

THE ETHICS OF SELF-CARE AND PERSONALIST ETHICS: A DIALOGUE BETWEEN MICHEL FOUCAULT AND EMMANUEL MOUNIER



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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this article is to foster a dialogue between the ethics of self-care, developed by Michel Foucault, and the personalist ethics, created by Emmanuel Mounier. Thus, this work is divided into three parts: understanding the notion of the ethics of self-care in Michel Foucault; to outline the main aspects of personalist ethics in Emmanuel Mounier and finally, to draw a parallel between these two ethics, recognizing in them different ways to think about subjectivity, freedom and commitment to the other. The methodology used in this work is theoretical research, carried out through bibliographic research involving the investigated theme. The relevance of this work lies in the possibility of debating ethics in the search for a new human action in the face of the crises that the world is going through.

Keywords: Self-care. Personalism. Ethics.

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INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this article is to debate two ways of thinking about ethics that, at first glance, may seem distant, but which are at an essential point: the concern with the constitution of the subject (in Foucaultian language) or of the person (in Mounierian language). Thus, we propose a dialogue between two French philosophers: on the one hand, Michel Foucault (1926-1984), with the rescue of the notion of self-care from the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations; and on the other, Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950), with a personalist ethic centered on the recognition of the dignity of the human person.

The personalist movement began in the early 1930s, in the context of a world that was still counting the losses and consequences of the economic crisis of 1929 and that was also witnessing the rise of Adolf Hitler in Germany in 1933. Understanding this scenario is essential for the analysis of the personalist movement, because it was through the primacy of the person and his humanity as a fundamental value that Mounier envisioned answers to the crises that society faced at the time. It was in 1932 that he founded the magazine *Esprit*, which was the main vehicle for the dissemination of personalist philosophy at that time.

In the 1970s, Foucault began the series *History of Sexuality*. In the third volume of the work (published shortly before his death, in 1984) the author focused on the theme of the ethics of self-care: in short, it is a process where the subject becomes his main object of attention and care. By knowing himself and relating better to himself, this subject begins to develop healthier relationships with the people around him. This movement tends to make the social environment more harmonious as a whole, after all, those who take care of themselves, relate, live together and take better care of others.

Thus, this article is divided into three parts: understanding the notion of the ethics of self-care in Michel Foucault; to outline the main aspects of personalist ethics in Emmanuel Mounier and finally, to draw a parallel between these two ethics, recognizing in them different ways to think about subjectivity, freedom and commitment to the other. The methodology used in this work is theoretical research, carried out through bibliographic research involving the investigated theme. The relevance of this article lies in the fact that the world is living in a time marked by economic, social and humanitarian crises. More than a systematic comparison, what is intended here is to let ideas come into contact, and one can provoke the other, so that new possibilities arise to think about ethics and reflect on

how it can contribute to the construction of a more just, harmonious and civilized society for all.

FOUCAULT: THE ETHICS OF SELF-CARE

The notion of "self-care" is an ancient practice, rooted in the philosophical traditions of classical Greece and Rome. It is a posture towards life and oneself, which involves a constant process of transformation of the subject through exercises, dialogues, meditation and attention to oneself. The subject is not born ethical, he becomes, and this becoming necessarily passes through practices that Foucault calls techniques of the self (FOUCAULT, 2006). This is how Foucault presents Socrates as the man of self-care, the one who questioned people and urged them to take care of themselves. Socrates was compared to a *tavão*, which is an insect that bites animals, and in doing so, induces them to agitation. Self-care should be seen as the sting that will penetrate people and make them wake up, rise up and open up, but not only in a punctual way. The sting embedded in the person motivates him to take care of himself, and this behavior must last throughout his existence.

Following the theme, Foucault (2010) starts to use Plato's *work Alcibiades*. Alcibiades was a young man whose family possessed a lot of money and social prestige. Alcibiades grew up and, in addition to being rich, became a very handsome boy, which made many people approach him, wanting to enjoy the privileges he had and that he could provide to others. Alcibiades was most likely blinded by this, and thought that his beauty and power would last forever. But obviously that is not what happened. As Alcibiades grew older, he lost these qualities and realized that he became uninteresting to the people who had previously harassed him. The lesson that must be taken here is that Alcibiades should have taken care of himself all his life, and developed virtues that would last throughout his life. Instead, Alcibiades neglected himself, preferring to cling to attributes that were ephemeral.

