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## THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE BEING NURSING-PROFESSOR IN THE NURSING CARE TEACHING PRACTICE: A HEIDEGGERIAN HERMENEUTICS<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** This qualitative study aimed to unveil the authenticity of the being nurse-professor in the nursing care teaching practice. The study applied the theoretical-methodological framework of Heideggerian hermeneutics. The strategy used to capture meaning was the phenomenological interview carried out with 11 professors. The organization and analysis of data allowed for the unfolding of the authenticity of the being nurse-professor, revealing that both are authentic in their professional careers and, as such, teach and learn in a different way. This feature makes a difference in the nursing care teaching practice. When led to states of anguish, they seek to follow other roads in order to ratify their responsibility in the care teaching process. Through their freedom to choose their paths, they are made unique beings and thus reveal their authentic existence.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Nursing. Nursing care. Faculty, nursing.

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## AUTENTICIDADE DO SER-ENFERMEIRO-PROFESSOR NO ENSINO DO CUIDADO DE ENFERMAGEM: UMA HERMENÊUTICA HEIDEGGERIANA

**RESUMO:** Estudo qualitativo que objetivou desvelar a autenticidade do ser-enfermeiro-professor no ensino do cuidado de enfermagem. Utilizou-se referencial teórico-metodológico da hermenêutica heideggeriana. A estratégia utilizada para captar os significados foi a entrevista fenomenológica com 11 docentes. A organização e análise dos dados permitiram desvelar a autenticidade do ser enfermeiro-professor, o qual revelou que são autênticos em suas trajetórias profissionais e, como tal, ensinam e aprendem de modo diferenciado, fazendo a diferença no ensino do cuidado de enfermagem. Quando se percebem em estado de angústia, procuram tomar outros caminhos, assumindo dessa forma a responsabilidade no ensinar o cuidado. Através da liberdade de escolhas em seus caminhos, fazem-se singulares, revelando, assim, a sua existência autêntica.

**DESCRIPTORIOS:** Enfermagem. Cuidados de enfermagem. Docentes de enfermagem.

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## AUTENTICIDAD DEL SER ENFERMERO-PROFESOR EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL CUIDADO DE ENFERMERÍA: UNA HERMENÉUTICA HEIDEGGERIANA

**RESUMEN:** Estudio cualitativo que objetivó desvelar la autenticidad del ser-enfermero-profesor en la enseñanza del cuidado de enfermería. El referencial teórico metodológico hermenéutica heideggeriano fue utilizado. La estrategia utilizada para coleccionar los significados fue la entrevista fenomenológica con 11 docentes. La organización y análisis de los datos permitieron desvelarla autenticidad del enfermero-profesor en la enseñanza del cuidado, que ha revelado que son auténticos en sus carreras profesionales y, por lo tanto, enseñar y aprender de diferentes maneras, lo que hace una diferencia en la enseñanza de los cuidados de enfermería. Cuando se perciben en estado de angustia, buscan tomar otros caminos, asumiendo de esa manera la responsabilidad en enseñar el cuidado. A través de la libertad de opciones en sus caminos, se hacen singulares, revelando así su auténtica existencia.

**DESCRIPTORIOS:** Enfermería. Atención de enfermería. Docentes de enfermería.

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## INTRODUCTION

Heideggerian phenomenology essentially deals with the issue of Being. Being is a typically human-centered matter; therefore, the problem of being is not only related to the essence, but also to the existence. In light of this, Martin Heidegger developed his existential analytics, which question the sense of being (the *Dasein*), meaning the being-there and the being-with in the world.<sup>1</sup>

The world is the man and the man is the world. As there is no separation between them, when man is born and begins existing in this world he seeks to be authentic.<sup>1</sup> Man's authenticity takes place in the exercise of questioning things, by inquiring about possibilities and choices made by him in the span of time of his existence<sup>1</sup>, not merely accepting things as they are in his world. For Heidegger, the concept of authenticity can be understood as the singularization of the existence; in other words, the appropriation of the self, the awareness of the being-there and his true readiness to engage in a wide array of possibilities.<sup>2</sup>

Modern man lives with so many daily commitments and tasks that it causes him to forget his own sense of existence; he is laid down in a common, impersonal life, or an inauthentic life, and thus forgets any sense of existence, especially when he begins to simply accept things as they are.<sup>3</sup>

