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GIVING STYLE TO ONE’S CHARACTER: NIETZSCHE & FOUCAULT ON SELF-ARTISTRY

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Abstract

Friedrich Nietzsche’s experimentations of thought in the *Gay Science* postulate the only needful thing to do – to give ‘style’ to one’s character. His ethical thinking, bound by its relations to aesthetics and the nihilism that counteracts as the backdrop of his thoughts, affirms the continuity that goes beyond morality, or in his words, beyond good and evil. Nietzsche owes from the Greeks the aesthetics that shapes his thought in contrast to modernity’s sublime. Michel Foucault takes over from this thinking, critiques modernity, and conceives of freedom for a new ethics. Incidentally, self-artistry is one commonality that sustains both thinkers’ Hellenic heritage of thought. What this paper intends to do is to juxtapose Nietzsche and Foucault concerning the topic on self-artistry. As such, it uses textual analysis on their works while crosschecking other sources. Both thinkers find self-artistry as having a critical importance in shaping not only of oneself but also of society.

Keywords: Nietzsche; Foucault; Modernity; Morality; Ethics; Self-Artistry.

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1. Introduction

Against superficial critics lampooning his posture and comic annotations, Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek delivered a purely philosophical lecture “Why Todestrieb (Death Drive) is a Philosophical Concept” (2009), in which he, in differentiating Lacanian ethics to Nietzschean ethics, refers to the latter as “*the philosopher of immoral ethics,*” while at the same time taking note that the title of Friedrich Nietzsche’s masterpiece is *Genealogie der Moral* and not *Genealogie der Ethik*. The two concepts – morality and ethics – are not the same. He stressed that morality is concerned with the symmetry of one’s relations to other humans with the zero-level rule closer to the Confucian golden-coated one: ‘Do not do to me what you do not want me to do unto you.’ While ethics on the other hand deals with one’s consistency with oneself as one’s fidelity to one’s desire.

What this immorality means stands in correspondence to Nietzsche's immoral ethics wherein there is no more guarantor (GS, 125), some divine being standing as overseer of one's freedom. What happens after this claiming of freedom is an ethics which consistently must deal with oneself – how in this new-found freedom can one create one's very self. With Nietzsche's philological training, he found refuge of emulation in the Greeks who are adorer of forms or artists in their own right. The relevance of art in contemporary society is crucial because it has the power to shape a collectivity of thinking. The question then of this paper is to ask how this ethics deals with the self as an artist or how to deal with self-artistry.

Incidentally, the Nietzschean, as he calls himself, who saw the radical importance of this self-artistry is Michel Foucault. To quote from *The Art of Ethics*: "Perhaps the difference between Nietzsche and Foucault on this point is made possible by the fact that Foucault had the advantage of seeing what the twentieth century had brought (O'Leary, 2002, p.5)." The book substantiates the significance of Foucault in furthering Nietzsche's plight, this time, tackling within the intersections of philosophy, ethics, aesthetics and politics about how one should live one's life. This fundamental difference not only of time but also of relevance is the only difference that this paper highlights. The organization of this paper does not antagonize Nietzsche against Foucault, or vice-versa. Differences, says Dan Zahavi (2008), are frequently overstated. Rather, the objective of this paper is to juxtapose the commonalities of Nietzsche and Foucault on their ethical thinking about self-artistry. While existing literature focused on the similarities of Foucault to Nietzsche on the topic on genealogy (Bielskis, 2009; Minson, 1985; Mahon, 1992; Owen, 1994; Lightbody, 2010; Visker, 1990, 1994), the subject in view of a community or the political (Olssen, 2015; Besley and Peters, 2007), this paper, although it inevitably draws similarity with such works, is strictly situated on the subject in correspondence with art and of self-artistry.

