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INDUSTRY OF HEALTH AND HAPPINESS IN MANFRED LÜTZ'S  
THOUGHT

*Industrija zdravlja i sreće u misli Manfreda Lütza*

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*Abstract*

*Manfred Lütz, a psychiatrist and theologian, speak about one of the key problems of modern society, and that is the relationship of contemporary man toward health. M. Lütz primarily addresses his message to a healthy people who tends to divinize health as supreme value. Health is turning into religion and such sacralisation of health care is accompanied by complete commercialization of the health care system. This process is facilitated by the glorification of health, medical science, physicians, and achievements in pharmaceutical industry. With his theses, he revitalizes the ancient Greek belief that excessive care for health is also a kind of sickness. Similar thought regarding health and illness we found in works of I. Illich, H.-G. Gadamer, Z. Bauman and others.*

*Key words: health, cult, illness, body, ethics, culture of well-being, healthism*

INTRODUCTORY WORDS ABOUT “THE (UN)NORMAL”

Psychiatrist, psychotherapist and theologian, Manfred Lütz, in 2009 wrote a work on psychiatry with a touch of cheerfulness “Irre! Wir behandeln die Falschen: Unser Problem sind die Normalen”.<sup>1</sup> During the Covid-19 pandemic we were guided, consoled and we put our trust in the concept of a *new normal* that had to be understood and implemented in all spheres of life.

<sup>1</sup> In this work we will use the book in Croatian language: *Ludilo: liječimo pogrešne - pravi problem su normalni ljudi: psihijatrija s daškom vedrine*, Znanje, Zagreb 2009.

In order to understand and accept the *new normal*, first it is necessary to try to define normal, but also to understand the antipode of normal.

Normal comes from the Latin word "norma" which means protractor, right angle. Until the 1930s, the word *normal* in English had the meaning "at right angles", while at the same time in America it meant the usual situation or position. In the general public the word *normal* began to be used to evaluate people only in the 20th century, although August Comte already gave it a medical connotation in 1840. Despite this almost unknown fact, it was only at the turn of the 19th to 20th centuries that the illness began to be associated with norms, in other words with the (ab)normal. When health began to be studied within the framework of clinical standards or norms, illness began to be understood and interpreted as a deviation from the norm.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the etymological origin of the term norm, the term was used for centuries and meant a set of traditional standards, rules and customs that are formed within a group or community, and are valued as the fruit of time and tradition, circumstances and needs, with the purpose to organize society. Norms as a set of traditional standards bind all members of society and as such constitute the morality of a society.<sup>3</sup> Whoever respects and follows the norms of the society to which he belongs is considered normal, while all that, and all those who deviate from the usual, normal, or socially acceptable norms, are considered abnormal, or in jargon, crazy.

Despite almost a whole century of studying the standard of (ab)normality, until today, psychologists do not have a generally accepted theory of personality that explains who is a normal and who is an abnormal personality. Neurological disorders cannot clearly define the neuroscientific criteria for evaluating normality. The World Health Organization considers psychological normality to be mental health, which implies inner self-satisfaction; healthy lifestyle habits; self-actualization; harmonious interpersonal relations; successfully coping with life's challenges; work productivity and contribution to the community. According to popular psychology, a normal person is one who is polite,

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ivan Illich, *Medicinska nemaza. Eksproprijacija zdravlja*, Litteris, Zagreb 2010., pp. 200-201.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. M. Lütz, *Ludilo: liječimo pogrešne - pravi problem su normalni ljudi: psihijatrija s daškom vedrine*, p. 29.

mild-tempered and even-tempered, while from a social perspective, a normal person is one who lives in accordance with social norms. Therefore, the most normal person is the one who is the most average, and this social mediocrity is achieved, according to social psychology, through education, i.e. adaptation and internalization of norms. According to psychiatrist Robert Torre, the precondition for such normality is the alienation of the individual from himself in order to fit into mediocrity.<sup>4</sup>

Unusual behaviors of individuals have been perceived differently throughout history. It took a long time to differentiate and define different mental illnesses, psychological difficulties and disorders because psychiatry is a relatively young science, its beginnings go back to the 19th century. Despite modern clear and precise medical definitions, society still sees many psychological difficulties as embarrassment.<sup>5</sup> In some African cultures, mentally ill people are still considered to be possessed by evil spirits, and in the ancient world, for example, epilepsy<sup>6</sup> was considered as a kind of blessing. In various cultures, mental illness is considered a punishment for sins.

Even today, in modern society, despite the amazing progress of medical science, the human brain still represents a mystery and remains inconceivable. And despite civilizational and scientific-technical progress, man has still not learned to accept the difference, originality, uniqueness and specialness of others. Therefore, M. Lütz in his work "Gott: Eine kleine Geschichte des Größten"<sup>7</sup> sees *the normal world* as one in which, out of decency, no voices are heard that cannot be heard by everyone else, nor can they be confirmed. *The normal world* is a firmly constructed

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Robert Torre, *Ima li života prije smrti. Iskustvo prvog lica*, MB Books, Zagreb 2018., pp. 40-42.