Such a disturbing life, aimed at seeking something that seems not to be understood even by man himself, leads him to search instead for an entity instead of a being. Such preoccupation with the search for entities and a lack of focus on any commitment to the being is termed by Heidegger as present-at-hand. Whenever the being-there is absorbed by the world in which he is circumscribed and also by his being-with relationship with others, the being is not himself anymore. In this present-at-hand, the being-there finds himself submitting to the choices of others, causing him to be an impersonal being.<sup>3</sup>

Bearing all this in mind, whenever man embodies the nothing, he still has the opportunity to become authentic, or to live an authentic existence. The nothing is the veil of the being; it is the way the being manifests itself whenever it is choked by the entity. The nothing is the being's existence, manifested in anguish, or an inner movement of his existence. It is the enchanting calling of the being. Thus, the final ruin of the being takes place whenever the individual strays from his life project

as a result of his daily preoccupation. From this point on, the being is brought to the condition of being sacrificed to the massification of society.<sup>1-3</sup>

In this perspective, the being nurse-professor is confronted by a major challenge: authenticity. In his daily professional practice he needs to constantly reflect on his attitudes and potential in order to become a subject that makes a difference in the care process, allowing for the anguish of his being to be an appealing call for authenticity. If such a movement is practiced by nurses, nursing activity will most likely experience historical changes and thus contribute to the improvement of the profession. The consolidation of the nurse depends on his "being professional" and occurs whenever he identifies the shape of his practice by means of his knowledge, so that his doing allows him to be seen; that is, showing his being and bringing about relevant changes in the way of producing nursing by the effective exercise of his autonomy.<sup>4</sup>

Hence, the nurse needs to model authenticity in his daily life, seeking to innovate and propose trajectories toward transforming his care practice into his own trademark, his professional turning point. This special way of being can be observed in the nurse-professor, who teaches care practices. His teaching practices, as well as his own existence in the care practice, needs to be questioned. In this moment, it is necessary to transform old educational paradigms into teaching-learning processes that value democracy and the pleasure of teaching and learning.<sup>5</sup>

Based on the above-mentioned context and the adopted theoretical framework, the objective of this text was to unveil the authenticity of the being nurse-professor in the nursing care teaching practice.

## METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study utilizes Heideggerian phenomenology. Phenomenology should not only describe the human experience, but also comprehend and interpret it. Phenomenological research should be distinguished based on what the person experiences regarding a phenomenon and how he or she interprets such an experience.<sup>6</sup>

The study was conducted in a Federal Institution of Higher Education (FIHE) located in the southern area of Brazil. The performed interviews maintained the privacy of the subjects. The

interviewees were selected and formally invited to participate during a general departmental meeting at the referred university. From then on, the professors who showed interest in participating in the study were contacted in order to schedule the venue, the day and the time for the interview.

Eleven nurse-professors were finally selected as meaningful subjects of the study. The inclusion criterion encompassed the permanent nurse-professors at the FIHE. Adopted exclusion criteria, on the other hand, were characterized as follows: professors working in the institution for less than one year; temporary professors; and professors who took part in doctorate examination boards.

The strategy employed to capture meanings was the phenomenological interview, which is able to disclose phenomena by means of the informant's free speech, based on the research's guiding question. In this type of interview, the researcher makes use of his empathy and subjectivity and puts the interviewee at ease while conducting his thoughts and language in the way he finds most appropriate. This type of interview is labeled as an existential meeting.<sup>7</sup>

The phenomenology-based information search process understands that the phenomenological dialogue stands out as an occasion to address the human experience; it is a time in which we need to listen to what the language is telling us about what the phenomena bring about, or in other words, an appropriation process.<sup>8</sup>

The interviews were recorded after obtaining the permission of the nurse-professors and were comprised of two steps. The first included the approach to the interviewee in order to establish the dialogue. From this point on, the interviewee was instructed regarding the type of study, its goals and the way in which the interview would be conducted. It was made clear that their statements would not be interrupted, so that they could follow the free-thinking path. Some issues concerning the professional trajectory of the interviewees in nursing practice were addressed as part of the approach strategy. This strategy was quite effective in bringing back memories of their careers and experiences in their world, in order to uncover hints of their existentiality.

The second step was constituted by the study's guiding question: "Who are you as a nurse-professor who teaches-learns care?" The question was written on a card so that interviewees could see it. The question was aimed at searching for a sense of their beings, thus directing them toward

knowing themselves. In this study, each interviewee was found to be authentic.

