

Africanizing Wellosophy: Integrating African Wellness Practices

Jude I. Onebunne, PhD*

Abstract

The paper delves into the topic of Africanizing Wellosophy through the incorporation of traditional African wellness traditions into modern well-being systems. Well plus sophy - wellosophy - provides a lens to reimagine holistic health and show that it is not synonymous with Western biomedicine. The Africanization of the concepts of health and wellness entails the prioritization of African epistemologies, ontologies and cultural values in their definition and praxis. Indigenous African wellness practices—such as communal living, ancestral reverence, spiritual rituals, herbal medicine, oral storytelling, and rhythm-based therapies (e.g. dance, drumming)—are underpinned by a multidimensional approach to health emphasizing the alignment of physical, mental, spiritual, and environmental harmony. In framing wellness as a shared, intergenerational and ecologically-informed endeavor, this paper suggests that African traditions are vital to the global conversation about wellness. The synergy thus formed not only contests the hegemony of Eurocentric paradigms but also reinvigorates African cultural identity and agency in a world dominated by globalization and neocolonization forces. Endeavoring to transdisciplinary approach in frame that highlights/ legitimizes indigenous knowledge systems, in carving out mainstream solutions from an African perspective, the paper calls/borrow across, African philosophy, medicine and education—from African perspective. Case studies from different African communities show the sustainability and relevance of these in ways that are addressing also modern-day health challenges to include mental health and environmental degradation. In the end, Africanizing Wellosophy is a call to reimagine what wellness means as an ethical, cultural and spiritual practice rooted in African cosmologies, not just an act of healing, although it is that too, but also an act of reclamation.

Keywords

Africa, wellosophy, healing practices, African wellness

Introduction

Africanizing Wellosophy by integrating African wellness practices is about wellosophy that tries to redefining wellness through African practices. With the global wellness industry now worth over \$4 trillion, there has been an ever-growing acceptance of a holistic and culturally diverse view of health and self-care (Global Wellness Institute, 2021). Another trend to hit the wellness scene: the integration of indigenous philosophies with modern wellness practices. In this context, Africanization of "Wellosophy"—a term that encompasses the intersection of wellness and personal philosophy—provides a transformative reconceptualization of self-care rooted in African ethics, spirituality, and communalism. This article seeks to examine the integration of traditional African wellness principles, indigenous knowledge systems, and cultural ritual into contemporary wellness paradigms.

In a time when health and well-being are among our most valued social virtues, wellosophy is a uniquely new philosophical construct — any philosophy of your making, blended and integrated with your own, if only -your- wellness, personal and/or otherwise. It connects the dots between physical health, emotional health, spiritual health, intelligent health. Wellness Philosophy is a portmanteau of wellness and philosophy: it is a lifestyle informed not only by the desire to be healthy but also by an ongoing practice of how to be well in all aspects of life. Although not yet an established branch of academia, wellosophy is making the rounds in wellness literature, corporate health plans, and other self-pathing paradigms.

Understanding Wellosophy

Note the portmanteau of wellness and philosophy — it insinuates something about philosophy as an approach to health and wellbeing. The wellosophy is a solution, a relevant and meaningful, holistic approach to wellness that fuses wellness and health principles. It concerns the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the wellbeing (Fave et al., 2011). It is a philosophy frameworks utilizing philosophy principles such as eudaimonia (flourishing) from Aristotelian ethics for contemporaneous wellness applications (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Even more, wellosophy is mind-searching and an introspective experience that includes present-moment awareness and contemplation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). It's a living-intention business — one where you're continuously aligning your millisecond decision-making with your own core values (Hayes et al., 2006)

Well-Being (Subject) — the philosophy of well-being investigates such fixed questions about what a good life is, and what living this life means for an individual, how to beautifully crystallize a good life. This area of study considers many theories of the nature, meaning, and pursuit of well-being, and how it connects with ethics, political philosophy, and other fields. Wellosophy terminology was adopted in the early 21st century, through the efforts of wellness entrepreneurs and holistic health advocates such as Liz Earle, a British wellbeing expert, author of *wellbeing: The Good Gut Guide*, who later characterized *wellosophy* to become a brand representing a living-well discipline (Earle, 2017). But the philosophy of wellosophy is rooted in ancient traditions, particularly those that follow principles of balance, mindfulness, and self-realization—including Stoicism, Ayurveda, and Confucianism. Essentially, wellosophy fundamentally defines well-being as more than physical wellness or the lack of disease, but rather an integrated approach to life that includes emotional, spiritual and intellectual wellness (Zandee, 2020). It espouses the notion that people ought to be proactively developing a personal "philosophy of life" that enables them to be consistently happy, resilient, and purposeful.