2. Methodology and Limitation

The study primarily employed hermeneutical textual analysis on the primary texts of Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault. For their oeuvres, the researcher made use of abbreviations in the citation of their books. The succeeding works of Nietzsche were abbreviated as follows: *Twilight of the Idols* or, *How to Philosophize with the Hammer*, TI; *Ecce Homo*, EH; *The Birth of Tragedy*, BT; *Human, All too Human*, HAH; *The Gay Science*, GS; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Z; *On the Genealogy of Morals*, GM; *The Antichrist*, A. Foucault's works on the other hand, including specific parts of his interviews, were abbreviated as follows: *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*, DP; *History of Sexuality vol.1*, HS; *History of Sexuality vol.2: The Use of Pleasure*, UP; *The Aesthetics of Existence*, AE; *Return of Morality*, RM; *Self-Writing*, SW; *On the Genealogy of Ethics: History of a Work in Progress*, GE; *The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom*, PF; *Technologies of the Self*, TS; *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, NGH. As a limitation of this paper in addition to the confinement to the topic on self-artistry, some important works were not consulted, particularly Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* and Foucault's *History of Sexuality vol. 3: The Care of the Self*. The reason is not that of relevance but of context as the research advances. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* stands as Nietzsche's mature work and Foucault's *The Care of the Self* concerns specifically on Roman practices, whereas this study mostly – since it also has some Roman references in the likes of Seneca but it – focuses on Hellenic art and practices, in which case *The Use of Pleasure* suffices.

3. Nietzsche, Tragedy, and the Modern Shift

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche's thoughtful experimentations on self-artistry manifests: "*One thing is needful* – to 'give style' to one's character (GS 290)." Quite evidently, Nietzsche's valuing of existence in his operation of the self as an aesthetic phenomenon is seen impulsively in the archetypes of the Dionysian-Apollonian artistry (Ansell-Pearson and Large, 2006, p.34-35), but also in the 'stylization' (GS 299) to be done for it in a dialectical fashion as opposed to the fixities in modern society systems while being careful not to disturb what Nietzsche Latinized as *perpetuum vestigium*. But this artistry accorded to the self in the aesthetics of being convenes also to the moral codes in its eventual translation to the politico-juridical systems in modern society, which appropriates itself in the restraining orders and the institutional gravity of power-relations coupled with the intensification of the state in its domination. As a conventional status of the Greek artistry portrayed by Nietzsche in the *Birth of Tragedy* but delved further by Foucault in the models of Greek to Medieval pedagogical personas (Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, John Cassian, etc.) this points, most especially, to the autonomous yet important societal relations of the so-called 'care of the self'.

For Nietzsche, antiquity's Greek tragedy contributes to man the enduring and significant function of aesthetics in the phenomenon: that existence is crafted aesthetically rather than metaphysically. The classical reference to Greek thought then alludes to self-artistry from the Greeks' way of living in concordantly adoring 'the whole Olympus appearance' – of forms, tones, and words – that caters to a superficiality stemmed from profundity; so much so that Nietzsche himself pointed it out rhetorically: "Are we not, precisely in this respect, Greeks? Adorers of forms, of tones, of words? And therefore – *artists?* (GS, preface, p.38)"

Being well-aware that this perception of appearance is not formulaic and stagnant, he stressed that there is a "continuous development of art" (BT, 1). The continuity that this connotes radically conceived an inherent perpetual bifurcation moving in the artistic impulses. Such perpetual 'strife,' the *perpetuum vestigium*, between the Dionysian and the Apollonian is testified by the *folk-song* in the expression of the *will*:

Its (The folk-song's) enormous diffusion among all peoples, further re-enforced by ever-new-births, is testimony to the power of this artistic dual impulse of Nature: which leaves its vestiges in the folk-song just as the orgiastic movements of a people perpetuate themselves in its music. We must conceive the folk-song as the musical mirror of the world, as the original melody, now seeking for itself, a parallel dream-phenomenon and expressing it in poetry.

To be will, music would have to be wholly banished from the realm of art – for the will is the unesthetic-in-itself. Yet though essentially it is not will, *phenomenally* music *appears* as will (BT, 6).

The Apollonian here marks the appearance of the Dionysian impulse as its elementary form of continuity, the dream-world being the mask that operates to provide in the folk-song an image by which representation emerges, thereby providing a face to project existence. It is elemental of life's continuity when it expresses its apothegm of dreaming: 'It is a dream: I will dream on!' Much of this dream-characteristic indulges the self towards knowledge of itself (BT, 4) in contemplation of one's identity. Apart from the dream as an appearance, the Apollonian also

emits ecstatic gratification (BT, 5) when it highlights the pulchritudinous façade of reality. This comes as no surprise given that the dream for Nietzsche is such that it matches as an ‘*appearance of an appearance*’ (BT, 4).