<sup>5</sup> During the history the understanding of mental illnesses influenced the attitude towards mentally ill people. Throughout history, they have been put to death, hidden from the public and imprisoned in isolated institutions. It takes many years to apply a more humane approach to people with mental disabilities, to integrate them into society, accept them, and treat them with dignity. Despite this, we dare to say that they are still on the margins, that they are often labelled, stigmatized, neglected, and left behind.

<sup>6</sup> Epilepsy was understood as a *morbus sacer*, a sacred illness, due to the belief that during a seizure a person experiences an encounter with the divine. (cf. M. Lütz, *Bog. Mala povijest najvećega. Obavezno štivo za ateiste, agnostike i vjernike*, Verbum, Split 2012., p. 275.)

<sup>7</sup> Here we use this book translated in croatian language *Bog. Mala povijest najvećega. Obavezno štivo za ateiste, agnostike i vjernike*, Verbum, Split 2012.

world in which no extraordinary event is possible because everything that goes beyond the usual is a illness, concludes M. Lütz, recalling Zarathustra who said: whoever feels differently, willingly goes to a madhouse.<sup>8</sup>

Despite all efforts to suppress it, madness has always existed, and the phenomenon of its existence, and all forms of manifestation, remains an enigma. The core of the madness remains a complete mystery. As Robert Torre says, madness is an integral part of society, it's comes from society, but also because of society, so it is something much bigger than a medical phenomenon. Madness is also a social phenomenon, according to R. Torre.<sup>9</sup>

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In order to humanize the perception of people with mental difficulties and illnesses, Manfred Lütz, primarily as a psychiatrist, and then as a theologian, asks the question: today, who is actually a mad person?

### 1. NORMOPATHS

Scientists, and especially physicians of course, constantly improve their knowledge related to both, health and certain diseases, the definitions of which can be found in medical textbooks, encyclopedias and lexicons. Manfred Lütz problematizes something else, the concept and perception of *normal*.

What M. Lütz considers debatable is the generally accepted definition of health by the World Health Organization, according to which health is "complete physical, mental and social well-being".<sup>10</sup> The definition of health today is even more comprehensive because it also includes the ecological and moral dimensions. Achieving this kind of physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual and moral balance in order to be completely healthy is impossible, according to M. Lütz. Namely, physicians and scientists have set too high standards of health. Or as Aldous Huxley sums it up, "medicine has advanced so much that no one is healthy anymore."<sup>11</sup> In the impossibility of achieving such a well-being,

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. M. Lütz, *ibid*, str. 275.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Robert Torre, *Ludilo uzvraca udarac. Povijest ludila osuđenog na psihijatriju*, MB Books, Zagreb 2021., pp. 13-18.

<sup>10</sup> M. Lütz, *Ludilo: liječimo pogrešne - pravi problem su normalni ljudi: psihijatrija s daškom vedrine*, p. 46

<sup>11</sup> Manfred Lütz, *Užitak života. Protiv terora dijete, manije zdravlja i kulta fitnessa*, Verbum, Split 2015., p. 28. And similarly said Montigne: "If you want to get sick, go to the doctor."

more and more people are considered sick, and therefore more and more people make great efforts to be healthy, to enter into limits of modern health standards, definition of health, well-being and quality of life. M. Lütz calls such people *normopaths*.

*Normapaths* are people who are normal to the point of discomfort, as ironically defined by this psychiatrist and theologian.<sup>12</sup> They are not able to approach life frivolously, they lack carefreeness, and they feel best in an atmosphere of general agreement. They always do everything as written and as it should be. These are pre-rational people who think they see things better and more correctly than others.<sup>13</sup>

The one who shows disobedience, who resists, protests, discusses, doubts what the society, laws or culture of a nation dictates, is simply a lunatic according to *neuropaths*.

However, as a psychiatrist with extensive medical experience, M. Lütz testifies to “totally normal madness”<sup>14</sup> and says: “People who suffer from mental disorders often simply do not participate in the completely normal madness of our society.”<sup>15</sup>

Eleven, twelve years after these words, precisely at the time of adoption and implementation of the measures of the civil protection headquarters all over the world for the purpose of suppressing the current pandemic, many asked themselves again - who is mad here?

<sup>12</sup> *Pathos* is hidden in the very word *normopath*, the suffering that individuals go through in order to be perfectly normal and healthy while they look with scorn on all those who deviate from the socially acceptable and recommended.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. M. Lütz, *Užitak života. Protiv terora dijete, manije zdravlja i kulta fitnessa*, pp. 23-26.

