

Truth-telling, Caring and Governing: The Significance of Foucault's Interpretation of *Parrhesia* to Governance

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Abstract: The article is based on the proposition that the study of politics is a study and teaching of values. Political leadership should possess values and virtues important in the exercise of power and authority. The dynamics of power in the society should be analyzed in relation to values, social norms, and cultural standards. This proposition is articulated by exposing the ideas of Michel Foucault on the act of governing. Foucault gives emphasis on the governing of self which is the foundation of the governing of community, society, and state. He also espouses that the political virtues of truth-telling and caring as essential to the act of governing. The discussion of the following concepts are giving emphasis on this article in order to provide a clear understanding Foucault's act of governing and its significance to governance: *parrhesia*, the dynamics of governing of self, as well as the symbiotic relationship between care of the self and truth-telling.

Keywords: Foucault, *parrhesia*, truth-telling, care of the self, governance

Eric Voegelin in his book, *The New Science of Politics*, argues that “the existence of man in political society is historical existence; and the theory of politics, if it penetrates to principles, must at the same time be a theory of history.”¹ He further argues that the works of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Hegel “marked the major earthquake of Western crisis” and were “the great epochs and the great restorations” of the foundation of political science.² Based on these arguments, Voegelin defines the new science of politics as the “science of essence” of society and politics that transcends political processes, policies, and institutions. It is a science of politics that is critical of Max Weber's “value-free” science. Voegelin explains:

The science of Weber supposedly left the political values of the students untouched, since the values were beyond science. The political principles of the students could not be transformed by a science which did not extend to principles of order. Could it perhaps have the indirect effect of inviting the students to revise their values when they realized what unsuspected, and perhaps undesired, consequences their political ideas would have in practice.³

¹ Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 1.

² E. Voegelin.

³ E. Voegelin, 16.

Weber and the modern science espoused an objective and impartial analysis of institutions. By doing so, it means that one's analysis must not be influenced by value-judgment. One's analysis must only be based on facts, on actual events, as well as on the scientific framework of cause and effect. Voegelin would like to throw away this kind of thinking influenced by "value-free" science.

He states:

The teaching of a value-free science of politics in a university would be a senseless enterprise unless it were calculated to influence the values of the students by putting at their disposition an objective knowledge of political reality. In so far as Weber was a great teacher, he gave the lie to his idea of values as demonic decisions.⁴

These ideas of Voegelin introduce a study of politics that is not alien to the study of human existence, society, and history. More so, these ideas present an argument that the study of politics must espouse the study and teaching of values for two main reasons: the students of politics are future leaders who must develop and possess values and virtues which are important in the exercise of power and authority; and secondly, the students of politics must analyze the dynamics of power in the society in relation to their values, social norms, and cultural standards.

This paper exposes the ideas of the French philosopher, Michel Foucault, on the act of governing. It is an act of governing that gives emphasis on the governing of self which is the foundation of the governing of community, society, and state. The governing of self promotes the political virtues of truth-telling and caring. Foucault's ideas on the governing of self as well as on truth-telling and caring are based on his interpretation of the ideas of Socrates.

This paper is divided into five parts. The first part exposes the idea of truth-telling based on the ancient text, *Apology*. In this part, the term *parrhesia*, which means to tell all the truth, is explained. The second part is a discussion on the three types of governing. In this three types of governing, the focus is on the governing of self. In the third part, the dynamics of governing of

⁴ E. Voegelin.

self is illustrated. The illustration is based on Foucault's analysis of the constitution of sexuality in his three volumes of work on sexuality. The fourth describes the symbiotic relationship of care of the self and truth-telling. This symbiotic relationship is important in governing not only of the self but also of others. The last part is a summary of the main ideas about truth-telling, care of the self, and governing of self and their significance of contemporary governance.

I. Truth-telling

Should one engage in politics?

This is one of the questions Socrates raised in the *Apology* which was analyzed by Foucault in his published lecture, *The Courage of Truth*.⁵ The answer of Socrates to this question was he did not engage in politics because he wanted to preserve himself and to protect his life. In other words, he did not want to die. Death is imminent to anyone in the arena of politics, faculty politics. Death is the danger that anyone, particularly the one who tells the truth (i.e., *parrhesiast*), may encounter in politics. However, Foucault clarified that death itself was not the reason why Socrates did not engage in politics. It was not death itself, said Foucault, "but rather some kind of relation to utility, some kind of relation to himself and to the Athenians; this useful, positive and beneficial relation is the reason why the threat hanging over truth in political systems prevented him from speaking the truth in the political term."⁶ In other words, Socrates avoided politics to "safeguard this positive task and responsibility" given to him.⁷ It was the task and responsibility of "particular practice of truth-telling," which is different to the truth-telling that takes place in the political stage.⁸ This truth-telling is what Foucault calls as "Socrates' *Parrhesia*" which is a mission on

⁵ Michel Foucault, *Courage of Truth (The Government of Self and OthersII): Lectures at the College de France 1983-1984*, ed. Frederic Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 75.