The Dionysian on the other hand is the sublime expression of musicality that ironically points to “the primordial contradiction and primordial pain, a sphere which is beyond and before all phenomena (BT, 4).” The Dionysian, as it were, reverts the Apollonian, not as counter-measure but as the affirmation of nature when, because it goes beyond the will in the aesthetic phenomena, it submerges the Apollonian back to the primordial unity of being. In effect, the primordial unification to being makes the artist, the superficial adorer of the phenomena, subsumed in intoxication, forgetfulness, and fading back to nature. The completion of this self-dissipation directs the forces of drunkenness to make sure that man must become “a work of art” himself (BT, 1).”

A resemblance of this strife in reference to Greek thought locates to beauty as having a special status, seen for example in Plato, although Nietzsche antagonizes Socrates’ scientism and Euripides’ ‘intelligent’ plays (Allison, 2001, p.19), when he taught of beauty as a bridge between the immanent and transcendent, a special privilege when the grandeur of the transcendent is physically seen (*Phaedrus*, 250d-e; cf. Schindler, 2007). It bore so in the operation of a polis built inherently on this strife: on identities and non-identities, continuities and discontinuities, making and breaking, and more importantly, on remembering and moving on. The self artistically forgets and remains true to life through the Dionysian, but it remembers and constructs itself through the Apollonian.

However, Greek tragedy appears to paradoxically reach its tragic end in the operation of modern society. Such identity was glamorized by the Enlightenment and its virtues, by the rise of the moderns, by the independence of the sciences, and by the extreme radical shift of truth into meaning (Tassi, 1986). Modern politics revolves around its machinations as a politics of identity (Natoli, 1997) where nature is trivialized, reified, and equalized. Nietzsche notes this change when Zarathustra, after wandering in book II of his namesake, returns in book III to the land in order to see what has come of humanity, but finds out instead that ‘everything has become smaller,’ equally the same like a uniformed herd (Z, III, 5). What this means in the bigger picture is not that everything has become smaller – the houses, public spaces, and structures – because men are small and they built structures in accordance with the size that suits them. Rather, it is precisely the opposite: everything has become smaller; humanity itself has become smaller, because the structures themselves made them small. Such structures, or shall we say, idealisms and juridico-moral norms or a-historical perceiving, like Marx’ and Engel’s socialistic utopia for example, set the stage for the event of men, but small men. The rise of the moderns single-handedly discharged the metaphysics of nature, Schelling being the avid reporter of modernity’s lack of philosophy of nature, where science and surprisingly religion have overtaken as they took form in historical orientations as in the scientific revolution and Protestant Reformation (Schindler, 2007). It is in this same structure of the modern era that supreme objectification and sovereign power, like Descartes’ *cogito* or Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, has demanded the tragic life, the becoming element of nature to be undermined and undermined too low – the senses suspected and deprived of true knowledge, and the metonymical reference to men’s nature as wolves to be subjected to the central command of the state. By fetishizing the stage, the outer structure, man’s

structure of the will reshapes itself into that of its externalities; in short, the dialectics of memory and forgetfulness are choreographed to forget the necessary pains and remember only ecstatic quasi-utopian pleasures. By turning away from suffering, the moderns figuratively advanced its mechanisms e.g. the telescope, maneuvered the magnification, and fastened technological comfort zones – but it was a magnification of perspectives into what Nietzsche called the *abyss*, the enigmatic trance of disillusionment and void. And modern man was gradually heading towards this abyss, bewildered, paralyzed at the gaze of the abyss itself. So his future becomes darkened, swallowed by the black hole, as it were, of nihilism, and drawn towards his end. It was in this sense that the abyss of nihilism has become a *conditio sine qua non*. Man's romanticism of identity, of absolute unification, of obsessing *Man* and *Reason*, and thus of purely Apollonian identity formations, like the Berlin wall, shattered against the richness of life's reality. The abyss of the modern ideal has created a far more aesthetical oeuvre, the experience of the post-modern *sublime* from the moderns as opposed to the Greek aesthetics of *beauty*.