<sup>14</sup> M. Lütz, *Ludilo: liječimo pogrešne - pravi problem su normalni ljudi: psihijatrija s daškom vedrine*, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> M. Lütz, *ibid*, p. 10. World-famous criminals are often considered insane. M. Lütz breaks down prejudices about criminals as mentally ill or madmen and says that the great criminals in history like Hitler or Stalin were not psychiatric patients but were simply evil, intelligent manipulators, excellent politicians, and outstanding communicators, very focused on their goals and persistent in their realization. Such a single focus cannot be achieved by the patient. In the inability to understand evil and its many manifestations, man is inclined to interpret evil as a disease, as a cognitive dysfunction. With such an interpretation, one enters the field of neuroethics in which scientists, but also the general public, lay the responsibility for their own misdeeds on genetics and disease, biological processes, difficult life, family problems, childhood traumas, society and the rest. In the same way, unusual behaviours and dark moods that lead to crimes are justified, the origin of which is also sought in neurotransmitters instead of one's own will, thus completely denying human freedom. (Cf. M. Lütz, *ibid*, pp. 13-18 and pp. 53-58.)

Namely, without diagnostic pretensions of insane or not insane, numerous people in the last two to three years have arbitrarily excluded themselves from society, isolated themselves from their family members and their loved ones, or this was imposed to them by the health professional community. Without going into the medical questions of the justification of such measures and procedures, the fear of illness and death has taken its toll. The new state, atmosphere and behaviour caused by the corona crisis revitalized the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche, who said: "Insanity in an individual is rare - but when it comes to groups, parties, peoples, times, madness is the rule."<sup>16</sup>

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A decade before the current epidemiological crisis, when talking about *normopaths*, M. Lütz talked about people who live a boringly good life and condemn people who suffer from some kind of peculiarity, regardless of how it manifested itself. *Normopaths* today would be those who closed themselves in a kind of incubators in order to preserve their physical health and life at the cost of their psychological, emotional, spiritual and social well-being, which of course caused new problems that are mostly tried to be solved with medication. It is justified to declare that enormous and countless existential, financial, family and emotional problems and difficulties are medicalized. Any unusual behaviour, peculiarity and moodiness as well as socially unacceptable emotional states are tried to be solved with psychopharmaceuticals.

In Croatia, too, we can find physicians, who thinks like M. Lütz. Except the mentioned R. Torre, Croatian bioethicist and physicians Lidija Gajski talks about the expansion of new definitions of diseases that were created by raising standards that are impossible to reach. This shifted the focus from disease treatment to disease prevention. In other words, modern medicine, in cooperation with the pharmaceutical industry, encourages the prescription of drugs to healthy people so that they do not get sick; so that they do not feel sad; so that they sleep well; so that they do not age quickly; so that they come to good body weight; and so that they can die one day as healthy as possible.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The quote is given by Eckart von Hirschhausen in the preface to the book *Ludilo: liječimo pogrešne - pravi problem su normalni ljudi: psihijatrija s daškom vedrine*, p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> Speaking about the goals and tendencies of modern medicine, Lidija Gajski writes about the expansion of indications for drugs, the expansion of the definition of

The insanely normal people like what everyone else says and thinks, and especially what themselves confidently represent. They do not allow the peculiarity of the other that jumps out of ordinariness. They love obedience, they strive for a perfect society where there are no unusual, disobedient or sick people, people with spiritual, emotional, physical or mental difficulties. With such an attitude, it is normal people who open the door to bioethically debatable procedures, for example, prenatal diagnostics, euthanasia, eugenics, genetic engineering, abortion, and spread various forms of discrimination. The new worldview that emerges from a new perspective on health sound like this: “Whoever can no longer be healthy, who is terminally ill or disabled, is a person of the second or third class who should be carefully prevented from entering into life or should be compassionately made easier for them to get out of it”.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, normal, politically very correct people, “born followers”, as M. Lütz calls them, create a mass of impersonal figures whose goal is to relieve society, but also themselves of so called “ballast existence”, sick, weak or simply different from themselves.<sup>19</sup> We can admit that in such a world there is no place for Forrest Gump, neither for Nikola Tesla, van Gogh, St. Francis of Assisi<sup>20</sup>, St. Catherine of Siena, nor for numerous ancient and contemporary scientists, artists, philosophers or Christian saints, in order, of *weirdos*, or people out of ordinary.

### 1.1. *Well-being culture*

Modern man is immersed in the so-called well-being culture as well as in a worldview based on popular positive psychology that has been gradually developing under the auspices of science since the 90s of the last century. Only recently this culture has

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the disease, the increase of the population being treated, the shift from disease therapy to its prevention and the creation of new clinical entities. These are serious phenomena that have not only medical, but also social and cultural implications. ( cf. Lidija Gajski, *Lijekovi ili priča o obmani*, Pergamena, Zagreb, 2009, p. 153. See more on the topic in *Ibid*, pp. 156-198.)

