

# Human Health as a Multidimensional Phenomenon: Approaches to Study and Phenomenology

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## Abstract.

In the article, human health is seen as a multidimensional phenomenon. The authors presented the definition of the concept of «health», revealed the essence of health as the main existence of man. Particular attention is paid to identifying determinants that have an impact on human health. Of considerable interest is the mechanisms of actualization of the health-building potential of the personality described in the article, on the basis of which it is possible to construct a model of behavior associated with the formation of constructive-positive thinking about one's health. The authors offer a fundamentally new understanding of the scientific concept of «health». Post-non-classical notions of human health are considered and its essential characteristics are indicated. The authors examine the essential manifestations of man as a multilevel creature. Through the prism of the multilevel of human existence, the principle of health as an ontological mechanism for the gathering of a person into an integrity from the fragmentation of his hypostases is grounded. It is proved that health is the most important characteristic of the intact integrity of human existence.

**Keywords:** co-evolution, generic essence of man, health, health potentials, integrity, self-actualization.

## INTRODUCTION

The urgency of the research problem can be determined in the increasing demands on the health status of the students in the circumstances of the rapidly changing realities of modern society, the emergence of new phenomenological directions such as sanogenic policy, sanogenic conflictology, sanogenic economy.

It should be noted that the progress of any society depends not only on the intellectual development of its members, but equally on the level of health that limits social, creative activity, individual contribution to social production.

It should be noted that the progress of any society depends not only on the intellectual development of its members, but in equal measure, the level of health limiting social, creative activity, personal contribution to social production.

According to the concept of the who, one of the main factors in achieving optimal health is a healthy lifestyle and a provision stating that individual health is responsible, foremost, the man himself. Such an approach brings to the society the task of improving the educational aspect in the implementation of the concept of national health.

Today, there is a clear tendency to reconsider human values, from which one of the most topical and paramount values of a person, without which the future of the nation is impossible - his personal health, comes to the fore.

Health should become the primary need of man, but this need can not always be completely satisfied because of its complexity and contradictions. This is due to the fact that a person is inclined with some delay, to assess the consequences of positive and negative effects on his body, and the fact that in the system of values of our compatriots, unfortunately, health has not yet taken a leading place. The health of a nation is the end result of the policy of any civilized state [1-5].

## THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

The concept of «health» reflects one of the fundamental characteristics of human existence. Therefore, it is rethought whenever there are profound changes in the «life world» of a person, but it remains a universal value. The essence of this value lies in the fact that it is health as a state of the individual or society that allows a person to realize a certain set of physical, spiritual and social opportunities, to some extent realize his human potential.

Health can have different value characteristics, which differ significantly in terms of media, by type, structure, etc. By

its value essence, health is a blessing; that meets needs, interests, has a positive value for people. The value content of health is accumulated in relation to the person (society) to his state, which ensures a successful (worthy, acceptable for the given conditions) life activity.

Together with the attitude of man to health, a system of his value orientations, preferences, goals, without which human existence loses its meaning, is built up. In its content, health as a value includes many sub-values that have meaning for the person. The carriers of health, and, consequently, the subjects of the value relationship can act as individuals, social groups, society as a whole [6].

Nowadays the humanity has reached the limits of its physical existence and such unprecedented impairment of harmonious relationships between nature and mind that it is impossible to keep neglecting natural biological foundations of a human body anymore, as split human integrity inevitably leads to the loss of his essential certainty and his disappearance.

Natural component in the multilevel structure of human being is represented by human corporeality. It is the body that is a crossroad of natural and generic, biological and social. The body is both a material foundation of social essence and a source of its development: human biological limitation creates various social institutes substituting for missing natural instincts of self-regulation and develops human technique and tool activities that compensate his corporeal imperfection. Thus, the body is a substantial basis of human being and an external form of all the abundance of human content.

Meanwhile, the structure of personality is multilayer: it involves physical (body), mental (nature, temper, aptitudes), and spiritual parts (essence of personality, its core based on spirituality as an embodied craving for value absolutes). The coordinated work of all the structural elements of a personality as well as their interaction with other fragments of the environment and systems of other people define human health, his resilience in the world and ability to actualize and develop himself. Health is both a core factor of human existence and a general condition of existence, its order, stability, and completeness.