After being transcribed and organized, the information captured in the statements was read comprehensively. The data were codified, aiming at grouping the reports that addressed the issue of this article – the authenticity of being a nurse-professor in the care teaching practice. Data were then analyzed in light of Heideggerian hermeneutics and in compliance with the pertinent literature.

Heideggerian hermeneutics aims at interpreting statements, thus proving that language is one of the expressions of the being. The "hermeneutic situation is sort of a 'place' reached by each researcher through the application of available theoretical instruments, so that an assessment of the addressed thematic field can be carried out".<sup>9:57</sup>

The data collection process took place in the second half of 2010, after being approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Santa Catarina under protocol number 996/2010. The ethical aspects of the research were respected, in compliance with Resolution 196/96 of the National Council of Health- Ministry of Health. The participants signed the Free and Informed Consent Form and were ensured full anonymity. They were identified by the letter P (Professor), followed by the respective position number of the interview. It is worth highlighting that only the doctoral student had access to the identification of the subjects, as the study's supervisor was also part of the institution's body of professors. Each and every hint of personal identification was subtracted from the statements.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study point out some specifics regarding the nurses that chose to become educators, in terms of the challenges of teaching-learning the care practice, thus revealing their authentic ways of being and existing.

In the following statements, the nurse-professors revealed their ways of being in their authenticity and the ways in which they design their paths and give sense to their beings. [...] *I grew up, learned, taught, created and produced this challenge of teaching and learning and learning and teaching; watching and learning all the time has always been part of my life and I like it! This is the greatest challenge of the classroom environment and the greatest challenge in the practice with the student. You have to not only generate learning opportunities,*

*but also learn with the student, create things with him. So I enjoy what I do very much! I do appreciate this coming and going related to the teaching, learning and doing, but I never forget my burden, my origin, which is the care aspect. It constantly offers me feedback on my performance. I have had enormous challenges in my teaching practice related to learning how to cope with the students' issues, to work at the preparation of classes and contents, the time issues and those difficulties that everyone has in the beginning of the teaching process. But, I had an assurance that provided me with the foundation for several things (P02); [...] I started here as a nurse and I had no teaching background, nothing that could teach me how to be a professor and I consider myself an excellent professor. If you ask me, "so, how did you learn?" I can tell you that, in my opinion, it was a gift and a strong desire to learn, invest, read, learn, read pedagogical and didactic (teaching) materials... This term is not used anymore now, but back then we used to refer to it as 'applied didactic'. Well ... teaching has always exerted a strong attraction for me and I assume that everything you do with pleasure, everything you believe in, everything you like to do, you tend to do well (P06).*

The challenges in the teaching world direct the nurse-professor to seek his pathways in an authentic way. Whenever they are submerged in daily teaching issues, these professionals reflect and describe their own ways, seeking to do things differently and thus providing evidence for their authentic existence. Whenever the being-there discovers his own world, in his own way, approaching and uncovering it himself in his own authentic being, such a revelation of the world and such an unveiling of the being-there are consolidated as interruptions of concealed, obscure places, a disruption of disguises with which the being-there himself hinders his own way of being.<sup>3</sup>

Humans are beings full of transcendent possibilities. They are also known as being-there in the world, being-with others and being-with the world.<sup>1</sup> The being-in-the-world is free to choose the path of his own existence, which can be either an inauthentic or an authentic type of existence.

The being-there is the being-in-the-world, being present in the world. To live is to have the opportunity to be understood by the being-there as a challenge in this world; however, when he realizes himself in it, he is already submerged in his daily, factual life, and he finds himself massified. Nonetheless, he is not merely a random victim. He can also be understood as a being in transformation capable of organizing things according to his

own needs, as this unique entity – the Being-there – is able to create and provide sense to his projects, thus exercising his possibilities.<sup>10</sup>