Self-care and the ethical notion that originates from it have an effect not only on the person, since self-care practices will consequently be echoed in the quality of the interaction that is constituted with the other, which tends to leave and maintain the common environment and even the community itself. in general, more harmonious and balanced. For Foucault (1994, p. 57), "this is one of the most important points of this self-consecrated activity; it is not an exercise in solitude; but a true social practice". But before looking at the other and taking care of the other, the subject must take care of himself. This last practice

should come before the former, but not out of selfishness or narcissism, but because the *I* / Come before the *other* to relate to the *other*, must rather relate to one's own *I*. Foucault (2006, p. 271) explains that one should not put the "care of others before the care of oneself; the care of the self comes ethically in the first place, insofar as the relationship with oneself is ontologically primary".

In the Greco-Roman world, self-care was considered a "constant activity," a kind of daily work on oneself. In the words of Foucault himself (2006, p. 32), "the care of oneself implies a look at oneself that is also the possibility of modifying oneself, of transforming oneself". It is not a narcissistic practice, but an ethical relationship with oneself that, paradoxically, makes room for the relationship with the other. This care was experienced as an ethical requirement, a practice necessary for the good conduct of life, and not as an individualistic gesture. On the contrary: only those who take care of themselves are capable of taking care of others. For Foucault (2006, p. 26). "There is no access to the other without working on oneself". In other words, ethics is not something external, imposed by universal rules; it is something that is born from the subject's relationship with himself, but which is reflected in the way he relates to the environment in which he lives. If the subject takes care of himself and knows how to lead his life well due to the autonomy he has conquered, he will know how to conduct relationships with his family, friends, colleagues, employers, employees, etc. That is also why taking care of himself is something for life, since

[...] self-care is ethical in itself; but it implies complex relationships with others, since this ethos of freedom is also a way of caring for others; That is why it is important for a free man who conducts himself properly to know how to govern his wife, his children, his house, in this also lies the art of governing. Ethos also implies a relationship with others, since the care of oneself allows one to occupy the convenient place in the city, in the community or in inter-individual relationships – whether to exercise a magistracy or to maintain relations of friendship (FOUCAULT, 2006, p. 282).

This ethic is not outside or around the subject, but it is evident that the way in which the latter relates to himself is reflected in the way he relates to others. Consequently, this subject who practices self-care, who knows and transforms himself, becomes free. Freedom is understood here not as that freedom guaranteed by law, to come and go, but the freedom of the subject who is not subjugated to feelings such as anger, intemperance or anger. He does not act impetuously guided by such instincts and emotions, because this subject has control over himself and knows that not everything he wants or wants to do

must be put into practice, and he himself knows how to impose this boundary. But he does not do so not because he is tied to moral codes, but because he has self-knowledge and self-control. In view of this, if "ethics is conceived as the sphere of one's relations (the clash that occurs, in the individual himself, between excessive desires and the limits of his free action)" (CANDIOTTO, 2010, p. 164).

And it is thus, by knowing himself, transforming and improving himself, that the subject achieves the so-called aesthetics of existence, in which he makes his life the bearer of values (FOUCAULT, 2006). These values are the virtues developed and cultivated by the subject, and which will make his life be seen as a work of art. In this way, the subject can be recognized by others through these qualities that he carries with him, and even become an example for posterity (FOUCAULT, 2006). For Foucault (2006), ethics is not the care of the self, but the former is intrinsically linked to it. In Antiquity, morality was linked to this ethics of self-care, and not to people's obedience to rules of conduct, since

[...] the Greeks effectively problematized their freedom and the freedom of the individual as an ethical problem. But ethical in the sense that the Greeks could understand it: *the ethos* was the way of being and the way of behaving. The *ethos* of someone is translated by habits, by his bearing, by his way of walking, by the calmness with which he responds to events. The man who has a beautiful *ethos* can be admired and serve as an example. But in order to have this freedom formed by this *ethos*, that is, by something that is good, honorable and respectable, there must be care for oneself, a work of oneself, on oneself (FOUCAULT, 1994, p. 281).

