

## Heidegger and Foucault: Reflections for Understanding Self-Care and the Care of the Self

[Heidegger e Foucault: Reflexões para Compreensão de Autocuidado e Cuidado de Si]

Clara Maria Miranda de Sousa\*; Marcelo Silva de Souza Ribeiro\*\*

**Abstract:** Here we discuss the approximations and distances between the contributions of Heidegger's and Foucault's thought. We are interested in knowing about the ideas of self-care articulated by Martin Heidegger and of care of the self, according to Michel Foucault, analyzing the convergences and divergences. Contrastive systematization was used in order to highlight the encounters and disagreements between the thinkers. There are similarities regarding the importance given to the issue of caring as something that constitutes the human being, but the distances are given by the way in which the meanings of care are conceived. The approximations and distances regarding self-care and care of the self thought by Heidegger and Michel Foucault make us reflect that each thinker was crossed by singularities, historical, social and cultural processes, unfolding in specific understandings around care.

**Keywords:** Caution. Self care. Care of the self. Heidegger. Foucault.

**Resumo:** Discute-se aqui as aproximações e distanciamentos sobre o cuidado via as contribuições do pensamento de Heidegger e de Foucault. Interessa-nos saber sobre as ideias de autocuidado articuladas por Martin Heidegger e de cuidado de si, conforme Michel Foucault, analisando as convergências e as divergências. Lançou-se mão da sistematização contrastiva de modo a ressaltar os encontros e desencontros entre os pensadores. Há aproximações no que se refere a importância dada a questão do cuidar como algo constituidor do ser humano, mas os distanciamentos se dão pelo modo como os sentidos de cuidado são concebidos. As aproximações e distanciamentos quanto a autocuidado e cuidado de si pensados por Heidegger e Michel Foucault nos lança a refletir que cada pensador fora atravessado por singularidades, processos históricos, sociais e culturais, desdobrando em compreensões específicas em torno do cuidado.

**Palavras-chave:** Cuidado. Autocuidado. Cuidado de si. Heidegger. Foucault.

---

\*Ph.D. student in Psychology at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA). Assistant Professor of Pedagogy at the University of the State of Bahia (UEBA). E-mail: [claradaassis@gmail.com](mailto:claradaassis@gmail.com). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0967-7790>.

\*\*Post-doctorate in Education at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA). Adjunct Professor at the Federal University of Vale do São Francisco (Univasf). professor at the Master's Program in Psychology at Univasf and in Teacher Training and Interdisciplinary Practices at the University of Pernambuco (UPE). E-mail: [mribeiro27@gmail.com](mailto:mribeiro27@gmail.com). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1196-7383>.

## Introduction

Care as an essential condition for the affirmation of life has been discussed in different areas, but in a significant way, the issue of care was relevant in the works of Martin Heidegger and Michel Foucault. Although they coincide in the theme (the issue of care) both have different apprehensions and follow equally particular paths. At the same time, despite the distances that mark the ways in which each one will deal with this theme, there seem to be approximations, encounters, and convergences.

This article chooses the theme of care in order to discuss the approximations and distances between Heidegger and Foucault. Thus, we are interested in knowing, specifically, the ideas of self-care articulated by Martin Heidegger and of care of the self, according to Michel Foucault, analyzing the convergences and divergences of these theorists around their reflections and investigations. This writing is based on questions arising from the dissertation work of one of the authors and from the shared experience within the scope of the discipline Interfaces Health and Education<sup>1</sup>, in which they privileged the discussion about care, based on Heidegger's perspective<sup>2</sup>, and Foucault's. In this *démarche*, emerged the need to theoretically elaborate a work that would account for these concepts that are often taken in an inappropriate and confusing way.

As already indicated, this article aims to present similarities and differences between these two theorists around the ideas developed regarding care, specifically self-care and care of the self. How can we understand self-care according to Heidegger? What does Foucault show us about the care of the self? How can we establish a relationship between self-care via Heidegger's thought and care of the self via Foucault?

## The making and path of this work

As already exposed, this text aims to articulate Heidegger's ideas around his thinking about care and, consequently, self-care, as well as discussing the analy-

---

<sup>1</sup>The authors developed via the Graduate Program in Teacher Training and Interdisciplinary Practices (PPGFPI) at the University of Pernambuco – Petrolina Campus and within the scope of the discipline Interfaces Health Education in the Psychology course at the Federal University of Vale do São Francisco (Univasf).

<sup>2</sup>The aforementioned research was developed by Clara M. M. de Sousa and Marcelo S. de S. Ribeiro, entitled "Care in Education: the meanings of experience in the context of research-training with early childhood teachers".

sis carried out by Foucault to discuss the care of the self. In order to do so, a basis was sought from the main works of both authors that dealt with the theme, as well as other works that outline the theme.

From the presentation of both authors around self-care, a contrastive analysis was carried out, according to the studies by Macedo (2018). Both Heidegger and Foucault present milestones in their discussions about care, sometimes approaching and at other times distancing themselves. In this way, contrasting is approaching, as well as understanding the singularities in which the propositions were built. (MACEDO, 2018).

After an individualized study of each theorist on care, specifically regarding self-care and care of the self, meanings were apprehended from their differences. We set out to “understand understandings” according to Macedo (2018, p. 90), using devices such as frames that bring crucial points of consensus and contradictions, unveiling a creative encounter from a conceptual point of view between Heidegger and Foucault.

In order to reach the discussion between the approximations and distances of the thinkers in question, we carried out readings on the two main works of the authors, *Being and Time* by Heidegger (2006) and *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* by Foucault (2004). Subsequently, the information apprehended was systematized in the contrastive sense to highlight the encounters and disagreements between the thinkers. In this way, we were able to contrast the ideas around self-care and care of the self in the studies of Heidegger and Foucault.

As a strategy for exposing the analyzed knowledge, the article is organized into five parts. The first moment is formed by the introduction, in which we make a brief presentation of the problem around the ideas of self-care in Heidegger and Foucault’s care of the self, as well as the way elaborated for such analysis. In the second moment, we discuss self-care in Heidegger, outlining his main ideas. In view of this, the third moment exposes Foucault’s ideas about care of the self, presenting his historical and philosophical discussions. The fourth moment contrasts the authors around what they present as self-care and care of the self. Finally, we carry out the considerations pointing out some possible contributions to the appropriation of the concepts developed by Heidegger and Foucault on care.

