

The main aim of the doctoral thesis is to contribute to the better knowledge of the means by which the notion of the phenomenon "developmental disabilities" (mental disabilities) was created in the past, and which existential opportunities result from this for the life of a mentally challenged person. What does this phenomenon mean for us today? How do we understand the questions related to the existential needs of mentally challenged people in the context of human rights?

I searched for the clarification of the ways by which the phenomenon of mental disability was shaped throughout the history of the development of the views of the human mind, body and soul. That is the reason why I define the notion of mental disability from the point of the views of the human mind and in connection with simultaneous growth in the knowledge of human body.

Chapter II is shaped by my study of principal human experience with mental differences since mythical notions of a human being. I devote my attention to the ancient knowledge of the substance of mental diseases, derived from the attempts of the first scientific, rational studies of human body. The Middle Ages enriched the care for people with mental impairment - among which the mental disability was also ranked though in phenomenology undistinguished, - by the element of charitable care. At the same time answering the questions about mental differences as divine punishment for sinner's wrongdoing. Only Modern Times searching for the etiology, the causes of mental disabilities, which began with the Renaissance attitude of medicine

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towards human corporeality, enabled to come nearer to the understanding of the substance of mental disabilities and to separate them from other mental pathological phenomena. The French Revolution defined modern conception of human rights which found its reflection in the deliberations about the mentally challenged persons.