<sup>18</sup> M. Lütz, *Užitak života. Protiv terora dijete, manije zdravlja i kulta fitnessa*, p. 12.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. M. Lütz, *Ludilo: liječimo pogrešne - pravi problem su normalni ljudi: psihijatrija s daškom vedrine*, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> From an interesting psychological aspect, M. Lütz looks at the life, health, and actions of St. Francis of Assisi in his work, *Bog- mala povijest najvećeg. Obvezno štivo za ateiste, agnostike i vjernike*, p. 267-270.



spawned numerous supporters who tirelessly search for methods of positive thinking in all spheres of private and professional life. Under the guidance of various teachers, gurus, instructors, astrologers, self-help leaders and life coaches, people try to find quick solutions to their difficulties and reach a level of complete happiness and satisfaction. In the meantime, positive psychology has grown into a giant industry whose focus is on happiness that can be achieved through one's own efforts and one's own strength. The psychology of self-realization makes man a being who is responsible for his own happiness and who should feel shame and guilt if he takes insufficient care of himself, his health and well-being. Eva Illouz talks about process of manufacturing happy citizens and the culture of self-help, which is based on the idea of self-realization and common psychological misery that is treated with suitable therapies. Therefore, self-help narratives, which begin as far back as the 19th century with the *mind healing movement*, have grown over time into powerful industries and serious and even dangerous political ideologies.<sup>21</sup>

Just as in law everyone is considered innocent until proven guilty, so in medicine all those who have not been diagnosed with a disease are considered healthy. In its elitism and culture in which the ethos of self-help prevails, society excludes eccentric people and those with difficulties in thinking, understanding or feeling, and M. Lütz considers them to be people who can "transmit an impulse of inspiration to society, can fascinate and contribute to the progress of humanity."<sup>22</sup> They in fact, suffer because of their way of being extraordinary, and "the extraordinary alone is not enough for a diagnosis, because it is known that it is precisely different extraordinary people who give color to our life and they are often the ones who have significantly contributed to the progress of humanity"<sup>23</sup>, concludes M. Lütz.

The new circumstances that have formed due to the epidemic of the Covid 19 virus are the result of such a militant normality, a new general madness marked first and foremost by the fear of illness and death. The strength of this delusion lies in the con-

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Eva Illouz, *Hladna intimnost. Kako smo stvorili emocionalni kapitalizam*, Planetopija, Zagreb 2016., pp. 52-56.

<sup>22</sup> M. Lütz, *Ludilo: liječimo pogrešne - pravi problem su normalni ljudi: psihijatrija s daškom vedrine*, p. 48.

<sup>23</sup> M. Lütz, *Bog- mala povijest najvećega. Obvezno štivo za ateiste, agnostike i vjernike*, p. 268.

viction of modern man, who is a child of the scientific and technological revolution, and the culture of healing and well-being, that he is the master of his health and life. This new beliefs makes a foundation for new norms that build a *new normal*.<sup>24</sup>

The Covid 19 virus brought to light a much more contagious disease that, like any virus, quickly spread among individuals and almost irreparably collapsed the brain, heart and lungs of society. It is healthism, terror of the health ideology.

## 2. THE HEALTHISM – TERROR OF HEALTH IDEOLOGY

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The thought and belief that everything is in man's hands, that he has the right to everything and the fact that many things are truly easily accessible to him and that everything is equally important and equally unimportant, is the source of various anxiety disorders, frustrations, anxiety, panic attacks, addictions, eating disorders, stress and depression. M. Lütz wonders: "If everything was normal somewhere in the world at some point, or still is - then what is still normal?"<sup>25</sup>

Mental difficulties grow exponentially with increasing fear of old age, dying, infirmity, illness, and death. M. Lütz calls these dominating fears pagan because they are felt, in the first place, by those who, believing in nothing and no one, begin to believe in everything. Refuges and shelters are desperately sought in esotericism, astrology, clairvoyance, self-help literature, gurus, and various systems, programs, projects, and products with the prefix *bio*, *eco*, *light* or *soft*. Thus, for example, *the new normal* caused a hysteria for the *New New Age*, or fast well-being. The ultimate utopian goal is to escape illness and delay or cheat death in all possible and impossible ways. The rituals that a person performs are so rehearsed, strictly prescribed, inflexible and unquestionable like dogmas, that it seems that Lütz's thesis about healthism is completely justified.

<sup>24</sup> Apart from doctors and other scientists that we mention and don't mention here, cinematography and literature abound with this theme, problematize a perfectly ordered society and a perfectly functioning man. We can mention movies like *The Truman Show*, *The Stanford Wives*, *Rain Man*, *Forest Gump*, Orwell's novel, 1984, etc.

<sup>25</sup> M. Lütz, *Ludilo: liječimo pogrešne - pravi problem su normalni ljudi: psihijatrija s daškom vedrine*, p. 30.

