

Ethno-Philosophy: A Caring Approach to Research and Therapy in Humanities

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Abstract : The integration of philosophy with ethnography, i.e., ethno-philosophy, or any qualitative method, is multi-dimensional. It is, thus, vital to the discourse on caring in the philosophy of education, and in therapy. These two significant dimensions are focal in this proposal's discussion. The integration of grounded data with philosophy can shed light on cultural, gender, socio-economic and political diversities in the relationships and interactions between and among individuals and societies. This approach can explain miscommunication and, eventually, violent conflicts. The ethno-philosophy study in this proposal focuses on the term caring, through case studies of 5 non-white male and female elementary school teachers in Los Angeles County. The study examined the teachers' views on caring and, consequently, the implications on their pedagogy. Subsequently, this method turned out to also be a caring approach in therapy. Ethnographic data was juxtaposed with western philosophy. Research discussion unraveled transformable gaps between western patriarchal and feminist philosophy on caring, and that of the teachers. Multiple interpretations and practices of caring were found due to cultural, gender, and socio-economic-political differences. Likewise, two dominant categories emerged. The first is inclusive caring, which is perceived as an ideal, as the compass of humanity that aims towards emancipation from the shackles of inner and external violence. The second is tribal caring, which illuminates the inherently dialectical substantial diversity in the interpretations and praxes of caring. Such angles are absent or minor in traditional western literature. Both categories teach of the incessant dynamic definition of caring, and its subliminal and repressed mechanisms. The multi-cultural aspects can teach us, however, that despite the inclusive common ground we share on caring, and despite personal and social awareness of cultural and gender differences, the hegemonic ruling-class governs the standardized conventional interpretation of caring. Second is the dimension of therapy in ethno-philosophy. Each patient is like a case study per se, and is a self-ethnographer. Thus, the patient is the self-observer and data collector, and the therapist is the philosopher who helps deconstruct into fragments the consciousness that comprises our well-being and self-esteem and acceptance. Together, they both identify and confront hurdles that hinder the pursuit of a more composed attitude towards ourselves and others. Together, they study and re-organize these fragments into a more comprehensible and composed self-acceptance. Therefore, the ethno-philosophy method, which stems from a caring approach, confronts the internal and external conflicts that govern our relationships with others. It sheds light on the dark and subliminal spots in our minds and hearts that operate us. Unveiling the hidden spots helps identify a shared ground that can supersede miscommunication and conflicts among and between people. The juxtaposition of ethnography with philosophy, as a caring approach in education and therapy, emphasizes that planet earth is like a web. Hence, despite the common mechanism that stimulates a caring approach towards the other, ethno-philosophy can help undermine the ruling patriarchal oppressive forces that define and standardize caring relationships, and to subsequently bridge gaps between people.

Keywords : caring, philosophy of education, ethnography, therapy, research

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