This Foucaultian concept is not only a historical resumption, but an invitation to think about subjectivity in another way. Foucault proposes an ethics without fixed norms, where the subject is at the same time a work and an artisan of himself. This requires constant work on oneself, with attention, discipline and freedom. In Foucault's reflection, ethics is directly linked to the way the subject constitutes himself – or rather, how he constitutes himself. This means that ethics, far from being a set of external norms, is first and foremost a practice of freedom, a way of relating to oneself and the world in a critical and transformative way. It is here that self-care gains strength as an ethical experience, because it places the subject in front of himself, not so that he submits to rules, but so that he becomes capable of creating other ways of being (FOUCAULT, 1994).

THE "aesthetics of existence" is also a way of breaking with the normative modes of subjectivation imposed by the devices of power. This is because taking care of oneself and developing qualities also invites us to resist. Resist what? To the discourses that shape us, to the disciplinary practices, to the regimes of truth that try to tell us who we are or should

be. For Foucault (2006, p. 19), "power is not something that is imposed from outside, but that circulates, infiltrates, and is exercised in the most diverse points of the social field". Therefore, resistance also needs to come from within — from the way the subject takes care of himself, questions himself, and invents himself. This resistance is not a direct confrontation or a pure and simple negation, it takes place on the plane of subjectivity, in the reinvention of oneself, in the refusal to be captured by ready-made models of identity. And this is only possible from concrete practices: writing, reading, meditating, dialoguing, observing oneself (FOUCAULT, 1994). When we resist, we free ourselves and become less susceptible to alienation and domination.

As Foucault points out, the ancients had "spiritual exercises" precisely to cultivate this constant attention to oneself (FOUCAULT, 2006, p. 37). Today, to think of self-care as a political practice is precisely to recover this gesture of freedom. It is, then, an ethics of singularity, a way of taking responsibility for oneself without falling into selfishness, because the care of oneself never excludes the other, on the contrary, it is what makes care and the relationship with the other possible. And it is in this sense that, for Foucault (2006, p. 24) the care of the self is a condition for freedom, but a freedom lived, practiced, conquered in everyday life. Thus, to take care of oneself is to assert oneself against conformism, against passivity, against subjection. It is, ultimately, to become a subject of oneself.

MOUNIER: THE PERSONALIST ETHICS

Mounier, in creating personalist philosophy, aimed to undertake a kind of middle ground between liberal individualism and socialist collectivism, currents opposed to each other. In relation to the first, it should be mentioned that the recognition of the rights of the human person was of fundamental importance for the turn that culminated in the fall of the Ancien Régime². This is because, in absolutist regimes, state power was overwhelming and aimed only to ensure the continuity of the monarchy's privileges. There was no valorization of the individual, nor the protection of the individual in the face of the abuses of the State. The growing dissatisfaction, especially of the bourgeois class (which paid heavy taxes, supported the luxury of the court and did not hold any political rights), resulted in the French Revolution (1789-1799), which changed the course of humanity. During this period, the

²It was characterized by the concentration of power in the hands of the monarch, in addition to the domination of the nobility and the clergy.

Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was promulgated, which recognized the human person as the holder of dignity and rights.

Thus a liberal and individualistic society was born. The State should guarantee freedom and security so that people could, now freed from the shackles of absolutist power, establish their businesses, accumulate wealth and achieve their goals. It so happens that, in classical liberal logic, the unbridled search for profit and the absence of any mechanism of economic control by the State, triggered the isolation of people, who ended up disassociating themselves from each other, without any concern for the notion of community. Individualism, which was born of a legitimate revolt against the arbitrariness of an authoritarian state, ended up placing the person in a position of total hegemony, bypassing the social environment in which he inhabited and leaving it in the background. And this became a problem, because the

[...] The person only fulfills himself in the community: this does not mean that he does not have some chance of doing so by losing himself in anonymity. There is no true community except a community of people. All the others are nothing more than a form of tyrannical anonymity (MOUNIER, 2004, p. 82).