Etymology of the Russian word for health, *zdorovye* (from *dorvo* – tree-like), sends us to the archaic collective consciousness, which fixed both essential relationships between a tree and a human and some “mystic involvement” (L. Lévy-Bruhl) of a human in the entire world perceived as a whole. Integrity and stability of the world (as well as of both a tree and a human) is

provided by rootedness in the generative substance-reason, while a seed already contains a potential image of future development. The image of integrity and perfection (completeness) folded in a seed is an idea of health – the ideal integrity and completeness of being at all the levels of existence.

The essence of being is its development from non-being, just the same, the human essence is first and foremost self-realization and self-development from the potential into reality. The fractal theory says that a big system (Being–Cosmos–Absolute) defines structural organization of so-called “detached” systems: society and a human. Within synergetic approach, the philosophers acknowledge the ability to self-arrangement an essential quality of being (including social), while speaking about a human as a system “detached” in the cosmic and social being, the principle of self-arrangement is modified in the principle of self-realization. In other words, human ability to arrange himself, i.e. to adjust himself to his true essence, is his core ontological characteristic.

The image of human is developed in the interior of its ontological givenness through revealing all the layers of his manifold essence: physical (somatic part of actualized essence with a human acting as an individual), social (collectivist: here a human actualizes himself as a personality), mental (emotional and sensual: a human as an individual), and spiritual (transcendental: a human is a microcosm). Harmonious self-realization in all the parts of being in the world is a necessary condition (and criterion) to actualize the idea of integral human health.

As we know, health from the holistic view involves corporeal, mental, and spiritual levels of a human. The very term holistic originates from the Greek word *holos*, which means “wholeness”, “integrity”. Thus, the holism is a doctrine, which treats the world a result of gradual creative evolution directed by non-material and incognizable “integrity factor” (J. Smuts, J.S. Haldane, A. Meyer-Abich, A. Leman). A. Maslow (1999), a psychologist and a philosopher, associated holistic view of the world with natural healthy state of a human, “I think that holistic way of thinking and understanding is quite natural...for healthy, self-actualized persons, and, vice versa, challenging for less developed, less mature representatives of the humankind.”

The holistic understanding of health became an interdisciplinary area of research and clinical practice. Besides, it led to the creation of valeology as a science studying an integral healthy human. The holistic approach to health not only removes the opposition of spiritual-mental and material-corporeal elements in a human. It also emphasizes the human subjectivity as a carrier of health and human responsibility for the state and development of health as a life potential. Otherwise, illness from the view of valeology initially emerges at the mental, i.e. noo-logical, level, and then spreads over the mental, or rather emotional sphere, and, finally, through the misbalanced vegetative nervous system, localizes at the vital (i.e. physical or corporeal level) and imposes some restrictions of self-realization on a subject [7]. R.I. Aizman’s model is one of the latest modern holistic models of health in Russia. It reflects constant and continuous mutual influence of somatic, mental, and spiritual elements in relationships with social and environmental factors [8].

Therefore, from the view of holistic understanding of health, it is necessary to refer any related factor to corporeal processes, study their subjective representation in cognitive and emotional forms, and consider spiritual meaning of these health creation factors. Moreover, we should bear in mind that the succession of these contexts is not occasional – each following context transcends (absorbs and transforms) the previous one.

First and foremost, this relates to the interaction between biological (corporeal, physiological) and mental contexts. The ethologist R.V. Dolnik emphasizes that “we need both to acknowledge and to know human biology” to explain mental

processes. Ignoring ethology in dealing with child behavior (just as ignoring ecology in economy) can lead to mistakes [9]. A.Sh. Tkhostov’s original psychological and semiotic concept of corporeal and consciousness psychology (based on R. Barthes’ *Philosophy*) represents corporeal phenomena in the consciousness as a sign. The mechanism of transforming corporeal events into mental is as follows: “a sign (marked corporeal sense), being an association of sensual tissue and a corporeal construct, becomes denotative in the mythological scheme of the illness, unfolds outwards and becomes a symptom” [10].

Further, it leads to the fact that mental representations of body and illness together with corporeal and physiological factors acquire significant influence on the state of health. These reflections acquire particular meaning in the context of myth (as the secondary semiotic system in R. Bart’s interpretation, where a sign is torn from the denoted object and starts to denote something different) of health-illness. Therefore, a person with the principally semiotic psyche is aware of his corporeal processes and interprets them from the view of the shared myth (magical, energetic, scientific and medical etc.) Moreover, “senses can both change their quality and be created from the above by the myth itself when they enter its secondary semiotic system...” [10]. Thus, the impact on person’s state of health (referring to both unfolding his health creation potential and correction-treatment) necessarily implies the impact with account for this mythic picture of health and its impairments existing as mental reality.

