

WILHELM KARDEMARK

# NÄR LIVET TAR RÄTT FORM

OM MÄNNISKOSYN I SVENSKA HÄLSOTID-  
SKRIFTER 1910-13 OCH 2009

*(English Summary)*

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## Abstract

This thesis describes and analyses anthropologies and understandings of health in Swedish health magazines 1910 to 1913 and 2009. It focuses on the three anthropological concepts of corporeality, relationality and rationality. The material can be seen as an illustration of the shift in perspective from “life as” to “subjective life” as described in the research of Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead.

The “life as” perspective posits the existence of external authorities, traditions and essential individual roles. It combines nationalistic, Lutheran and naturalistic perspectives with the romanticization of nature and the natural life. Taken together, these four perspectives interpret the human condition, offer life goals and indicate pitfalls to avoid. They also generate a view of humans as part of the nation and of a Divine order. Health is emphasized; on the one hand in regard to the Swedish nation, on the other in relation to one’s fellow human beings. Good health and the productivity it affords become means to serve the nation and one’s fellow citizens as well as insuring the successful fulfillment of one’s vocation. This emphasis on service and productivity combined with the other two perspectives’ stress on scientific approaches to life and the ability to place oneself above irrational and unnatural views of humanity, provide the basis for a masculine genderization of the concept of health.

Views of life and health in contemporary magazines are marked by “subjective life” understandings, emphasizing the individual’s experiences and emotions, her need to know herself as an individual and her possibility to do so by being attentive to her emotions, wants and needs. This approach should be seen in relation to the biomedical and psychological perspectives prevalent in the material. With the psychological perspective, the individual’s hopes, feelings, close relations and personal history are seen as elements of which she must be aware and able to control in order to stay healthy. The biomedical perspective views health and various states and emotions as dependent on processes in the human body that may be altered by physical activity, nutrition and the like. It gives, together with aestheticizing notions of the body, a view of the body as malleable and controllable. These perspectives provide core features of individualistic anthropology and understanding of health and they form the background for a feminine genderization of the concept of health.

KEYWORDS: religious studies, health, health – religious aspects, medical humanities, gender, body, health magazines, self help materials, nineteen tens.

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