## Considerations about self-care by Martin Heidegger's thought

Martin Heidegger, 20th-century German philosopher, was a university professor at the universities of Fribourg and at Marburg, in former Prussia. In his early studies, he was a student and assistant of Edmund Husserl, known as the founder of Phenomenology. In his early studies, he carried out significant analyzes of documents of Christian religious life. As a young thinker, his initial interests were involved with medieval mysticism, the Pauline epistles, and the work of Saint Augustine (ESCUADERO, 2013).

Heidegger's first studies supported the articulation of a Phenomenology of Life, with philosophical inquiries around the question of the meaning of being. For the structuring of his phenomenological way of seeing, he distanced himself from Husserl to undertake his own idea. In the analysis carried out by Valentim (2009), Heidegger criticizes the existential thesis related to the transcendental Phenomenology articulated by Husserl, in which he thinks of a method of scientific rigor based on the exercise of the so-called *epoché*, being the suspension of judgment to know the essence of the phenomenon studied, reaching the "pure self". Transcendental reflection takes place in "putting in parentheses" one's own consciousness and its acts, opening up to reflect the reflected (TOURINHO, 2012).

For Heidegger, the transcendental constitution is given by the possibility of the existence of oneself, that is, it is ontological. Husserl, when thinking about phenomenology as a science of pure consciousness, seeks to indicate that by promoting phenomenological reduction, phenomena are clarified as they appear in consciousness. Against aspects related to consciousness and intentionality, Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, proposed his investigation around the question of Being, inaugurating Existential Phenomenology (MOREIRA, 2010).

Husserl, in *Logical Investigations*, discusses Phenomenology as a descriptive procedure, investigating the phenomenon as it appears. Heidegger agrees with Husserl that Phenomenology has a methodical character to lead the being to the phenomenal field, approaching it from its essence. Heidegger advances this thought, reflecting that more than the efficiency and rigorous application of a method would be relevant to the valorization of the attitude of constant appropriation that the phenomena themselves manifest. In other words, Heidegger understands that the being is integrated in the world, conceptualizing being-in-the-world, not as a mere observer, but as someone who inhabits and

lives together, integrating the historicity that crosses people, cultures and objects (HEIDEGGER, 2006; KAHLMEYER-MERTENS, 2015).

Even though he disassociated himself from Husserl, he was still inspired by his teacher to develop the study of the meaning of being. In addition, several ancient Greek philosophers instigated him in his philosophical thoughts, among them he highlighted the importance in his research of Plato's Philosophy to support Augustinian studies and Aristotle's practical philosophy. The crucial themes of Heidegger's discussions were: the experience of time, anguish, consciousness, and care, the latter being what we will explore the most in this space (ESCUDERO, 2015).

From his publication *Being and Time*, Heidegger highlights his studies around the *being* that questions its own existence, questioning and understanding itself. In this way, Heidegger articulates Phenomenology as a method to achieve the understanding of being, meaning in his words "letting and making what is shown to be seen for oneself" (HEIDEGGER, 2006, p. 74). Phenomenology, while letting the phenomenon appear, is not facing a subject who becomes an observer, but leads to an awareness of what constitutes it. Thus, the phenomenon is what presents itself and comes to consciousness (HOLANDA, 2014).

Still based on Husserl, Phenomenology for Heidegger apprehends the subject and object inseparably, because it is impossible to understand at different times, but it is all the time involved and charged with consciousness. Thus, the questioning around being involves the existential ontological dimension in the movement of being-in-the-world-with-the-others. For the philosopher, the being is not capable of understanding without interpreting the relationship with others and the world.

Heidegger makes considerations around *Dasein*, a term used to develop the idea of being there, as he understands that being is not a thing in the world, but being-in-the-world concerned with its existence. *Dasein* as presence and being-in-the-world chooses between assuming its existence or losing itself. Each *Dasein* is unique in its way of existing because it is constructed in relation to the world (HEIDEGGER, 2006; LOUREIRO, 2009).

Therefore, we present an analysis of the construction of Heidegger's thinking about self-care from five points of discussion: the philosophical foundations that supported Heidegger in the constitution of his position of care; the

dimensions of care as a concern and occupation; the consideration of *Selbstsorge* being self-care, inauthenticity and authenticity; and the considerations about self-care in Heidegger.

### **Philosophical foundations for the constitution of care in Heidegger**

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (2006) brings the fable of Higinio, known as the myth of care. In the myth, Care appears as an archetype that proposes an inspiring idea of giving form to humans. Thus, he establishes a dialogue about the work that was molding the community with clay, bringing as archetypes the planets of the universe: Saturn, Jupiter, and Earth. It is timely that, in the myth, each one has an essential role to give life to the human: body and spirit. (HEIDEGGER, 2006).

To name the work, Jupiter and Care discussed which name to give the creature and Saturn wisely brings the idea that whoever first got inspired, molded, and watched over life, should give the name. That's how Care calls the creature human, man, because it was made of humus, which means fertile land. Thus, the fable ends: "As he who first imagined man was careful, let him stay with him as long as he lives". (HEIDEGGER, 2006, p. 264).

Heidegger (2006), through the myth of care, exposes the process of construction of being-care, thus showing that being is necessary to know what one is, so that the future can be seen as a possibility of existential opening. At every moment in which man discovers themselves, they are also building themselves up, transforming themselves, starting from a raw material to a masterpiece. This construction is being formed little by little, without a determined time. It is letting time and experiences do their work.

According to Escudero (2013), the philosopher Heidegger does not establish prescriptive ways of being, as ancient thinkers once signaled. The analysis carried out by Heidegger is philosophical and consequently formal. In existential analysis, according to Heidegger (2006), it is not possible to discuss what *Da-sein* will manage to resolve factually, since it is an existence moved within the world together with others. Aristotle, for example, in his book *Nicomachean Ethics*, offers instructions on how to seek a full life. It turns to the dimension of the particularity of responsibility towards oneself.