The French Revolution emerged from the motto "liberty, equality, fraternity", but if in the cold letter of the law everyone was equal, in practice, inequalities were deep. There was no state intervention, especially with regard to the economy, and so the market regulated itself by its own forces, which inevitably resulted in marked social discrepancies. In this "pure liberal model, the laws of the State cannot (or should not) interfere with the criteria of merit that spontaneously 'spring' from social intercourse" (CAMPOS; FERES; et al., 2018, p. 32). The meritocracy of liberalism is a fallacy. One can only consider personal merits in a society with real opportunities and chances for all. It's like a marathon: all athletes must have the same starting point. If some competitors have to leave a few steps behind the others, the test becomes unfair. So, transporting the metaphor of the race to life in society: one can only speak of achievements by individual merits if everyone is within the same circumstances.

Marxism made profound criticisms of this liberal and capitalist model. This strand argued that the revolution for an egalitarian society should start from the total restructuring of the economic order, where private property would be extinguished, all means of production would belong to the State and thus social classes would be abolished. It happens that, in this case, the person would once again be stripped of his freedom and

would be oppressed; either before the State, or in favor of collectivism, which under these conditions, would end up totally subjugating it. The change proposed by Marx had as its starting point changes in the structure of work that moved the economy and not the human person itself. Thus, the singular man in his unique characteristics was relegated to oblivion, to the detriment of the collective man and the common mass to which he belonged (MOUNIER, 1967, p. 96).

What can be seen is that Mounier was not in full consonance with liberal individualism or with Marxist collectivism. The first prioritized the person but completely despised the community; the second, on the other hand, excelled in the collective, but forgot the person as a singular being. For this reason, the personalist philosophy was also an attempt to find a point of balance, which recognized the value of the human person, but without abandoning the importance of the social environment. Personalist ethics defends solidary coexistence as a fundamental principle. The relationship with the other, understood in its deepest and not merely utilitarian character, is the space where the person affirms himself and finds his meaning of existence. Thus, valuing the individual cannot mean contempt for the fact that he lives in society and not isolated.

The starting point of Mounier's personalist ethics is the centrality of the human person, understood in its various facets: spiritual, relational, historical, and free. For Mounier, personalist ethics goes beyond respect for human dignity; it aims at the promotion of the person in his totality, in his integral development (MOUNIER, 2004). The person cannot be reduced to a selfish individual who separates himself from others, nor to a simple member of an abstract collectivity. She is a unique being, but deeply social and whose meaning in life lies in living with others and developing her potential.

In personalist thinking, the human being is not an object, a means or an instrument to achieve a certain purpose, he is an end in himself. For Silveira (2010, p. 5), "Mounier took up the notion of person and made it the starting point for a new philosophical navigation: optimistic, committed thinking allied to the demand for action in the face of 'established disorder'". Personalism rejects the idea of impersonality, since man is not simple inanimate matter, man is a rational and sovereign being in his actions. The autonomy that man has gives him the possibility of thinking and exercising his ideas as a person who exists. And existing, under the personalistic aspect, is more than simply being alive and breathing, since "the person is only fulfilled in the freedom that builds him as a

responsible being before his own humanity and the humanity of others" (Mounier, 2004, p. 67).

Every legal system that has human dignity as its pillar is closely intertwined with Mounier's personalist doctrine, as it places the human being as the center of its protection, recognizing him as the bearer of rights, dignity, freedom and autonomy. However, it is necessary to remember that there is no way to separate the individual from society, because the human being is essentially communitarian. It is concluded, therefore, that the recognition of the dignity of the human person is also essential for life in society, from the moment that limits are established that cannot be invaded, because, otherwise, we would live in a permanent state of primitive nature, in which only the law of the strongest would apply. It is fundamental to realize that all forms of social control, such as Politics and Law, are not exhausted in themselves, they exist to serve society, and not the other way around. The society where the person lives; the person who is the beginning, middle and end point of everything.

For personalism, the person is an absolute, because he is a model and ontological perfection with a call to fully realize beyond time and to rise to infinity. Faced with such thinking, it was up to the personalist movement to bring out the awareness of an increasingly impersonal universe in the relations between men and society, whose depersonalization made man an object, a stranger to the other and to himself (SILVEIRA, 2017, p. 137).

