

AN EXPLORATION OF SIGNIFICANT THEMES IN THE DIARY OF A PERSON WHO COMMITTED MURDER

BY

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SUMMARY

The objective of this study was to explore the authentic knowledge that evolved from a spontaneously-written personal diary and other related texts of a person who committed a crime of passion. I attempt to demonstrate how spontaneous linguistic forms can be used to gain a better understanding of the dynamics underlying and precipitating a crime of passion. A crime of passion is a phenomenon where both the individual suffering and the therapeutic or research community seem to be either out of control or very vague in understanding and explaining its various paradoxes. The main question is: why is the knowing (loving a person) in such cases not revealed in their way of being (killing that person)?

To explore the diary's significant themes effectively, I have attempted to explicate the meaning of the idea of a *crime of passion* by adopting an existential-phenomenological approach. In so exploring the paradoxes within the hidden, very complicated meanings (knowledge) in the diary of John — an alias chosen to provide anonymity — who murdered his fiancée, the knowledge (epistemology) of his spontaneous expression emerged as an effective key to understand his way of being or existence (ontology) within a specific context, time and part of his life. The vantage point, then, was the basic phenomenological tenet that the world should be allowed to reveal itself, and that consciousness and preconceptions should be explicated through scientific description. A study of existing literature, both academic and non-academic, revealed that crimes of passion can be understood from many different points of view. However, few revealed the implicit conceptual paradoxes that exist between 'crime' and 'passion' – two notions that do not sit well together.

From the perspective of qualitative research, an in-depth analysis of meaning units and conceptual categories clarified the selected texts' underlying, often hidden, meanings. John's writings were extensive: the diary consisted of over 1000 handwritten pages. A rigorous analysis of the theoretical links between their various conceptual categories emerged, highlighting gaps in our former understanding about crimes of passion generally, and allowing for reflections toward a theory. Taking an existential-hermeneutical approach, together with the literature review, resolved questions of various kinds, including exploratory and descriptive questions, and conceptual and semantic questions. Hence, the existential-phenomenological research paradigm and method did effectively deal with the intricacies of the phenomenon at hand. This research paradigm's application led to discovering that, implicit in the "crimes of passion" phenomenon there lies a paradox between "crime" and "passion". Unravelling of this major paradox further revealed many secondary paradoxes — whose unravelling enabled a demonstration and description of how the person who committed a crime of passion lived a paradoxical life even before he committed it. It also

showed how his existence gradually changed from an inauthentic (insincere) life of pretence to a more authentic (sincere) one of caring and responsibility after the crime. This project's main contribution can thus be described as providing new insights for the therapeutic and research community about the complexity of the paradoxical existence of a person who commits a crime of passion.

OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie studie was om die outentieke kennis wat uit 'n spontaan geskrewe persoonlike dagboek en ander verwante tekste van 'n persoon wat 'n misdaad van passie gepleeg het, te verken. Ek het gepoog om aan te toon hoe spontane linguistiese vorme gebruik kon word om 'n beter begrip te verkry vir die dinamika wat 'n misdaad van passie onderlê. Beide die lydende individu en die terapeutiese en navosingsgemeenskap is baie vaag wanneer 'n misdaad van passie as deelwerklikheid en oënskynlike paradoksale verkynsel, verduidelik word. Die kernvraag is: "waarom word die wete (om iemand lief te hê) in sulke gevalle nie weerspieël in die leefwyse (om iemand dood te maak) nie?"

Betekenisvolle temas in die dagboek is vanuit 'n eksistensiële-fenomenologiese benadering verken ten einde die verskuilde betekenis van 'n *misdaad van passie* te ekspliseer. Ek het die gekompliseerde verborge betekenis (kennis) in John (alias ter wille van anonimiteit), 'n persoon wat sy verloofde vermoor het, se dagboek verken om die veronderstelde paradokse te ontrafel en bevind dat die kennis (epistemologie) in die subjek se spontane selfuiting insig verskaf tot 'n beter verstaan van sy bestaanswyse (syn-ontologie) binne 'n spesifieke konteks, tyd en gedeelte van sy lewe. As vertrekpunt is die basiese uitgangspunt van fenomenologie gebruik waarvolgens veronderstel word dat die leefwêreld openbaar word en dat bewustheid van voorveronderstellings deur wetenskaplike beskrywings onthul kan word. 'n Studie van akademiese sowel as nie-akademiese literatuur het aangetoon dat 'n misdaad van passie vanuit verskeie oogpunte beskou kan word, maar dat die implisiete konsepsuele paradokse tussen 'misdaad' en 'passie' (twee botsende konstrukte) nog grotendeels onduidelik is.

'n In-diepte analise vanuit 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsperspektief is onderneem ten einde betekenseenhede en konsepsuele kategorieë bloot te lê aan die hand waarvan die onderliggende en bedekte betekenis in die geselekteerde tekste onthul kon word. Deur noukeurige bestudering van John se omvattende geskrifte (die dagboek beslaan meer as 1000 handgeskrewe bladsye) is teoretiese verbande tussen verskillende konsepsuele

kategorieë uitgewys om sodoende die leemtes in ons begrip van en teoretisering rondom misdade van passie bloot te lê.

Met behulp van 'n eksistensiële-hermeneutiese oriëntasie en 'n literatuuoroorsig is verkennende, beskrywende, konsepsuele- en semantiese vrae sowel as teoretiese vrae ondersoek en beantwoord. Die eksistensiële-fenomenologiese navorsingsparadigma en metodologie het 'n effektiewe manier gebied om die ingewikkelde dinamika van 'n misdaad van passie te ondersoek. Die aanwending van hierdie navorsingsparadigma het aangetoon dat daar 'n implisiete paradoks tussen "misdad" en "passie" bestaan in die konseptualisering van die verskynsel van 'n "misdad van passie". Verdere ontrafeling van hierdie onderliggende paradoks kon sodoende gedoen word en het gelei tot die formulering van verskeie sekondêre paradokse. Die ontrafeling van laasgenoemde paradokse het dit moontlik gemaak om te demonstreer hoe die persoon wat die misdaad van passie gepleeg het, 'n paradoksale bestaan gevoer het selfs voordat hy die misdaad gepleeg het. Dit het ook aangetoon hoe hy geleidelik vanaf 'n nie-outentieke (onopregte) voorgee bestaanswyse verander het na 'n meer outentieke (opregte) lewe van omgee en verantwoordelikheid na sy misdaad. Die belangrikste bydrae van hierdie projek is dus geleë in die nuwe insigte in die kompleksiteit en paradoksale bestaan van 'n persoon wat 'n misdaad van passie gepleeg het, vir die terapeutiese en navorsingsgemeenskap bewerkstellig het.

KEY TERMS

Analysis of a personal diary

Analise van 'n persoonlike dagboek

Authenticity

Outentiekheid

Case study

Gevallestudie

Crime of passion

Misdaad van passie

Existentialism

Eksistensialisme

Existential-hermeneutic orientation

Eksistensieel-hermeneutiese oriëntasie

Paradox

Paradoks

Phenomenological psychology

Fenomenologiese sielkunde

Qualitative research

Kwalitatiewe navorsing

Text analysis

Teksanalise