The modern and postmodern traditions view these, in general, as dialectical opposites: if beauty concerns determinate form and therefore finitude, the sublime expresses infinity; if beauty is natural, the sublime does violence, it disrupts and de-centers nature either as spirit or as freedom; if beauty presents pure continuity with desire, the sublime represents discontinuity and so frustrates, thwarts, and commands desire. From within this opposition, we get—contrary both to the classical and the Christian tradition—rest without transcendence or rapture in beauty, and inexorable and inhuman restlessness in the sublime (Schindler, 2007).

This is where the problem leaps in: when the modern amplification of aesthetic principles achieves a metaphysical doctrinal status, it deviates from the Apollonian and Dionysian duality. The sublime amplifies the contemplation in its unnatural form, that is, the unnatural use of Apollonian which discontinues reality, the Dionysian, and therefore escapes suffering and the tragedy of existence. The sublime distorts natural energies in reality and goes for the total devaluation of this world. Zarathustra nauseates, “it was suffering and impotence – that created all afterworlds; and that brief madness of happiness that only the greatest sufferer experiences (Z, I, 3).”

The self as an artist who adores art is a proclivity but when this self-artistry incapacitates the strife inherent within the adoration of art in contemplation and drunkenness, that is to say, when it assumes a dogmatic and metaphysical standing as *the* artist seeing only of himself as over and above art, self-artistry becomes totally detached, castrated even, from being's primordial unity. Nietzsche loathes metaphysical values to the point of repudiating *The Birth of Tragedy* when in its dedication to Wager, it claims in its metaphysical tone that “it is only as an esthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified (BT, 5).” In the abyss, man as the artist of nature, as the artist of his natural self, transcends above nature to the point of abandoning it with the new dictum: “We artists! We ignore what is natural. We are moon-struck and God-struck (GS, 59).” This asceticism, this aesthetic metaphysician mentality, finds congruence to the mentality of the slaves, of the metaphysicians of the ascetic ideal: “In beholding the ascetic ideal, the philosopher (the metaphysician after-worlds man) sees before him the optimum conditions for the highest and boldest spirituality, and smiles, in the process, he does *not* deny ‘existence’, but rather affirms his *own* existence and *nothing but* his own existence, and this perhaps to the extent that he is not far from the sinful wish: *pereat mundus*,

fiat philosophia, fiat philosophus, fiam! (GM, III, 7).” As purely an adorer of the other-worldly forms in fiction, man forgets the sensual world, and prides himself in the intention of action, but only in the intention, which means that “there is no question of ‘virtue’ here (GM, III, 8),” for there is no action to begin with, having only imaginations of the ascetic. In the experience of the modern sublime, an extremity of beauty is intensified, or shall we say, *fictionalized*, devoid of any imperfection – a perfect aesthetical experience so to speak. In such a manner, the aesthetic metaphysician thinks of himself as a *saint*, devoid of any sin or stain. The imagination of such artists or the types of artist that belabor against what is natural conceives of an ethical injunction that is speaking in absolute terms; they “are thinking what is most indispensable to *them*: freedom from compulsion, disturbance, noise, business, duties, worries; (in order for them to adore their) ‘most authentic and most natural conditions of their *optimum* existence, their *most beautiful* fruitfulness (GM, III, 8, Italics mine).” The verb here is to ‘desert,’ from the world of the senses, from the chaotic world of reality, which in the long run has become a noun, a non-active Apollonian language, – for by deserting the world, “these intellectuals are themselves the desert” where “there is no shortage of camels (Ibid.)” Crucial to this discussion is the three metamorphoses of Zarathustra in the allusion of the first morph, the camel (Z, I, 1). The very conditions of an escapade from the senses load the camel as the weightlifter of the problems of the world, making the world as a huge obligation: it becomes too individualistic, accepting all responsibilities but lacking in self-discipline, and yet, the more the camel escapes the problems of reality, the more the problems become heavier pile after pile. That is to say, the kind of self-artistry that escapes responsibilities does not really escape but is making things worse. In the society of aesthetic metaphysicians, there is no valid cause of external intervention from one’s artistry of the self, due to fear of hostility, conflict, including in such a mood, the anxiety of being exposed of one’s secrets (HAH, 335) since the herd knows all too well its members. Moreover, this individualism about such vanities of the artist critically distances its appreciation to others, when it is merely “so much concerned of the impression (HAH, 338).”