Thus, corporeal processes, responding to particular impact within physical culture (meaning not only physical exercises of “body culture” or “bodybuilding”, but, in a larger sense, care for well-being and development of the body) inevitably reflect in particular mental forms, and, as a result, acquire positive or negative spiritual meaning. The notion of “spirituality” means here the process and results of a person transforming himself during self-transcending (precedence and entering a new level) of current limitations of his corporeality and psyche by extending responsible identification with larger spheres of being. Spirituality is the potential of harmonization, opposition to entropy, the potential involved in the very phenomenon of life that is most fully and purposefully (consciously) expressed in a human. This understanding means actualization of a human potential, including the area of health creation, by revealing current possibilities to manifest human essence in the world and creating new ones. Thus, health creation manifests true spiritual culture of a human and, therefore, a human often starts with the care for body and then realizes the necessity of spiritual development using some Western or Eastern spiritual practices.

We should also note that the Self is the core of human health within the holistic approach (true I, unlike the masks of false Ego or the image represented to others, i.e. a subject himself).

C.G. Jung says that, “...the consciousness and the unconscious are not necessarily opposed to each other, but complement each other up to the whole – the Self...”, and “...the Self is a superior value to the conscious I”, therefore, a human cannot fully acknowledge it as “I” because a part cannot understand a whole [11]. Jung compares the Self with the Sun in our solar system and Ego with the Earth centered by the Sun [12]. The Self is constantly developing; this development is understood as transcending, dialectic removal of contradictions-oppositions (male-female, the conscious-the unconscious, good-bad, friend-foe etc.), when the Self finally acquires its true integrity – individuation.

A. Maslow understands “the Self” or “I” of a human as its essential core; respectively, self-actualization by Maslow is mastering the ability to adjust to one’s own internal nature, which provides optimal functioning and health of a human, either corporeal or psychological or spiritual. Self-actualization is also

constant development of one's potential abilities by a subject, including health, which again makes us return to the notion of health creation revealed exclusively in active interaction of a subject with the world both in the form of his corporeality and in the forms of social relationships and subject activities [13]. R. Assagioli's psychosynthesis calls this process self-realization and understands it as self-cognition and revelation of potential, "the experience and awareness of the Self as a synthesizing spiritual Center." However, it does not necessarily include what can be called the spiritual level [14].

In the terms of A. Meneghetti, the founder of ontopsychology, "onto in se" or "in se" is the Self as individual's being by itself (essence in itself) taken irrespectively of its relationships with the world, the internal positive core of a human, his true existence transcendent to the plane of existence, while conscious and logical "I" is the only conscious psychological instance of the human psyche that is likely to identify itself with the entire psyche. Consequently, in common with other trends of existential psychology, the human task is understood as the revelation of positive potential of his being in interaction with the world; successful adjustment of I and "in-se" is a basis for the efficient practical activities and health [15].

Thus, the Self is a suprapersonal, transpersonal center reflecting the deepest and true nature of a human as a conscious subject. The Self acts as an active subject which has various potentials and some representations of itself and is focused not only on the external world but mostly on itself during self-cognition and self-fulfillment. This subject carries out his health creation potential in the care of the Self.

M. Foucault, the French philosopher and "archeologist of knowledge", says that "the care of the Self" (Greek *epimeleia*) is one of the core human characteristics, first acknowledged and articulated in antiquity [16]. The researcher notes that the care of the Self became the heart of ancient philosophy with its constant striving to become the art of existence in the doctrines of Socrates, Epicure, Epictetus, Seneca, and Aurelius Mark. He also emphasizes that "the tradition going back to the origins of the Greek culture closely associates care of the self with medical thought and practice", and "Plutarch assumes in the introduction to his Health Guidance that philosophy and medicine act "within the same boundaries" [10]. Moreover, that period saw no principal difference between care and curing of body and soul. The care for body was combined with the care for soul (the Pythagorean practice of introspection) in the "discussions on business" and critical comprehension of notions; it became widespread in various philosophic schools. Thus, the Stoics also worked out schemes to show various stages, or rather possible forms of curation. M. Foucault writes that "These concepts and schemes suited both the medicine of body and the therapy of soul; they enabled to apply a uniform type of theoretic analysis to physical disorders and immorality and implied the same technique in both cases: we had to engage in both "injuries", treat them and cure them if possible [16].

