our Commission on Elections (Comelec). In fact, Comelec Chairman George Garcia has tasked a unit of the poll body to look into the use of artificial intelligence and deepfake technology with the end of prohibiting its use in the 2025 elections. Such is technology now that groups can tap AI to impersonate personalities in order to deceive the public.

Disinformation has also reared its ugly head in international politics. A rather disturbing report came out recently about how the US military implemented a secret program at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic to sow fear about the use of the China-developed

Sinovac vaccine. With the use of fake accounts on social media apps, the said program involved coming out with localized content across different jurisdictions, including the Philippines, about China being the source of COVID and how people should not trust the efficacy of its homegrown vaccine. It also amplified a disputed contention that vaccines sometimes contain pork gelatin and as such the use of the Chinese manufactured vaccine on Muslims is forbidden under Islamic law.

Another report detailed how Chinese social media users and platforms were engaged in spreading false news about a supposed civil war brewing in the Philippines due to President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr.'s policies on the West Philippine Sea. The anonymous accounts on Chinese social media amplified statements from officials of the previous administration calling for the independence of Mindanao. These two

separate developments show how social media and the digital world has already become a new battleground and arena for geopolitics.

Currently, we have anywhere between 50 to 83 percent of the population who have access to the internet. This covers both fixed and mobile internet users across the country. According to the Department of Information and Communications Technology, the Philippines is one of the top, if not the top of the list of countries when it comes to the use of the internet. Filipinos are also above average when it comes to time spent on social media apps. This leads me to question how much of Filipinos' internet usage is actually for productive purposes.

These issues underscore the need for us to equip our people with the right skills and competencies. Under the current 19th Congress, we have been pushing for the approval of a National Digital Transformation Act that aims to equip our people with the necessary digital skills. In



### BETTER DAYS

SONNY ANGARA

this day and age, it is crucial for individuals to have digital skills in order to create better employment opportunities and become more productive when engaging in endeavors such as freelance work. Senate Bill No. 625 seeks to institutionalize a national digital transformation strategy and a national skills development strategy to ensure every Filipino is provided with a better understanding of information and communications technology (ICT) and develops the necessary skills to apply ICT in their daily lives. Such skills initiatives should include proper media literacy, and other programs that fight disinformation. It is only when we raise

our awareness of what is truth and false that we can better stop the spread of misinformation and protect ourselves from being duped and exploited.

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## Beyond being: The art of becoming

In a world fixated on the end result, the journey often gets overlooked. Yet, we genuinely evolve in the journey — the process of becoming. Carol S. Dweck's "Mindset: The New Psychology of Success" champions this notion, suggesting that a fixed mindset limits growth by enforcing the idea that one must simply "be" rather than "become." But what if we embrace the "growth mindset" notion that life is not about static being but continuous becoming?

First, let us consider the nature of "becoming" in the context of education. For students, a growth mindset transforms challenges into learning opportunities rather than obstacles that might expose a lack of intelligence. This approach encourages resilience, a critical attribute in our fast-evolving world. A student who embraces difficulties with a mindset geared towards growth will likely

excel beyond one who gives up when faced with the unknown.

This concept of becoming over being manifests as career adaptability in the professional realm. Workers are more likely to take initiative and try new things when they see their career growth as ongoing. A young professional, for instance, may begin their career at the entry level but, by concentrating on their development, work their way up to a leadership position while learning and adapting.

Personal relationships also benefit from this mindset. Consider a partnership where both individuals focus on growth; such relationships tend to be more dynamic and resilient. Each partner's commitment to becoming a better person can lead to a more fulfilling and adaptive relationship, unlike relationships where partners are fixed in their ways.

Feelings of mental and physical health are not immune to the influence

of the philosophy of becoming. Changing one's diet, exercise program and mental health practices can be positively influenced by viewing health as a continuous process. This can make them more resistant to health issues and help them maintain good health over time.

Becoming is also a fertile ground for creativity. Musicians, authors and artists who believe in their capacity for growth are more inclined to challenge themselves creatively. Rather than viewing their work as an end, they see it as a means to an end — a creative inquiry.

A more in-depth familiarity with one's identity is another goal of the "becoming" ideology. An individual's capacity to grow depends on their level of self-knowledge, which can be attained via persistent introspection into their wants, needs, anxieties, and driving forces.

This perspective is

crucial in times of failure. To respond to setbacks healthily and productively, one must see them as stepping stones on the road to becoming, not as final verdicts on one's existence.

An emphasis on becoming promotes strategies and policies that enable continual improvement in community and society development, including community-driven development projects and lifelong learning. Growth that benefits all segments of society can be achieved with this strategy.

Environmental stewardship is another area where the mindset of becoming can lead to significant benefits. Suppose societies view their relationship with the environment as a journey toward sustainability rather than a static state to be maintained. In that case, they are more likely to adopt innovative practices that ensure long-term environmental health.



### IMPULSES

HERMAN M. LAGON

Lastly, focusing on becoming rather than being in spiritual and philosophical realms can lead to a more fulfilling and expansive existence. Many spiritual traditions emphasize the journey or the path as being more (magis) enlightening than any particular state of enlightenment.

Focusing on "becoming" rather than "being" has far-reaching effects on many areas of life, not simply personal development. It fosters resilience, adaptability and a deeper engagement with the world. As we face the complexities of modern life, embracing

the process of becoming might be the key to a more prosperous, more successful existence. With all its twists and turns, the journey is where the magic truly happens. Let us cherish the becoming and move beyond just being.

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Doc H fondly describes himself as a "student of and for life" who, like many others, aspires to a life-giving and why-driven world that is grounded in social justice and the pursuit of happiness. His views herewith do not necessarily reflect those of the institutions he is employed or connected with./WDJ