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Subjectivity as the Care of the Self: a Foucaultian Reading of Self-care

Radu BANDOL¹

Abstract

This study is considered as a proposal to identify some metaphysical support (non-empirical) of the self-care for a patient suffering from a chronic disease, as an extension of the bio-psycho-social paradigm. The methodology is dominated by a phenomenological perspective, supported by a hermeneutic conceptual analysis of the care of the self in Michel Foucault, focused on the Socratico-Platonic period and pervaded by the intention of having a translation and application to self-care. Foucault pleads for an aesthetics of the self, called subjectivity, in which the subject is self-constituted through the so-called technologies of the self. The care of the self comes from the resignification of the philosophy as a way of life in which the subject is objectified. The translation and the applicability of the care of the self at the idea level to self-care are identified precisely in the acquisition of some important principles of the philosophy of care of the self from the Greek Antiquity: the role of awakener of consciousness of the one who is concerned about oneself as the first moment of the metaphor of awakening from the sleep, the ethos as a way of being, a way of behaving and a life model. The pair self-knowledge – care of oneself justifies informing the former by the latter, in which being concerned about oneself means knowing oneself. Nevertheless, knowledge means care of the self where the self is synonymous with the soul and moreover, with the divine element in man.

Keywords: *care of the self, subjectivity, Foucault, self-care.*

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1. Framework of the discussion and intentionality

This study represents a proposal to identify some metaphysical bases (in the broad sense of non-empirical bases) of self-care. For example, we believe that the patient suffering from a chronic condition, who finds for self-care a basis having philosophical-religious, ethical, moral and spiritual arguments, as an extension of the bio-psycho-social paradigm, whether they are provided by the attending physician, health system, family or friends, the environment or himself, will have more opportunities to remain faithful to the self-care commitment.

If, as it is suggested by Paterson (2001), the first psychological outlook on the disease or health condition is such an important factor due to the increase or decrease in the intensity of the disease, then self-care must help the patient maintain a psychological foreground of wellbeing and health. Besides taking medication, keeping a special diet or using inhalers, in the set of tasks recommended by Corbin and Strauss (1988) for patients, are included the maintenance, change or creation of some new, meaningful life behaviours or new life roles, along with the healing of the emotional sequelae related to the chronic condition of the disease that affects the future prospect. In other words, as Lorig and Holman (2003) summarizes, a self-care program should include medical and behavioural management, role and emotional management.

Among the factors favouring the increase in chronic conditions, the Innovative Care for Chronic Conditions Report of the WHO (2002) identifies: the process of the population rapid aging, urbanization, unhealthy life styles and the risks of the overall market. There is a disparity between health problems and health care. In the case of self-care, the problem is the way in which the patient manages the disease their condition, how they deal with it. Their attitude must be an active and participatory one. The care provided to the patient, besides the medical care provided by a partner (hospital, physician), highlights the importance of self-care and consequently, self-awareness raising. Therefore, increased prevention, the preparation for the old age with a high quality of life, for example, or putting up with a contracted chronic disease are, according to Foucault's formula, part of an "aesthetics of existence". In case of contracting a chronic disease, how will the patient make it their "friend"? In the case of a person who, although suffering from a chronic disease, lives with a healthy perspective of the foreground, the main paradox highlighted by Paterson is that "although

the sickness is distant, the management of the disease must be foremost; that is, the illness requires attention in order not to have to pay attention to it. The person must recognize the disease as a fact of life while at the same time rejecting the limitations and significance of it (2001: 25, 26)". Positive thinking, optimism, enthusiasm, hope are very important. At the same time, we believe that the art of living life under the circumstances of a chronic disease must have deeper resources, based more than on the empirical, psychological or emotional level. We maintain that self-care is connected with a certain care of the self or self-concern, with what the object does, or better said the subject of the extension of the community and primary medicine extending beyond a clinical, medical treatment. I found the resource of argumentation for this in a hermeneutics of the subject (2005b), created by Michel Foucault, a subject whose aesthetics of existence can be related to and inform the practice of the person's self-care.

2. Methodology and methods

A phenomenological perspective will be prevalent in the study, consequently, therefore, it is one that aims at understanding the topic in question from the point of view of subjective, humanistic or interpretative reference frameworks. It is a hermeneutic conceptual analysis of the care of the self in the case of Michel Foucault, pervaded by the intention to have a translation and application to self-care as a medical concept.

