

PHILOSOPHY OF HEALTH AS EDUCATION TO HEALTHY LIFE

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Abstract: *The health as a value of human life means to live healthy, wisely and rationally. The health is a reflection of our own being and thinking. The philosophy of health as a stand on life perceives human from perspective of holistic medicine or global understanding of health. The philosophy of health is focused on support of positive and constructive approach to life and health. It also presents procedure open discussion about philosophical basics of medical ethics. Systemic conception of health is not discovery of modern times but we can find its beginnings in ancient medicine. The support of health in a school environment is also important.*

Keywords: *health; philosophy; systemic conception; school.*

Health as a value of human life

Health is a frequent conception being occurred in the present time. Healthy nutrition, healthy lifestyle, healthy environment, healthy school etc. are often discussed. The health is considered to be the highest value of the human life. But we feel deficiency of the health or its endangering only *in extreme life situations*.

Such situation can be also *an initial stage of philosophical view* of the world. Many classical philosophers have already regarded the state of harmony of the physical and mental health as the ideal of human life.

Healthy living comprised also to live wisely and rationally. For example, *Aristotle* regarded a state of blessedness and harmonic perfection as a sense of human behaviour, called by him *eudaemonia*.

The health becomes a reflection of the state of our own being, it is an experience of our generally satisfying life, a good feeling of our body, soul and spirit and it reflects also our relationships towards the surrounding world... *The authentic health* can not be assigned by any diagnosis, any investigations or tests and external evaluation. It can be only lived as a comprehensively satisfying life feeling.

The health is not a product of a scientific research, it is not the matter of therapeutic methods or absence of disease. The health is a *personal value* of an individual, which can be reached by means of good communication with oneself and with the surrounding world, by a wise life. The health is not the existing state, but the matter

we endeavour constantly to reach. We must be trying to find the health along with our sense of life.

The base of health and sense of living is a spontaneous and creative self-formation of a person face to face of possible risks. So the exact *definition of the health has always been missing*. In approach to health we can identify two different methodological ways. *The usual, empiric approach* tries to curtail the concept of health by generalization of partial medical knowledge with use of mathematical methods. *The philosophic, hermeneutic approach* is based on anticipated hypothetical statements and derives from them various conclusions.

Nowadays, the opinion should be that the *health*, in the existing state of *civilization*, means the same value for every individual in any place of the world. But it is not so simple. In the past and also in the present time the value of health and life can be different because it is influenced by the culture of individual areas, by the approach to health, by different customs and traditions and on a large scale it depends also on local life conditions and possibilities.

Thus *nowadays, the health is considered* as a process of reaching health. It is the *active process*, which can be influenced by each of persons concerned, however, with participation of the family, lifestyle, school etc. For this reason, *a medicine man or an occidental physician* with their ways and methods of healing can be more or less successful if people believe them... In the various parts of the world they do not use expensive technology or chemical preparations and nevertheless they can reach a comparable success. Of course, it must be say that people using medicine man services have different physical and psychic “base“ in comparison with us, who are often far way off natural healing methods. Despite of it, we can also learn from experience and practice of those natural people.

In the present time it can seem to us that everything concerning the health is only in hands of physicians because they are those who are able to heal and cure an individual who would formerly die. Therefore, *by the words of Aldouse Huxley*, the English writer of the 20th century it is possible to say that: “*Medical research* has advanced so much that there is no healthy human being in the world“ But the *disease* is something that comes to an individual to arouse him, to help him in his spiritual maturity or to destroy him.

Science is a measurable area but the health is not only an exact matter; it is a changing process influenced by behaviour and experience of the respective human. Thus, *the disease* can not be taken as an isolated problem which can be removed by one medical performance. It is necessary to see the human as an agreement of the mass and the spirit – two components in mutual interaction. So diseases can start their existence only in our mind.