And yet Nietzsche vouched never for people who are capable of conquering this wholesale nihilism in the market, but for people strong enough to withstand it. To find beauty in such wasteland is not however descriptive of an apocalyptic laughing at the destruction of a meaningless world, but of an affirmer and creator, pointing to his figure of the *Urbemensch* who remains true to the end, true as a continuous self-critique of himself in a continuous consensus with others, as a superman able to make of himself who he really is. The *Urbemensch* for Nietzsche is, to use Hollingdale’s translation, the superman, a man in the forefront of the shackles of modernity but who establishes power over himself, the man ‘over’ himself, the master of his impulses, and the man who seeks co-harvesters and co-creators like him in ‘*an intensified, action based-positionality who then hopes to establish the communal focus on and a striving for the good and just society* (David, 2013).’

4. Foucault, Freedom, and the Call for New Ethics

Nietzsche ends up saying, “Morality will gradually *perish* now: this is the great spectacle in a hundred acts reserved for the next centuries in Europe – the most terrible, most questionable, and perhaps also the most hopeful spectacles (GM, III, 27).” Foucault on the other hand continues, “... the idea of morality as obedience to the code of rules is now disappearing has already disappeared. And to this absence of morality corresponds, must correspond, the search for

aesthetics of existence (AE, p.49).” This means that, “according to Foucault, Nietzsche’s prediction that morality would gradually ‘perish’ over ‘the next two centuries’ has already come to pass (O’Leary, p.1)”. For Nietzsche, it was important to give style to one’s character, as ever to give form to one’s life in an artistic manner. For Foucault too, this thought of stylizing one’s self philologically inspired from the Greeks, calls for a work of ethics relevant to a work of art in the self, getting its relevance not only to initiate the kind of future to be envisioned but also to recover and reexamine the past back to the examples that we can make use of in the Greek formula. It is a continuing Nietzschean drive for aesthetics of existence, yet along with this Foucault finds a later enlightenment which only those who have witnessed the twentieth century can suggest,

... I am simply Nietzschean, and I try to see on a number of points, and to the extent that it is possible, with the aid of Nietzschean texts – but also with anti-Nietzschean theses (which are nevertheless Nietzschean!) – what can be done in this or that domain. I’m not looking for anything else but I’m really searching for that (RM, p.251).

An example of Foucault’s Nietzschean-contra-Nietzschean thesis is the two-fold aim of philosophy that of the critical and ethical cultivation of practices of liberty which tend to minimize domination, a vision suggestively needed in contemporary society. Contra Sartre, Foucault does not measure activity in a sense of whether it is authentic or inauthentic; rather of creative activity (GE, 262). In comparison to Aristotle’s causality in view of efficiency, referring to the four causes that govern the creative activity of a thing, namely, material, formal, efficient, and final, which further speaks respectively of matter, form, the agent, and the end, in Foucault too, particularly in *the Use of Pleasure*, there is a parallelizing analogy, the *substance ethique* (ethical substance), the *mode d’assujettissement* (mode of subjectivation), the *form d’ascèse* (form of practice), and the *teleologie* (end). Foucault was very careful to re-examine the changes in these roles or conducts in the active life especially the shifts that happened since the Greeks 4th Century B.C. to 2nd Century BC to early Christianity. To tabulate:

	Greeks 4th Century B.C.	Greeks 2nd Century B.C.	Christianity
Material Cause	Aphrodisia	Aphrodisia	Desire, Flesh, Concupiscence ...
Formal Cause	Politico-aesthetic choice	Universality (Alà Kant)	Divine Law
Efficient Cause	Art of one’s self	Ascetism	Self-Deciphering
Final Cause	Mastery of one’s self (for one’s self)	Master of one’s self (for others)	Immortality, Purity, Eternal Life