The analysis of care of the self is shaped by the subject's self-constitution who passes through the "labour" of self-practices and has self-knowledge as a fundamental property, out of which originates everything. In fact, the main questions that can lead to the involvement in treating self-care as care of the self are: "how is subjectivity constituted according to Foucault's interpretation?" and, related to this, "what connections, argumentations or metaphysical anchors of self-care can we discover in the care of the self?". After all, how can we approach a Foucaultian reading of the self-care?

We will resort to some delimitations in order to circumscribe the path of this study: focusing on the study of the care of the self from the classical Greek period – Apology of Socrates, Alcibiades, where Foucault notices the outline of the dialectics self-knowledge – care of the self. In the first part of the project (the project is meant to be continued with the

care of the self from the 1st-2nd centuries AD), restricting the research to the topics of subjectivity and self-care from *Herméneutique du sujet* [hereinafter HS] along with other related studies. We will define the care of the self in the Foucaultian manner, that is included in a philosophy as a way of life, we will contextualize it within the subjectivity and then, we will discuss about the pair care of the self – self-care.

3. Philosophy as a way of life. How the care of the self appears and what it is

The case of Michel Foucault proves that, in spite of the axiomatic closing of philosophy and of exhaustive exploration, from Plato to Heidegger, of the models of philosophical attitudes considered in terms of their relation either to objectivity or rationality, however, philosophy is not a closed business. His activity cannot be reduced solely to the historical issue related to the conservation of great thinkers. Renault admits that Foucault's merit is that he feels this closing of philosophy and, choosing a Nietzschean-Heideggerian position, relates it to areas and topics outside the philosophical discourse up to that moment (1997: xxii, xxi, 201).

Foucault is included in the movement of the 80-90's of the last century French postmodernism that "claimed to rehabilitate the original and genuine meaning of Western philosophy, namely that of <way of life>, <art of living>, <technology of the self> " (Mureșan, 2010: 89), whose leader was Pierre Hadot, who wrote about philosophy as a way of life (Hadot, *Philosophy as a way of life: Spiritual exercises from Socrates To Foucault*, 1995). The latter defined a personal paradigm of philosophy, characterized by the prevalence of the wise life over the philosophical discourse (Socrates), insisted on topics such as the face of the wise man, the conversion, the enhancement and update of the spiritual exercises from Antiquity, philosophy as "soul therapy", the inheritance of the philosophical practice by Christianity, the disappearance of the true philosopher in the modern era and their replacement with the teacher of philosophy (Bădiliță, 1995: 7).

The debate on "philosophy as a way of life" has its motivation precisely for launching the concept of subjectivity, which, in its turn, relies on the precept of the care of self, very important for the moral philosophy and this study. Mureșan (2010: 90, 94, 102) considers "philosophy as a way of life" as being ambiguous, thinks that it is an

abusive resignification of philosophy, that Hadot, together with his supporters “start from a meaning that was probably given to philosophy by the late Stoicism” and that the assertions concerning the nature of the ancient philosophy have an excessively categorical character and do not replace evidence. He brings arguments against this school (including Cristian Iftode (2010), among the classics of philosophy, undoubtedly deciding that “philosophy is <the science of principles> and not a way of life.” On the other hand, Mureşan admits that the adepts of the philosophy as a way of life really raise the question of “the utility and use of philosophy” and that philosophy “should be occasionally descended into agora as well”, but that, nevertheless, “this popular appendix” that we call “wisdom” (life wisdom) must not be confused with philosophy itself (2010: 94-95).

Wishing to deepen the roots of philosophy as *philosophia mirabilis*, Anton Dumitriu addresses the problem of *sophós* (1974), between the “wise man”, the one who professed wisdom (Thales, Solon), the man having the highest degree of soul perfection and the “philosopher”, the lover of wisdom, the one who cultivates wisdom – *philósophos*, who can become “wise” at a certain moment, not in the original sense of the word, but in the moral sense (moral personality full of virtues, like Socrates; the sense accepted by the Stoics, the Epicurean, the Skeptics, subsequently taken by the European philosophy). The interpretation towards which Dumitriu directs us is a gnoseological one, connected with the interpretation given by Plato in *Charmides* for the Delphic precept “Know thyself” as being the same thing as “Be wise”, along with the traditional ideal of the Greek thinking, summed up in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* – the gradual fulfilment of the multiple states of the Being, up to the last one: thus, *sophós* is the one who knows himself, the bearer of the light, the holder of the truth, the one who achieved the Being (Pythagoras, Empedocles would meet the criteria).