⁶ M. Foucault, 80.

⁷ M. Foucault, 83.

⁸ M. Foucault, 81.

which he (Socrates) insists, which he (Socrates) will never abandon, and which he (Socrates) will practice constantly at the very end.”⁹ Socrates “sees it as a job, a responsibility, comparing himself to the soldier who is always at his post.”¹⁰

The aim of “Socrates’ *Parrhesia*” is not only to tell the truth but also to “watch over others continuously, to care for them to take care, not of their wealth, reputation, honors, and offices, but of themselves, that is to say, of their reason, of truth, and of their soul.”¹¹ Furthermore, “Socrates’ *Parrhesia*” would like to insure that people “take care of themselves, that each individual attends to himself as a rational being” in relation to the “truth founded on the very being” of their souls.¹² The “Socrates’ *Parrhesia*” highlights three moments, or processes, in knowing and telling the truth. The first is *zetesis*. This is marked by the search for truth. Once one found the truth, he moves to the second moment which is *exetasis* or the examination of the soul, comparison of the soul, test of the souls.¹³ In this moment, one examines the truth in relation to one self or one soul. The veracity of truth is established not only based on facts or guidance of a teacher but also based on its significance to an individual’s soul or self. Once an individual ascertained that this is indeed the truth after careful examination, he moves to the third moment which is the *epimeleia*. It means taking care of oneself.¹⁴ In the third moment, an individual is expected to care for himself based on the truth. It also means to live his life, to carry one self, to related with others based on the truth. In short, “Socrates’ *Parrhesia*” started with investigation, followed by testing, and lastly, care. Foucault concludes that this courage of truth is “exercised in the form of a non-political

⁹ M. Foucault, 85.

¹⁰ M. Foucault.

¹¹ M. Foucault, 86.

¹² M. Foucault.

¹³ M. Foucault.

¹⁴ M. Foucault.

parrhesia, a *parrhesia* which will take place through the test of the soul.”¹⁵ It is, therefore, an ethical *parrhesia* or an ethical truth-telling.

II. The Three Types of Governing

Foucault identifies three types of governing. These are (1) the governing of oneself, (2) the governing of family, and the (3) “science of governing well.”¹⁶ The first type of governing falls under ethics and morality. It is how individuals conduct themselves in relation to others and with the society and State. The second type of governing is about managing and regulating the affairs in the family. This involves parents regulating the conduct of their children seeing to it their values are in accordance with the norms of the society. It also about parents providing the material welfare of their children such as food, shelter, clothing, and education. The last type is about governing the society and the State as whole. The governing of the society and State is the type of governing that is commonly known. Foucault describes it as the “application of economy, the establishment of an economy, at the level of the State as a whole.”¹⁷ Economy is referred to here as the regulation and control of the inhabitants, wealth, and the conduct of all and each.¹⁸

The relationship of these three types of governing is in continuity.¹⁹ These are not isolated and contradictory to another. In the upward continuity, individuals who want to lead the society and the State must know how to govern themselves. They must be men and women of high moral standards who know how to regulate and control their conduct in relation to their duty and responsibility as leaders of the society and the State. Technical knowledge and skills on governing are important but co-equal with that is the ethical and moral standards. They must not only govern

¹⁵ M. Foucault, 90.

¹⁶ M. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977-1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2004), 93-94.

¹⁷ M. Foucault, 95.

¹⁸ M. Foucault, 95.

¹⁹ M. Foucault. 94.

themselves well but also their family. Providing the moral and material needs of their family is a duty and responsibility that they must not neglect. Instilling discipline and control in the conduct of the family and in the use of family's resources must also be given attention. Those who aspire to lead must inculcate to their family the high moral standards that they impose into themselves. If these acts of governing are accomplished in the levels of the self and of the family, then those who aspire to lead will be successful in governing the society and the State as whole. In the downward continuity, when leaders govern well the society and the State, when they demonstrate high moral standards in the conduct of themselves as well as the affairs of the society and the State, the family's wealth, resources, and needs will be governed well by the parents. Parents will also inculcate high moral standards to their children and thereby making children conduct themselves properly. It follows then that individual members of the society and the State will govern and control themselves as well.

The three types of governing involve regulation and control. The regulation and control of oneself, the family, and the society and the State as whole. And if the society and the State are regulated and controlled well, the family and the individual will be governed properly.