L. Binswanger, the Swiss psychiatrist, psychologist and philosopher, had an existential idea of a human a "project of oneself" and treated determination by the past, present or one's own unconsciousness as deprivation of free existence. The individual style of being-in-the-world is based on the world-project of a human, which defines his representations of himself, the world, and typical responses. In common with L. Binswanger, M. Boss, another existential psychologist, M. Boss, suggests perceiving a person in the context of his representations of the future; only the narrowed perception of missing reason for existence in the future causes psychological problems. Consequently, existential understanding of a human implies that a person projects himself and his life including his health. It is this

self-projecting that reveals the potentials of personal health creation.

In accordance with this holistic understanding, we should project health by revealing health creation potential at all the levels of integral human being. The process of unfolding this potential in time can be based on the model of virtual psychology and periodization of mental development worked out by N.A. Nosov on this basis. They considered the development of human representations of himself in the ontogenesis from babyhood to adulthood and identified five levels of this self-reality – "sobi" in their terms, i.e. virtual reality (from the view of existentialism – the stages of the "oneself actualized" project understood as a kind of subject's "zone of proximal development"), which enables a person to identify himself at various age periods on various grounds [17]. A person acquires all these realities (body, consciousness, personality, volition, internal human) by consequent shifting of identity accent in mastering the previous way to identify oneself at the needed and sufficient level.

### CONCLUSIONS

In agreement with these stages of mastering one's nature and developing of human integrity (individuation), the accents in the care of oneself and one's health are shifted and manifest as specific ways and areas of health creation potential. It should be emphasized, however, that a human sort of goes through these ontogenetic levels again, this time consciously, and strives to carry out a true care for himself as a healthy human being. Thus, a subject should initially carry out his health creation potential in corporeality (the first stage), then in the psyche (the second-the fourth stages), and then – in the spirit (the fifth stage). We can also speak about the manifestation of this potential in appropriate contexts – corporeal, mental, and spiritual. Besides, socio-cultural context defining specific forms and priorities of subject's health creation activities is a natural background for these processes.

The complexity, multidimensionality of the notion of health necessitates the use of an integrative approach in its study, which makes it possible to unite methodologically specific concepts and concepts, revealed from the standpoint of different sciences, into a coherent unity. It is important to highlight those components of the integrative methodological approach, which are most significant in the study of health and will allow us to identify the integrative bases of the study.

As such components it is expedient to single out the following approaches:

- axiological approach – recognition of the health of the individual as one of the priority universal and social values and in this capacity occupying the highest level in the hierarchy of human needs;

- akmeological approach – the consideration of health as an indicator of human well-being and the result of his self-development;

- culturological approach – health as an area of human culture includes in unity the three components: body, soul and mind; hence, health is the totality of the culture of the physical (the ability to control one's movements, one's body); culture of the physiological (the ability to control physiological processes in the body and increase their reserve capacity); the culture of the psychic (the ability to control one's sensations, feelings, emotions); intellectual culture (the ability to control one's thoughts); culture of the spiritual (the ability to manage its value-semantic sphere and realize the life aspirations associated with spiritual self-improvement);

- holistic approach – health includes the optimal functioning and development of a person in the spiritual plane (conscious responsibility in the social and wider life systems), the cognitive sphere (reasonable optimism and the presence of health-building attitudes) and the psycho-emotional sphere (emotional

balance), and also in terms of its biological body (vigor and physical capabilities), while mental factors have a more significant impact on physical health than the physical state of the mental human mood of a person;

- personal-activity approach – health is studied as a characteristic of the personality, formed and manifested in its activities, considering as a result of its own activity;

- competence approach – health is the ability to self-preservation, self-development and self-improvement ie. appears not as a result of the influence of external conditions and resistance to them, but as a manifestation of inner creative activity, creativity in the process of life activity;

- system approach – considers the cognizable object (health) as a system of one or another level.

The indicated conceptual approaches allow to consider health as a target resource of the person, which can be managed. Health as a resource must have a certain basis – health-building potential of an individual, the actualization of which is possible in the educational process.

Thus, the holistic approach to human health treats the body is an open self-arranging system that constantly exchanges energy with the environment. It is acknowledged that the mental and the physical, the rational and the emotional, the biological and the social, the mental and spiritual are the parts of the integrated whole; the relationships between these fragments of the whole in a human indicates the idea of health as an archetype model of human generic essence and his full being. A human can carry out himself and his integrity in all the three parts if he actualizes the idea of the integral health: physical, mental, and moral.

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