The subjectivity, which we will tackle in the next chapter, attacks the level of the moral philosopher who has access to virtue through life course. Foucault notices in this case an opposition between antiquity and modernity, outlining the conceptual antithesis between philosophy and spirituality and between the care of the self and self-knowledge. The French philosopher cannot conceive the Cartesian development of the subject that is intrinsically capable and a priori of the truth without the ethical effort taken by the inner man subjected to asceticism and

purification, that is one cannot be the beneficiary of truth and at the same time, be immoral.

An important philosophical stake of Foucault's lecture *HS* is outlined by Gros: "Antiquity, rather, would have made a subject's access to the truth depend on a movement of conversion requiring a drastic ethical change in his being. In ancient spirituality, the subject can lay claim to the truth on the basis of a transformation of his being, whereas for modern philosophy it is insofar as he is always enlightened by the truth that the subject can claim to change the way he conducts himself (2005: 522)".

We can notice in Foucault a composition of the subjectivity on the tone of harmony and dissonance, at the same time, at the crossing of the Delphic *gnōthi seauton* – "Know thyself" and of the Socratic *epimēleia heautou* – "care of the self". The former, claims Foucault, has burdened itself in the theoretical disciplines of academic philosophy (metaphysics, philosophical anthropology, philosophy of the mind) and communicates "a detached mode of reflection and an antiseptic notion of truth", whose emblem Foucault calls the "Cartesian moment" in the philosophical thought. The other one, developed by the Stoics, the Epicurean and Cynical, tends towards the "non-academic domains of self-formation or 'spiritual exercise' as catechesis, political training, and psychological counselling". However, if both of them are of Platonic origin, the academic version of the operative truth is nevertheless epistemological, cognitive and scientific; while the "truth" of practical philosophy as the care of the self "is the harmony or coherence that obtains between the sage's life and teaching" (Flynn, 2005: 609-610). This "truth" should be understood more as a person's authenticity manner, the subjectivity of self-constitution that results from *theoria* and *praxis*.

In Foucault, the care of the self comes from the resignification of philosophy as a way of life in which the subject is objectified: the known object is not something from the exterior, but the very subject itself. The subject is directed towards the self, but not in a narcissistic way. The Foucaultian *epimēleia heautou* construct (ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ) is one of the possible leading threads in philosophy that appears starting with Socrates (the 5th century BC) and extends to the Christian asceticism of the 5th century AD, that is over a period of one thousand years. This is the way in which, in *HS* (2005b: 23, 22), Foucault himself describes the notion of care of the self: firstly, it is connected with "the theme of a general

standpoint, of a certain way of considering things, of behaving in the world, undertaking actions, and having relations with other people. The *epimēleia beaoutou* is an attitude towards the self, others, and the world". Moreover, the care of self involves "a certain form of attention, of looking". This notion "implies that we look away from the outside to (...) we must convert our looking from the outside, from others and the world etc., towards <oneself> (...); implies a certain way of attending to what we think and what takes place in our thought. The word *epimēleia* is related to *meletē*, which means both exercise and meditation". The last significance of the care of the self lies within a range of actions that are "exercised on the self by the self, actions by which one takes responsibility for oneself and by which one changes, purifies, transforms, and transfigures oneself".

4. Subjectivity and the constitution of the subject. The technologies of the self

Foucault found a clever way to solve the problems that faced the philosophical thinking of the continental Europe after the Second World War, thinking dominated by the philosophy of the subject, in which the foundation of any knowledge and the principle of any significance would be rooted in the signifying subject. Access to the truth, activation of the subject by himself in the care that he takes of himself, knowledge of the self were issues whose questioning could be translated in the subject's relations with the truth and in the relationship between the care of the self and the self-knowledge. The French philosopher does not declare himself neither an analytic philosopher (a theory of the objective knowledge), nor a structuralist one (a new way of analysing the signifying systems) – nobody is perfect, he joked (1999: 159-160) – but he tries "to put the subject back into the historical domain of practices and processes in which he has been constantly transformed (Gros, Course Context. The Philosophical Stakes of the Course, 2005, p. 525)". Thus, Foucault is interested in the ancient topic in the modern era and is aware of a relation of reversing the subordination between the care of the self and the self-knowledge.