III. Governing of Oneself and the Dynamics of Governing

To illustrate the continuity of these three types of governing, let us turn to Foucault's work on sexuality. In his three volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault discusses the different techniques in Ancient Greek society that were utilized in governing sexuality. These discussions and analyses of Foucault on the effect of power and knowledge on the use of pleasure and constitution of sexuality provide us ideas about his philosophy of government,²⁰ and how the

²⁰ The discussion on government as governing of men based on the construction of sexuality in the Ancient Greek society provides a different explanation of Foucault's idea of government from the perspective of subjectivation and individualization. This is different to his

continuity of the three types of government works. It is evident in his works on sexuality that Foucault sees sexuality as a product of power relations and power-knowledge.²¹ According to Foucault, in the analysis of sexuality, one must uncover “who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said.”²² Different philosophical, political, and economic discourses are used to produce a single view and conduct on sexuality, and in the process eliminate other views that are not relevant to the current climate and milieu. Foucault would like to point out that sexuality is constituted by different discourses and techniques in order for it to be aligned with the economic and political goals of the State. He argues in the first volume of the *The History of Sexuality* that:

By placing the advent of the age of repression in the seventeenth century, after hundreds of years of open spaces and free expression, one adjusts it to coincide with the development of capitalism: it becomes an integral part of the bourgeois order. The minor chronicle of sex and its trials is transposed into the ceremonious history of the modes of production; its trifling aspect fades from view. A principle of explanation emerges after the fact: if sex is so rigorously repressed, this is because it is incompatible with a general and intensive work imperative.²³

Based on these statements, sexuality is governed because of the demands of capitalism and production. Sexuality must be aligned with the definition and requirement of work. This means that sexuality is significant to work and production; thus, sexuality must be constituted and also defined or redefined based on the changing demands of work and production: a strong sexuality must be discovered and constituted in the name of work and production, and the use of sexuality

explanation about pastoral power and modern government wherein Foucault would like to highlight the influence of the former to the latter in terms of welfare and care for the public. In government and sexuality, the researcher would like to give emphasis on the idea of government as the management of individual conduct or as the governing of men. Governments during the ancient time and even today implement laws to govern individual conduct, and in end contributed to the social construction of the individual through the laws and other regulations that it imposed.

²¹ In his published lectures entitled, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France 1975-1976*, Foucault explains that sexuality is a matter for individualizing disciplinary controls being an imminently corporeal mode of behaviour. On the other hand, it is also a matter of regularization because it is a biological process that concerns not the bodies of individuals but the elements. It concerns the multiple unity of the population (p. 251).

²² Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, p. 11.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

must be regulated in the name of economic resources and production. This opens to the use of different techniques in the modern era that lead to the regulation and disciplining of sexuality. An example of such is the regulation of the reproductive health of women by the State. The State perceived that the reproductive health of women is the cause of social ills and problems that hamper economic growth such as over population and poverty. Hence, it must be regulated and this leads to the birth of artificial birth control, a product of medicine's study on the reproductive health of women. The regulation of sexuality through birth control also eliminates the group of people perceived to be weak and liability to the State and to the economy, i.e. the poor, the illiterate, the unhealthy, and even the mad. Regulating the number of people based on economic demands and in the name of economic growth eliminates future problems brought about by unwanted population in the society.

To further expound Foucault's ideas on the governing of sexuality in line with the political demands of the State, these passages in the second volume of *The History of Sexuality* is worth noting:

In any case, the principles of this moral code are always directly referred to the needs of the state, and never to the internal demands of the household, the family, or married life: one should bear in mind that the good marriage is the one that benefits the city and it is for the sake of the latter that the children ought to be "the noblest and best possible"... the injunction, backed up by penalties, to inseminate only one's lawful wife without having any other sexual relations during the period in which one is capable of procreation – all this is tied to the particular structures of an ideal city...²⁴

As stated, Foucault is referring to the Ancient Greece's regulation of marital life and sexual relations between husband and wife. It is explicitly and clearly stated that prescriptions and constitution about marriage is for the benefit of the city state and not for the couple themselves. Marriage, in other words, has political relevance to the State, because through it the couple

²⁴ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, volume 2, Trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 167-168.

procreate or produce children, the future human resources of the State. Hence, it is the interest of the State that it produces “the noblest and the best possible” species for a better and stronger State. Even marital relation, such as the prohibition of extramarital affairs, is prescribed not for the sake of morality itself, but for the interest of the State. The prohibition of extramarital affairs is not only moral but it also political because of its relevance to the achievement of an ideal city or State.

In other words, sexuality is governed, regulated, or disciplined for economic and political reasons, and other reasons based on the situation of the State.²⁵ Sexuality is not only an individual concern or a private affair. The State had particular interest on it from the ancient period and to the modern time, for the reason that it has great significance to the political and economic lives of the State.