Mounier, by placing the person as a pillar of his ethics, emphasizes his responsibility, emphasizing that freedom cannot be understood in isolation or individualistically. For him, true freedom is that which is concretized in the commitment to the other, to the community and to human dignity. Freedom, in his perspective, is closely linked to responsibility, a fundamental concept in personalist ethics. Freedom, as Mounier understands it, is not the freedom to act without restrictions, but a responsible freedom, which requires of the subject an ethical attitude towards the other. Personalist ethics thus proposes a vision of freedom that goes beyond simple individual autonomy, placing it as a commitment to human dignity and the common good. For Mounier (2004), the person defines himself in the encounter with the other, and it is in this encounter that he must exercise his responsibility. Personalist ethics cannot be thought of without taking into account the other, because it is through the relationship with the other that the person is fulfilled as a human being.

[...] freedom, conditioned, no doubt, but which made the person responsible for his action. The ethics of action was configured from the dialectical articulation of will and

freedom, on the side of immanence, with its existential conditionings; on the side of transcendence, with the eminent dignity of the human person, the source of all the values that should guide our actions (SEVERINO, 2009, p. 159).

The commitment to human dignity is the foundation of this vision of freedom and responsibility. Personalist ethics not only defends the freedom of the subject, but demands that this freedom be exercised with respect for the dignity of all human beings. Thus, freedom and autonomy, for Mounier (2004), are not isolated achievements, but are always intertwined with ethical commitment and responsibility towards others and the community. True freedom is that which is realized in the encounter with the other, in respect for human dignity and in care for the construction of a more just and solidary world.

THE DIALOGUE

The first connection we glimpse between self-care and personalism is the centrality of the person or the subject. Foucault places the subject as the protagonist of his own life, attention and care. The subject must be for himself his main point of interest and improvement, because before any "other" comes the "I". In the personalist doctrine, the person is the nucleus of everything, of a society, of a legal order and of the universe itself, since all paths begin and end in him, since "the person is not an object that can be separated and observed, but a center of reorientation of the objective universe, it remains for us to make the analysis revolve around the Universe built by himself to illuminate its structures in its various planes [...]" (MOUNIER, 2004, p. 35).

Foucault and Mounier lived in the period of World War II, and the latter began the dissemination of personalist philosophy precisely during the years in which fascist and Nazi ideologies rose in Europe. In these regimes, everyone was not granted the condition of "person", in the sense of conferring dignity and legal protection on them. So much so that entire populations have been decimated. Ethics in Mounier rests on the idea of the dignity of the person, of legitimizing oneself and the other as an absolute good. Now, if we give ourselves and also others the *status* of persons equal in dignity and rights, then we can think of ethics as cooperation between persons, peoples and states, and thus we would have a society that can recognize itself as ethical from the moment that it identifies the fundamental value of the human person in a reciprocal way. simply because we are all human, regardless of nationality, religion, language, ethnicity.

It can be seen that this issue is not only related to the historical period in which Mounier found himself when he founded the magazine *Esprit* (1932) and began to spread personalism. Guaranteeing the dignity of the person in practice, not restricting it only to declarations and constitutions, is a path that opens up for the recognition of a plural world, which is basically the world in which we live, inhabited by people and groups from different places, cultures, religions, ethnicities, etc. That is why the "Declarations of Rights are soon distorted, when they do not rest on societies sufficiently rich in indomitable characters, and simultaneously on solid guarantees in structures" (MOUNIER, 2004, p. 107). It cannot be forgotten that the person, to whom dignity and protagonism are granted within a political, social and legal system, is also endowed with reason, a quality that makes him or her apt to the critical and civic sense. Mounier himself was an example of this: he mobilized against totalitarian states, having been persecuted and imprisoned for his conduct of resistance. To exist is more than simply to breathe and have rights. It is also to be aware, fruitful and engaged in them, since

[...] To exist is to say yes, it is to accept, it is to consent. But if I always accept, if I don't refuse and if I never refuse, I sink. Existing, from a personal point of view, also and often means knowing how to say no, protest, disconnect [...] I do not guarantee, it seems, my lightness of maneuver and the very youth of my being if not to the condition of questioning everything, at every moment, beliefs, opinions, certainties, formulas, adhesions, habits, affiliations. The rupture, the leap, are in fact essential categories of the person (MOUNIER, 2004, p. 59).