The religion of health (*Gesundheistreligion*<sup>26</sup>) or the cult of healthy life has many faithful devotees and followers who have turned health into a religion. Health has become a duty and even a (moral) commandment for modern man. New social and health norms dictate that a person must be always healthy at all costs and, even at the cost of life.<sup>27</sup>

### 2.1. *The sacralization of health*

The society of the healthy sacralises health. Everything that a believer once did for the sake of God, he now does for the sake of health. It is the supreme, the greatest good, therefore gyms become new churches, hospitals become cathedrals, doctors become demigods, and organic food becomes mana. In simpler terms, eternal life is sought on earth. Namely, the cult of health, which M. Lütz talks about, has all the elements of religious worship of God such as rituals, pilgrimages, fasting, missions, penance, priests, believers, and temples. And while a person can joke with God as he wants, there is no joking with health, in modern society. In fact, any joke about health is considered blasphemy or blasphemy. M. Lütz very aptly conveys this with his observation: "Our ancestors built cathedrals, we build clinics. Our ancestors fell on their knees, and we do sit-ups. Our ancestors saved their souls, and we saved our figure."<sup>28</sup> Health worshipers treat their health very religiously. In order to be healthy, they are ready for any form of self-denial and penance through rituals of sacrifice, asceticism, fasting and renunciation. Physicians are the new saviours and healers who are worshiped as saints in the procession. Waiting for the arrival of a physician seem like Advent. Medics' offices have become confessional rooms, and health care facilities have become new sanctuaries.<sup>29</sup>

The Italian surgeon and politician, Ignazio Marino, noticed that already in the 70s of the last century, people treated surgeons like priests. The surgeon regularly appears in a long coat and speaks in an incomprehensible language and promises and performs salutary rituals that the patients do not suspect at all,

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<sup>26</sup> Man's (pseudo)religious attitude towards youth and health was first expressed by Lütz, using this term in an article published by *Die Zeit* on April 17, 2008, "Erhebet die Herzen, beuget die Knie" (p. 17.)

<sup>27</sup> Cf. M. Lütz, *ibid*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>28</sup> M. Lütz, *Užitak života. Protiv terora dijete, manije zdravlja i kulta fitnessa*, p. 16.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. M. Lütz, *ibid*, pp. 30-39.

but in silence, feeling gratitude and awe, expect healing.<sup>30</sup> In a very similar way, Michael Foucault spoke of doctors as a new priesthood that will inherit the goods taken from the Church. Thus, he predicted that believers “will be converted to a way of life oriented towards health more than towards salvation.”<sup>31</sup>

Religious elements are not only taken from Christianity. Manfred Lütz finds in the planetary cult of health elements stolen from Buddhism and boldly calls this mish-mash “Buddhism from a can”.<sup>32</sup> Ancient Eastern recipes and therapies are often found in media that sensationalize traditional Eastern medical techniques and skills. Lütz writes: “Only if someone advertises any therapy, even a nonsensical one, with a possible cure, he get full public attention, unlimited talk time and an endless number of visitors to his website.”<sup>33</sup>

Healthism gathered all the negative elements and phenomena that occur under the auspices of religions such as heresies, false sciences, sects and the Inquisition.<sup>34</sup> They have, of course, an ideological character.

## 2.2. Health colonization and ethics of healing

Manfred Lütz is a witness to what Ivan Illich predicted already in the 70s of the last century. In his work “Medical Nemesis” (1975), Illich talks about the “medical colonization of everyday life”<sup>35</sup>. He believed that medicine (together with industrialization and politics) turned a person into a man who needs constant help<sup>36</sup>, who is subject to constant recovery<sup>37</sup> and who is an ordinary consumer of health services. Even then, the ground was being prepared for the consumer man of our age who compulsively spends on various therapies and medicines that he has learned to want and need. “Achieving health through good works of comprehensive and thorough health care is the funda-

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ignazio R. Marino, *Credere e curare*, Giulio Einaudi editore, Torino 2005., p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> These words of Foucault are brought by Illich in his work *Medicinska nemaza. Eksproprijacija zdravlja*, pp. 190-191.

<sup>32</sup> M. Lütz, *ibid*, p. 38.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid*, p. 37.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, p. 35.

<sup>35</sup> I. Illich, *Medicinska nemaza. Eksproprijacija zdravlja*, p.7.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, p. 164.

mental dogma of the religion of health."<sup>38</sup> Many are caught up in this wave of irrational expectations and simply do not accept any criticism or counterargument. But as Lütz says: "Certainly, madness is characterized by the very fact that it cannot be removed by arguments."<sup>39</sup>

However, it seems that the supporters of the cult of health love to talk about guilt, and it is above all a moral and religious category. Under the pressure of healthism, human being is considered responsible or guilty for his own or other people's illness and/or death. Health is understood as a good that can be produced, which is in human hands, it is a "product that can be repaired".<sup>40</sup>

The basis of the religion of health is the *ethics of healing*, the ideology of which justifies the methods and procedures that are believed to lead to the healing of the sick. The goal of the *ethics of healing* is a healthy person, and this is also the essence of the religion of health. According to this ethic, everything that serves to heal the sick is allowed. It is not only permissible but also a duty which is a terrifying belief.<sup>41</sup> This understanding of health and life is truly ethically very debatable. The imperative of health builds an entire health industry that ignores and belittles all those needy, especially vulnerable members of society, who become social surplus and a burden on society whose members strive for health, productivity, and success.