How does sexuality have been governed?

It is evident in the succeeding analysis of Foucault that sexuality is governed in the ancient Greece through the governing of the self. In the second volume of the *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault explains that there is a need to govern one’s sexuality because of *aphrodisia* which refers to the “acts, gestures and contacts that produce a certain form of pleasure.”²⁶ However, Foucault clarifies that what is regulated is not pleasure itself but rather the dynamic relationship between acts, pleasures and desires.²⁷ This dynamic relationship is analyzed as ethical or moral in terms of

²⁵ Based on the book of Marilyn B. Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture* (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), Foucault’s idea of sexuality can be described as constructionism. Constructionism believes that “sexuality, from this historical and critical perspective, is so shaped by cultural forces and mediated by factors such as language that it must be seen as uniquely the product of society” (p. 8). It is contradicts that thesis of essentialism that views sexuality as “built into the biology of the human animal, which shapes human institutions and whose will must force its way out, either in the form of direct sexual repression or, if blocked, in the form of perversion or neuroses” (p. 8). William M. Byne in his article, “Why We Cannot Conclude Sexual Orientation Is a Biological Phenomenon” in *Speaking of Sexuality: Interdisciplinary Readings*, eds. J. Kenneth Davidson, Sr. and Nelwyn B. Moore, 2nd edition (California Roxbury Publishing House, 2005) challenges the statement, “sexual orientation is primarily biological phenomenon” from three perspectives: (1) sexual orientation is not a unitary phenomenon that can be explained by single account. “There are multiple pathways to the same endpoint of relative sexual attraction to men or to women;” and this means that sexuality is complex phenomenon (p. 245). (2) Since sexuality is a complex phenomenon, it cannot only be explained by the biological factors. There are psychological, social and experiential factors that also provide explanation about sexuality (p. 245). (3) The biological database itself is weak to support the thesis that sexuality is biological (p. 245). He further explains that the “neuroendocrinological and neuroanatomical evidence does not allow one to resolve that sexual orientation is primarily biological” (p. 247).

²⁶ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, p. 40.

²⁷ Foucault, 43.

quantity and role. Quantitatively, the dynamics is analyzed in terms of number and frequency: acts, pleasures and desires are differentiated with one another as moral or immoral based on the criterion of intensity, or in terms of a lesser or greater, or moderation or excess.²⁸ In other words, the morality or immorality of an act of pleasure and pleasurable desire is a function of moderation or excess. This means that the acts of pleasure and pleasurable desires are not evil in itself. These acts become immoral or evil when it is used in excess or exaggeration or beyond the limitation posed by social norms or institutions. On the other hand, man and woman have specific roles in sexual relationship: the former occupies an active role while the latter occupies a passive role. The morality or immorality of the acts and desires of pleasure is a function of role. One commits immorality when one does not perform, or abandoned, one's role. For example, when man performs a passive role and abandons his active role in sexual relationship, he commits immorality in the use of pleasurable acts and desires. In short, according to Foucault, for man, and even for woman alike, the immorality in the practice of *aphrodisiac* is a function of excess and passivity²⁹ as well as the performance or abandonment of one's role.

In the Ancient Greece, there are two principles used as guide in governing one's sexuality. The first of these principles is *chresis*. The term *chresis* means that an individual must be prudent, reflective and calculative in the way he/she distributes and controls his/her sexual actions.³⁰ This also means that an individual person must manage one's sexual activity and must conduct oneself properly in matters pertaining to sex and sexuality. Further, it means that one should impose a regimen on oneself which he/she observes in the accomplishment of sexual acts.³¹ *Chresis* does not regulate and discipline the use of pleasure through the imposition of stringent rules and harsh

²⁸ Foucault, 44.

²⁹ Foucault, 47.

³⁰ Foucault, 54.

³¹ Foucault, 53.

penalties but by instilling in the consciousness of the person that one should be prudent in the use of pleasure. One must be cautious in what one feels and thinks in terms of one's sexual desires. In being very cautious, one must always reflect on one's intention pushed by sexual and pleasurable desires before he/she translates that intention into action. One must also calculate one's sexual actions to determine the risks or evils that can arise from such sexual acts.