“Worries, hate and fear - together with their branches: anxiety, bitterness, cupidity and cruelty - those strains attack our body on its cellular level. Under those circumstances it is not possible to keep the healthy body. *All diseases are born out of your mind.*”¹

¹ Walsch, Neale Donald: *Hovory s bohem II*. Praha: Pragma, 1999, p. 22, ISBN: 80-7205-645-X.

Philosophy of health as the attitude to life

The philosophical point of view can be applied to any thing, situation or problem. It implies the insight to investigate, reflect and ask. What should be comprised in the prospective *philosophy of health*? It is the perception of the health which *respects the human being* from the so called *holistic medicine point of view* or/also in the sense of the *global understanding of the health*. With using this insight, the interconnection of our body and soul are investigated in more details. It takes also into account the fact that our world consists of various societies that are in mutual interaction and form one integrated system.

According to philosophical openness and dialog, all is acceptable. *The philosopher* asks a question and gives reply; but here there is always a space for a new formulation of the question and for repeated revision of the reply. Some possible imperfect current solution can always exist for the philosopher, which brings him stimulation for seeking a new solution of the respective problem.

Of course, we can also hold a *discussion on need of the philosophy*, namely the philosophy of health; one may reject it, the other may support it enormously. All things that are not “measurable“ and “real“ can make impression of inutility and non-objectiveness. But the philosophy has been here since time immemorial and it tries to investigate also questions inspired by our daily life.

The believe in opportunity of continual progress in the cognition of our world - it has become *the leading idea of development of the European mind*. From all sides appeals come to us on thinking about our life, unethical behaviour towards other people and environment etc. Also from all sides the appeals come to us to change ourselves and our behaviour.

Despite it, consumption demands are increasing and those needs appear in new areas where they have not yet existed. Unfortunately, this *consumption trend* has been shifted *nowadays* also to the *medicine and pharmacy*. Research results have given evidence that after a promoting presentation of solution of some healthy problem in public media, people - without provable need - started taking medicaments for solution of this problem.

The human of our times is fascinated with the *promotion and science* and he has reduced himself to be a subject taking on himself an overflow of continuously discovered new diseases and medicaments. Sometimes information has appeared that various clinical studies may be influenced by great pharmaceutical companies acting as the funding source for the studies. Here the rule is likely used: as much as possible to conceal negatives and to exaggerate merits of the medicaments studied.

Philosophy of health proves to be competent also with the following question: In fact, where is the borderline between the science and humanity, between pragmatism and cognition of health indisputable principle? To find a proper scale of all and in all – it is the most often and the most difficult task of human doing. In such situation it is necessary to contemplate philosophically, to stop for a while, to make self-reflection for change of own behaviour and to strive after living in harmony with oneself, near surrounding and nature.

Philosophy of health is focused on support of positive and constructive approach

to life and health, on preventing negative attitudes that can disturb our *negative balance* because: “Our every idea or activity is based on love or fear...”²

All *our ideas* use to be derived from those basic life attitudes. *The fear* is a negative energy that can limit, close and damage us, can hide and accumulate, whereas *the love* is a positive energy that can broaden, disclose, share, open and cure us.

We must learn to perceive different ways of lifestyle in order to compare them with our own style. *Our life and health* should correspond to our decisions either those done or not done. The function of *our soul* is to indicate our desire, the function of our mind is to choose one of possibilities and the function of our body is to carry out the choice.

The human must think about why his *disease* came and what he must to do for his cure. Of course we must *distinguish among diseases* “on account of life“ and inborn diseases evoked genetically. If the human does not find a cause of his disorders, the disease is transferred in its chronic form and he only takes prescribed medicaments. Undesirable effects he tries to suppress by taking other medicaments. In this way he starts his “vicious circle“ of difficulties. Slowly he starts to understand that only he himself can cure his disorders. Commercial *business and profit* do not go hand in hand with medical ethics. Unfortunately nowadays also the *health service* is getting to be the area for earnings because people are always willing to invest in health.