### 3. COUNTERMEASURES: EMBRACING THE WEAKNESS

The dominant and overwhelming desire of modern man is to be spared from all suffering, illness, difficulty and embarrassment, life crises and dissatisfaction, and that is the greatest madness. If a person emphasized and provoked difficulties, we could talk about masochism in that case, but life embrace struggles, problems as well as happiness, pleasure or joy. The theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar calls this fullness of life.<sup>42</sup> Command-

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<sup>38</sup> M. Lütz, *ibid*, p. 45.

<sup>39</sup> M. Lütz, *Ludilo: liječimo pogrešne - pravi problem su normalni ljudi: psihijatrija s daškom vedrine*, p. 74.

<sup>40</sup> M. Lütz, *Užitak života. Protiv terora dijete, manije zdravlja i kulta fitnessa*, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Lütz, *ibid*, p. 81.

<sup>42</sup> "Fullness of life means allowing the unexpected, making yourself available to the moment, being ready for what should happen to the person in question". (Quo-

ing ourselves that we must always be good we are condemning ourselves to mediocrity. Namely, many psychologists, philosophers, and even physicians<sup>43</sup> talk about the benefits of crisis situations and illnesses, including M. Lütz, who testifies about his patients who were motivated by the crisis to change their lives or take a step forward.<sup>44</sup> Every crisis is a sign of dissatisfaction with the existing, but also an invitation to change, to a new life experience and to a new life.<sup>45</sup> In other words, a difficulty can become an opportunity. The gap between the old and the new must cause inner chaos, restlessness, insomnia, or fear... Even more, they are a condition for change. In this sense, it is good not to be good.

Karl Jaspers also spoke about the borderline situations of human existence that are necessary for human growth. What a person needs to realize is that there is no escape from suffering, old age, pain, illness, sadness, death, or loss of loved ones. Trying to escape it, is foolishness. Croatian psychiatrist Robert Torre writes that "Through borderline situations, we see life better. He is the same then as before. But we are not."<sup>46</sup> Thus, borderline situations (difficult life situations) are a kind of existential construct, and what a person can do for himself is to prepare for the inevitable.<sup>47</sup> In this lies the art and cheeriness of life, which Lütz promotes in his works as a response to healthism. "The art of living, therefore, can only consist in the fact that sources of life's happiness can be found even in these inevitable borderline situations of human existence."<sup>48</sup> It is precisely in handicap, pain, sadness, old age, dying and death that one can perceive the greatness, truth and richness of life, but also its mystical dimen-

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tation taken from M. Lütz, *Bog- mala povijest najvećeg. Obvezno štivo za ateiste, agnostike i vjernike*, p. 273.)

<sup>43</sup> Victor Frankl left a great contribution to humanity in accepting the most difficult life circumstances from which meaning can be extracted and human growth can be achieved. We recommend his works *Time of Decision*, *The Doctor and the Soul* and *Suffering from a Meaningless Life*, *Man's Search for Meaning*.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. M. Lütz, *Ludilo: liječimo pogrešne - pravi problem su normalni ljudi: psihijatrija s daškom vedrine*, p. 48.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Sabrina Cipolletta, "Dove si nasconde la salute. The enigma od Health", *Riflessioni Sitematiche*, 15 (2016.), p. 22.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Torre, *Ima li života prije smrti*, p. 26.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. M. Lütz, *Užitak života. Protiv terora dijete, manije zdravlja i kulta fitnessa*, pp. 140-141.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, str. 12.

sion in which man is fully realized only in his weakness, as a social being relying on others. Perfect health, perfect happiness and a perfect life, which healthism imposes, ask man to fight for his right to health, to dying and to death, instead of thinking and demanding the right to treatment, which is denied to many and unattainable to anyone. Any aspiration to live and die independent of others is in contradiction with our anthropological truth about the transience and fragility of man and his life.<sup>49</sup> In the essence of his being, human being is turned towards another human being, he dependent on him from birth to death. Therefore, a person's life, its quality and longevity, does not depend on health, but on the care and assistance of others.<sup>50</sup> Or, as Clive S. Lewis, best known in the world for his work "The Chronicles of Narnia", said, "when it comes to enduring pain, a little courage helps more than vast knowledge, a little human compassion more than great courage, and the tiniest crumb of God's love more than anything else."<sup>51</sup> It is necessary to invest strength and trust in the mercy, to feel and share compassion that will support the patient during recovery or at the moment of death.