In the management and conduct of sexual activities, one must be aware of his/her sexual needs. These needs can be satisfied through pleasurable acts in a moderate manner and in the performance of one's role, i.e., active for male and passive for female. One must use his/her pleasure for the satisfaction of needs based on his/her personal status. Furthermore one's sexual needs should be satisfied in the "right time" as well as in the proper place; and in the satisfaction of sexual needs using one's pleasurable acts and desires, one must observe it not only in terms of quantity or numbers or frequency but also in the right time and in the right place. Foucault explains that based on the principle of *chresis*, sexuality is governed not through the use, or imposition, of laws but rather through the use of a *techne* or practice such as being prudent, reflective, calculative; and the practice of managing and conducting one's sexual activity properly. This *techne*, Foucault further explains, "guides action in its time, according to its context, and in view of its ends." That is why in this form of morality, an individual person makes himself/herself an ethical subject not by following moral rules but by adopting a kind of attitude towards sexuality and by his quest to individualize and modulate his action, and not to universalize it.³²

Another principle used as guide in governing one's sexuality is *enkrateia*. *Enkrateia* is characterized by an "active form of self-mastery, which enables one to resist or struggle, and to achieve domination in the area of desires and pleasures."³³ This principle implies that one has to

³² Foucault, 62.

³³ Foucault, 64.

dominate or control one's sexual pleasures and desires by resisting, struggling and combating. This is an ethics of power because one becomes moral and ethical by resisting and struggling over one's sexual pleasures and desires, which are also defined as inferior human appetite that makes humans similar with animals. Hence, in order for man to be superior over and different to animals he must continuously resist and struggle over his sexual pleasures and desires. This is a form of war whose ultimate goal at the end is to conquer one's internal enemy, that is, desire and pleasure.

Based on the principles of *chresis* and *enkrateia*, one's sexuality is governed by following two principles: the first is by following a regimen or moral codes that would guide one's thought and action; and the second is, by resisting or struggling or by exercising a morality of behaviors.³⁴ The two principles imply deliberate practice of liberty in governing one's sexuality because one is allowed to conduct himself based on the mastery of the codes. In this context, individual's sexuality is governed between the action of the self and the determination of the same self.³⁵ Furthermore, the individual is "coded or recoded within a 'moral' knowledge" but on the other hand that individual is "tied to his own identity by conscience of self-knowledge, through all the techniques of moral and human sciences that go to make up a knowledge of the subject."³⁶ The governing of the self, or of sexuality in this case, is a dynamic interplay between code, behavior, prescription of moral code, and the liberty to act based upon such code. This means that the human person's sexuality is governed not simply by determinism but also by his/her volition to behave based on that code. One decided to behave on that code because he believed on the truth value of such code.

³⁴ Beatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*, trans. Edward Pile (California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 158.

³⁵ Beatrice Han, 159.

³⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 103.

In relation to the principle of *enkrateia*, Foucault mentions about the principle of *epimeleia heautou*, which means “care of the self.”³⁷ This is a fundamental philosophy which guides one’s action and behavior. Based on this principle, the human person should “attend effectively to the self, and to exercise and transform oneself” for him/her to become moral and ethical. This fundamental philosophy does not espouse the idea that human persons must be selfish and should not take care of the affairs of others but instead focus only on oneself. Rather, this espouses the idea that one cannot take care of others by not taking care first of oneself. For example, a leader cannot govern over the city and take care of the needs of others by not taking care first of oneself; and taking care of one’s self implies that a leader should continuously improve oneself, know continuously to master one’s self. This is based on the fundamental belief that self-mastery and the mastery of others are similar and the same in form. Furthermore, this is based on the political principle which states that “governing oneself, managing one’s state, and participating in the administration of the city were three practices of the same type.”³⁸ This does not simplistically mean that everything starts with oneself; it, however, implies that the way to govern oneself, control oneself, resist oneself is also similar to the way one governs, controls or resists others and the society as well as the State. This, furthermore, means that the management of one’s household and private estate reflects on how one will manage or govern the city and the State. In other words, the model for the governing of others and of the whole society, city, and State is the way one governs himself and his household or his private property.³⁹

³⁷ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, 73.

³⁸ Foucault, 76.

³⁹ According to Skinner (see page 14), “Democratic Athens invested each *kyrios*, or male citizen who headed a household, with a patriarchal authority. This meant that the *kyrios* was himself responsible for the conduct of all other members of that household, its women, children, and slaves, and acted as their legal guardian and representative in the public sphere. At the same time, he also performed his civic duties by attending popular assemblies, voting, holding office, serving on juries, and defending the city-state in wartime. Competence to supervise the private economy of an *oikos*, to deliberate prudently on affairs of state, to manage public business, and to conduct oneself bravely on the battlefield depended upon self-mastery....” This statements of Skinner supports the idea that in Ancient Greek society, self-mastery, which also includes care of the self, of the male citizen is very important for him to perform his various duties in the household as well as in the State.

