ABSTRACT
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Responsibility as Sounding Board in the Caring’s Context of Meaning
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The purpose of this dissertation is to examine and investigate the concept of “responsibility” - its inner meaning with the intention of formulating a pattern, a theoretical model of the inner responsibility’s figuration of facts and thereby create the conditions for caring in responsibility – emanating from the ethos of caring and caritative caring ethics. The dissertation’s pre-understanding and theoretical perspective is based on Eriksson’s caring science theory and its basic assumptions as well as the knowledge developed at the Department of Caring Science, Åbo Akademi University.

The overarching methodological approach is hermeneutic with a starting point in the thoughts of Gadamer (1997). The approach reveals new horizons of understanding when a search for the inner meaning of responsibility advances through an ontological determination of the inner core of responsibility. The inner core of responsibility consists of freedom, guilt and love and constitutes the foundation of the research. That which is true and evident in the core of responsibility is detected, expressed and discerned through the methodical application of conceptual analysis, the hermeneutic act of reading and a meta-synthesis of the various materials. The different figurations of responsibility that are constructed in the dissertation are reflected against a caring science substance model (the interpretive foundation) and deepen the understanding of the inner meaning of responsibility in caring’s context of meaning.

The main research questions are: What is responsibility and what is responsibility’s meaning-bearing meaning-content in caring’s context of meaning? The various figurations of responsibility ultimately result in a dialogue between the figurations and the fusion of the horizons elicits the inner core of responsibility. The fusion of the horizons of responsibility’s figuration together with the caring science substance model comprises that which becomes true and evident for responsibility’s figuration of facts in caring’s context of meaning.

The dissertation’s results are seen in the form of two axioms, each with a sub-category/ axiom. The core of responsibility is understood in eight theses on freedom, seven theses on guilt and six theses on love. Responsibility’s figuration of facts demonstrates a knowledge where the meaning-content of freedom, guilt and love are related to one another in an uninterrupted substance movement and in which freedom and love form guilt’s conditions for responsibility. Freedom, guilt and love pertain to life-knowledge and create a unit in the core of responsibility that enables the personal inner to develop and refine itself through the deeds of responsibility in caring’s context of meaning. To possess the will and ability to, through the act of caring, dedicate to each patient a caring communion pertains to a personal inner responsibility in which human beings/carers allow themselves to meet their own insufficiency in that which is infinite and unfinished in caring’s context of meaning but which is simultaneously sufficient in the context of humanity.

Responsibility’s figuration of facts provides a broad and profound meaning-content. Responsibility opens itself to an inner ethical structure that is continuously maturing in that guilt derives its strength and positive charge from freedom and love. This dissertation provides an injection of theory into the basic research in caring science, in regards to the understanding of the ontology of responsibility.

Keywords: Caring science, responsibility, ethos, caritative caring ethics, caring’s context of meaning, hermeneutics.