The *physician* should believe his patient. He has no reason not to believe him because only the patient himself can assess subjectively his pain and his state. Only later on the physician should investigate and dispute various diagnoses. Sometimes physicians may exist with the opinion which seems to be ridiculous, namely that there is only one reason, one consequence of the disease and one way to cure the patient.

Philosophy of health is a procedure of open discussion about philosophical basics of *medical ethics*. Although the field of medical ethics has also been developed in our country in recent years, the respect and willing of professionals from other professions seem to be in the beginning.

History of systemic conception of health (philosophy of health)

Systemic conception of health has not been discovered in modern times but we can find its indications in the ancient medicine. Hellenic medicine was born from the existing ancient Greek philosophy which is characterized by systematic procedures and now it is taken as the first serious philosophy from historical point of view..

Medicine was the first scientific field born from this philosophy and has been developed in relationships with it. *Ancient Greek philosophers* considered the universe as a whole and called it *physis* containing both an order and a continuous movement.

The movement goes on in *three phases*; *the first* phase is the state of harmonic ordering of all existences and their mutual relationships, *the second* phase is making disorder in this harmony and the *third* phase re-organization of the original order.

Hellenic medicine, originated from this philosophical system, is the first medicine in the sense of a scientific branch; it comprises the research and the corresponding

² the same title, p. 23.

medical practice coming from systemic conception of health and disease, inspired by the concept of the nature as a universal whole.

Long ago the ancient Greek medicine discovered that a certain natural constitution and certain susceptibility to illness belong to each human age period. Health is taken as a common healthy natural constitution, as an equivalence of individual elements of a complex unit. For this reason, diseases are not perceived in isolation, as specific problems themselves, but as a consequence of a disturbed balance. Therefore the ill individual is seen in various connections and with investigation of his natural environment.

In the 5th century B.C. the *ancient Greek philosophy* started, on the contrary, to draw inspiration from the medical science, from its conceptual and cognitive results. Several philosophers became concurrently physicians and stepwise the medicine has been reversely influenced by philosophy.

The physician can be regarded as an *authentic medical man* if he tries to take a disease from its very beginning, is concentrated on external circumstances, investigates them and simultaneously gives edification to his patient.

Support of health in school environment

In recent time a lot of community projects arose with the aim to achieve better health in a certain community by means of beneficial changes. It concerns not only the project for school environment. Besides the project Healthy School there are other European projects e.g. Healthy City, Healthy Enterprise etc.

Community projects for support of health are based on two items; the first one is the fact that the human as a social being is satisfying his basic needs by means of social relationships with his nearest surrounding and so his health reflects especially the quality of those relationships. Further, the projects are grounded on information that every community disposes of a certain strength and power to influence lives of its members and the surrounding world.

The *strength and power* of the community depends on proportion of contributions of its members and on extent of its institutionalization. In this way it can achieve also a formal authority. The community is able to influence the health of near and remote groups, their present and future forms. Although individual project can differ in several items, all of the projects have *two identical basic principles*: respect for needs of the individual within the society as a whole; development of communication and cooperation within the community and among communities.

Although *many community projects* were started, the priority attention is paid to the projects focused on *education*. From this point of view *children and youth* are the most endangered group because they are still creating their own attitudes to themselves and to the society; their personalities are still being formed, they accept stimuli, attitudes and accepted models. Children and youth are the group that should have a chance to learn to observe things from a new and undistorted point of view, to form their attitudes by means of sufficient volume of information and by using social tools with e.g. *democratic principles* among them.

In nineties of 20th century the **European Network of Health Promoting Schools** (hereinafter ENHPS) was created with the aim to establish a group of model schools in

all regions of *World Health Organization* (hereinafter WHO); those schools should prove importance of support of health in the school environment. The *model schools* should publish their knowledge and experience to other education and health institutions that can influence the health support strategy on the national and international level.

