This dissertation offers a phenomenological and existential account of health. It considers the model of health that is dominant in the contemporary USA. Using the example of fatness, this dissertation argues that the dominant model of health is deeply flawed, because of its largely unexamined commitment to naturalism and positivism (in the Husserlian senses of these terms). It concludes that purported alternatives to the dominant model, such as the Foucault-influenced constructivist approach to health, fail to respond adequately to the problems posed by naturalism and positivism. Instead, this dissertation proposes a model of health as *embodied authenticity*. This model is developed on the basis of Edmund Husserl’s account of embodiment and Simone de Beauvoir’s account of action.

The central tenet of this model is that health is the embodied aspect of authentic action. That is, health is a feature not of bodies but of actions. A person is acting healthily -- and thus, can be said to ‘be healthy’ -- to the extent that she or he is engaged in physical action in pursuit of goals which are themselves conducive to the freedom of the agent her or himself and to the freedom of other persons. The goals themselves and the likelihood of the actions to be conducive to these goals must be capable of standing up to intersubjective critique in order for the person’s action to be authentic and thus healthy. This model of health is then applied to the case of fatness, in order to show that it squares better with lived experience than the previously available models of health. This dissertation concludes with a discussion of freedom as central to health.