

NURSING, HISTORY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

ENFERMAGEM, HISTÓRIA E EPISTEMOLOGIA

ENFERMERÍA, HISTORIA Y EPISTEMOLOGÍA

Paulo Joaquim Pina Queirós¹

How to cite this article: Queirós PJP. Nursing, history and epistemology. Rev baiana enferm. 2023; 37:e53774.

History is the science par excellence of chronology. There is no history without the temporal approach, for chronology is inherent in historical reasoning. The operative concepts of synchrony and diachrony go in this direction, which allow to establish lines of continuity and rupture, analyze simultaneities and thus adduce multiple, longitudinal and transverse influences, explain the webs of which the facts were made, experiences and structure ideas. The approach to what happened in the past and its interpretative analysis, necessarily allows a more informed and understandable reading of today's reality. In historical studies, temporal delimitation is essential, but spatial localization on a continent is also required, territory, location or given context.

It is given these assumptions - space and time - that historical narratives are built, methodologically robust, without presentisms, without readings of the past in the light of current values and concepts, that is, without anachronisms. But also, without extrapolations and abusive generalizations, to which is added the necessary and possible objectivity based on the rigor of the sources of the most diverse typologies.

On the other hand, epistemology studies the ways in which knowledge is acquired and its principles of belief and truth. Epistemology seeks to clarify the nature of science knowledge and differentiation in various branches and disciplines. Strictly speaking, it refers to the branch of philosophy that deals with scientific knowledge. Thus, theory of knowledge and gnosiology, are terms that are close to it, tend to designate the same has come to be considered synonyms.

We will easily accept a chronological dimension in the development of the sciences in general and in the development of each one *per si*, that is, knowledge, knowledge organized superlatively, constituted itself in science, not in a static or spontaneous not uncommonly, but through processes of approximation, inferences and proofs, accumulation of evidence and cleaning operations, ruptures, precision and concentration in objects of study, specific purposes and objectives.

In this process, we watch the differentiations and birth of new disciplines, disciplined knowledge. In this follow-up, science and sciences are long, temporal processes of human construction, evolving nonlinearly, as any aspect of life evolves. The process of scientific construction are historical processes, in which knowledge is synthesized, concentrated in function of diachronic framing – with a before and

Corresponding Author: Paulo Joaquim Pina Queirós, pauloqueiros@esenfc.pt

¹Escola Superior de Enfermagem de Coimbra. Coimbra, Portugal. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1817-612X>

an after, a continuous or a rupture and synchronous - at the same time other knowledge differentiate and autonomize being mutually influenced, not existing outside a specific context.

The historian of science, Thomas Kuhn, is due to epistemology, not only the development of the concept of paradigmatic revolution – paradigms and metaparadigms or central concepts – but above all the notion of temporality, in the progress of the autonomization of disciplines, that is, of the various sciences.

Also, Gérard Fourez, in a complementary perspective, coming from sociology, perspective the notion of construction – the sciences as human constructions, that is, human readings on the existing real, which is not in itself that real. It refers, for example, to the idea that there are rocks, but geology does not exist materially, this is the human construction about this real concrete.

With these considerations, where do we want to go? Let us think of nursing as a science or, if we wish, nursing science. Without the historical dimension we commit the folly of stating that nursing has always existed, when research in nursing history clearly tells us that the term, the word, only appears in the Portuguese language of Portugal and Brazil, in the last decade of the XIX century, probably not before, and it is important to say that we have so far found a first record in 1896.

There was yes, a long process of professionalization of an activity, occupation or craft of being a nurse or being a nurse, which at one time gained significant social weight, so that it was necessary to find a name for this collective of people dedicated to these actions, so yes, the term nursing arises. Before, there were nurses and nurses, who exercised in their own spaces - the wards - but the professionalization that comes slowly to develop, gains a new impetus, is accentuated by this time, late XIX century, with the creation of formal education in schools, first nurses, later nursing.

On the other hand, to affirm that nursing is a science, because yes, it is not enough, it will have to introduce the temporal dimension in the systematization of nursing knowledge, which are disciplined and differ at a high level, knowledge that are synthesized with methodology which allows them to be considered science.

The work of Suzanne Kérrouac is seminal, in the sense of identification in structured thinking in nursing, in successive paradigms: categorization paradigm, integration paradigm and transformation paradigm⁽¹⁾. The analysis of these paradigms allows the perception of the evolution of different concepts of nursing, expressed in models and theories, grouped generically in similar nursing views.