The initial *conception of school promoting health* was discussed in early eighties. This topic of many conferences and seminars had been broadly discussed and changed and then it served as a base of ENHPS development. After *pilot tests* of this conception in Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic, the European Union (EU), Council of Europe (CE) and WHO Regional Office for Europe accepted the project; ENHPS was established in 1992 and has since been quickly spread. In the year 1997, 37 countries were linked to the conception, each of them with own pilot network of schools.

”The participated schools committed to promotion of health by creation of school environment that would be safe and beneficial for healthy life and work and healthy development. (...) The school supporting health tries to create opportunities for all its involved individuals, to follow and improve their physical and mental health by means of change of its management structure and structure of internal and external relationships, by means of teaching and learning and by means of the methods supporting interoperation with social environment.“³

To ensure success of all such endeavour, it is necessary to implant support of health into all school everyday doings and activities. The *school supporting health* is an opportunity of European countries for change to better, for better future – and these countries can not stand aside - in self-interest and in interest of the non-European world.

The *European region* comprises many various cultures and the main goal of ENHPS is to come just to mutual understanding and recognition of variety of those cultures. Therefore, the important precondition of this project is mutual cooperation on the national and local level, exchange of experience and mutual respect. The aim of ENHPS is to bring up nowadays’ youth to be healthy and educated people with sense for responsibility and with skills necessary for living in the modern world. By the resolution of the *1st Conference of ENHPS in 1997*: in Europe each child and young man has right and should have opportunity to be educated in the health promoting school.

The program of health promotion at school (hereinafter the Program HPS)- in sense of the European Conference - should bring benefits for children and youth not only in all components of their health but it should contribute to general transformation of school process. It should bring elements of democracy both to education itself and to school institutions and in this way produce benefits for children and youth and also for teachers. The aim is to form healthy and educational, learning and working environment. Such operation school should be a base for formation of the healthy society with applying democratic principles that are the human aim for the present time and hopefully also for the future.

The Program HPS is divided into *three fundamental pillars*:

1) *Supportive environment*: comfortable material environment; comfortable social environment; comfortable operating environment.

³ Havlinová, M.: Program podpory zdraví ve škole: rukověť projektu Zdravá škola. Edit. Miluše Havlinová. 1st issue, Praha: Portál, 1998. p. 244-245, ISBN: 80-7178-263-7.

2) *Healthy learning*: meaningfulness of education; option of choice and adequacy of education; participation and cooperation in education; motivating evaluation of pupils.

3) *Open partnership*: school as a democratic community; school as an education centre of municipality.

Further characteristics of the contents of the Program HPS:

The first pillar of the health promoting school, with respect to the *supportive environment*, comes from the fact that each person lives in a certain environment and he cannot break himself of it because it belongs to his life. The environment constitutes a means to satisfy our needs and it is also a certain model that we try to create and maintain during our life.

The second pillar of the health promoting school, with respect to the *healthy learning*, describes the process of acquiring certain skills, knowledge and attitudes. In the last years *pedagogy* underwent a substantial development. *Based on philosophical and psychological knowledge and research results it tries to humanize the education process and to respect particularity of an individual. Bloom theory* is important for this trend, with accepting the presumption that all pupils can acquire new skills and knowledge under favourable conditions and sufficient time.

Modern school education tends to individualization, to adaptation of the whole educational process to the individuality of a pupil with all his needs and particularities. It is based on proper identification of the so called *initial characteristics of pupils*. It means to find individual differences in learning, by the type of intelligence and the differences given by previous knowledge and skills, attitude to learning and by culture and family environment. Taking into account those characteristics, the favourable education methods and strategies can be selected to reach educational goals and to retain space for accomplishment of education needs of the pupils.

