

## African Well-being and the Healing of Humanity

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*“When the human spirit is well whole and healthy, the human being is characterized by confidence, competence and a sense of full possibility and unlimited potentiality<sup>1</sup>”*

The real function of African traditional healing is found in both the critical examination of its practice and an understanding of the implication this corpus has for helping to heal all of humanity. The articles in this volume represent an impressive contribution to the critical examination. In understanding the question of well-being, it is necessary to grasp the African meaning of being human and the enduring, nourishing power and significance African healing traditions have for humanity.

Our beginnings are humanity’s origins in the Rift Valley of Mother Africa. We come from great people—visionaries, peacemakers, artisans, healers, warriors, scientists and dignified people. The African presence is documented on every continent. Our divine walk from the East (KMT and Nubia), to the South (Great Zimbabwe) and West Africa (the last classical African civilizations of Ghana, Mali, Songhay) through to the diaspora laid the foundation for the knowledge and skills that made the New World. Our heritage is a debt that the “ancient,” “modern” and “post-modern” worlds owe to Africa. For example, Greece’s stolen legacy from Egypt, the Moor’s contribution to Spain for seven centuries, the African roots in the Xia, Shang & Zhou dynasties of ancient China, Africans making of the new world’s agricultural, industrial and informational revolutions.

Ngubane (1979) argues that the African understanding of the person is a “protein” evaluation of the human being which flowed into Nile Valley high culture

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<sup>1</sup> Nobles, Wade W., 2009 *The African Sense of Being: Rescuing and Reclaiming Humanity for Us All*, Unpublished Manuscript

of the Ancient Kemites and subsequently created clusters of similar conceptions all over Africa. What, in fact, is recognized as African culture and civilization is the combined social conventions and inventions emerging from a common African meaning of the person and well-being, which I believe to be best represented by Bantu-Kongo thought.

The Bantu-Kongo believe that diverse forces and waves of energy that govern life surround humans. The Bantu-Kongo believe that the heated force of Kalunga blew up and down as a huge storm of projectiles, *Kimwandende*, producing a huge mass in fusion. In the process of cooling, the mass in fusion, solidification occurs giving birth to the Earth. In effect, the Bantu believe that all of reality (Kalunga) is fundamentally a process of perpetual and mutual sending and receiving of spirit (energy) in the form of waves and radiations. Kalunga or reality is the totality, the completeness of all life. It is an ocean of energy, a force in motion. Kalunga is everything, sharing life and becoming life continually after life itself. As the totality or the complete living, Kalunga is comprised of both a visible realm (Ku Nseke) and an invisible realm (Ku Mpemba). The visible physical world has spirit (energy) as its most important element. Referred to as Nkisi (medicine) the spirit element of the physical (visible) world has the power to care, cure, heal and guide. The invisible (spiritual) world (Ku Mpemba) is comprised of human experience, ancestor experience and the soul-mind experience. The Ku Mpemba has spirit (energy) as its most important element (Fukiau, 1991). In effect, if reality (visible and invisible) is, it is spirit.

A human being is, in fact, a divine spirit housed in a physical body having a human experience. The human being is a three-fold unfolding experience of yet-to-live, living and after-living spirit. Being human is to be a living sun, possessing a "knowing and knowable" spirit (energy or power) through which one has an enduring relationship with the total perceptible and ponderable universe. It is to be inseparable from and live and move within an ocean of waves/radiations of spirit (energy or power). Consistent with this notion of being human as vibrating radiating energy, the fundamental core or essence of all African traditional healing systems is righting the

psychological and socio-political factors which are expressed as human discord and disease (cf. Adogame, 2009)

Well-being in traditional African thought is being love-filled, happy, healthy, joyful, prosperous and efficacious. African traditional thought teaches us that “well-being” is achieved when spirit (human) beings (spirit) affirm their own humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and on that basis establish humane relations with them. A human being is “spirit” whose unfolding is a constant and continual inquiry into its own being, experience, knowledge and truth. To be human is to be a spirit in motion (unfolding). Being human is to be a phenomenon of perpetual, constant and continual unfolding (vibration- sharing and exchanging) of life spirit. Humans are containers and instruments of Divine spirit and relationships. This alone has profound implications for healing all of humanity.

African traditional healing should not be seen or treated as exotica or some long lost and irrelevant primitive set of practices of interest to only a select few. This, for the most part unexamined and disrespected, aspect of human genius has real value for all of humanity. Consider for instance, that the tri-fold (yet-to-live, living and after-living) unfolding vibrating radiating spirits (humans) can be thought of as the “essentiality-of-being” and that well-being is at the level of the whole or collective. The “essentiality-of-being” for all of humanity would, therefore, include beings yet-to-live, the living, and those dwelling in the after life. What kinds of choices would people make about how they live, relate to each other, what they eat, and how they treat sacred Mother Earth, if those choices were rooted in a sense of well-being that required the recognition of the inextricable link between all living beings on this planet?. When confronted with personal illness, impending social disaster or international conflict, the world’s peoples, driven by an intrinsic traditional African sense of well-being, would meet these challenges in humane ways because their own sense of humanity depended on that reflection. How better would humanity be if, without selfishness, hatred, envy, jealousy, or fear, each one of us, from individuals to nation states, saw it as our nature and/or vested interest to support and recognize the full possibility and unlimited potentiality of everyone else. The healing of humanity

may very well be found in understanding African Traditional healing and adopting the African sense of well-being.

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# IMHOTEP JOURNAL

*African Healing Traditions*

Volume 7, May 2010

By The Students



Picture taken at Ekhaya KweNdaba (*House of Wisdom*, at Credo Mutwa Village in South Africa)