

From the editor ...

Nurses hardly know how to fit the present into that narrow space between past and future. The past, with its multiple traditions, barriers and limitations, bears down on us like a heavy loadstone even as the future rolls in on us like a mighty tidal wave, bringing new problems, new challenges and new demands. We find ourselves repeating the habits and traditions of the past and feel helpless in the face of the rapidly approaching future. We sense the sharp reality of both dimensions of time and are unsure how to act.

We can analyze the past and gain important insights. We can make tentative predictions about the future, which gives a sense of purpose and direction. But neither of these important analyses can substitute for the searching and re-searching of truth as it exists in our experience of the present. We cannot accept the past ways and methods of science as a prepackaged source of knowledge and truth. We must learn that knowledge is available to everyone who develops the organs of knowing. Only then will we stimulate in ourselves and in others the understanding of today's knowledge.

Nurses have always been a silent and a silenced force in the health care system and in society. We have allowed ourselves to be dragged down into a mindless mire and have believed the fiction that our capabilities were less than adequate to be taken seriously. We have been torn between a multitude of competing loyalties, further choking our creative and productive potential.

We are aware that some individuals and groups in society are struggling to change obsolete habits of thinking. The need for change within the health care system and the profession of nursing is evident, and there are signs that change is occurring. Many of the ideas contained in this issue challenge the sacred and valued ideas of the past. They all concern testing and searching for a more authentic "truth," one that is relevant to the present.

No one person is able to provide answers for the profession of nursing. We cannot count on someone else to do what needs to be done. Rather, we as individuals must determine to overcome or ignore the barriers, traditions and limitations of the past, and become creative and productive in the pursuit of knowledge. If we set our sights on the possibilities of the future without anxiety or fear of the unknown, we are all potential pioneers. We may not be able to understand fully the significance of what we do today, but to remain unproductive and silent will exclude us from any noticeable part in shaping the future.

The development of nursing literature, such as this journal, is of critical importance to our present and our future. It is an endeavor in which every nurse can participate. It requires determination, discipline and commitment. It provides an opportunity for us as individuals and as a group to stop being idle bystanders and become active participants in the course of history.

The articles in this issue continue the theme of the first issue. Several of the articles illustrate specific applications of general principles and approaches that were presented in the first issue. I hope that you the reader will take an active role in responding to these first two issues by following the work of these authors, by expanding and developing your own ideas as stimulated by theirs, and by letting us know of the ideas and searches upon which you are embarking.

—Peggy L. Chinn, R.N., Ph.D.
Editor