IV. Care of the Self and Truth-Telling

In his published lectures entitled, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault provides an extensive discussion on the “care of the self” and on other themes that are related to it. First, a master is required in order for an individual to learn to care for himself/herself. However, the role of the master is different to that of a teacher. He/she is not concerned with the knowledge and abilities of the person; rather, the master is one who “cares about the subject’s care for himself, and who finds in his love for his discipline the possibility of caring for the disciple’s care for himself.”⁴⁰ Secondly, the care for the self does not only require the presence of the master but also knowledge of oneself: the care for the self means to know oneself. This means that looking at the self is an element that is the same as the self and in this element one must look at that which is the very source of thought and knowledge, and that source is the divine.⁴¹ The care of the self does not only mean, then, knowing oneself but also knowing the divine, the source of all knowledge and thought about the self. This implies a relation between the self and the divine; one knows better himself/herself if he/she also knows the divine, the ultimate source of the self. But what moves an individual to know himself? Foucault explained that one will only work on knowing himself/herself when he/she accepts his/her ignorance or being unaware of oneself. Ignorance is a requirement in knowing oneself; and it is also a requirement in the care of the self.⁴² One realizes the need to care for oneself when he/she admits that he/she is ignorant of himself/herself.

Foucault also discussed several themes that are related to the care of the self. The first is *ascesis*. *Ascesis* first means defining one’s end or objective and fixing oneself based on that end or objective; second, it means providing oneself of something he/she does not possess; and last, to

⁴⁰ Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the College de France 1981-1982*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 59.

⁴¹ Foucault, 71.

⁴² Foucault, 254.

bind oneself to the truth.⁴³ *Ascesis*, in short, is providing oneself with the truth, the truth that he/she needs in order for him/her to have an orderly existence and meaningful life. It is for this reason that Foucault describes *ascesis* as “coming together with oneself” and the “subjectivation of a true discourse in a practice and exercise of oneself on oneself.”⁴⁴ In other words, *ascesis* means the subjectivation of oneself as self is based on the true discourse; and a person who cares for himself must be involved in the subjectivation of oneself based on true discourses.

Aside from *ascesis*, Foucault also discusses the principle of *meletan* which means the exercise of appropriation. Under this principle one is in an “appropriation that consists in ensuring that, from this true thing, we become the subject who thinks the truth, and from this subject who thinks the truth, we become a subject who acts properly.”⁴⁵ This principle is very important for those who care for themselves, because it reminds them that they should not only think and speak of the truth but they should act properly according to that truth. Acting according to the truth is the true attitude of persons who care for themselves. Another important principle related to the care for the self is the principle of *parrhesia*, which means to speak freely. According to Foucault, it is the “naked transmission” of truth itself; that one is speaking freely when the true discourse is transferred on him, and not just transferred but received it and he is already impregnated by it; that is why, one is able to use it and subjectivize it, make it as his own.⁴⁶ Speaking freely is essential in caring for oneself because a person who cares for himself/herself does not only know himself/herself but also believes that what he/she knows aside from himself is the truth. He/she believes on it as true after careful reflection and recollection. In short, *parrhesia* is speaking freely in accordance with the truth.

⁴³ Foucault, 332.

⁴⁴ Foucault, 333.

⁴⁵ Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 357.

⁴⁶ Foucault, 382.

So what is *parrhesia*?

Going back to the *Courage of Truth*, Foucault talks about the relationship between care for one self and *parrhesia*. *Parrhesia* means to tell all, a telling all that is tied to the truth.⁴⁷ It is not simply a talk that gives one's opinion on any issue that confront the society. It is tell-all that is tied to the truth. It is implied that the *parrhesiast*, the one who tells the truth, has an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the truth. He/she has searched for it, verified it, examined it, and convinced by it. In other words, he/she acts based on the truth that he/she examined and verified. Convinced by it, he/she is tied to it and is always ready to tell-all the truth, "without hiding any part of it, without hiding it behind anything."⁴⁸ That is why the *parrhesiast* takes a risk every time he/she tells the truth. It is a violent and deadly risk. It is a risk that will not only destroy friendship and invite the ire of critics. It is also a risk that can put oneself in danger and eventually face death. However, the *parrhesiast* is not concerned with the risk, though he/she is aware of it. He/she is concern only of letting the people know about the truth. *Parrhesia*, then, is not only telling the truth but the courage to tell the truth regardless of the outcome.

It is also important to take note that *parrhesia* is a technique in counter-balancing.⁴⁹ It is a counter-balance to the deployment of power in the dynamics of power-relations of institutions because someone has the courage to check the utilization of power over individuals, particularly if it is excessive, by telling the truth that challenges institutions. *Parrhesia* is a counter-balance, or counter-conduct, to the politics of truth. In the latter, truth is a product of dynamic network of power relations involving institutions. On the other hand, the former emphasizes that truth is a confession from individual who has knowledge about the truth. In the act of confessing, he/she

⁴⁷ M. Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 10.