*Dasein* as being there has an ontological character of care. For this, the philosopher uses the term *Sorge*, stating that care is not experienced by being, but being is care itself. This statement is due to the fact that the philosopher articulates the thought that care permeates the structure of being there (HEIDEGGER, 2006). According to Grün (2019), the philosopher in *Being and Time* did not exactly want to describe the attributions that the being needs to have, but the essence that constitutes being there. In this way, *Dasein* is, above all, essential care (HEIDEGGER, 2006; GRÜN, 2019).

For Escudero (2015), Heidegger's concept of care dates back to the ancient Greek tradition of care for the self and the soul. Plato and Aristotle were great propagators of ideas of care that would help people to improve themselves and in the good government of the polis. In this way, Heidegger, when thinking about care as being ontological to being there, reflects that there is no human experience without a relationship with the world.

### **Dimensions of self-care in Heidegger: Worry x Occupation**

Care for Heidegger (2006) establishes the interconnection in the way of existing between being in manual action as an occupation, and in the co-presence in the encounters with others in the world, being the concern. He explains that care as an occupation is given by the dimension of zeal for "things" and with the actions provided by the works to be done and in the daily work service. Concern, on the other hand, is the dimension of care for the other, in coexistence and cordiality with attention and willingness to be with the other. Furthermore, he reflects that the concern has two differences: the first being "to remove the 'care' from the other and take the place of occupations, replacing them" (p.173); and the second is "the possibility of a concern that not so much replace the other, but that precedes them" (p. 174). This means that the dimension of care as a concern can either replace the action of someone's care for themselves, as well as empowering others to take care of themselves.

The way of living self-care for Heidegger (2006) involves the integration between occupation and concern to be lived in an indivisible way. He warns that any attempt to rebuild such a structure will lead to failure, as the great secret for self-care is the balance between the relational dimensions of oneself, the other, and the world.

Self-care is a problem in itself because there is no time or opportunity to experiment. Worrying about oneself in Heidegger's ideas proves to be the most difficult to be lived, since *Dasein* is focused on objectivity, in order to carry out the construction of things and other beings (HEIDEGGER, 2006; ESCUDERO, 2013). When summoned to take care of itself, *Dasein* is called to turn to itself, experiencing calming down as serenity.

### **Self-care while *Selbstsorge* in Heidegger**

In addition to these two dimensions of care, Heidegger (2006) deals with care for oneself in some translations as self-care, while *Selbstsorge*. Heidegger (2006, p. 257), when thinking about *Selbstsorge*, states that “therefore, it does not indicate, primarily or exclusively, an isolated attitude of the self with itself”. That is, self-care reveals itself as an action to the subject themselves, which must always go through the help of others within the world.

Azeredo (2017), when reflecting on *Selbstsorge* based on “Heideggerian” ideas, treats that being as a continuum of existence, which moves to improve the relationship with others and the world. Heidegger (2006) also states that the other structural movements of being, occupation, and concern, are placed within the attitude of self-care, being authentic with yourself, assuming your ways, and meeting with your essence.

It is by looking at itself that the being has the possibility of “being able to be” free toward existence. Heidegger (2006) shows that this original structure is revealed in every attitude and situation that permeates it. Self-care, therefore, shows itself at all times, both in care as an occupation, and in concern for things, the world, and others.

For Heidegger (2006), the being must seek a perfect balance to experience self-care. He exemplifies that contemplative determination is not more important than a political or entertainment action, but emphasizes that the time for the process of carrying out actions for oneself must have priority space so that the being does not lose itself, so to live inauthentically.

The *Selbstsorge* in Heidegger (2006) is an opening to the possibility of experiencing the intensity of the self, appropriating its essence and realizing that at certain moments *Dasein* gets lost in the midst of things and in everyday life

with its imbalances, in addition to being lost because of the opinion of others.

### **Inauthenticity x Authenticity and the care**

Heidegger (2006) shows that *Dasein* lives the duplicity between authenticity and inauthenticity. Authenticity is the effort of being, it is the primordial gesture for existence. The authentic way of living permeates the actions of care, zeal, attention, dedication, and willingness to existentially be in the world with the other (HEIDEGGER, 2006; SALES, 2008).

Inauthenticity is analyzed by Heidegger (2006) as the actions of everyday life, which are shown to be happening because we are imbricated in the idea of being released into the world. Furthermore, inauthenticity affects the encounter with the other. The being in inauthenticity closes itself off to develop and become itself, ceasing to move towards the possibilities of healing. Thus, the game occurs between the authenticity of care hiding in the inauthenticity of being-in-the-world turned to things and the imbalances of everyday life. In other words, in the conscious search between being authentic, *Dasein* falls into inauthenticity, integrating the ambivalence of care (HEIDEGGER, 2006; SALES, 2008).

From the sense of feeling thrown into the world, the being runs away from itself, thus changing the direction of care, living eternal returns, not revealing itself in authenticity, but declining towards inauthenticity according to what its position as a being-in-the-world tells it to be (HEIDEGGER, 2006). According to Escudero (2013), *Dasein* regularly insists on distancing itself and getting closer to itself. He also explains that Heidegger perceives that the being begins to experience the time of detachment rather than proximity.

To this end, Heidegger (1995) in his work *Ontology—The Hermeneutics of Facticity* portrays that the being is summoned to understand itself, becoming accessible through the practice of hermeneutics, in which it interprets itself not about other lives, nor in actions with, but in the being there itself, being awake the revelation of itself. Such action does not arise in an inventive way, but from a fundamental experience in the relationship with oneself, appearing before oneself. In this way, the being there reveals itself in the now, not being able to understand itself in the yesterday, since it no longer exists, nor in the future because it does not yet exist. Existence takes place in the present, in the

moment, being an opportunity to look at yourself.

When fleeing from itself, the being there decays into self-neglect, distancing itself, hiding from the *Selbstsorge* experience. Thus, *Dasein*, while seeking itself, flees from itself, moving in the choices of being able to be (HEIDEGGER, 2006; SAMPAIO, 2013). In the quest to know its existence, the being lives the possible paths between running away from itself or embracing itself in a responsible way in order to desire to live the actions consciously (HEIDEGGER, 2006; ESCUDERO, 2013).

