

# Concept of disease and human existence

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# Initial points of thinking

- Being many years at the edge of medicine, I have recognized that doctors tend to see their patients (and sometimes also other people) in increasingly narrowing way, mostly through the concept of disease and certain 2-sided, i.e. medical staff and patients, ritual behavior in medical settlements.
- Medical doctors are often accused of being only engineers of biological machines.
- Contemporary professional behavior of medical people is well limited service provision which very openly reflects pretension of society to unify different professional relations under one template.

## 2 main roots of medicine

- The *moral root* is a wish or demand to help and care other people;
- The *rational or cognitive root* is thinking from gathering of medical experience of healers and their communities.
- The balance between the roots has been changing through times, but moral root seems to be primary one indeed.

# 2 main axes of medicine

- Health-disease distinction
- Medical professional - patient relationship or in broader terms relationship between single person and society in certain situations.
- These 2 axes are somehow able to create very complicated value and knowledge space for medicine both on personal and different social levels.

# Concept of disease I

- There are several different theoretical (philosophical) approaches to understand disease and health-disease distinction.
- Differences in understanding of disease can put a diseased and disabled person into very complicated and not so well predictable social environment.

# Concept of disease II

- As a fundamental category in medicine, disease is a causal process with some more specific labels: etiology is a starting point of it; pathogenesis and symptoms are intermediate labels of the process, and therapy is a way to drive the process in certain way.
- There are 2 steps in particularisation of disease: first, there is huge number of different diseases with the unique general set of etiology and pathogenesis and, second, every disease can vary in endless way in concrete cases.

# Concept of disease III

- In modern scientific medicine the concept of disease tends to turn more particular one and less universal category. Just think about thousands of different concrete diseases (or limited scenarios of human existence) in ICD-10.
- Despite of all those fine classifications and huge number of possibilities of human (pathological) existence, great extent of uncertainty still exists in this area.

# Concept of disease IV

- Some people support the value neutrality within the concept of disease, but it seems to be impossible separate values from particular case of disease in social environment.
- Some people think about disease as abnormal condition of an organism, but this seems to be valid only in social environment.



# Human existence I

- The concept of health, especially the WHO's "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity", is very much about proper human existence.
- Medicine covers differently various aspects of well-being: therapeutic medicine has traditionally been more involved to personal physical and mental wellbeing, and public health hopefully and more directly to social well-being.

# Human existence II

A paradox of modern medicine is that in case of disease it, i.e. medicine, should give more autonomy to every patient, but at the same time due to tremendous progress in medical sciences patients have to trust and follow doctors rather more and less their own immediate reasoning and intuition about their own situation.

# Human existence III

- Medicine is very much reductionistic with particular diseases;
- Biological reductionism and sophisticated social determinism can produce mutual symbiosis in which the human being may objectively lose its freedom and autonomy, despite of public demand to offer them.

# Conclusion

- Disease is much more social concept than medical people and patients usually think about this;
- The concept of disease is nowadays rather more important to society than to diseased people themselves because in case of broad consensus with that it helps efficiently locate human beings in social environment.