The statements of the nurse-professors show that the identification and creation of his own possibilities determine his projects and, in this way, his becoming in the Nursing teaching world. [...] *I see myself as quite a restless person...who just can't be tied down It's not an obvious behavior seen by people, though. It's something inside me. It's extremely difficult for me to engage myself in a regular routine; that's why I'm always seeking other things, new things, either in my field or in other fields, I mean, here in the undergraduate course I have moved around a bit and now I have decided to come back to the issue and get closer to [...], and that move just revitalized me. I like [...] very much, but I think that I should insert other issues into this list, especially because of the [...]. So, for me...how I see myself: as an intensely restless person who enjoys learning new things, who needs to discover new skills in me and in others, who is strongly impatient about certain aspects...that involve the learning area (P01); [...] I think that I teach and learn every day, this is real learning... I think that such teaching-learning must be attentive. When you realize that you are only teaching, you are actually performing poorly as a teacher. In order to teach well, you know, you have to think to yourself all the time: what have I been learning? What have I been learning? Whenever I feel like I'm a smart fellow, I say to myself, ok! What have I been learning here right now? I'm not that smart...but I think...no. After you understand the universe of knowledge you see how insignificant what you know is. And now I am not ashamed of saying that I don't know things, that I know little about them, I'm just not ashamed of it. I certainly know some things, if we were to compare knowledge, I can say that I know some things, you know other things, and both of us know much more than just one of us alone...and then I always think: what is there for me to learn here? This is a steady challenge for someone that has been a teacher for 30 years; that is, to keep asking myself what I have been learning (P11).*

As humans are beings of possibilities, they can emerge from this condition and determine their authentic existence, thus returning to their true path, to their life project. Anguish stands out as an inexplicable and disturbing feeling, but such a feeling is capable of drawing the human being out of his daily inertia, causing him to take control of his way of being in a quest to reveal his true self. Anguish singularizes his existence in his own being-in-the-world, which is essentially projected toward possibilities.<sup>1</sup> As he comprehends his own

existence, he can decide on the choices and possibilities presented in this world, thus pointing out the factual determination of the exercise of existence propagated in time, in the pluralities, singularities, moments, times and life conditions. Hence, man only exists when he is involved in a relationship. That is why he does not exist outside of the world. Hence, the being issue refers to man's existence in this world. His showing up in the world determines his authentic existence.

However, it can be observed that these teaching professionals are not only involved with the care practice, but also with those they teach the care practice to, thus developing a career with the other and intending to provide the students with several ways and opportunities in their learning processes. For that purpose, they engage in a unique preparation process in order to share their experiences with their students. Nursing educators strive both to create learning opportunities amidst uncertainty and to ensure that the teaching-learning process takes place, thus unfolding and embracing new contexts.<sup>11</sup>

The being nurse-professor is wrapped up in daily teaching tasks. Due to his busy and demanding schedule, he moves apart from his project, his real possibilities, thus taking a deep dive into the present-at-hand and allowing himself to be led by life's waves, sometimes settling down and other times seeking other paths that can bring him back to his project again. [...] *the care practice is quite complicated, twelve hours in the hospital. I was the only nurse in the ICU. The hospital only had three nurses at that time and I was the only one in the ICU. On weekends, I was on duty throughout the entire hospital. I was swallowed, very much absorbed by the work, and I did not have much time to study. I tried to study for six months, but it was impossible. Then, I decided to teach only, as this is a feasible move, coming to the hospital, staying with the students. I won't be far away for a long time, there will certainly be times of practicing care and that's why I decided to teach. I do not regret it so far. It's a pity not to be working longer hours in the hospital right now, especially in the area I work in. Technology is very present these days* (P03).

The entity is positioned on the game board of his own being; that is, the conditions in which the being-there is engulfed by projects toward a more appropriate being in an array of possibilities. From this point on, he makes his own choices and decisions and takes full responsibility for them. The anguish of the being stands out as a feeling that opens up the possibility for a more befitting

being-there, meaning that every decision made by the being-there will have some implications.<sup>12</sup>

The being-there is a being of possibilities, an authentic and inquisitive being, a steady seeker of learning. In a certain way, such restlessness causes the nurse-professor to always be preoccupied with the other while directing their care practice. The meanings drawn from experiences point to ways of living and establish a correlation among people.<sup>13</sup>

The being-there's way of being authentic reveals his way of existing. In this perspective, the inquiry concerning the sense of being is thus revealed to the world. Nurse-professors stand out as professionals who are committed to care and, therefore, realize their being-there as caregivers. Such a perception can be clearly observed in the following statement: [...] *now, our occupation as teachers and caregivers at the same time...when you are there, rendering the care, it is not a trivial profession, it is not a trifling work, it's a life that is being taken care of, especially people who are at risk of losing their lives. So, it is really difficult, but I just love it, it's something I do appreciate very much and...and I am learning! When I arrive there I think to myself, "I'm a teacher now". It looks like there are two different people: the professor and caregiver P03, and the professor nurse P03, as if they were two different people. As soon as I get to the hospital, as soon as I get into the classroom, you know. I'm very excited about what I do* (P03).

