Lyat Friedman

Technologies and Practices of Criticism

In a 1980 lecture, Michel Foucault states,
[We seek] . . . another kind of critical philosophy. Not a critical philosophy that seeks to determine the conditions and the limits of our possible knowledge of the object, but a critical philosophy that seeks the conditions and the indefinite possibilities of transforming the subject, of transforming ourselves ("Subjectivity and Truth," 152-3)

While Immanuel Kant' critique delineates the conditions and limits of knowledge, Foucault seeks a critique that bring about a transformation of and in the subject.   He does not ask about the object of knowledge. Rather, Foucault seeks to understand the practices and techniques of the self that induce transformation. He compares the Stoics' techniques with the religious practices of Christianity; Christian practices with Modern techniques of the subject. He studies the changes criticism inaugurates.
This paper seeks to examine critique—a technique of self—that induces and activates a transformation of the self in an age of digital technologies. If the Stoic disciple compared written lists of chores in order to study how to better oneself; the Christian follower orally confessed one's failings and sins; the modern citizen practiced published criticism of one's hegemonic institutions; then these days, social platforms generate systematic inserts of praises and applauses. I will argue in this paper that the daily digital postings uses Christian practices of placing oneself before the observing eyes of those watching, substituting the notion of sin with that of pleasure.