

The Lived Experience of Caregiving as a Vulnerable Person: Preliminary Findings of an Applied Hermeneutic Phenomenology Study

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Abstract : In different fields, there are people who have something that stands out. In the educational world, for example, it is clear when some teachers have something: they are the best teachers, but this is not directly attributed to their disciplines, methodologies, etc. It is that they have something that captivates, inspires, and motivates. But we also find this something in other contexts. In this thesis, the interest is in something that some marginalized people, such as Ab (fictitious name), have. Ab was born in a rural community and saw the lifestyle of his family change drastically as a consequence of structural changes in his village. The community became impoverished, and together with a group of teenagers, he decided to migrate to Spain in search of opportunities. His best friend drowned during the crossing. After arriving, he lived in indecent conditions and felt unsafe. He now suffers from anxiety and frequently faints from it. Yet, he's linked to Joves x la pau (a Christian project, although he is a Muslim), distributing food for people who live on the streets every Thursday afternoon. When he asked about what happens on cold and rainy days, he explained simply: "if it rains, I distribute the food, and immediately I get home, take a bath, and sleep warm under my roof. That is when we most have to go." This something he has will be called caring. And one of the general objectives of the thesis is to discover what are the meaning structures of this caring what is the lived experience of this caring. In this communication, preliminary results of an Applied Hermeneutic Phenomenology (AHP) study on the lived experience of caring as a vulnerable person are presented. The research means to answer what is the lived experience of caring as a vulnerable person. That is, to describe and explain what it is like to caregive for a vulnerable person, what it is, essentially, to caregive for a vulnerable person, what makes the lived experience of caregiving for a vulnerable person different from any other. In order to investigate the meaning of the phenomenon of caregiving as a vulnerable person, as already stated, the method used will be Applied Hermeneutic Phenomenology (AHP). We base ourselves, initially, on the proposal of Raquel Ayala-Carabajo and Max Van Manen. As Van Manen (1990) explains, AHP is a method that works essentially through fieldwork, with the collection of data on lived experience (experiential material). It is a phenomenology of practice. We here present the provisional themes we found: caregiving as a vulnerable person is seeing yourself in the other, identifying with the care-receiver; Caregiving as a vulnerable person is putting the other's need before oneself's; Caregiving as a vulnerable person is temporarily overcoming your weaknesses to make yourself strong for the other; Caregiving as a vulnerable person is going beyond the conventional approach; and Caregiving as a vulnerable person is taking responsibility even if it's not yours.

Keywords : applied hermeneutic phenomenology, care ethics, hermeneutics, phenomenology

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