The authentic way of being reveals that the caregiving process can be related to the student, as interviewees understand that they are people who can offer care as well. Nurse-professors are willing not only to teach, but also to care for the students in their daily work, as they comprehend that the students need to be care for so that they can also learn to care for others. The act of caring integrates rationality and affection, opening pathways to possibilities for change, construction and reconstruction of knowledge, thus leading practitioners toward autonomy and freedom.<sup>14</sup> [...] *there is an utterly different correlation in this area. You have to understand the students; they are still teenagers, 17, 18 years old... This has been a tremendous learning experience for me, to understand the behaviors of the students* (P03); [...] *I look at the [...] students; poor them, they have to engage in the work. Most of the time they have never ever been in a hospital before and now they have to care for someone, they are shaking... I used to see a great lack of sensitivity on the part of the professors. They lacked attention toward others placed in situations where they had to reach a level of self-*

*organization prior to beginning the care practice itself. I think that we have quite a relevant role in creating the future, that is, in shaping nurses. Besides being an official and bureaucratic journey, I see it as a personal journey of caregiving as well* (P10).

The relational movement of the nurses-teachers brings about the sense of being closer to the student, thus showing that the being-in-the-world stands out as an existential condition during the time he is aware of his presence in the world, meaning that the being-there does not exist only in his subjectivity, but also in his relations with others and with the things of the world. This existential condition causes them to care for the other and show concern, patience and readiness regarding the demands of the student.

In this sense, nurse-professors unfold their ways of being in a variety of ways, according to the experiences they undergo in their worlds, or in their worldliness, thus determining their existence toward the care practice. The care practice is part of the nursing language. As it is approached as the way of being of nurses, it also embodies a relational and contextual character.<sup>15</sup> The care practice, as the core essence of the nursing activity, is featured by singular professionals. The ways of being of such professionals are shown in the way they understand their own being, beginning with the entity they relate to and the way they essentially behave. Such comprehension evolves from the surrounding world.<sup>1</sup>

The worldliness of Nursing can be perceived as a way of being in the existentiality of the nurse-professor. This is the world where the various facets of living the profession are grounded and the caregiving practice stands out as its intrinsic characteristic. The caregiving practice allows the nurse to be present and to have the opportunity to become authentic. "The present being finds his sense either in the temporality or in the historicity condition, which points to the constitution of the being related exclusively to the explicit or implicit presence. The presence is always related to his past, but is not only bound to the past. In this moment, the presence is the historic way built up from past experiences"<sup>1:57-58</sup>

Therefore, the nurse-professor conducts his actions based on his caregiving experiences and in his own personal construction, or his historicity, managing to make use of his technical-scientific, relational, cultural and social competencies. Competence "is a complex category of the mental and intellectual activity that gathers the capacity

and the ability of the worker toward mobilizing knowledge and mental resources to solve complex situations experienced in his professional life"<sup>16:714</sup> The professional's singular life trajectory within the caregiving context allows him to be authentic.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Heideggerian hermeneutics movement enabled the unfolding of the authenticity of the being nurse-professor in the nursing care teaching practice. In the evolvement of their experiences, therefore, the nurse-professors approached in this study became authentic in their world. Whenever they realize a state of anguish, they seek to move toward new paths, thus taking up the responsibility of teaching and learning care. The freedom to choose their own ways allows them to become singular beings, hence reaching their authentic existence.

Being an authentic nurse-professor is to be positioned in the game of life. A wide array of possibilities are opened up by means of his experiences, allowing him to choose and decide his own paths, an action that means to take responsibility for the present and future of the nursing care teaching practice. While facing a shared teaching world, the professional seeks knowledge and finds himself restless, showing that the anguish of living allows the being-there to reflect and inquire regarding his own being, thus revealing the possibility of being authentic in the caregiving practice.

These discussions unveil the possibilities for the being nurse-professor in the exercise of his becoming in the daily teaching practice. They also point out that to be an authentic being nurse-professor is to do things differently, to be special in the nursing care teaching practice.

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