⁴⁸ M. Foucault, 10.

⁴⁹ M. Foucault, 14.

challenges the prevailing or dominant truth that institutions propagate. The *parrhesiast* may introduce revolutionary discourses that are tied to the truth by criticizing society and its institutions as well as the prejudices and norms that prevail in the society and its dominant institutions. He/she may also put into question the current “regime of truth” using moral discourses. He/she may challenge the prevailing truth and its influence to institutions and their strategies, techniques, processes, and procedures.

Being a *parrhesiast* is a threat to institutions because he/she challenges the truth which is essential for the existence and survival of a society and of the State. All societies and States and their institutions are founded on certain principles which are tied to the truth. These principles are sacred to them because it is the soul of the State, society, and institutions. These are sacred for the reason that they provide the reason for their existence and the justification for all their actions and decisions. It is only natural for the States, societies, and institutions to protect these sacred principles which are tied to the truth. Hence, it is expected that they may react violently to the one who has the courage to tell the truth that challenges their current “regime of truth.”

In the ancient democratic Greek society, for example, *parrhesia* has no place because truth-telling is dangerous not only for the city but for the *parrhesiast* himself in the sense that he would be opposed by the will of the majority. The acceptance of truth would depend on the culture and structure of societies, States, and institutions. Truth would prevail if the social and political milieu would allow it. In the language of Foucault:

True discourse is powerless due to the institutional framework in which it emerges and tries to assert its truth. The powerlessness of true discourse in democracy is obviously not due to the true discourse, to the fact that the discourse is true. It is due to the very structure of democracy.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ M. Foucault, 40.

Truth is structural because structure provides support, the scaffolding, to true discourse. True discourse maybe subjugated, and the *parrhesiast* may be put in danger if the structure does not recognize with the discourse as true. History is a witness to this. Men and women of different societies were put into prisons or exiled or eliminated because the structures of their societies were not yet “fertile” for their seed of truth to grow. These structures are founded on principles that the societies cherished. Let us take the life of Socrates as an example. Socrates did not enter the arena of politics in truth-telling because he was concern of his safety and of his own life. He did not take part in political deliberations in the democratic arena and institutions because he knew that such did not have space for truth-telling and such would put his life at risk, by being eliminated.⁵¹ This is the danger of being a *parrhesiast* especially in societies and institutions that have structural and political faults and defects.

V. Truth-telling, Care of the Self, and Governance

Based on the discussions above, it can be inferred that governing or to use a contemporary term, governance starts with the governing of self. This means that an orderly community, society, and state start from governing of self. That is why truth-telling and caring for the self are given emphasis in Foucault’s analysis of Socrates’s ideas. These are political virtues essential in managing the affairs of the society and the state. In the exercise of leadership as well as active collaboration in the dynamics of politics, the courage to tell the truth and to care for the self and for others are essential guidance principles. Like Socrates, meaningful participation in the social interaction and political dynamics involved caring for the self and caring for others. Caring for the self is not an act of selfishness. It is founded on the premise that leaders and members of the

⁵¹ M. Foucault, 76, 80.

society and state must live a life based on the truth that one has discovered and they agreed upon. In other words, it means living a life where there is congruency between what one professes as truth and one's action and behavior. Truth-telling is not political though it is exercised in the realms of institutions and in the dynamics of power and relationship. Truth-telling is ethical in the realms of politics and dynamics of power and social relationship because it emphasizes harmony between what one says and what one acts. In other words, it emphasizes integrity and authenticity. Truth-telling, therefore, is essential in governing in the sense that governing starts with one self – the self that needs to be disciplined, regulated, controlled in order to have a just and orderly society. It is also the self that must be ethical and moral by behaving based the truth. It is the self that care for the self as well as for others.

Foucault's idea of effective governance that starts with governing of the self is articulated in the three volumes of his work on sexuality. Sexuality is governed through a *techne* of being prudent, reflective, and calculative. It is the *techne* about managing and conducting one's sexual activity properly. It is the *techne* that quests for individualizing and modulating one's action and behavior. This *techne* is based on the power ethics where one must dominate and control sexual pleasures and desires by resisting, struggling, and combating. It is the power to conquer one's internal enemy – desire and pleasure. The *techne* that governed sexuality also include following a regimen or moral codes, which are accepted as truth, to guide one's thought and action; as well as, resisting desire and pleasure and exercising a morality of behavior.

In the governing of self, an individual is expected to exercise control, regulation and transfer of the self to be moral and ethical. Knowledge of one's self as well as acceptance of one's ignorance are essential in the governing of self. These traits are significant for leaders and members of society in governing themselves and others. Having an end or goal where leaders'

and members' fixed their existence is also essential in the governing of self. This end or goal provide them guidance and direction to live harmoniously and orderly with one another. Lastly, it is also essential in the governing of self that one thinks, speaks, and acts based on the truth being professed.