It is important to follow what Foucault understands by subject and the way in which he develops it. Kelly offers a dynamic and continuous perspective in the interpretation of the subject made by Foucault, supporting by arguments the fact that the philosopher would

not have had a sudden return to the 80's, but rather a gradual return to the subject over the 70's (Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 2009). Descartes and subsequently Kant, who introduced the concept of subject, identified, one by one, the self and the subjectivity with consciousness. The notion of conscious subject was deeply marked in the consciousness of European philosophy. During the writings of the 60's, Foucault related to the issue on the subject from a perspective that placed him "outside the analysis of a discourse" that did not involve any ontological claims about it or even "a permanent methodological rejection of the concept". However, during the 70's, the subject is subordinated to the concept of power, "thus appearing as something produced by what he calls "subjection" (*assujettissement* – "subjection" in the sense of subjugation)". In the 80's, the philosopher focuses on the nature of the subject, the discourse from this period involving the triad of concepts subjectivity - ethics - truth, customized for the ancient Greece and Rome (Kelly, 2013). The unification of Foucault's work supported by Kelly does not follow a single line of argumentation, but a single questioning; finally, Foucault notices the questioning of the relationship between truth and subjectivity as a spirit that animates the whole work. Furthermore, the conceptualization of the subject should be taken along with the experiential dimension of the truth, power and leadership, an intertwining usually called "subjectivity".

The intention expressed by Foucault himself (1983: 208-209) concerning the work of his last twenty years, is neither related to theorization nor to methodology, but "one to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects"; "thus, it is not power but the subject which is the general theme of my research". However, with the annotation according to which "Foucault's real concern was neither for the subject in the classic sens (Cartesian, Kantian, Husserlian etc.), nor for the truth in the classic sense – whether we conceive it as a form of correspondence, coherence or as an original disclosure – but rather for the (historical) relationship between subjectivity and truth" (Iftode, 2013: 77). The author develops three ways of objectification by means of which man becomes subject: the ways of inquiry aiming at conferring to themselves the status of sciences (for example, the objectification of the subject who talks in the science of philology or linguistics), the objectification of the subject by dividing practices, in which the subject is divided either inside himself or

by others (the made and the sane, the criminals and the “good boys”); the third way of objectification is precisely searching for a way by means of which man transforms into a subject (for example, how men have learned to recognize themselves as subjects as „sexuality”).

Foucault is most interested in the way in which the subject is constituted and not in the research on his origins; does “how” have an influence on “when?”. Therefore, he cannot agree with the classical phenomenology of Husserl, who states that the only way that is appropriate to acquire knowledge is to start with your own immediate perception experience and then move on. The subject is not a blind spot, something that is not subject to research. The ontology of Foucault's subject is a fluid, dynamic one and is always constituted in the course of life and circumstances he has to deal with, it is not a substantial one: “[The subject] is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not primarily or always identical to itself. (...) Undoubtedly there are relationships and interferences between these different forms of the subject; but we are not dealing with the same type of subject (Foucault, 1997b: 290)”.

Concerning the subject's constitution and the process of subjectivization, Kelly makes some terminological distinctions that help us deepen the architecture of Foucault's construct (2009: 87-89). The process of the constitution of subjectivity, defined as *subjectivization* is the one by means of which somebody comes to be constituted as a subject. *Assujettissement*, which derives from *assujettir* (to subject) and *sujection*, which derives from *sujet* (subject), terms that Foucault uses, can be rendered as “subjection” and mostly have the same connotation as “subjection”, but they it literally means “to make something into subject”. Two forms of the subject can be detached in this case: the subject in which we are transformed by “subjection” is taken as a passive subject rather than an active, philosophical or grammatical subject. Hence, the necessity of a new word that should relate to the construction of subjectivity. Thus, Kelly continues, “subjection” means the process through which one becomes subordinated through power such as the process through which one becomes subject, as reflected in “The Subject and Power” (Foucault, 1983: 212): “There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.” Thus,

the *subjectivization* or *subjectivity* would have the connotation of the active subject, referring only to our constitution as subjects, while subjugation connotes the passive subject, the one upon whom power is exercised. However, in practice it is impossible to constitute an active subject without the existence of a passive one. Subjectivization considered as subjectivity and in which the subject is self-constituted is deeply connected with the techniques of the self, which Foucault will develop in *HS*.