Instead, the man of the 21st century follows therapeutic steps like liturgical ones because the body is his personal sanctuary. He worships his one's body, serves to it. He is obsessed with him and protects only the body. Contemporary man strives exclusively for physical health, good looks, happiness, sleepiness, rest, which he buys in pills and seeks in wellness centres. This is because existential and emotional problems are solved by a psychiatrist. He thinks that the physician can satisfy his needs and desires, erase life's failures and realize his potential. The psychiatrist takes over the role that was once played by the family, a very good friend, a priest, or any trusted person, and the pills that doctors very often prescribe to their patients

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<sup>49</sup> See more in: I. Illich, *Medicinska Nemeza: Eksproprijacija zdravlja*

<sup>50</sup> Intervention of Manfred Lütz, Press conference of the presentation of the General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy on the subject of life on the topic: "Qualità della vita ed etica della salute" (February 21-23, 2005). Available at: [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_academies/acdlife/documents/rc\\_pont-acd\\_life\\_doc\\_20050217\\_etica-salute\\_it.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_academies/acdlife/documents/rc_pont-acd_life_doc_20050217_etica-salute_it.html). (Access 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2021.) On the same occasion, Maurizio Faggioni also spoke, and he referred to the difficult task of anthropology, which, speaking about the quality of life, needs to clearly and carefully define the categories "good life", "happy life", "pleasant life", "life worth living".

<sup>51</sup> Clive S. Lewis, *Problem boli*, Verbum, Split 2015., p. 10.

when they meet, narcotize the modern man. Unfortunately for the patient, the pill helps the pharmaceutical industry more than him.<sup>52</sup> Medicine is no longer perceived as a science that heals, but as a service activity that is there to fulfil the hedonistic and egoistic desires and dreams of individuals. Therefore, we can talk about new medicine, or sustainable medicine, as well as we can talk about new profiles of patients, those who change one therapy for another.

Today we can say that Ivan Illich was right when he was talking about medicine that has become a workshop for repairing and maintaining a person in a functioning state.<sup>53</sup> He also talked about a medical institution as a professional corporation with the goal of eliminating pain, correcting anomalies, eliminating disease, and fighting death. It really has become an institution that assumes the management of the fragility that paralyzes man in a way that he cannot face the impermanence of life.<sup>54</sup>

In the background stands the utilitarian philosophy and individualistic worldview as well as the modern psychology of self-realization. Namely, as other authors say, such as Charles Taylor<sup>55</sup>, Ivan Illich, Zygmunt Bauman, this identification of health with well-being and even fitness is a consequence of neo-capitalism and consumerism.

Health is identified with the optimization of risk, which is why great efforts are made in favour of the best possible physical ability, which in the end does not lead to satisfaction, but to a circular mechanism of constantly new beginnings and successive ends that always seek new therapies. Z. Bauman calls such a life a *fluid life*, ongoing life, and it requires constant questioning, self-criticism, and self-censorship. Thus, a *fluid life* feeds on frustration with itself.<sup>56</sup> Ivan Illich, long before Manfred Lütz, to

<sup>52</sup> Cf. M. Lütz, *Ludilo. Liječimo pogrešne prvi problem su normalni ljudi. Psihijatrija s daškom vedrine*, p. 77

<sup>53</sup> Cf. I. Illich, *Medicinska Nemeza: Eksproprijacija zdravlja*, p. 8.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

<sup>55</sup> If modern society equates health with well-being, and illness equates with weakness. In this therapeutic turn, Taylor also notices how sin is identified with illness, where we notice how religious and moral categories enter into the space of medicine. See more in: Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Belknap Harvard, 2007.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, *Fluidni život*, Mediterran Publishing, Novi Sad 2009, pp. 9-24. In this part, Bauman looks at the current problem of identity. He writes about people who are obsessed with the problem of identity: "At the top, the problem is to choose the best model from the many that are currently offered,



whom we mainly refer, noticed that with the expansion of therapeutic offers, the number of problems, needs, weaknesses and diseases grows every day in our society.

### 3.1. *The art of living in hard times of illness*

Manfred Lütz learned about more relaxed approach to health and illness from his much older colleague, who believes that a healthy person is “a person who is able to live somehow happily and contentedly with his illnesses.”<sup>57</sup>

Inspired by the long-lived Hans Gadamer M. Lütz repeats that health is a secret, like a kind of divine power, it remains hidden from us. Illness can be overcome to some extent, even controlled, but neither man nor medicine can fabricate health. Unlike illness, health cannot be objectified. Medicine studies the origin of disease, but not of health. Where does our health come from? Why and how am I healthy and the other is not? How do others around me get sick in the middle of a pandemic, and I stay healthy? These are the questions without the answer. Health is beyond our power, strength, knowledge, and cognitive abilities, unlike illness. Health we cannot understand. Terminologically it is defined as “well-being”, “balance”, “energy”, “calmness”, “strength”, “happiness”, “autonomy”, “freedom” and “independence”. Etymologically, the origin of the word health is connected with the religious term (*salus*), salvation and holiness. Therefore, health is the absence of evil. The semantic field of the term “pain” is also wide. This term has many synonyms in world languages. Pain is “temptation”, “bitterness”, “agony”, “torture”, “punishment”, “evil”, “endurance”, “misery”, “grief”, “fatigue”, “discomfort”, “wound”, “unhappiness”, “mourning”, “hard work” and “restlessness”.<sup>58</sup>

Only recently has pain been identified with physical pain, which is why medicine has taken the monopoly over the pain.

