

**PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF GERONTOLOGY IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY**

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**Abstract**

This article examines the challenges of increasing human life expectancy from a socio-philosophical perspective. It reveals one of the contradictions of gerontology, which views old age from the narrow perspective of medicine, healthcare, and the improvement of treatment methods. The importance of social relations in living an active, creative old age is emphasized.

**Key words**

gerontology, philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, life expectancy.

The current stage of human development is characterized by a significant increase in average human life expectancy. For example, according to data from the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan [1], the average life expectancy for those born in 2000 was projected to be 70.8 years (73.2 years for women and 68.4 years for men). According to WHO data published in 2019, life expectancy in Uzbekistan is 69.4 years for men, 73.6 years for women, and 71.7 years for the overall life expectancy [2]. By comparison, just two centuries ago, life expectancy was low. Prior to the transition to healthcare, which began at different times in different regions of the world, average life expectancy ranged from 22.5 years (Oceania) to 34.8 years (America) [3]. For a number of reasons (wars, epidemics, poor nutrition, lack of healthcare systems, and weak protection from predators and natural disasters), people were unable to live to old age. In a relatively short period of time, old age went from being a rare and highly revered phenomenon to something commonplace and taken for granted. Advances in modern medicine, molecular biology, and biogerontology have brought scientists closer to understanding the mechanisms of aging and slowing this process. Meanwhile, advances in medicine, healthcare, and improved treatment methods have led to a division of life into two stages: "healthy (active) life" and "life with disability" ("survival"). A new sociocultural problem has emerged—an aversion to old age, a fear of aging—which has threatened the principles of humanism. Against the backdrop of globalization, increased security, and improved quality of life, a trend toward social disunity has emerged [4]. Group membership and close social contacts are no longer factors for individual survival. Now, while demonstrating independence and self-sufficiency, people allow alienation in relationships, gradually losing the capacity for love, empathy, and mutual assistance, while intergenerational conflicts intensify.

In response to these processes, the science of gerontology emerged about a century ago. It aims to study the biological and psychological aspects of aging, as well as methods for prolonging the active period of life and rejuvenating the body. However, we see a significant contradiction in modern gerontology: research is limited to the natural sciences, while society today dictates the need for and creates the conditions for continuous spiritual, professional, and physical development of the individual, which is not limited by age. Human development depends not only on physical health but, most importantly, on social relationships. Human existence is based on ideas and values, self-realization, and creativity. We believe that the development of a new anthropology and the philosophy of neoclassical humanism will demonstrate that old age can be a beautiful, creative, and rewarding period of life. Creating conditions for older people to realize their potential, drawing on accumulated experience and the wisdom that comes with age, and living an active, creative old age can enhance self-esteem and well-being, foster interest in spiritual life, and prevent stagnation in vitality. To achieve this, gerontology must transcend the confines of purely medical issues. By addressing philosophical and social aspects, it must contribute to a shift in modern people's worldviews.

Thus, we see the need to expand gerontological knowledge into the fields of philosophy, cultural studies, sociology, and pedagogy. Demographic trends not only in Uzbekistan but throughout the world require the development of new principles, content, functions, and structure for gerontological knowledge. Research into the problems of old age is needed not only from a biological perspective, but also from a social, spiritual, moral, professional, cultural, educational, and economic perspective. Certainly, some theoretical research in these areas is being conducted, but it requires greater attention.

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