Returning to Foucault, we have that, later, the care of the self as a practice that sought ethics in relationships and the aesthetics of existence was replaced by the coercion exercised by institutions, such as the school, church and hospitals, since from "Antiquity to Christianity, one passes from a morality that was essentially the search for a personal ethics to a morality as obedience to a system of rules" (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 283). With the end of the era of Antiquity, this idea of self-care was set aside as a practice in the search for virtues that would culminate in an ethical existence. Morality, from then on, began to be directed to the subjection that people should have to codes of conduct and institutions, which also had their own rules. The rise of Christianity contributed robustly to the abandonment of the ideal of self-care:

Christianity, by introducing salvation as salvation after death, will unbalance or, in any case, disturb this whole theme of self-care. Although, I remind you once again, seeking salvation certainly means taking care of yourself. However, the condition for achieving his salvation will be precisely renunciation. In the Greeks and Romans, on

the contrary, based on the fact that one takes care of oneself in one's own life and that the reputation one will leave is the only one beyond what one can worry about (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 267).

Here, we open parentheses to highlight a point of opposition between Foucault and Mounier: for the former, the dissemination of Christian precepts made the subject renounce self-care, after all, true salvation would come with death and not in life, and thus the subject relegated himself to abandonment. For Mounier, on the other hand, it is the opposite: the valorization of the person is due to the influence of Christianity, because "Christian personalism goes to the end: all values are grouped under the singular appeal of a supreme person" (MOUNIER, 2004, p. 77). Mounier, it must be said, was a Christian philosopher and certainly the principles of his religion exerted a strong influence on him. In defending the priority of the person, Mounier understands it as the most important divine work, because

[...] each person is created in the image of God, each person is called to form an immense mystical and carnal Body in the Charity of Christ. A collective history of humanity, of which the Greeks had no idea, begins to make sense. The very conception of the Trinity, which has fueled two centuries of debate, brings with it the surprising idea of a Supreme Being in which different people intimately dialogue, of a Being that is already, by itself, a negation of solitude (MOUNIER, 2004, p. 20).

Another difference between philosophers concerns the transcendence of the subject/person: Foucault avoids metaphysical foundations, proposing an ethics that is not based on an essential subject, but on a continuous process of construction and resistance. Ethics for Foucault is not a search for a transcendent meaning or for an imperious truth about the subject. Mounier, on the other hand, starts from a more intense view of the person, understood as a spiritual, relational, free and historical being. For him, ethics is built around a transcendental conception of the human being, based on the search for a deeper meaning, which goes beyond the limits of the material and palpable world. Freedom and autonomy for Mounier are not only questions of resistance to power, as he starts from the idea that the person has a spiritual dimension. Spirituality, in Mounier's thought, does not refer to an abstraction, but to the continuous search for meaning, freedom and transcendence (MOUNIER, 2014).

In convergence, Foucault and Mounier, in their respective philosophies, criticize the alienation of the person/subject, although they address different phenomena. Foucault observes the forms of alienation imposed by the devices of power, especially with regard to

the control mechanisms that regulate life (disciplining, surveillance, institutions, etc.). He also pays attention to the fact that the human essence has long been imprisoned and alienated by numerous historical, social and economic processes, and, in these contexts, it would be necessary for man to free himself from such mechanisms, so that he could connect with himself (Foucault, 2010). Mounier, in turn, criticizes the alienation caused by massification and materialism, which transforms people into mere elements of a socioeconomic mechanism with no room for freedom, independence and human dignity itself. Both, therefore, warn of the loss of autonomy and awareness of the person/subject from different perspectives (FOUCAULT, 2005; MOUNIER, 2004).

Foucault (2006, p. 268) explains that "taking care of oneself was, from a certain moment on, willingly denounced as a form of self-love, a form of selfishness or individual interest". It is important to highlight that the act of occupying oneself is not only focused on the techniques we employ for ourselves in isolated and solitary activities. From the perspective of Grabois (2011, p. 106), Foucault, by "giving importance to the practices of the self, does not defend an individualistic position; argues, on the contrary, that these practices are part of a broader context of social practices". When we take better care of ourselves, we establish healthier relationships with others. Therefore, the idea of self-care as a self-centered practice must be rejected.