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to assemble parts of equipment that are sold separately and bind them, not too weakly (so that unsightly, outdated and old-fashioned parts, which should if they were hidden, they would not show through the joints), nor too tightly, (so that the collage would not resist its disassembly in a short time, when the time for melting comes).” (p. 15.)

<sup>57</sup> M. Lütz, *Užitak života. Protiv terora dijete, manije zdravlja i kulta fitnessa*, p. 27.

<sup>58</sup> See more in: Sabrina Cipolletta, *Dove si nasconde la salute. The enigma of Health*, pp. 17- 26.

Pain is today alienated from sadness, guilt, sin, anxiety, fear, hunger, and powerlessness, as established by I. Illich, because it is classified into new categories such as “anomaly” or “disability”. This contradicts the human experience in which a person can suffer greatly without feeling any pain.<sup>59</sup>

Medicine is not competent to deal with evil and salvation, and the mass media, which present health as a state that can be reached by one’s own strength, the state that can be grabbed, understood, kept and, if necessary, produced by any human being or science seems to be very dangerous idea for man’s health.

#### CONCLUSION

In Christianity, the great individual is not a strong one, healthy, productive, or successful, but contrary, the one that is poor, the suffering one, the sick, the fragile human being, the weak and the old, even dying man, who evoke mercy, not condemnation. The heart of humanity rests precisely in providing help to those most in need. Therefore, a much more appropriate ethics than the *ethics of healing* would be one whose imperative is: work so that your actions are in accordance with the permanence of an authentic human being. However, being authentic in the midst of a sedated crowd is quite a demanding task. Medical techniques are not and cannot be methods of salvation or fulfilling the wishes of individuals. Salvation and eternal life are not achieved through health services or good deeds of “self-care”.

As Gadamer says, health cannot be seen, it remains hidden from us, although the concept is always being defined. Thus, according to Gadamer, one can guess, on a subjective level, that health is an intimate agreement with oneself, but also existence in the world with others in active and joyful occupation of life’s tasks.<sup>60</sup> The concept of health is similar to that of I. Illich, who says that health is existence in comfort, which is known to be relative and transitory, because health presupposes the ability

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. I. Illich, *Medicinska Nemeza: Eksproprijacija zdravlja* pp. 174.-175. Illich notes, for example, that the Old Testament speaks of such a great wealth of shades of pain, that even thirteen Hebrew terms are translated into the Greek language by the single word “pain”. (cf. *ibid*, p. 181.)

<sup>60</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Dove si nasconde la salute*, Raffaello Cortina Ed., Milano 1994.

to take personal responsibility in front of the pain, anxiety and death.<sup>61</sup> Almost every disease today can be individually defined as an objective state of the organism, while pain and suffering, as well as health, continues to be a mystery.

In the plague of new diseases, new diagnoses, new health standards and norms, as well as new forms of madness, primarily those that manifest in the imperative of health and the mania of sustainability, it is not easy, but it is necessary, to think about one's own and inevitable mortality and vulnerability. Namely, as I. Illich writes in his insightful work, these are not dangers that jeopardize pleasure, satisfaction or happiness of man who became a victim of rules for eating, sleeping, loving, playing, suffering or dying.<sup>62</sup> Rather, illness and death are part of man's reality, which is impermanent and fluttering, and what actually compromises man's joy in life are arrogance and greed. This whole reflection, as it usually happens in philosophy, can only be a footnote to Plato's words that constant concern for health is also a disease.

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## INDUSTRIJA ZDRAVLJA I SREĆE U MISLI MANFREDA LÜTZA

### *Sažetak*

Manfred Lütz, psihijatar i teolog, govori o jednom od ključnih problema suvremenog društva, a to je odnos suvremenog čovjeka prema zdravlju. Lütz svoju poruku primarno upućuje društvu koje je sklono divinizirati zdravlje kao vrhunsku vrijednost. Zdravlje se pretvara u religiju, a takvu sakralizaciju zdravstva prati i potpuna komercijalizacija zdravstvenog sustava. Taj proces olakšan je glorificiranjem zdravlja, medicinske znanosti, liječnika i dostignuća u farmaceutskoj industriji. Svojim tezama revitalizira starogrčko vjerovanje da je i pretjerana briga za zdravlje svojevrsna bolest. Sličnu misao o zdravlju i bolesti nalazimo u djelima I. Illicha, H.-G. Gadamera, Z. Baumanu i drugih.

*Ključne riječi:* zdravlje, kult, bolest, tijelo, etika, kultura blagostanja, zdravstvo.

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. I. Illich, *Medicinska Nemeza: Eksproprijacija zdravlja*, p. 161.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.