Wellosophy and Wellness

Wellness is an integral and dynamic procedure for achieving optimal health and well-being through conscious choices, balanced living, and the integration of physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, and environmental dimensions. It is not the absence of disease, but an active way of living that contributes to a high quality of life. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1948). This definition sets the stage for the definition of wellness, which goes beyond the narrow definition of health.

According to the National Wellness Institute (NWI), the six dimensions of wellness are physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual and occupational (Hettler, 1976). Physical wellness refers to the state of your physical body and how you maintain it through fitness, nutrition, sleep, and preventative care. Emotional wellness relates to self-awareness, emotional regulation and coping with life's challenges. Intellectual wellness encourages engaging in creative and stimulating mental challenges throughout life. Social wellness promotes healthy relationships and a good support system. Spiritual wellness seeks purpose, values and meaning in life; occupational wellness is finding personal satisfaction and enrichment in one's work or career. Wellness is also culturally and context dependent. For example, in African communities, wellness is intrinsically linked to the solidarity of the community, ancestral relations and nature. Reflecting an African philosophy of Ubuntu—‘I am because we are’—collective well-being, interdependence, and the relational nature of human existence is built into the philosophical foundation of the approach (Mbiti, 1969). This underscores that much of the wellness, especially with relation to matters of body, across much of African life is not individualistic but community-oriented.

Additionally, wellness is not static, it is fluid. This takes active work, practices, and the capacity to adjust with the shifting rhythms of life. These days, worldwide stressors from climate change to pandemics to economic instability have made holistic wellness practices

essential to sustaining our resiliency and balance. In short, wellness is a holistic and preventative approach to living and a philosophy that integrates multiple facets of human experience. It comes to fruition through deliberate action, taken on behalf of the self in an effort to be self-actualized, and it is a reflection—individually and collectively—of the endeavored pursuit of the good life.

Pillars African Wellosophy

African wellness is a community and holistic concept based on indigenous African philosophies, worldviews, and cultural practices. “In contrast to Western inclinations to emphasize individual health metrics and biomedical paradigms, African wellness is integrative, bringing together physical, emotional, spiritual, social, and environmental dimensions of human life”; the work emphasizes “the power of the collective” and “planetary wellness.” Informed by traditional knowledge systems, intergenerational wisdom, and a deep sense of interconnectedness between people, place, ancestors, and the land. African Wellness is a multidimensional, holistic and active pursuit of health in interconnected aspects of life. Whereas the traditional medical model is preoccupied with the absence of disease, wellness is a broader proactive approach to thriving in life. We are also imparting and following the core concepts of African Wellness which includes the following dimensions. The pillars of wellosophy lie predominantly within the confines of balance or what one could refer to as philosophical equipoise. But wellosophy usually centers around a few pillars that are connected:

- **Physical Wellness:** This pillar focuses on the relevance of a healthy body including, exercise, eating, sleeping habits and preventative health care. It treats the body as a vehicle for living and demands its maintenance through deliberate lifestyle choices. (Aristotle, trans. 350 BC/1934, 502a) This notion assumes that human beings spend a significant amount of their lives on the physical level. (2009). Physical wellness is all about the more common task of taking care of your body; that is, by exercising, eating the right food, getting the right amount of sleep, and avoiding bad behaviors
- **Mental and Emotional Wellness:** I feel like emotional regulation, stress management and mental clarity are such key features of Wellosophy. The field takes cues from positive psychology, which emphasizes strengths, virtues, and those factors that lead to a fulfilling life (Seligman, 2011). The authors recommend mindfulness, journaling and therapy among the practices for building emotional resilience. In sum, it is all participating in cognitively challenging activities, ongoing education, and cognitive versatility. It borders within the development of feelings awareness and healthy expression, resilience and stress management
- **Spiritual Wellness:** In Wellosophy, spirituality does not necessarily mean adherence to a particular religion, but rather a belief in the interconnectedness of all things — a oneness with nature, with the cosmos, or with a higher consciousness. Transcendental philosophy and existentialism emphasize meaning-making and ethical living (Frankl, 2006) and are also closely aligned with the humanistic perspective. It explores the values and beliefs, seeking purpose and meaning in life, and connecting to something greater than oneself
- **Intellectual Wellness:** Wellosophy values lifelong learning, curiosity, and critical thinking. Rooted in the Socratic tradition, it sees knowledge as a means of self-mastery and personal liberation (Plato, trans. 2007). Intellectual wellness includes being open to different perspectives as well as being willing to rethink your beliefs.
- **Social Wellness:** Social bonds and civic life are essential. Wellosophy acknowledges humans as social beings and centre data on empathy, communication and collective well-beings (Noddings, 2003). Social interactions are associated with longevity, and positive social interactions reduce stress (Umberson & Montez, 2010). Social wellness has to do with developing genuine friendships, creating supportive social structures, and serving the community
- **Environmental Wellness:** It means living in harmony with the Earth — realizing the part the environment plays in individual and collective well-being. The practices under