The ancient Greeks or Romans did not have the modern concept of subjectivity, but their techniques of the self-point to their ethics, highly exploited by Foucault in the last part of his life. The subject's historical constitution is the philosopher's most original and influential part, which is opposed to the belief on traditional subjectivity as being transcendent and unchanging from the historical point of view. Therefore, in Foucault "the subject constitutes itself (*se constitue lui-même*) in different forms at different times through the use of varied practices, but always by distinguishing itself from the physical body that engages in those practices" (Kelly, 2013: 513). It is about a dynamic constitution involving effort and continuity, in which the subject, in the relationship with the self "continues to create itself, but by transforming itself and changing its nature" named "folded force" (Deleuze, 1988: 104). Foucault's orientation towards Antiquity is due to the fact that he catches in the writers of this period the way in which they were constituted as subjects in a manner and through some techniques that he associates to the ethics in the sense of *character*, as a dimension of the self, not in the modern sense of good or bad rules or principles intended for actions. Briefly, these techniques called *askēsis* are related to a culture of the self and are meant to establish a connection between subject and truth: for example, the practice of abstinence, deprivation, physical strength, purification, meditation, the obedience to the authority, confessing to the spiritual director, the practice of writing, of reflection (Foucault, 2005a). These techniques of the self are defined as "the procedures, which no doubt exist in every civilization, offered or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of self-mastery or self-knowledge (Foucault, 1997a: 263)".

On the one hand, Foucault distinguishes between the code (*prescriptions*) that determines which acts (*conduites*) are allowed or

forbidden and the code that determines the positive and negative values of behaviours and, on the other hand, he believes in another dimension of moral prescriptions, “the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself, *rapport à soi*, which I call ethics, and which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions” (Gros, 2005: 512-513).

Differentiation leads to the theme of the care of the self (*epiméleia heautou*), the precept which, according to Foucault, generates the *ēthos*, pervades and guides the ethics from the Antiquity. In the 3rd chapter we pointed out the way in which Foucault defines the care of the self. It is appropriate now, before dealing with the pair *care of the self – self-care*, to make some remarks concerning the rendering of *epiméleia (souci de soi)* by “care of the self”. During the opening lecture of January 6, 1982 from the Collège de France, Foucault uses Socrates’ well-known comparison with a horsefly, “that chases and bites animals, making them restless and run about”, in order to highlight the role of awakening of conscience that should be taken the one who is concerned about oneself. The first moment of waking up from the sleep represents the care of oneself. “The care of oneself is a sort of thorn which must be stuck in men's flesh, driven into their existence, and which is a principle of restlessness and movement, of continuous concern throughout life (Foucault, 2005b: 8).” McGushin (2007: 32) pays attention to shade and thinks that the translation of *souci* by “which” would mislead us: *souci* is not just *care* in the sense of an affectionate concern for oneself, a sort of tender feeling toward oneself. *Souci* is, as the above quote makes clear, an anxiety. To care about something in this sense is to be anxious about it: in other words the self, which is the object of *souci*, is the source of an anxiety, an “agitation.”

O'Leary makes another interesting remark (2002: 119-120), based on several discussions held by Foucault about the old techniques on the self and the contemporary need for a new relationship with the self, in which “the reader is faced with a continuous temptation to give this self an ontological precedence”. If in the classical languages, the term which is translated by “the self”, contains only a reflexive connotation and avoids any substantial involvement of the self, in the English language it doesn't. Thus, there may be a misunderstanding when the structure *souci de soi* is translated by “care of the self”, believes O'Leary, revealing more than just a reflexive pronoun. The equivalent of “care of the self” would

be *souci du* (de + le) *soi*, not as Foucault always renders *souci de soi*. “Care of self” would be more correct or “self-care” to comply with the relationship with Greek and Latin. In fact, “self-care” conveys what Foucault was always fascinated by in the classical Greek thinking, namely that “practice of self-care, self-formation and *auto-poesis* appear not to be thought in terms of a pre-given self, or subject”.