The *art of the self*, the art of life, as it is in a continuous lifelong activity of stylizing one’s nature, focuses primarily or operates analogically both from the autonomous and the political. What it means is that choice is not just personal choice: it is always a politico-aesthetic one when it has the capacity to shape society. For the Greeks in the 2nd Century B.C., this political shaping acquires a universality – almost to the similitude of Kant’s universal categorical imperative for one’s duty. Take note that the shifts in the singular activity of an agent in the efficient causality cause directly the whole range of other causes. It is of great importance then that *action*, as in the acting part of each activity, of each choice on the self, places a special role in self-artistry. The gravity of the laws, the intensification of the power-relations, and the capacities of dominion

over others above societal relations manifest greatly in the actions that take part in state-affairs. In other words, the operations matter most than the intention. But take note also of the final shift: in the activity of Christianity, efficiency becomes not really an activity but a self-deciphering. It could have been supporting if it remains contemplation with action, but in itself it remains mere self-deciphering, in view of an afterlife as its final cause, rather than constant self-examination. There is a great difference here. Action determines the role of history, for it is in actions that efficiency conducts the operations of society, from top to bottom classes, from legitimate acts accorded for everyone. From the Greek's active participation in society basing from an autonomic yet reflectively analogical to the political, as in the role of the individual for the good of the society in Plato's *Republic*, Foucault determines the difference in the ethical concern up to the twentieth century society where there is a large play of passivity. This passivity has been caused by the over-emphasis and the abuse of the power-relations obviously found in its central contemplation. Society for Foucault operates in power-relations, but not as power over others, but power as freedom for oneself, in acting 'who you are' and 'what you want' in a fashion actively participative in the operations of society. People under the abusive governmentalities of power and truth-games become submissive, unfree, and passive. The higher-ups determine the role of the lower, and the principle of subsidiarity detaches its role in the function of empowerment for everyone, but only empowerment *for*, which in contemporary societies now points to empowerment for the higher class. In *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault views the shifting of formulas especially in the subject matter (*aphrodisia*):

Greek Formula	Chinese Formula	Christian Formula	Modern Formula
<i>Acte-Plaisir-[Désir]</i>	<i>Plaisir- Désir-[Acte]</i>	<i>[Désir]- Acte-[Plaisir]</i>	<i>Désir-[Acte]-[Plaisir]</i>

In the modern formula, Aphrodisia in a sense was reduced to desire, to mere desire, and worse, to a drug for sexual stimulation. It appears that modern society's perversion of intentions in the extreme consumeristic mentality of passive people reduces desire as subject to the demands of the market. Propagandas in the internet sites seek for example to recover the lost art of manliness in which the articles often denote today's society as a 'spectator society' rather than a 'doer society'. Spectators merely enjoy active roles in basketball courts, actors in the cinema etc. This also reminds for example the trending issue in America where people are getting fatter while in the case of the developing countries people actively burn sweats for a living and grow thinner. The interplay is, while some nations have never grown too fast to be all too modern, some have done it very fast. The developing countries are nonetheless not that Greek old but that they live in a way where action takes place. To get this framed, in the course of the historical development (at least it was dared to be called so) of the ethical consequences of events, "one of summarizing Foucault's three volume of history of sexuality would be to characterize it as the story of our *loss of freedom*, as the story of how we, in Western societies, came to be not only 'trapped in our history', but forcefully 'attached to our own identity' (O'Leary, p. 84)."