this pillar include sustainable living, eco-conscious consumption, and mindfulness of one's ecological footprint. It is the Input — creating and maintaining clean and healthy living environments and engaging positively with the ecosystem

- **Occupational wellness:** Finding passion, meaning, purpose, enjoyment in one's line of work. That is a kind of satisfaction, enrichment, and alignment with personal values in one's work

In sum, African Wellness has a very unique historical development. What all does the term wellness encompass, and how has its meaning changed over the years? Although ancient healing approaches such as Traditional Chinese Medicine, Ayurveda, and many indigenous traditions have had a holistic conception of health for millennia, the contemporary wellness movement started to gain traction in the mid-20th century. The 1950s were started to see the emergence of the modern wellness movement with Dr. Halbert Dunn, who taught the concept of high-level wellness as the integrated method of functioning, which is focused on maximizing the individual's potential. Wellness is frequently thought of as a continuum, not as a specific destination. Individuals move along this continuum — from illness toward optimal wellness — depending on their choices, circumstances, and resources. Instead, this view understands wellness as a constant state of effort, learning, and growth—not a permanent solution or the end goal of finding a validated “perfect” state. The wellness tenet has infiltrated numerous realms. Predominantly now integrated with preventive and wellness-based approaches in healthcare systems. This is done through wellness programs. What are they and how do they work? For example, schools and colleges adopt wellness programs to facilitate student growth. Equally, community health programs meet needs of public health. Within these explanations lie the important role that wellness plays as an empowering framework to help people take responsibility for their health and quality of life. Ubuntu is the philosophy of the African wellness movement and means “I am because we are.” However, “Ubuntu” stresses deep harmony among all human beings and the necessity of communal relations in determining individual identity and well-being. As Tutu (1999) observed, “Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. CEUs provide the foundations of minimum wellness standards as a guideline: but should never solely define wellness — an axiom of which is not about being healthy individually but rather globally amongst the fabric structure we hope to create.

Wellness in Africa has a heavy focus on spirituality. Ancestral spirits, divine beings and nature are considered sacred in traditional African belief systems. Health and illness are conceptualized in spiritual and metaphysical terms, and healing practices usually involve rituals, prayers, herbal remedies, and consultation with traditional healers or diviners (Mbiti, 1969). These practices are not just aimed at treating the body but bringing a sense of balance between body, mind, spirit, and environment. On an even broader perspective, we have seen how African wellness is intertwined with the land and sustainable ecosystem. In Indigenous African cultures, the place we call the environment is often understood as a sentient being with whom humanity has a symbiotic relationship. When this balance is disrupted, whether through environmental degradation or by ignoring traditional ecological knowledge, it is viewed as a threat to both community and individual wellness (Kambon, 2015). Sustainable living and respect for the earth are, thus, intrinsic parts of African wellness.

Other vital contributors to wellness include socialized relationships, family ties, and community involvement. Elders are revered as keepers of knowledge, and intergenerational learning is considered crucial for ensuring cultural identity and continuity. Community is formed and cherished through celebrations, storytelling, music and dance, serving as a source of ingenuity, resilience, solidarity and joy. Modern African wellness is becoming hybrid, synthesizing traditional knowledge with the modern health care system. The growing recognition of the importance of traditional practices in achieving comprehensive public health outcomes has led to many African countries realizing the need to integrate traditional

practices with biomedicine (WHO, 2013). Ultimately, African wellness is a multi-layered and relational construct, one that extends beyond the individual and to collective, spiritual, and environmental health. It is based in ancestral knowledge, cultural traditions and social values to encourage a balanced, harmonious life.

Core Theories of Well-being

Theories of well-being are widespread and come from different fields, which have tried to explain a good and happy life. The hedonic theory—highlights pleasure and the avoidance of pain, arguing that well-being comes from happiness and life satisfaction. Conversely, the eudaimonic theory, which is based on Aristotelian philosophy, emphasizes the importance of self-realization and being true to oneself and one's values. It holds, rather, that some things — health, education, relationships, autonomy, but also some things not as easy to define — are objectively good for you, whether you see them that way or not. Subjective well-being (SWB) is based on personal evaluations of life satisfaction and feelings, and capability theory, developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, points to actual opportunities for individuals to attain ways of living that are of value to her/him. Finally, communitarian and relational theories, including those from African philosophies, focus on social harmony, interdependence, and communal responsibilities as being fundamental to well-being, and go some way to transcending individualistic perspectives.