5. The discussion *care of the self* – *self-care*. The foundations of self-care on the aesthetics of existence or the art of living

From the beginning, we decided to find those elements from the philosophy of subjectivity as *the care of the self*, elements that could help us interpret or read self-care in the Foucaultian manner. We pointed out that the subject is self-constituted through the techniques of the self, which points out to us that a philosophy as a way of life could be related to the medicine of self-care. The linguistic specification proposed by O’Leary suggests to us, even indirectly, the subject’s spontaneity in relation to oneself, the way in which he should assume “facing” the truth of life in order to transform itself, to attain self-fulfilment. The poetics of the self (in the sense of *poiētiké*, productive science) and the aesthetics of existence for which Foucault advocates, inspires the ethics of the truth (*une éthique de la vérité*) distributed according to three main procedures of subjectification, out of which, at present, we chose the second one: the Christian confession or hermeneutics of the self, the philosophical Greek and Roman care of the self and Cynical parrhêsia (fearless speech) (Gros, 2004).

The proposal that we make at this time concerning the patient suffering from a chronic condition of the disease or for its prevention, is that, according to Foucault, the acquisition of some important principles of the philosophy of care of the self from the Greek Antiquity, could bring a contribution that is at least ideatic to the present self-care programs. A patient who already suffers from a chronic disease certainly questions their “friendship” with the disease until their death. How will they manage this? We think especially about the mental state which should be more than a good momentary psycho-emotional state. If the patient must acquire new life behaviours, if they must have a meaningful outlook related to the new roles that they should play in life and if looking into the future should give them more hope, then *the care of the*

self in the Foucaultian sense provides a metaphysical resource for the self-management of the disease.

The French author is aware that in the topic of care of the self or of the practice of the self, as it was in the last centuries before Christ and the first ones after Christ, “the self basically appeared as the aim, the end of an uncertain and possibly circular journey – the dangerous journey of life”. Christianity preached the accession to life, light, truth and salvation precisely by means of self-renunciation (Foucault, 2005b: 250). Foucault sees in this case an obstacle through which the care of the self, considered as a selfish self-involvement, came to be perceived as something opposed to the ethical commandment (Kelly, 2013: 518). However, according to Foucault, the “self” to which the Greek philosophers referred “is not a concept borrowed from the psychoanalysis” or the “self” from psychology (Iftode, 2010: 170). Furthermore, in order to have a broader picture, when Foucault talks about the questioning of personal freedom in Greece, he points out that the care of the self also represented concern for the other:

ethos was a way of being and of behaviour. It was a mode of being for the subject, along with a certain way of acting, a way visible to others. A person's ethos was evident in his clothing, appearance, gait, in the calm with which he responded to every event, and so on. For the Greeks, this was the concrete form of freedom; (...) What makes it ethical for the Greeks is not that it is care for others. The care of the self is ethical in itself; but it implies complex relationships with others insofar as this ethos of freedom is also a way of caring for others. This is why it is important for a free man who conducts himself as he should to be able to govern his wife, his children, his household; it is also the art of governing. Ethos also implies a relationship with others, insofar as the care of the self enables one to occupy his rightful position in the city, the community, or interpersonal relationships (...) (Foucault, 1997b: 286-287)

The quotation from Foucault has several life directions which a chronic disease could acquire. As Hadot notices (1992: 226), Foucault's aesthetics of existence “is not only a historical study; it was meant also to offer contemporary man a model of life”. The care of the self-perceived as taking on a suitable position in society, will have to justify a character and a behaviour that “reveal” the feeling of belonging to a Whole, both on the community and the cosmic level, not a narcissistic and

individualistic cultivation of the self (Iftode, 2010: 171). The life path, subject to a self-governing (self-control) with ethical implications that are visible for the others, suggests metaphysical values that complements and flavors the medical model of self-care.