At this point, we are easily led to realize two things. The first is that the difficulties, even today, of affirming nursing as a science are the result of specific evolutionary processes and not compared with ancient disciplines/ sciences long established in the field of scientific knowledge. To compare medicine today, or the right, to nursing, is to want to compare things in times of very distinct self-development. The first coming of millenary paths of systematization, refinement and concentration had the nursing with a path of professionalization of only a century and theoretical systematization, with some consistency only from the mid-XX century, already within the framework of the integration paradigm, happened after the work of Virginia Henderson, Dorothea Orem, among others. Let us consider, then, rhythms and stages of development, proper to each discipline.

On the other hand, the second consists in the understanding that there is not a single science, there are sciences with different methods, possibly with a look that can be shared. With specific and specific forms of systematization of their knowledge, disciplining them in order to become scientific disciplines. We will accept as science all methodologically constructed knowledge, logically explained, shared, replicable and subject to peer control. We also find in the field of science, by the two great epistemologies: the positivist epistemology based on technical and technological rationality and the epistemology of practice based on practical-reflexive rationality. The discussion of the affiliation of nursing knowledge in one of these large epistemological groups is present in the theoretical construction of current nursing, allowing the affirmation of nursing as practical human science⁽²⁾.

History allows us to realize that the knowledge developed by nurses and nurses over centuries has been organized until they have to be systematized for their teaching. Simple learning and passage in work contexts was no longer enough, formal education became necessary. At the same time gained consistency the group and arises the collective name, nursing. Knowledge has been developing and growing specificity and focus on purposes and objectives. The process of knowledge clearance was methodologically enriched, becoming understandable, explainable and replicable for verification. In nursing, after the movement of professionalization that lasted centuries until the end of the XIX century, appears in the XX century the scientific affirmation and consolidation of highly differentiated knowledge, refined methodologically through an epistemology of practice.

When history and epistemology join nursing, the knowledge of this area of knowledge becomes more understandable and more explainable. The history and history of nursing, delivers the evolutionary dimension and transversal understanding to current nursing. The epistemological approach places us in the real world of knowledge construction, which are methodologically correct in a perspective of responses in health, well-being and disease, to the challenges of society, communities and people, clarifying the purpose of this practical human science, namely to facilitate transition processes for health and well-being⁽³⁾.

Anchored in a historical perspective, we understand the differentiation of nursing knowledge, its origin and evolution, its scientific justification as organized knowledge, situated in a post-abysal moment of the development of universal knowledge. That is, of approximation of scientific knowledge of other knowledges, in a much needed ecological coexistence blocking the enormous epistemicide, characteristic of modern and postmodern thought⁽⁴⁾. Nursing, explained by standards of knowledge, whether empirical, ethical, aesthetic, personal, emancipatory, socio-political, context, can build its epistemological narrative around the concept - nursing an ecology of knowledge⁽⁵⁾.

And here we go in the human construction of nursing science.

Collaborations

- 1 – conception and planning of the project: Paulo Joaquim Pina Queirós;
- 2 – analysis and interpretation of data: Paulo Joaquim Pina Queirós;
- 3 – writing and/or critical review: Paulo Joaquim Pina Queirós;
- 4 – approval of the final version: Paulo Joaquim Pina Queirós.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Kérrouac S., Pepin J., Ducharme F., Duquette A., Major, F. La pensée infirmière. Laval-Québec: Éditions Études Vivants; 1994.
2. Kim H. The Nature of Theoretical Thinking in Nursing. 3. ed. New York: Springer Publishing Company; 2010.
3. Meleis A. Theoretical Nursing: Development and progress. Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer; Lippincott William & Wilkins; 2012.

4. Santos B. Para além do pensamento abissal: das linhas globais a uma ecologia de saberes. *Revista Crítica de ciências Sociais*. 78; 2007. Available from: http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0101-33002007000300004
5. Queirós P. Enfermagem uma ecologia de saberes. *Cultura de los Cuidados*. 20⁽⁴⁵⁾, 137-146; 2016. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14198/cuid.2016.45.15>.

Received: March 31, 2023

Approved: April 3, 2023

Published: May 22, 2023



The Revista Baiana de Enfermagem use the Creative Commons license – Attribution -NonComercial 4.0 International.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

This article is an Open Access distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons (CC BY-NC). This license lets others remix, adapt and create upon your work to non-commercial use, and although new works must give its due credit and can not be for comercial purposes, the users do not have to license such derivative works under the same terms.