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Philosophy, Politics and Economics of Health

Master in Philosophy of Science

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Week 2 – Introduction to the Philosophy, Politics and Economics of Health

1. **Definition of Health and Disease**

*When is a person healthy?*

*Define the following kinds of conditions and give examples for each:*

Disease:

Illness:

Sickness:

*Is old age a disease? An illness, a sickness? Why or why not?*

*What about a disability like deafness?*

*Is it possible to have a disease without an illness or sickness? To be diseased and ill without being sick? Give an example for each possible combination.*

1. **Health and public good problems**

*Are the following examples of public goods?*

* The provision of health services.
* A vaccination campaign that achieves “herd immunity” against the measles.
* A vaccination campaign against tetanus.

1. **Public vs. Individual Choices**

*Is alcoholism a public health problem?*

*Consider the following tobacco policies: increase taxes, ban tobacco ads, ban smoking altogether. Which one would you choose, and why?*

1. **Next Week: Improving Health in a Complex World**

*Readings:*

Chapter “Evidence, Mechanisms, and Complexity” in James Wilson, *Philosophy for Public Health and Public Policy (required)*

Nancy Cartwright, “Knowing what we are talking about: why evidence doesn’t always travel” *(recommended)*