### **Some considerations about self-care in Heidegger**

To look at *Dasein*, according to Heidegger (2006) is to know what to choose in life, thus opening the door to understanding that each being is constituted in a particular way and that it is not possible to universally impose a mode of self-care. It is considered, then, that *Dasein* is always in an attitude of openness, of change, of opening up new possibilities, including turning to itself and recovering its authenticity (HEIDEGGER, 2006; ESCUDERO, 2013).

Heidegger's *Being and Time* (2006) encourages a process of transformation of life, in which what was veiled comes to be revealed, of what until now would only be an opinion that takes the form of truth. The task of being permeates the choice we make at every moment in our life, our habits guide the existence in which we are involved, fighting with ourselves, confronting ourselves, and running away from freedom. In this way, time is the precursor of the self-choice that each person starts to live daily between authenticity and inauthenticity.

Heidegger (2006) makes it clear that *Dasein*, beyond being there, is being-in-the-world. Thus, being-in-the-world is characterized by being with the other, being the "presence" itself (HEIDEGGER, 2006). He still delineates that the world is always shared with others. In this way, we would not be able to understand self-care if we were not involved in lived experiences with others.

Life is, therefore, a brief journey that requires knowing and having the skills to seek a full existence. Thus, Heidegger (2006) invites us to embark on an inner journey, often confusing, but necessary to overcome the obstacles that time indicates to establish. Self-care permeates the action of searching for the safe harbor of existence.

We can then summarize all our analysis so far with the idea that *Dasein* is its opening, since it is its existence and, in existing, it is a totality open in potentiality, sometimes distancing itself from its essence, but in the movement of understanding yourself opening up to the horizon of the coming-to-be from its possibilities not yet realized.

### **The care of the self in Michel Foucault's thinking**

Michel Foucault, a French philosopher of the 20th century, considered one of the great thinkers of postmodernity, was a professor at the Collège de France between the 1970s and the year of his death in 1984. His studies involved different themes, among the most propagated are power relations in social institutions, the body, sexuality, and care, among other investigations (COTRIM; FERNANDES, 2017).

Foucault in his studies was concerned with problematizing the individual and their relationships, in which not only discover what they are, but refuse what society has stipulated that we become. In the mid-early 1980s, the thinker was involved with studies on the production of subjectivity from what the individual perceives of themselves until then being placed in the second instance in his reflections (VIVAR Y SOLER, 2008).

Foucault (1979, p.78) defines “(...) Care of the self as a set of rules of existence that the subject gives to themselves, promoting, according to their will and desire, a form or style of life culminating in aesthetics of existence”. He insists that this form of care does not resemble an ethics in which the subject isolates themselves from the world, but rather returns to themselves after acting. Care of the self or self technologies allow individuals to perform a set of operations on their bodies, souls, thoughts, behaviors, and ways of being, with a view to achieving a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. There is no way to think about this concept of Care without covering it with a pedagogy of the self that produces subjectivization relations.

As a way of organizing our analysis, we discuss the care of the self based on Foucault's thinking in four topics of discussion: the first presents the philosophical and historical foundations on which it was based to articulate care; the second deals with the care of the self as practices to be lived; the third brings

the aspect of occupation to achieve well-being; and finally, the relationship between body and soul as integrative means of care of the self.

### **Philosophical and historical foundations for the constitution of care of the self in Foucault**

Among his works that most portray care of the self, we point out *The History of Sexuality* and *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*. The first addresses the pleasures experienced in Antiquity and the second analyzes Plato's writings, specifically Alcibiades' dialogues with Socrates, emphasizing that self-knowledge is achieved through practice with oneself. As noted, Foucault resorts to ancient philosophers to base his thinking on the care of the self, among them: Socrates, Plato, Marco Aurelio, and Seneca (SIMÃO DE FREITAS, 2010).

The care of the self for Foucault would be involved with a social practice that would spread among individuals, as was taught by the philosophers of antiquity. The *epimeleia heautoû*, meaning care of the self in the Socratic-Platonic period, refers to care as a concrete action, linked to the particularities of different ways of taking care of oneself. Foucault indicates that in this historical period, the idea of care propagated was that "it is necessary that you take care of yourself, that you do not forget about yourself, that you care for yourself" (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 6).

For the Greeks, taking care of oneself was related to the care of the soul, the psyche, exercising thought, in order to question oneself about the truth in order to reflect one's conduct, evaluating and modifying it. The care of the self still permeated activities that were related to reading, studying, exercising contemplation, and building plans for success, as well as for death. (FOUCAULT, 2004; KOVALESKI; OLIVEIRA, 2011).

When proposing the discussion about the care of the self, Foucault performs a historical analysis of three periods. In the first, he analyzes Socrates' philosophical ideas, in order to indicate that people become aware of themselves and the values that commanded their lives. Second, he discusses Plato's writings around the cogito "know thyself", reflecting that taking care of oneself and knowing oneself are at the same point of intersection. Finally, he analyzes the first centuries of the Christian era, in which asceticism took on great strength as daily care practices. But it is in the period from Stoicism to Epicureanism that

Foucault finds more support for thinking about the care of the self practices as new ways of emphasizing human subjectivity. (FOUCAULT, 2004; SANTOS, 2013).

According to Grabois (2011), Foucault makes a return to the sense of care of the self based on three models: the Platonic, the Christian, and the Hellenistic. The first model would be the Platonic one, in which taking care of oneself is overcoming ignorance, consisting in the search to know oneself since knowing oneself elevates the individual to the truth. In the Christian model, asceticism is central as a practice of caring for oneself, in order to decipher the movements present in the soul, until reaching the renunciation of oneself. The third model, being the Hellenistic one, is presented as the constitution of the self as an objective to be achieved. In this model, the subject develops an art of themselves.