The problem breaches from a society where in its utter collectivity, it loses its clutch (or clutches it hard) from the individual. It distorts then the analogy of the degree of importance of the individual from the political. And there are dislocating ethical questions which are called so only because they have become an imperative from the fixities established from moral codes. It points again back to the question of identifying a practice of the self with intensity and positionality for the common good of society: in which for Nietzsche, self-artistry must strive for the future and

for Foucault, this striving must be for an everyday consensus-building. Both conceptions of the prescriptive practices seek to transform the individual as a work of art, yet the more important link between the two is the *grounding of freedom*. The question is not to identify a particular practice of care for the self; the question is *how* to freely practice a care for oneself. But it is not just mere freedom as liberation in a strict sense, as Foucault differentiates the two (PF, p. 282-284), rather it must be of an intensified form, i.e. philosophy applied to the political when he says that “the relationship between philosophy and politics is permanent and fundamental (PF, p. 293).” For this reason Foucault says that the care of the self must be a pedagogical, ethical, and also ontological for the development of a ruler (PF, p. 293), not only of himself as a practitioner of philosophical perspectives in contemplation but also as a practitioner of politics, a master both of himself in correlation with other masters, caring in consensus, or a consensus of communal caring from free individuals.

This consensus does not come about from a high end utopia, as if – as often portrayed, from a state of immaculateness to corruption – man was nostalgically in a blissful state of dignity and because of a mere apple, he fell from grace, the same depiction of the discordant apple which enraged Hera and Athena in the choice of Paris favoring Aphrodite. This totality that pictures utopian apples of discord make for a false account of history and development. For Nietzsche, such thinking of a transition that the superman was born a superman, or a superstar was really born a superstar is too utopian. For Foucault too, such a reading that a ‘philosopher may have forgotten something’ from the course of his philosophizing’ does not make any sense at all (PF, p. 295). Consensus starts in what Foucault calls *parrhesia* or ‘speaking to truth in power’ in contrast to feeling-close types or flatterer-user types. As Foucault says, there has to be an ecological movement, which must be slow, very slow. For instance, he says in the *Genealogy of Ethics*, “I think it is very, very interesting to see the move, the very slow move, from the privileging of food, which was overwhelming in Greece, to interest in sex after the seventeenth century (GE, p.235).” This movement accepts the idea that self-artistry begins with an honest conception of oneself as a gradual becoming of a form from wood blocks to be carved and shaped. For Foucault, there is a lesson from the Greeks to enact a kind of behavior unperturbed by moral codes, using techniques of life that make self-artistry free from interdictions and prejudiced identities, stereotyping and petty ethical moralizing.

The practice of freedom, the intensification to one’s self in consensus with others, and the reconsideration of aphrodisia in the various changes in the societal realm have to be formed with a choice. Freedom is not manifested absolutely on juridico-moral codes, nor is it relayed in religious mantras; freedom has to be represented with choice, and for Foucault, it has to be both aesthetical and political (GE, p. 264-265). That notion of positionality, which grounds the understanding that it only is positionality so long as it thrives on free grounds, is in a sense not the absolute wholesale clearing and dismissal of Descartes’ meditations, but closer to what Heidegger meant for the clearing vis-à-vis presencing in *aletheia*, that is, in opening the self towards a trajectory where possibilities are enacted with responsibility.

This element of choice however is often disturbed by the impulses of the passions that sometimes deviate the practice of self-artistry. An instance, Foucault refers, is found in medieval times where John Cassian acknowledges the “Devil who deceives and causes one to be deluded about one’s self (SW, p. 208).” In the Greco-Roman and even in early medieval times, freedom

as an ontological condition of ethics is “informed by reflection (PF, 284).” And again, here Foucault notes that “no technique, no professional skill can be acquired without exercise; nor can the art of living, the *tekhné tou biou*, be learned without an *askésis*, that should be understood as a training of the self by oneself (SW, p. 208).” That is why, Seneca – to get a resource from Roman practice – said that it is necessary not only to read but also to write. And yet the idea is not just to write but also to rewrite the account of one’s self in self-examination (TS, p. 247) as opposed to the self-deciphering as the efficient cause of Christianity. It is in this self-examination that one finds the things that make one unfree, so that one ought to eliminate those things in order for one to read a life that is worth caring, or better yet, that is worth improving and reshaping. This pedagogical instruction of one’s self by one’s self is a touchstone for ethical improvement. And because writing is not only for oneself as the first reader but also for others, writing constitutes the necessary consensus to know one’s part, as in many thinkers who first engage in the technique of knowing thyself first before one can take care of others e.g. Socrates, Pindar, etc. There are also other things that one needs to do for self-artistry apart from writing, as in letters, or the self-examination accorded to it. There is also *askesis* which trains the thought and the body: *Meditatio* is an imaginary experience that trains thought, *Gymnasia* is training in a real situation, even if it is artificially induced (TS, 240). Another is the *interpretation of dreams*. This interpretation in refuge of the aid of Apollo in the oracle of Delphi, instigates the necessary preparations for artistically molding oneself for the future. All of these reflect the kind of basis one has to ground for oneself as a necessary self-reflection of oneself in hopes of freely establishing the future. In view of such interpretation, Nietzsche differentiates the world of dreams from the world of fictions in that the latter is worse since it never grounds itself in reality.