Generally the *principles of healthy education* defined in the *Program HPS* strive after development of the pupil's personality with needs of the group he participates in, i.e. with respecting the community, the world. *The school promoting health attends to advisability of learning*, i.e. practical usability of skills and knowledge being learned by pupils for their real life. As regards the education contents and methods, the school promoting health takes care of suitability and option of choice, for facilitating every pupil to learn also the extending curriculum in the way corresponding with his personality and intelligence type, in a *balance of the rational-emotive education*. The school promoting health tries to create *uncompetitive environment* which can intensify self-confidence, self-reliance and responsibility of pupils and to supply pupils with motivating for evaluation.

The third pillar of the health promoting school, with respect to the *open partnership*, strives for *transferring from a closed authoritative system to an open system with elements of democracy* and in this way to prevent from social-pathological effects that could be supported if the school social system would be closed. The social system of the school is formed by persons inside the school (pupils, teachers, school management workers, non-pedagogical workers and parents) and the so called *strategic partners of the school*, i.e. institutions and organizations influencing operation of the school (education advisory centres, school office authorities, municipal board etc.). The mentioned

partners play various roles and perform functions in the social system of the school; they have various relationships that define the extent and ways of their participation in school activities.

In connection with the Program HPS, the Framework Education Program is an important inspiration source for forming conception of interconnection and inter-curricula relations relevant for education to health.

With formulation of education aims and free choice of education methods and teaching means, the *Framework Education Program* provides teachers with procedures to achieve results by methods suitable for individual students with their particularities, orientation etc.; it gives them enough space for themes difficult to insert in an individual curriculum by use of the so called *cross-section themes*. The cross-section themes comprise topics of several subjects; here teachers cooperate in educational process and in this way the individual topics are presented in all contexts and some current themes of our present society can be pointed out. Therefore *global education, multicultural education, environmental education, philosophy, philosophical anthropology, axiology, ethics, medical ethics* are the new parts of curriculum that should discover important new relationships and knowledge of human existence and consequences of human activities as projected in sense of human life and its values, significance of health, environment or intercultural relationships.

"In the school environment there is an option to draw up the new specialization – **philosophy of health**. This discipline could be a universal education agent with its complex and integration character. Within philosophy of health we should mainly seek things and phenomena promoting human ethics and responsible attitude towards health and to all things supporting mental development, with avoiding impact to mental devastation. It should comprise cultivation of sense of positive life attitudes including responsible social behaviour and acting.

Philosophy of health should contribute to personal growth and socially constructive attitudes. Its basics is reflective morality, i.e. conscious consideration of possible consequences of own acting. Generally it should be a dynamic balance based on individual and creative approach. Philosophy of health should teach us to see our disease as a challenge to create successful life strategies. Our world is very risky place for living and if a disease strikes it could take us into dark abysses of our soul. Therefore, philosophy of health must to teach us to live with our disease by means of a lot of fruitful compromises that enable us still to participate with dignity in the life."⁴

FILOZOFIE ZDRAVÍ JAKO VÝCHOVA KE ZDRAVÉMU ŽIVOTU

Abstrakt: Zdraví je dnes chápáno i jako osobní hodnota lidského života. „Žít zdravě“ znamená „žít moudře“, „žít rozumně.“ Zdraví je odrazem našeho bytí a myšlení. Filozofie zdraví nahlíží na člověka prostřednictvím holistické / celostní medicíny, a tedy i zdraví chápe „globálně“. Zaměřuje se především na podporu pozitivních a konstruk-

⁴ Rybář, R.: Úvodní poznámka k filozofii zdraví. In *School and Health* 21 (1), Volume 1. (Ed.) Řehulka, E., MU Brno, 2006. p. 265. ISBN: 80-210-4071-8.

tivních přístupů k životu a zdraví. Takové systémové, celostní pojetí zdraví však není „objevem“ moderní medicíny, jeho počátky sahají až do doby počátků medicíny a filozofie v antickém Řecku. V současné době nabývají na významu také otevřené diskuse o lékařské etice, do škol je zaváděn „Program podpory zdraví ve škole“.

Klíčová slova: zdraví, filozofie, systémové pojetí, škola