### **Practices of care of the self in Foucault**

The subject is constituted in an ethical way from the techniques of the self in favor of new forms of life today, passing through practices that favor the potential to create oneself as a work of art. Thus, in his studies, the philosopher observes that the subject, when practicing care of the self, gets rid of the disciplinary mechanisms and norms that regulate subjectivity. The ethics of caring for the self would be related to the technology of existence, in which people learn to take care of themselves (FOUCAULT, 2010).

According to Foucault (2004), the care of the self would not be a moment of stillness, but of restlessness in which each one sets themselves in motion, in the sense of fulfilling themselves beyond what society imposes on them, exercising the freedom to affirm as a subject of themselves. The individual who puts themselves in care of the self practices, questions themselves, realizing the social roles in which they assume, favoring intervals for the relationship with themselves.

Taking care of oneself for Foucault (2004) permeates the practice of self-government, so that in the permanent process of self-knowledge, the subject has the ability to decide on external tasks. To do so, he based himself on Socratic teachings, legitimizing that self-government is to seek the truth, being one of the practices taught by him to asceticism, which provides moments of self-reflection to later express itself in his way of living life. The practice of

asceticism also involves practices of regulation exercises with the outside, in the words of the philosopher, such as: “(...) role and function always keeping in mind the things that we must have in the mind, namely: the definition of the good, the definition of freedom and the definition of the real” (FOUCAULT, 2004, p. 354).

When dealing with practices of the self, Foucault also points to technologies of the self, in which the individual performs actions to the body, to thoughts, either by themselves or with the help of others, giving them the opportunity to reinvigorate the state of contentment and happiness. (FOUCAULT, 2004; SANTOS, 2013; KOVALESKI; OLIVEIRA, 2011).

Thinking about the technologies of the self according to Foucault is only possible by understanding the concept of power. For the philosopher, power is not restricted to institutions or social apparatus in which subjects are subjugated. But rather, perceiving power in everyday life, in the relationships in which micropowers are exercised, in which individuals show themselves as unequal due to the roles they play socially. In this way, power, for not being egalitarian, leads to consequences under the technologies of the self, for imprinting material consequences directly on bodies, in our society dominated by the capitalist bias of consumption of products and services said to be favorable to well-being (FOUCAULT, 2004; KOVALESKI; OLIVEIRA, 2011).

When approaching the care of the self, in the dimension of bringing the body as a fundamental and important means for the experience of practices, Foucault questions ideas socially constructed historically, which have been changed, thus signaling the opening of other ways of perceiving the body. In addition to the body, the philosopher thinks that there is no way to take care of oneself without taking care of how one thinks, within the historical-social process in which they are involved. (FOUCAULT, 2004; KOVALESKI; OLIVEIRA, 2011).

### **Care of the self in the dimension of taking care of oneself**

In the consumer society in which we are involved, taking care of oneself is transgressing norms, it is being disobedient when producing and producing. Foucault shows that society has established rules of conduct even at times when the individual is not working, dictating that leisure is the moment to overcome idleness and that being idle is practically deviating from the so-called social

normality (FOUCAULT, 2004; KOVALESKI; OLIVEIRA, 2011).

Foucault shows that care of the self “takes time. And it is a great problem of this culture to fix, during the day or life, the part that should be consecrated to it.” (FOUCAULT, 2005, p. 56). Some time in the day should be devoted to looking at oneself, to stock up on self-reflections to better integrate the social body. Frenetic occupation is imposed on us and work reappears all the time, at the same time work is guided by productivism, which makes people forget about activities reserved for themselves.

Taking care of oneself corresponds to taking care of the singular construction of oneself, of the relationship with others, as well as with the body and communication with the transcendent. Since the care of the self is not diverging from the care for political relations. Caring for the self involves caring for spirituality, in which it meets the truth through the purification of the soul. Such a technique integrates self-observation, looking at oneself and everything that concerns the values built in the private life of each individual. (FOUCAULT, 2010).

For Foucault, taking care of oneself is not simply worrying, but keeping a series of occupations for oneself, setting aside time and choosing techniques to practice exercises, and maintaining a certain routine intended for oneself. It covers a set of procedures elaborated with great zeal. It is important to emphasize that the care of the self procedures are constituted of meaning from what each one can consider as caring, with evolutions of this meaning in the relationships with others.

### **The body and soul – means for care of the self**

Foucault, in his discussions, discusses that the body in the care of itself is integrally linked to the soul. The care given to the body needs to be given to the soul, as one communicates to the other the discomfort and disturbances that may afflict the subject. In this way, “the ills of body and soul can communicate with each other and exchange their malaises: there where the bad habits of the soul can lead to physical miseries while the excesses of the body manifest and sustain the faults of the soul” (FOUCAULT, 2005, p.62).

Body and soul, because they are connected, need care actions in a singular

relationship with themselves, being their own caretaker agent. With this, it is important to realize that the body cannot be seen in an instrumental way, but in constant construction with the soul, in order to experience well-being when both are integrated, receiving special care. The care of the self to be lived with constant attitudes, elevates the individual to be subject in the relationship with themselves, not letting anything go unnoticed, but maintaining harmony between everything that involves them, from the experiences with the body, the soul, as well as relationships with others.

Another aspect to be highlighted is the philosopher's contribution to realize that nowadays the cult of the body has spread a lot, leading to an excess of procedures, which instead of helping only tend to disturb the subject, since it leaves aside the care for the soul, not realizing that there are factors that only cause harm and that it does not correspond to taking care of oneself.

Foucault emphasizes from the analyzes of the ancient Greeks that it is necessary to have time, techniques, and overcome disciplinary mechanisms to build a way of caring for the self. For that, practices such as asceticism, elevate the individual to the encounter with the truth, to "know yourself", that is, in addition to knowing the world and everything it has, each person needs to be involved with themselves, with the political factors that it imposes and constitute subjectivization with virtues to be cultivated for the good of themselves through the search for self-knowledge.

### **Heidegger and Foucault – between meetings and distance about self-care and care of the self**

Care as seen so far from the studies of Heidegger and Foucault indicates the concern of both to strengthen the idea that people forget about themselves, making the relationship of self-care or care of the self impossible. Our thinkers put the spotlight so that we all pay attention to a considered ethics of care so that we can live the essential knowledge for an existence in which life is aesthetically created as a work of art, without ready-made models, but sculpting its own way of taking care of oneself.

