Abstract

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Courage in caring - the servant of caritas

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The aim of this study is, with a care science approach, to gain some insight into the mystery of courage, to see what significance courage has for the good in care, how courage appears in ethos. It is hoped that the study will bring more understanding for the being of courage in care to the core of knowledge of caring sciences, also understanding the mystery of courage opens up the possibility of making courage visible in the world of the patient. The starting points of the study are three basic questions: 1) What is courage from a caring science point of view? 2) What is the driving force behind courage? 3) How do external factors influence the inner courage of the caregiver? The theoretical perspective of the study is based on care science. The development of the theory of care science that has been done at the Unit For Care Sciences at Åbo Akademi (Enheten för vårdvetenskap vid Åbo Akademi) forms the base for the understanding of reality that is taken for granted in this study, and the aim of the study has been set from this perspective. The basic ontological viewpoint of the study postulates that human dignity is dependent of the carer having the human calling, to serve with love and be there for the other person.

The general methodology for the study is hermeneutic. The fact that the study by nature is hermeneutic means that what is sought is insight and understanding. The questions at issue will be approached through three different horizons. The first horizon is reached by establishing a dialogue between the theoretical perspective and previous research. The second horizon has an empirical base where three group discussions are held. During the three discussions a total of 12 care personnel have participated. The discussions have been concentrated to the subject of interest for the study, courage in care, and have been held in a hermeneutic spirit. The interpretation of the results is represented by the second horizon. The third horizon, and the result of the study, is reached when the two aforementioned meet and a dialogue is established between them.

The result of the study shows that courage is an inherent force within every carer. It is not, however, self evident that a carer finds the power of courage and lets courage permeate the attitude of the carer and the actions she performs. If courage is to serve caritas the prerequisite is that the carer follows her own free will and chooses to do the good deed; that she has a belief in her own ability to care and a belief in the fact that she is doing the right thing. The major external factors that have influence on the courage of the individual carer are, according to the study, the spirit of communality in the caring culture and freedom. Caritas appears as the factor that gives meaning and power to courage, at the same time as it is courage that makes it possible for caritas to be visible in the reality of caring. Therefore courage is the servant of caritas.