Parrhesia, or tell all, is essential to the governing of self in the sense that he/she who governs himself/herself and others must always tell all that is tied to the truth; at the same time, resist institutions and the power that in the name of truth and using that truth as basis of discourse. That is why those who govern or lead must be willing to challenge the status quo if it is required by the truth. It follows then that since they know the truth, they must "counter conduct" the truth and discourses produced by network of institutions. They must also accept that their lives may be put at risk because they speak and live a life according to the truth, that may pose as a threat or challenge to existing institutions and to the status quo.

These ideas on truth-telling, caring, and governing of self are significant to contemporary governance. Governance is "part of neo-liberal programme of shrinking 'Big Government' by enabling citizens to take over state activities."⁵² By shrinking the "Big Government," governance is more "inclusive, pluralistic, consensual and less hierarchical allocation of authority wherein activities are backed by shared goals."⁵³ Based on these descriptions, governance is characterized by a "small government" in the sense that not all state activities such as policy-making, program implementation, and delivery of public services and public goods are being performed by the government or the public sector. The government, in other words, has no monopoly in the exercise of power and authority because it allows the participation of the different sectors of the society in

⁵² Andy Alaszweski, "Drugs, risk and society: Government, governance, or governmentality" in *Health, Risk, and Society*, Vol. 13, No. 5, August 2011, 392.

⁵³ Cris Shore, "European Governance or Governmentality?: The European Commission and the Future of Democratic Government" in *European Law Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 3, May 2011, 296.

managing the affairs of the state. However, the different stakeholders in governance though they represent different sectors and interest, work towards a common goal; and such goal can be summarized by the terms “development” and “improvement of quality of life.”

Governance is not necessarily government. It is a “process that involves both public and private actors, the activities of which are coordinated through both formal and informal rules and guidelines in such a way that a common or public goal is advanced.”⁵⁴ Governance is equated to an effectiveness and efficiency in the management of the affairs of the state or in the exercise of authority. To be more specific, it is equated to an effective and efficient delivery of quality public goods. Effectiveness, efficiency and quality in governance are achieved because of participation and partnership between the public and private sectors that includes the civil society organizations. Furthermore, it is also achieved due to the technical expertise provided for by the different sectors. That is why governance as a process balances both technical expertise and public participation in order to achieve the desired results⁵⁵ such as improved delivery of services, quality public policies, responsive programs, and elimination of corrupt practices. Furthermore, as a process, governance also provides set of tools for solving public problems and issues through informal sharing arrangement, public-private partnerships, joint power agreements, and participatory planning.⁵⁶ This “set of tools” demonstrates that government is the sole answer to solve problems. Government is not the solution to all problems and may not have all the answers to resolve public issues. Public issues and problems can be best resolved by partnership and collaboration of

⁵⁴ Ole Jacob Sending & Ivy B. Neumann, “Governance to Governmentality: Analyzing NGOs, States, and Power” in *International Studies Quarterly* (2006) 50, 653.

⁵⁵ Susan Rose-Ackerman, “What Does ‘Governance’ Mean?” In *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, Vol. 30, No. 1, January 2017.

⁵⁶ Tyler A. Scott and Craig W. Thomas, “Unpacking the Collaborative Tool Box: Why and When Do Public Managers Choose Collaborative Governance Strategies” in *Policy Studies Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 2017.

different sectors. Development and the enhancement of people's quality of life can be realized by all stakeholders working together.

For partnership, participation and collaboration of different stakeholders be meaningful and productive, governance must embrace the political virtues of truth-telling, caring and governing of self. These political virtues are enabler of good governance because these will develop trust and confidence among the different stakeholders. All stakeholders are concerned of acting and deciding based on the truth and they will remind everyone of that truth. All stakeholders are conscious that they have to care not only for their own interests but also for the interests of other particular the public. Hence, they exercise prudence and observe moral standards in their decisions and actions. All stakeholders are aware that they have to keep on improving and developing in order to provide better services to the public. These political virtues of truth-telling, caring, and governing of self are essential for all stakeholders to be aware of their accountability to the people. Their policy and political decisions must always consider the welfare of the people, for they are accountable for the people.

These political virtues are also essential for leadership in governance. The leaders including all stakeholders must always exhibit authenticity, consistency, and integrity in their relationship, interaction, and decision. By observing these political virtues leadership and other stakeholders in governance will get not only the trust and confidence of the people but also their respect. By getting their respect, they will command obedience from the people. People will obey the leadership because it demonstrates moral and ethical standards in governance. These political virtues, therefore, make leadership in governance transformative.

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