The primary purpose of this study is to, from an idea-historical approach, discover and describe how that which is ethical in caring and the care relationship are formed and expressed in the care provided at the Ekåsen psychiatric hospital from 1960–1980. The aim is to discover and capture the central ideas and pattern of ideas ascertained from the source material. The study’s research question is: how was that which is ethical in caring and the care relationship expressed at the Ekåsen psychiatric hospital from 1960–1980?

The study emanates from a theoretical perspective, with a basis in axioms and theses developed by the Department of Caring Science at Åbo Akademi University. The study occurs within the framework of the psychiatric care context. Hopefully, the knowledge gained from this study will contribute to systematic and clinical Caring Science as well as the sub-discipline known as the history of ideas within Caring.

This study has a qualitative hermeneutic approach, with Ricoeur’s thoughts regarding interpretation and the “hermeneutic arc” guiding the research. The method employed in the study is idea-historical and especially Olausson’s (1996) thoughts regarding text interpretation are used.

In the study, a historical background is presented which describes the development of psychiatry from a general perspective as well as a specific description of Ekåsen psychiatric hospital’s history. The study results are presented in three complementary sections. The first section describes the influence of *zeitgeist* and external structures on care and care work. Analyzing the study results further and more intensely, the second section presents the fundamental pattern of ideas seen in care and caring during the time studied. The pattern of ideas that emerge are: A positive desire for good care; Respect and responsibility and The relationship. The results provide two overarching patterns of ideas: Desire for communion and closeness to patients as well as Ethics lives within the individual carer.

Furthermore, relating to the study’s theoretical perspective, it is possible to conclude that it was in communion and the carer-patient relationship that ethics and an ethical attitude lived. The good spiritual disposition that carers possess is what supports relationships and communion. In conclusion, the study shows that it is in communion and relationships that ethics are formed. The ethical relationship is the caring.