

EDITORIAL

Wabi – Sabi and the Nature of Knowledge

Wabi – sabi, the Japanese aesthetic principle of beauty reflects our understanding of the nature of knowledge: that they are impermanent, imperfect, and incomplete (Koren, 2008). The truthfulness of things cannot be ascertained with absolute finality.

What we hold as facts today may not be considered as facts before. The discipline of nursing, for instance, was historically created to assist the physician in the performance of their duty. The focus of the discipline of nursing then was the physician and not the patient. Today nursing emphasize its disciplinary focus as the study of caring in the human-health experience (Newman, Sime, & Corcoran-Perry, 1999), a drastic shift towards being a person-centered profession. Knowledge is invariably impermanent.

What was considered as the “golden-standard” of care then may be verified to be not so golden after all. Bed bathing patients with soap and water was then considered as one primary method of minimizing infection until it was demonstrated that it actually increases the microbacteria instead of minimizing it (Johnson, Lineweaver, & Maze, 2009). Knowledge is constantly imperfect.

The truthfulness of the knowledge that we have today is transitional, it can only be considered temporarily complete until such time that it will be proven otherwise. There was a time when we only believed in the existence of one form of intelligence until studies show that there is more than one form of intelligence. Knowledge will consistently remain incomplete.

The reality of the things that we know at the moment is always arbitrary. What we considered as evidence today may become useless by tomorrow. Timeliness of the dissemination of knowledge should be given emphasis, publications as one of the avenues for this dissemination should then be given importance. The process on how we arrive at knowledge and the knowledge that was produced, however rudimentary, needs to be disseminated. As scholars, we are ethically and morally bound to make public the seemingly trivial and private scientific endeavor of our professional discipline. Discovered knowledge that is kept secret, however brilliant it may be, will remain practically useless.

Dissemination should place emphasis on the process and merit on how knowledge was produce instead of wasting energy proving that what we came to know is faultless and unflawed. There must be a continued effort to rediscover things and make this process of

discovery known to the public. The goal of knowledge creation and dissemination should not be the production of absolute truths but expositions of figments of realities which ultimately aim to uplift human condition.

The principle of Wabi – Sabi reminds us that things, including beauty and knowledge, are transitory and imperfect. It also reminds us to always assume a position of humility and openness and not of superiority and arrogance. This lens allows us to appreciate things with a sense of awe and wonder and through these develop our love for the process of knowing, knowledge creation, and knowledge dissemination.

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