

GUEST EDITORIAL

Progress in Philosophic Inquiry in Nursing

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Nursing scholars have a long tradition of philosophizing. In a recent nursing philosophy seminar, I discussed the contribution of what I consider to be the "Top 10" nurse philosophers and how they have influenced nursing thought and action. I selected these 10 leading philosophers on the basis of the breadth of their influence and the significance of their contribution. While the individuals I selected may not have viewed their own work as philosophical in nature, I applied this term because their work considers the nature of nursing using methods of reason and argument (the tools of philosophy). I must admit that I was hard pressed to limit my list to 10. The list included philosophers with whom I do not necessarily agree but whose works have significantly shifted or furthered our understanding of nursing *qua* nursing.

My list is somewhat chronological in order and, not surprisingly, is topped by Florence Nightingale, whose works on the nature of nursing served to shape the profession and discipline well into the 20th century. My second selection is the duo of Lavinia Dock and Isabel Maitland Stewart, for their work on the development of nursing and their writing about the need for nursing to be guided by principles rather than trial and error. I include Hildegard Peplau for her groundbreaking work on the interpersonal aspect of nursing. Peplau was one of the first theorists to articulate the importance of the relationship between the nurse and the patient.

Ernestine Wiedenbach made significant contributions to nursing philosophy with her work on the art of nursing, which analyzes in detail what it means for a nurse to help a patient. Virginia Henderson dedicated her remarkable career to clearly articulating nursing's goals and mission. James Dickoff and Patricia James are the only non-nurses on my list. Their work has made a significant contribution to nursing in that it helps us to focus on the kind of theories required for nursing practice. I include Lorraine Walker for her pioneering dissertation on the discipline of nursing and Barbara Carper, whose inspirational work

has helped us to further understand ways of knowing in nursing. While Patricia Benner's work straddles the border between the scientific and the philosophic, I include her name because she has helped nursing philosophers to refocus their attention on the practice of nursing and has helped to make the knowledge embedded in practice the subject of legitimate inquiry. Interestingly, Benner's discourse in the current issue of *CJNR* addresses the importance of philosophizing to practising nurses. My final inclusion is Rosemarie Rizzo Parse. While her work is controversial, I include Parse because her program of research demonstrates a determination to pursue and refine a vision of nursing. Within Parse's work is a clear call for placing the patient at the centre of nursing care.

I encourage you, as a reader of this issue of the Journal, to consider nursing's philosophic legacy. Your "Top 10" list might be very different from mine. There are numerous nursing scholars, including Moyra Allen, Myra Levine, Dorothea Orem, Martha Rogers, and Rozella Schlotfeldt, who deserve mention. I believe that the legacy of many scholars is presently being formed. The value of preparing such a list is that it prompts us to consider nursing's impressive past in the realm of philosophy.

There are many signs that philosophic inquiry in nursing has a bright future. Academic centres such as the Institute for Philosophical Nursing Research at the University of Alberta and the Centre for Philosophy and Health Care at the University of Wales Swansea are beacons of this promise. These centres support conferences and workshops that bring scholars together to consider philosophic questions relevant to nursing. The first issue of *Nursing Philosophy: An International Journal for Health Care Professionals* was published in July of this year.

It is very encouraging to witness the continuing development of philosophical work in nursing. This issue of the Journal is another significant milestone in this development. When June Kikuchi wrote a guest editorial for the special issue of *CJNR* focused on Philosophy/Theory in the summer of 1995, she expressed concern about the quality of scholarship in the realm of nursing philosophy. In reviewing the manuscripts for this issue, Editor Laurie Gottlieb and I were struck by the high calibre of many of the submissions. This indeed bodes well for nursing philosophy. The response to the call for papers for this issue was very positive. I thank the legion of reviewers who offered critical reviews.

The seven papers published in this issue represent diverse philosophic positions and substantive foci. One of the most important ques-

tions that nursing philosophers have grappled with concerns the nature of nursing knowledge. This issue includes three papers that consider the epistemological foundations of nursing and raise questions about foundational approaches to knowledge development. In the world of philosophy, postmodernism has offered a penetrating criticism of science and foundational epistemology. While many philosophers have focused on the epistemological implications of postmodernism, Holmes and Warelow advance the discourse by considering the promise of postmodernism for nursing scholarship and practice. Browne looks at the role that critical social theory can play in advancing nursing science. She concludes that while critical social theory may have limited implications for nursing science, it provides an important perspective for examining the fundamental ideologies upon which nursing knowledge is developed. Finally, Ceci examines the relationship between knowledge and the knower, arguing that who we are influences what we can know about ourselves and our world. Her claim is that what is considered to be knowledge is a matter of power, privilege, and values. Together these three papers offer some helpful insights into the central questions that are raised about the possibility of developing knowledge in nursing.

Hawley, Young, and Pasco's paper is also epistemological in nature and considers the methods of nursing science. These authors address the criticism that has emerged regarding traditional scientific approaches. In particular, they examine the claim that reductionism in nursing science is antithetical to the values of nursing, and argue that this claim is unfounded. Their paper suggests a realist ontology and maintains that causal explanations are essential for a practice-based profession such as nursing.

Another central domain of concern addressed in these papers is the moral realm of nursing. Bennett Jacobs examines the subject of human dignity and explores how this concept has been used in a variety of discourses. Peter considers the moral knowledge required in the context of home-care nursing and outlines how feminist ethics can form a basis for development of this knowledge.

Romyn considers the realm of nursing education and focuses on emancipatory pedagogy. She delineates the diverse ways in which emancipatory pedagogy has been conceptualized and outlines key areas of agreement and disagreement among philosophers of nursing education.

The dilemma of philosophic inquiry is that it is very difficult to come to closure on any given issue. For every question that is answered

another 10 must be considered. Does this mean that our quest for philosophic understanding should cease? I argue emphatically that philosophy is essential to nursing. As nurses we must consider the nature of our discipline; the work of philosophy is the work of tending to our discipline. The papers included in this issue beckon us to philosophize. I invite you to read these papers with a philosophic eye. Consider whether you agree or disagree with the points raised, and engage in arguments with the authors. In the end it is this process that will aid us in gaining a wider understanding and in coming closer to (dare I say it) the truth.

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