In this space, we will be looking at the possibility of understanding the approximations and distances in Heidegger's view of self-care and Foucault in his propositions of care of the self. This is in order to better understand that

both thinkers have peculiarities of time, historical and philosophical concepts, and their own experiences that trigger their studies. Therefore, aligning the two thinkers in studies, without thinking that there are differences, would be a huge mistake. In this way, discussing self-care and care of the self based on the encounters and contrasts of Heidegger and Foucault allows us to think that their propositions are as current as they are paradigmatic since we are immersed in social, political, economic, cultural, and individual contexts.

We will therefore bring some meeting points between Heidegger and Foucault on self-care and care of the self. It is important to emphasize that we do not intend to exhaust these points, but to contrast their refinements in terms of distance. In this way, the following table shows us converging points between the thinkers:

**Table 1.** Approaches between Heidegger and Foucault regarding self-care and care of the self

<b>Self-care – Heidegger</b>	<b>Care of the self – Foucault</b>
Philosophical foundations of the Greek thinkers Plato and Aristotle	Philosophical foundations of the Greek thinkers Socrates and Plato
Permeates a structure between occupation and concern	Understands how to take care of actions for oneself
Existential analysis	Hermeneutics of the self
The subject question themselves	The subject asks themselves
Authenticity	One’s own truth
Asceticism	Spirituality as a way of knowing oneself
Self-care is integrated with caring for others	Caring for the self is aligned with caring for the other

Source: authors (2022)

The subject question themselves The subject asks themselves Authenticity One’s own truth Asceticism Spirituality as a way of knowing oneself Self-care is integrated with caring for others Caring for the self is aligned with caring for the other Source: authors (2022).

In Ancient Greece, good living is presented as art and technique, not as a mere aesthetic achievement, carrying out a set of practices that perceive the result of good living itself. Good living is shown in Ancient Greece as a self-reflective attitude, with principles of self-preservation and care for oneself. (FONTOURA, 2017).

The modern period has a direct impact on people’s way of life, due to the accelerated industrial process, scientific advances and profound cultural changes. Modern man doubts their own thinking, for being involved in the process of alienation socially imposed on the consumer culture, deceived with ri-

gid techniques that point them to results considered effective and standardized. Our thinkers, Heidegger and Foucault, rescue knowledge considered influential from Ancient Greece (Socrates, Plato and Aristotle) to finally present the robust project of a path to be built by each person on the path of care. (HEIDEGGER, 2006; FOUCAULT, 2004; CASANOVA, 2009).

Care according to Heidegger (2006) is the totality of the ontological structure as a being-in-the-world, comprising the immense possibilities of existence in relation to things and others. Thinking about care is extrapolating the theoretical to the practical and considering the meaning raised within reality. Both Heidegger and Foucault show that self-care/care of the self is taking care of yourself, knowing techniques or technologies that you put into practice in the daily exercise of attention to your own care. (HEIDEGGER, 2006; FOUCAULT, 2004; SILVA, et al. 2009)

The Greek philosophers (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) are strong illuminators of the thoughts developed by Heidegger and Foucault, understanding care in action, applied concretely. Foucault, using a text by Plato, says that “it is necessary that you take care of yourself, that you do not forget about yourself, that you care for yourself” (FOUCAULT, 2004, p. 6). In line with this idea, Heidegger (2006) presents the dimensions of care as concern and occupation, leading the being to manifest itself as a cure or care from its ontological elaboration. Heidegger also points out that:

[...] being-in-the-world is healing, one can understand, in the preceding analyses, being together with the manual as an occupation and being as the co-presence of others in encounters within the world as a concern. Being-together is occupation because, as a way of being-in, it is determined by its fundamental structure, which is healing. The cure not only characterizes existentiality separated from facticity and decay, but also softens the unity of these ontological determinations. Healing does not, therefore, primarily or exclusively indicate an isolated attitude of the self with itself (HEIDEGGER, 2006, p. 258).

Thus, care cannot be reduced to mere instrumentalization. It is conceived as an ontological-existential phenomenon, a necessary opening for the relationship with the world, with things and people. There is also, in this opening, a willingness to establish decisions in the face of adversities that arise. Foucault (2006) shows us that self-care is a fertile field of learning, of training, implying

a work that needs time to be cultivated, adopting new forms and meanings from the inventiveness that existence itself encourages to break and to meet.

Thus, Heidegger (2006) makes use of existential analysis to seek a way to clarify and support the questioning of *being* for the *being* itself. An analytical way that brings into vogue questions of the essence of *being* and that is able to describe how one is and how one understands oneself, being, therefore, led to a hermeneutic of the factual of being there. In the words of Heidegger himself (2006, p. 94), “life is a way of being, but which, in its essence, only becomes accessible in being there”.

Approaching this way of analyzing existence through being itself, articulated by Heidegger, Foucault explains that the hermeneutics of the self presents itself as:

the formation of procedures by which the subject is led to observe themselves, to analyze themselves, to decipher themselves, to recognize themselves as a domain of possible knowledge”. Hermeneutics of the self is experimental in nature because it aims at “the way in which the subject experiences themselves in a game of truth” (FOUCAULT, 1994, p. 633).

Foucault shows us that the hermeneutics of the self starts from the real need for the constitution of the subject to happen by itself, it would also be a constant to be deciphered via desires. He also demonstrates that the subject is not destined to be subject to the standards required socially, but that, in meeting their truth, they draw the possibility of the relationship with themselves being true. Both thinkers give us indications that the existential analytics and the hermeneutics of the self are part of questioning and questioning oneself, about choices and possibilities, instituting a responsible and conscious way of caring for oneself (HEIDEGGER, 2006; FOUCAULT, 2004).

Heidegger (2006) tells us about care from a perspective of authenticity, in which the being not only theorizes, but creates possibilities to put into practice actions that take care of the human condition. In this bias, Foucault (2004) warns that the ways of living that seek to adopt standardized models are critically thought from the search for knowing their truth. With this, it is clear that both agree that the truth prevails in the construction of care for their own *being*.