Here, then, we have what we consider to be the most important link between Foucault's care of the self and Mounier's personalism: the view of the subject/person as an essentially communitarian being. For Mounier, man has a sociable and communicable nature, since "the first movement that reveals a human being, in early childhood, is a movement towards others: the child, from six to twelve months, leaving the vegetative life, discovers himself in others" (MOUNIER, 2004, p. 35). Personalism has its contribution to the centrality of the person, but, just as taking care of oneself is not an egocentric attitude, as it is reflected in the interaction with the other, the placement of the person as a maximum unit in any time and place does not aim to exclude the other, but rather to recognize everyone as beings with dignity and not subject to objectification, which inevitably leads to a collective space that is supported by respect for the person and for all their range of diversity. Personalism is directly opposed to individualism, because

[...] Individualism is a system of customs, feelings, ideas and institutions that organizes the individual based on an attitude of isolation and defense. It was individualism that constituted the ideology and the dominant structure of Western bourgeois society between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Abstract man,

without ties or natural communities, supreme god at the center of a freedom without direction and without measure, always ready to look at others with suspicion, calculation or claims towards others, alongside institutions reduced to ensuring the mutual coexistence of selfishness. Or its better income from profit-oriented associations: this is the form of civilization that we see dying, undoubtedly one of the poorest that history has ever known. It is the very antithesis of personalism and its most direct adversary (MOUNIER, 2004, p. 61-62).

Foucault (2010, p. 266) also stresses that "self-care cannot in itself tend towards that exaggerated love of oneself that would come to neglect others, or, even worse, to abuse the power that can be exercised over it." It is true that *the self* must come before the *other*; But it is also true that the *self* cannot and should not exist alone, to the point of simply ignoring the other. There is no contradiction between the two notions. The subject must in fact take care of himself before taking care of the other; But it is by taking care of himself first, taking the reins of his life and reinforcing his freedom, that he will be able to relate better to his peers. In the same way, the recognition of the dignity of the human person as a primary value in a society and legislation should not lead to the abandonment of the ideal of community as a conducive and civilized environment for coexistence among its members.

These questions allow the dialogue between the two thinkers to be deepened, leading to new possibilities for reflection on ethics, freedom, responsibility and the constitution of subjectivity in the social context. The dialogue between Foucault's ethics of self-care and Mounier's personalist ethics is not limited to abstract philosophical debate; Its implications are profoundly relevant to the contemporary world context. The confrontation between these two paradigms offers a unique opportunity to enrich discussions on central issues of current ethics, such as individualism *versus* social responsibility, subjectivity *versus* otherness, and freedom *versus* mutual care. In addition, its proposals can be applied to essential areas of social life, such as education, politics, and health, providing a solid foundation for more humanized and responsible practices. In a world increasingly marked by individualism and impersonality, Foucault and Mounier's reflections on ethics offer a necessary and very important critique.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main objective of this article was to promote an encounter between two great philosophical traditions: the ethics of self-care in Foucault and the personalist ethics in Mounier. What can be concluded is that the approximation and divergence between these two thinkers create a fertile field for a dialogue that allows us to reflect on autonomy, ethical

responsibility and subjectivity. Both offer valuable contributions to a deeper understanding of the practices of freedom.

The world is going through countless crises: political structures based on tyrannism, hate speech and intolerance, exclusion of minority groups, threats to democracies, human rights violations, poverty and hunger that annihilate countries and nations, among many others that could be mentioned and analyzed. In the dialogue that we propose to foster here between Foucault and Mounier, we intend to demonstrate that the care of the self and the legitimation of the person as the center of all protection of a political-legal complex are effective ways to make society a more favorable environment for all. For Foucault, those who take care of and take care of themselves, take care of and relate better to the other; for Mounier, the rejection of any degrading treatment that annuls someone's humanity is because there is recognition, by each other, of the personality and dignity they carry. Thus, both notions make interpersonal relationships and the community as a whole more beneficial.

What we suggest here, by "putting" Foucault and Mounier face to face, is not to provoke an innocuous doctrinal stir, but rather to provide a deeper reflection on the problems that afflict the world, from the time in which Mounier and Foucault lived, to our time. To seek a new human action, a new ethics and new relationships between the self and the other and between the self and the world. These relationships are guided by a civic spirit of collaboration and that have reciprocity and plurality as principles. Conflicts are typical of any social environment and will always exist, so there are mechanisms for maintaining order, such as the Law. But that doesn't mean that the environment we live in can't become healthier and less inhospitable.

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