

## Care as a Situated Universal: Defining Care as a Practical Phenomenology Study

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**Abstract :** This communication presents an aspect of phenomenon selection in an applied hermeneutic phenomenology study on care and vulnerability: the need to consider it as a situated universal. For that, we will first present the study and its methodology. Secondly, we will expose the need to understand phenomena as situation-defined, incorporating feminist thought. In an informatics class for 14 year olds, we explained the exercise: students have to make a 5 slide presentation about a topic of their choice. A does it on streetwear, B on Cristiano Ronaldo, C on Marvel, but J did it on Down Syndrome. Introducing it to the class, J explains the physical and cognitive differences caused by trisomy; when asked to explain it further, he says: "they are angels, teacher," and shows us a poster on his cellphone that says: if you laugh at a different child he will laugh with you because his innocence outweighs your ignorance. The anecdote shows, better than any theoretical explanation, something that some vulnerable people have; something beautiful and special but difficult to define. Let's call this something caring. The research has the main objective of accounting for the experience of caregiving in vulnerability, and it will be carried out with Applied Hermeneutic Phenomenology (AHP). The method's objective is to investigate the lived human experience in its pre-reflexive dimension to know its meaning structures. Contrary to other research methods, AHP does not produce theory about a specific context but seeks the meaning of the lived experience, in its characteristic of human experience. However, it is necessary that we understand care as defined in a concrete situation. We cannot start the research with an a priori definitive concept of care, or we would fall into the mistake of closing ourselves to only what we already know, as explained by Levinas. We incorporate, then, the notion of situated universals. Loyal to phenomenology, the definition of the phenomenon should start with an investigation of the word's etymology: the word cura, in its etymological root, means care. And care comes from the Latin word cogitatus/cōgīto, which means "to pursue something in mind" and "to consider thoroughly." The verb cōgīto, meanwhile, is composed of co- (altogether) and agitare (to deal with or think committedly about something, to concern oneself with) / āgīto (to set in motion, to move). Care, therefore, has in its origin a meditation on something, a concern about something, a verb that has a sense of action and movement. To care is to act out of concern for something/someone. This etymology, though, is not the final definition of the phenomenon, but only its skeleton. It needs to be embodied in the concrete situation to become a possible lived experience. And that means that the lived experience descriptions (LEDs) should be selected by taking into consideration how and if care was engendered in that concrete experience. Defining the phenomenon has to take into consideration situated knowledge.

**Keywords :** applied hermeneutic phenomenology, care ethics, hermeneutics, phenomenology, situated universalism

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