A path signaled by the thinkers for the understanding of care for oneself is the practices that turn to spirituality, presented by Foucault, as:

the set of searches, practices and experiences such as purifications, asceticisms, renunciations, conversions of the gaze, modifications of existence, etc, that constitute, not for knowledge, but for the subject, for the subject's very being, the price to be paid in order to have access to the truth (Foucault, 2004, p.19).

For Foucault (2004) spirituality is shown to be a possibility for the subject to know themselves and be able to govern themselves, it is what concerns the transformations that must be carried out in order to reach the truth. In order to do so, Foucault (2004) approaches the ideas of philosophical schools such as the Stoics, Epicureans and Neoplatonists, as well as primitive Christianity to think about spirituality as a practice of caring for the self.

Heidegger (2006) in his thinking about asceticism, demonstrates influence from the Catholic Christianity, as well as Greek philosophers like Plato, valuing mysticism and religious experience as a way of meeting with their own essence. It is in asceticism that the being is stripped of its preconceptions, sinking back into life with conditions to perceive other horizons that point to its existence.

And as a crucial point, Heidegger (2006) and Foucault (2004) argue that there is no self-care/care of the self if it is not together with the other. The awareness of self-care is pointed out by the thinkers as a way of being and living based on the lifestyle. It makes us think that for each being there is a way to take care and take care of themselves. Care is not, therefore, something specific to one or another person, but to everyone, since we go through the experience of life, living with or living suffering.

With these encounters between Heidegger's and Foucault's thoughts about care, it is important that we know essential principles that strengthen practices that promote personal growth in the interpellation between beings and their relationships, with ethics and aesthetics of presence from the care of the self, highlighting primarily self-knowledge. Another aspect that calls our attention is that caring corresponds to an ethic that directs attitudes, not in terms of nar-

cissism or egoism, but in the subject's relationship with the world and with other people.

Just as there are encounters between Heidegger and Foucault in their discussions of care, the following table presents some distances that characterize their differences in thoughts in the relationship of self-care or care of the self.

**Table 2.** Contrasts between Heidegger and Foucault regarding self-care and care of the self

Self-care – Heidegger	Care of the self – Foucault
Ontological Sense	Practices to oneself
Theoretical knowledge also determines the being	Doing – technique
Being-toward-death that determines the totality of care	Practical behavior (care) and theoretical knowledge (knowledge)
Self-care takes place through possibilities as a being-in-the-world	Learning in youth that lasts into old age
	Specific techniques (production techniques, sign systems techniques, power techniques and techniques of the self)

Source: authors (2022)

Heidegger (2006) points to care in the ontological sense, he does not elaborate an idea of something that is detached from being, but that permeates its existential structure. On the other hand, Foucault (2004) reserves himself to think of care of the self as practices in the art of living well, relating it as an action aimed at techniques that aim at a healthy life. Against this, he still points out that the care of the self is done by training in techniques that support the exercise of self-government. While Heidegger (2006) brings care as a sense of being-in-the-world, which is based on the understanding of being thrown into the world, challenged to choose daily to worry and take care of care, whether for oneself, for the other and for the world.

In a singular way, the care of the self in Foucault (2004) derives from the coming and going between practical knowledge (care) and theoretical knowledge (knowledge). In the dynamics of singularization understood as ethical elaboration, the confrontation with the constitutive negativity of being there derives and a two-way street between practical (care) and theoretical (knowledge) behaviors. In a “Heideggerian” understanding, theoretical knowledge also determines our being. The *being* who knows is the *being* who also understands themselves as a being-of-care (HEIDEGGER, 2006; FOUCAULT, 2004; CASANOVA, 2013).

With the idea of finitude, Heidegger (2006) presents that the totality of care

is the being-toward-death, being the opening to what is singular of a being that is always at stake in relationships and therefore never a finished work. In “Foucauldian” ideas, it would be possible to elaborate a universal maxim of self-care practices, which can be learned in youth and can last into old age. (FOUCAULT, 2004). In this game of existence, Heidegger (2006) calls us to realize that we are at stake, taking risks, having limitations, making mistakes and getting things right and, therefore, in need of care, being-together-with-others and needing to be taken care of in order to take care of them.

Foucault (2004) draws on knowledge from Greco-Roman antiquity to support specific techniques that aim to care for the self, being carried out by the people themselves and operating in their bodies, thoughts, and behaviors. He also presents the specific techniques in four groups: 1) production techniques – it is shown how to do it through the instrumentalization that leads to the production of means that help their well-being; 2) techniques of sign systems – the use of meanings, symbols or significations; 3) techniques of power – related to rules of conduct, participation, and governance of the polis; and 4) techniques of the self – it corresponds to an examination of conscience, interpretation of dreams, writing of the self and meditation. With specific techniques, Foucault (2004) demonstrates that each subject is able to find a state of happiness, perfection, or even immortality.

In the words of Heidegger (2006, p. 213), “in being attuned, the being there is always already attunedly unveiled as the entity for which it needs to be responsible in its being as the being that it existing has to be”. For Heidegger (2006) self-care can be seen from the relationship of being with the world, as being-in-the-world. When becoming aware of their real needs, the being has the condition to fine-tune their structural conceptions of existence, being involved in multiple possibilities in the relationship with other beings.

Bringing the approximations and distances regarding self-care and care of the self thought by Heidegger and Michel Foucault makes us think that each philosopher was crossed by singularities, historical, social, and cultural processes, countless influences, in order to try to guarantee us understandings around the Caution. It is relevant that we recognize its particularities in the discussions around dealing with the complexity of thinking around care.

## Final considerations

When we look at the relationships between Heidegger and Foucault around care, we emphasize that each thinker contributes to awakening an ethical and aesthetic behavior for life, taking responsibility and worrying about the good life, through actions to promote care.

We can find many techniques for the exercise of self-care, such as healthy eating, resting, exercising, walking, dancing, working creatively, and building healthy relationships, among others. However, more than just techniques, we need to emphasize that it is in experiencing the senses and desires to take care of oneself, understanding the possibilities within its reach, and in the relationship with the world that we find the abode of being-caring.