Digressing from Foucault's view, but not in contradiction with the care of the self from the Greek Antiquity, we support, according to Jean-Claude Larchet (2001: 605-606), that the Christian teaching advocates for granting the care of the self, seen as a spiritual self-love. The self-love that the Savior presents in a parable (*Luke* 10:27, 25-37, the broader context is the parable of the Good Samaritan) is love “in God and for God”, as a dialogic person created in His image and called to become God by grace, through similarity. The virtuous *filautia* (self-love) is the condition for the love of the neighbour, who has the same nature as the one who loves. In other words, I look after the image of God into which I am made so I can also respect the other's image.

Although it fills our space and time with speeches, techniques and relations that aim at making us happy and more careful with ourselves, the biopolitical project (political and social power that shapes our life) of modernity, paradoxically requires a type of “normalization” of the formation of the self and establishes “a powerful self-neglect, a pervasive thoughtlessness about the fundamental political and ethical question – How will I live?” (McGushin, 2007: xx). The renaissance of the care of the self is the answer given by Foucault for the contemporary society to the question: “How should I live?”. What Foucault proposes to us is an art of living. Life must be seen as “a way of living” (*ethos*). The plan of life must be architecturalized and hierarchized by relating to a preferably last goal, which we reach by means of various secondary purposes. The authenticity of life and honesty with oneself resides precisely in relating to one's life as a great whole. Coherent living means fighting for what is really important in life. There are tips and problem-solving abilities that are particularly helpful for the patients suffering from a chronic disease (also applicable to healthy people) which, for example, Lorig and his colleagues provide at the end of a study: Bathing and Hygiene, Grooming, Doing Household Chores, Cooking, Entertaining, Going Out, Gardening, Keeping Warm, Traveling, Enjoying Recreation and Leisure (Lorig, Halsted, Sobel, Laurent, González, & Minor, 2006). They must be integrated into the ethics of

the self, first as remedies for improving the disease and, at the same time, as stages for the subject's self-modelling, self-constitution.

Questioning the subject is connected with a balance between "know thyself" and "be concerned with yourself"; it is precisely by means of this that Foucault's project is meant to encourage, inspired and based on the Socratic-Platonic care of the self, in which Socrates is given a foundational role as a philosophical attitude, due to the harmony between his teaching and lifestyle (Flynn, 2005: 612). Foucault (2005b: 4, 5, 8) states that the Delphic precept *gnôthi seauton* did not initially have the value that was subsequently assigned to it and that "to know yourself" does not reveal a philosophical manner of knowledge: "The phrase did not prescribe self-knowledge, neither as the basis of morality, nor as part of a relationship with the gods". In fact, the maxims of the oracle of Delphi – *mêden agan* ("not too much"), *eggua, paru d'atê* ("commitment brings misfortune"), *gnôthi seauton* ("know yourself") – were general imperatives of caution. According to Defradas (cited in Foucault), the last precept, "was the principle [that] you should always remember that you are only a mortal after all, not a god, and that you should neither presume too much on your strength nor oppose the powers of the deity". Beyond any affinity to interpret the Delphic precept, Foucault's comment, is that it occurs several times in relation to the principle *epimêleia heautou*. In fact, there are a few texts in which *gnôthi seauton* occurs as one of the forms, consequences or applications of the rule "you must attend to yourself, you must not forget yourself, you must take care of yourself."

In the analysis made by the French thinker (2005b: 5, 31-38, 52-57), he identifies two essential topics that are applicable to self-care: self-knowledge and the care for the soul. He devotes particular attention to Plato's Alcibiades dialogue (especially the final part), maintaining that *epimêleia heautou* "is indeed the justificatory framework, ground, and foundation for the imperative "know yourself" and finds the analysis itself and its theory in the Socratic and Platonic moment of the care of the self. However, as a positive imperative, the care of the self is a good belonging to the Greek culture: when Anaxandridas (a Lacedaemonian) is asked why the Spartans do not cultivate the fields themselves and leave them to helots, the answer is "so that we can take care of ourselves". The answer is not a philosophical one, but it is connected with a political, economic, social privilege. Thus, in the dialogue with

