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It is time to re-illuminate nursing care: reconnecting Florence Nightingale to her legacy

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There is a relationship between caring and peace in our personal lives and in the world. Light and ritual are metaphors and symbols for nursing to imagine another way, beyond the modern, of how things can be. It is ritual and light that can create a path to reconnect nursing with its past-present-future. If any image runs through the history of nursing, it is the light of Nightingale's lamp, radiating the meaning of the nursing light and energy to the world.¹

The historical connection of Nursing with the care topic has a long journey; however, in recent times, this has deserved the attention of scholars, theoretical researchers of nursing aiming to clarify, develop and understand the meaning of this concept, as well as the way it was built and constituted through time and history.

When we consider care as the focus and essence of nursing and its contribution to society, we are sure that this phenomenon needs to be studied in its multiple dimensions in order to build a body of knowledge on its practice of nursing care that is contextualized and unveiled in its, among others, historical, political, social, cultural, economic, and spiritual aspects. For only then nursing will recognize itself as a profession of substantive knowledge, underpinning its care practice, and it can become a distinct subject with a unique contribution in the world.

Historical studies are important mainly for nursing because the construction of collective memory is what makes it possible to become aware of what we really are as a historical product, the development of collective self-esteem, and the task of rebuilding professional identity.

Thus, the unveiling of reality through the study of the Nursing History is liberating and allows a new look at the profession and its care practices. We also need to recognize in the history of nursing the way nurses are inserted in the world of work considering the subjectivities related to the formation process and their experiences of professional being and doing contemplated in their historicity, as a profession with a knowledge dominated by women facing power-knowledge relationships in different times and contexts of history.²

During capitalism, care assumed a professional identity by appropriating a set of knowledge with the objective of establishing itself as a social practice and legitimizing itself as of scientific nature, since it was influenced by, among others, the cultural, economic and social scenario.

At that time, the space dedicated to care went from home to hospital, causing the logic of capitalist thought to merge with the organization of health care, resulting in a collective work divided into several activities and carried out by health professionals and other professionals, workers trained for

specific activities providing the caregiver with an institutionalized character.³ The hospital is now considered a therapeutic space for the production of knowledge-power.

In contemporary times, we see that care and the need for care are linked to human dignity and solidarity; moreover, one feels that healing is linked to care, but essentially, care exists regardless of cure.⁴

Paradoxically, in the context of major advances in knowledge and new discoveries in science that have contributed to great technological progress aimed at the care itself, striking scenes of carelessness such as wars, attacks, in addition to the contingencies arising from misery, such as hunger, endemic diseases, epidemics and pandemics, and all their consequences, explode every day.⁶

Such situations require care to occur, urgently emerging to identify human vulnerability and fragility, and to seek to provide hope that human groups will survive.

When revisiting the history of human care, we could not fail to evoke the figure of Florence Nightingale and to be inspired by her principles of care which were the first essences for professional care.

With Florence Nightingale, Nursing is born and begins to take shape and acquires the status of a distinct occupation with the formalization of its teaching. In the development of care theories, Florence Nightingale's work stood out in the mid-19th century, from 1820 to 1910. Although her writings have not been approached in a theory context, her assumptions address beliefs about human care that continue to be developed by scholars in various parts of the world.⁷

Nightingale's work is considered an Environmental Theory because the basic concept of her writings is the healthy environment, the physical environment full of vitality that stimulates the vital power of the human being. The knowledge about the care of Nightingale was revolutionary and visionary and highlighted the science, the art based on the thought of Hippocrates and Bacon.⁸

Nightingale's Theory continues to be inspiring for its breadth and vision of the future, and the care connections with ecology.

Watson (2005) has developed a theoretical model of nursing as Sacred Science - Caritas Model, visualized as a spiritual dimension that echoes love, care "healing" (reconstruction) to the paradigms of the new millennium, in a perspective of an updated Nightingale's nursing model. The author understands that the future of Nursing aims to revisit, reconnect the reverence and sacredness of life incorporating art, science, ecology, and spirituality.⁹

Nursing is a profession that has an ethical and social responsibility, both for the individual and for society, to be responsible for caring and to be at the forefront of society's care needs.

Besides integrating medical and technological aspects in its practices, Nursing must also transform them, together with a completely new vision, about the advanced practice of Nursing.

As Nurses, may we also walk in our own power, our own light, and our own beauty and transmit it by radiating care, healing, and peace, to greet the new Man and the new world.

The Nurse, wherever he or she is, is called to provide space to "lift up the light they are" and transmit it; evoking "transformation can only occur through a return to our human center, to our own light".

May we be light and hope in every scenario of care...

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