This entirely *fictitious world* can be distinguished from the world of dreams (to the detriment of the former) in that dreams *reflect* reality while Christianity falsifies, devalues, and negates reality. Once the concept of ‘nature’ had been invented as a counter to the idea of ‘God’, ‘natural’ had to mean ‘reprehensible’, - that whole fictitious world is rooted in a *hatred* of the natural (-of reality!-), it is the expression of a profound sense of unease concerning reality ... *But this explains everything*. Who are the only people motivated to lie their way out of reality? People who *suffer* from it (A, I, 15).

The communal focus that the Greeks had tried to live in consensus preempts a society compressed by freedom and solidarity with each other, empowering each other for the goodness and justice that everyone hopes for in the future. What this further means is that the practice of establishing an art within oneself – self-artistry – is, concerning pleasures, to engage them in correct ‘usage’ or *Chrēsis*, coupled with ‘moderation’ or *Sōphrosynē* and the fundamental active form of ‘self-mastery’ or *Enkrateia*. The use of pleasure in the *Use of Pleasure* embarks its practices of moderation and prudential mastery of oneself. This revolves around the capacity of a person to make use of himself with not only *style* but *timing*, both in the acknowledgment of the finitude of being and the proper time it must be used, and moderation, of which in the balance and mastery of one’s self society brings about goodness and justice.

Self-artistry relays from the messages of Nietzsche and Foucault the critical importance of the self in shaping society. Kauffman states that “the Good Life is the powerful life, the life of those who are in full control of their impulses and need not to weaken them, and the good man is for

Nietzsche the passionate man who is the master of his passions (1974, p. 280).” This is affirmed in Nietzsche’s formula:

My formula for the greatness of a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be different – not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it ... but love it (EH, II, 10).

Foucault on the same plane strives for a self-artistry that molds the fabric of society where power relations are there because there is freedom. He says that “if there are relations of power in every social field, this is because there is freedom everywhere (PF, 292).” This is indeed a testament opposed to the fixities found in the modern codes where power is only for those who are positioned above the power institutions. Foucault says that ‘in power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibility of resistance there would be no power relations at all (Ibid.)’ And this resistance best represents the striving of giving style to one’s character.

5. Conclusion

In the discussion above, both Nietzsche and Foucault directs self-artistry with the upbringing of a culture that reverberates and continuously corrects itself through how each individual sought to live a ‘new ethics’. This ethical thinking in aesthetics and not in morality or judicial regulations is grounded on a freedom marked with an intensified and positioned action, a way of life in aesthetical audacity coupled with the shaping and reshaping of one’s self as a work of art, and an attitude of autonomous pedagogical promising for the improvement and empowerment of persons in society. Here, self-artistry in Nietzsche and Foucault is not absolute freedom but the freedom to resist, conjure, and reshape oneself as a work of art capable of shaping culture.

In recapitulation, the question of finding that practice of the care of the self in particular is void, since as Hannah Arendt points out, the questions must be answered from the conditions on the ground in everyday experiences. But not everyone knows everyone’s everyday experience; it must then be a personal question that must come from these frames of ethics and aesthetics. Both Nietzsche and Foucault think that man is everywhere in chains - everywhere he hears the ‘clink clink clicks!’ of morality. But while Nietzsche’s immoral ethics says that the king is dead as a nihilistic phenomenon, Foucault continues, that we have yet to cut off the head of the king (cf. GS, 125; Phelan, 1990; NGH, p. 146; Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983). Only in this frame can authentic self-artistry transpire into molding contemporary society.

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