Alcibiades, Socrates starts from a tradition. The approach of the care of the self by Socrates (Plato, 1997a) occurs when Alcibiades, coming from a noble influential and wealthy family, wants to transform the statutory primacy into political action, wants to govern the others. Socrates “admonishes” Alcibiades by using the Delphic imperative “know thyself”, in this case under a weak form of some advice with prudence. In other words, you had better start to know yourself to a certain extent. Think about it, are you able to cope with the tasks of the city leader? Alcibiades is inferior to those he wants to defeat and concerning wealth (the king of Persia is richer) and education (his parents died, they entrusted him to the guardian Pericles, but the latter left him in the hands of the slave Zopir, who is a monument of ignorance). Alcibiades does not possess the art of leadership (*tekhne*), a proof that he cannot answer the question: “what does the harmony of the city consist in?”. In witness whereof, he recognizes his state of ignorance, but Socrates recommends to him *epimelêthênai sauton* – take care of yourself (Alcibiades, 127e). It is interesting that in this case *epimêleia heautou* appears only as a moment necessary in the formation of the young man, while in the *Apology*, 30a (Plato, 1997b), about which we talked in the previous chapter, the term is addressed as a general function of the whole existence, translated into the care for the soul.

The target of Socrates’ urge to Alcibiades is deeper: you must take care of yourself, but what is this self itself (*auto to auto*) and then, in what does this care have to consist? Otherwise formulated, the first question would sound this way: what does “the self itself” mean? What is this element that is both on the side of the object and of the subject? Answer: *psukhês epimelêton* – we must take care of our soul (Alcibiades, 132c). I myself am my soul. Foucault detaches in this case the subject of the action from all the elements that make up the action, therefore he infers an irreducibility of the subject. Here, the subject-soul is not an epistemic subject (subject-matter of the connoisseur-known classical type). The subject *heautou* refers here to “the subject’s singular, transcendent position, as it were, with regard to what surrounds him, to the objects available to him, but also to other people with whom he has a relationship to his body itself, and finally to himself”. Furthermore, taking care of one’s soul and knowing one’s self means for Socrates recognizing the divine element in man (133b-c): “SOCRATES: Then if the soul, Alcibiades, is to know itself, it must look at a soul, and

especially at that region in which what makes a soul good, wisdom, occurs, and at anything else which is similar to it. [...] Can we say that there is anything about the soul which is more divine than that where knowing and understanding take place? [...] Then that region is resembles the divine (*theiōi*), and someone who looked at that and grasped everything divine – vision (*thean*) and understanding – would grasp of himself as well.” Thus, self-knowledge is considered as a fundamental way in the care of the self and the only one that provides the access to the truth and the access to the truth allows the vision of the divine in man.

6. Conclusions

We started our study with the purpose of identifying some metaphysical (non-empirical bases) of self-care for a patient suffering from a chronic disease, as an extension of the bio-psycho-social paradigm and we asked ourselves how we could interpret self-care in the Foucaultian manner.

We looked into the argumentation of a manner in which someone suffering from a chronic condition could make the disease as his/her “friend”, thus we studied the possibility of the translation and the applicability of the Foucaultian care of the self to the concept of self-care. The novelty of the study consisted precisely in putting together those two phrases and researching the way in which the former could inform the latter. We have pointed out how that the care of the self was brought to attention by Foucault by reviving the philosophy as a “way of life” and gave an answer to the problem of the subject’s constitution according to Foucault: the subject is not considered as an epistemic subject in the classical manner anymore, but it is self-constituted through the techniques of the self. The dynamics of the historical constitution of the subject in relation to the self involves a transformation and a change in its nature, by “the effect of self by self”.

We identified the translation and the applicability to the ideas’ level of the care of the self in self-care precisely in the acquisition of some important principles of the philosophy of the care of the self in the Greek Antiquity, considered according to Foucault’s view. First of all, the role of awakener of consciousness of the one who is concerned about oneself as the first moment of awakening from sleep, then the *ēthos* as a way of being, a manner of behaving and a life model. According to

Foucault, the pair self-knowledge – care of the self-realize, justifies informing the former by the latter, in which being concerned about oneself means knowing oneself. However, self-knowledge means care of the self, where the self is synonymous with the soul and moreover, with the divine element in man.

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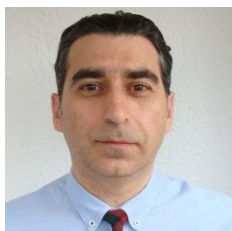
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Biodata



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