

What is Health?

Lecture 2.4



What is Health?

- What is “health”?
 - the state of people who are not “ill”?
 - But the definition of illness, or disease, evolves....
 - The distinction between Normal vs. Abnormal is both descriptive *and* normative (value-laden)



Health and Disease as “Social Constructs”

- ... discussion about what counts as health and disease involves considerations of what counts as the proper human state, and the latter [concept] is caught up with value judgements which are both explicit and implicit. (Tristram Englehardt, Jr.)
- ... illness and disease, health and treatment, [are] social constructions (...). Outside the significance that man voluntarily attaches to certain conditions, there are no illness or diseases in nature. (Peter Sedgewick)
 - *who* counts as normal human being and *what* counts as a normal state are “normative” questions, not a natural “fact”
 - **frame-work relative**... what is normal in one group, is perhaps abnormal or “ill” in another group.
 - The **scientific/biological framework?** But is goal of health *merely* a biological goal of survival or environment-relative optimal biological functioning?