We emphasize that further studies are relevant, that there are numerous limitations of this text, which is configured more as a first contrasting look. Obviously, there is a need for further research via more writings on the art of care, involving other dimensions such as care for the others and the world.

With this study, of a theoretical nature, we understand that self-care in the "Heideggerian" view is centered on our totality, being necessary for our existence, realizing its totality, in the following aspects: psychological, biological, spiritual, social, cultural, economic, and environmental. The care of the self via "Foucauldian" thinking is shown by practices that lead the subject to the reach of living well. With this, each being knows about their anxieties and desires, as well as what gives them existential meaning and how to take care of themselves, learnings that will support them throughout their lives in their relationships with themselves, with others and with the world.

## References

- AZEREDO, J. L. "Selbstsorge – cuidado de si e fürsorge – preocupação a partir de Heidegger: análise ontológica em relação a educação". *Revista Linguagem, Ensino e Educação*, Criciúma, v. 1, n. 1, mar. 2017.
- CASANOVA, M. A. *Compreender Heidegger*. 5ª. ed. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2015.
- CASANOVA, M. A.. *Eternidade frágil: ensaio de temporalidade na arte*. Rio de Janeiro: Via Veritas, 2013.
- COTRIM, G.; FERNANDES, M.. *Fundamentos de filosofia*. 4ª ed. São Paulo: Saraiva, 2017.
- ESCUADERO, J. A. "Heidegger. Ejes y temas de su programa filosófico de juventude". *THÉMATA. Revista de Filosofía*, n. 51, p.13-36, 2015.
- ESCUADERO, J. A.. "Heidegger: Being and Time and the Care for the Self". *Open Journal of Philosophy*, v. 3, n. 2, p. 302-307, 2013. Disponível em: <https://www.scirp.org/pdf/2013052910233432.pdf>
- FONTOURA, F. "A arte do bem-viver e seu modelo estrutural segundo a filosofia de epicteto". *Prometeus*, n. 22, 2017.
- FOUCAULT, M. *A hermenêutica do sujeito*. São Paulo, SP: Martins Fontes, 2004.
- FOUCAULT, M. *Repensar a política: ditos e escritos*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Forense Universitária, 2010. (v.4)

- FOUCAULT, M. *História da sexualidade III: o cuidado de si*. 8a. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Edições Graal, 2005.
- FOUCAULT, M. *Dits et écrits* (pp. 631-635). Paris: Gallimard, 1994.
- GRABOIS, P. F. “Sobre a articulação entre cuidado de si e cuidado dos outros no último Foucault: um recuo histórico à antiguidade”. *Ensaios filosóficos*, v. 3, p. 105-120, abril de 2011.
- GRÜN, A. *Cuidar de si e do outro*. Petrópolis – RJ: Vozes, 2019.
- HEIDEGGER, M. *Ser e Tempo*. Parte I. 15a. ed. Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 2006.
- HEIDEGGER, M. *Ontologia. Hermenêutica da facticidade*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1995.
- HOLANDA, A. *Fenomenologia e Humanismo: reflexões necessárias*. Curitiba: Juruá, 2014.
- KAHLMAYER-MERTENS, R. *10 lições sobre Heidegger*. Petrópolis – RJ: Vozes, 2015.
- KOVALESKI, D. F., OLIVEIRA, W. F. de. “Tecnologias do Eu’ e cuidado de si: embates e perspectivas no contexto do capitalismo global”. *Cadernos Brasileiros de Saúde Mental*, Florianópolis, v. 3, n. 6, p. 171-191, 2011.
- LOUREIRO, S. A. G. *Educação humanista e diversidade: um diálogo possível entre Paulo Freire e Martin Heidegger*. Belo Horizonte: Nandyala, 2009.
- MACEDO, R. S. *Pesquisa Contrastiva e estudos multicase: da crítica à razão comparativa ao método contrastivo em ciências sociais e educação*. Salvador: EDUFBA, 2018.
- MOREIRA, V. “Possíveis contribuições de Husserl e Heidegger para a clínica fenomenológica”. *Psicologia em Estudo*, Maringá, v. 15, n. 4, p. 723-731, out./dez. 2010.
- SALES, C. A. “O ser-no-mundo e o cuidado humano: concepções heideggerianas”. *Rev. enferm. UERJ*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 16, n. 4, pp. 563-8, 2008.
- SAMPAIO, V. F. “Reflexão sobre o conhecer si mesmo como acesso ao sentido”. *Rev. NUFEN* [online]. v.5, n.1, Janeiro-Julho, 36-43, 2013. Disponível em: <http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/pdf/rnufen/v5n1/a05.pdf>
- SANTOS, I. B. “A arte do cuidado de si na formação continuada de professores de língua inglesa”. *Revista Caminhos em Linguística Aplicada*, v. 9, n. 2, p. 51-76, 2013.
- SILVA, I. J. et al. “Cuidado, autocuidado e cuidado de si: uma compreensão paradigmática para o cuidado de enfermagem”. *Rev. esc. enferm. USP*, v. 43, n. 3, 2009.
- SIMÃO DE FREITAS, A. “Michel Foucault e o ‘cuidado de si’: a invenção de formas de vida resistentes na educação”. *ETD - Educação Temática Digital*, v. 12, n. 1, pp. 167-190, 2010.
- VALENTIM, M. A. “Heidegger sobre a fenomenologia husserliana: a filosofia transcendental como ontologia”. *O que nos faz pensar*, n. 25, agosto de 2009, p. 213-238.
- VIVAR Y SOLER, R. D. “O cuidado de si em Michel Foucault”. *Percursos*, Florianópolis, v. 9, n. 2, p. 59 – 70, 2008.
- TOURINHO, C. D. C. “A consciência e o mundo na fenomenologia de Husserl: influxos e impactos sobre as ciências humanas”. *Estudos Pesquisas em Psicologia*, v. 12, n.3, p. 852-866, 2012.

**Received:** 29/07/2022

**Approved:** 10/08/2022

**Published:** 31/08/2022