● **Hedonism**

Hedonistic theories equate well-being with pleasure over pain. Classical hedonism, connected to Epicurus and later Jeremy Bentham, claims that pleasure is the only intrinsic good and pain the only intrinsic bad (Bentham, 1789/1996). Modern hedonists, including Fred Feldman (2004), have created additional accounts, as with "attitudinal hedonism," which concerns how one finds pleasure in varying states of affairs rather than just sensory pleasure. "Happiness, construed as life abundant in pleasure and low in pain or distress, is entitled to be considered the 'greatest good.' " (Crisp, 2006, p. 622)

● **Desire Satisfaction Theories**

Desire theories claim that well-being consists in having one's desires fulfilled. Simple desire theories take satisfaction of a particular actual desire to contribute to well-being, while informed-desire theories take only such desires as those that a person would have under ideal conditions (full information and rational deliberative processes) to contribute to well-being (Griffin, 1986; Railton, 1986). What is best for a man is what will best satisfy all his wants, through his life." (Parfit, 1984, p. 494)

● **Objective List Theories**

Objective list theories claim that some things are good for people independent of whether they are desired or enjoyable. These theories enumerate a series of objective goods that together make up well-being, for example knowledge, friendship, broad health and efficiency (Finnis, 2011; Nussbaum, 2000). If you already know on what to think: "The good life for humans includes certain objectively valuable activities or states that contribute to the good life, regardless if they are desired or pleasurable to experience," (Fletcher, 2013, p. 206)

● **Perfectionism and Eudaimonism**

These theories, which have roots in Aristotle's writings, equate well-being with the cultivation and exercise of human capacities and virtues. Well-being is living a life of virtue and excellence, realizing your nature as best you can (Aristotle, trans. 2000; Hurka, 1993). "Happiness is an activity of soul in accordance with virtue." (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book I).

● **Flourishing**

Well-being in Practice

Each person applies well-being in the way that is best suited to them, but the execution of the well-being process generally looks like taking the time to reflect on yourself and set goals in each one of the wellness pillars. People are invited to cultivate their own wellness philosophy through questions like: What does it mean to live a good life? How do my values

shape the decisions I make every day? What do I do to feed my body mind and soul? Also, the focus on personal responsibility bypasses structural issues that affect well-being, including poverty, racism or environmental injustice. Other philosophers, notably, Martha Nussbaum, have warned against wellness paradigms that neglect social justice and the need for public policy to ensure conditions for flourishing (Nussbaum, 2000).

In other words the so-called Way of Wellness: One practical way would be to have a wellosophy Journal, logging your progress, gratitude, moods and lifestyle. Another is to adopt routines and rituals that incorporate meditation, mindful eating, nature walks or volunteering. Even corporate or integral wellness programs are starting to adopt wellosophical principles. For example, some organizations create work environments that facilitate movement, encourage mental pauses and forge social togetherness—mutual to employee well-being and corporate culture (Zandee, 2020).

Wellosophy and its Appreciation in Philosophical Traditions

In philosophy, wellosophy draws from both Western and Eastern traditions. From the Western canon, it draws upon: stoicism, which teaches self-discipline, rationality and emotional resilience. The other is existentialism, an emphasis on authenticity, personal responsibility and the search for meaning. Utilitarianism, which assesses the consequences of decisions based on general welfare.

Western Philosophical Tradition

Western philosophers have explored the concept of wellness through the classical, medieval, modern, and contemporary epochs, with increasing complexity in the understanding of human flourishing. A key concept in this tradition is *eudaimonia*, which is sometimes translated as “human flourishing” or “well-being,” and which originated in Ancient Greek philosophy. Aristotelian ethics teaches that benevolence is more than the absence of deviance, but rather the positive articulation of human capabilities as a lived, conducive virtue. As Aristotle claims in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *eudaimonia* manifests as a life of rational activity in accord with virtue (Aristotle, trans. 2009). Wellness, according to Aristotle, is integrative, with moral, intellectual, and physical dimensions. Stoic philosophy — the wisdom of followers like Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius — too stresses the importance of inner wellness through self-control, resiliency and the pursuit of alignment with nature’s rational order. Wellness, according to the Stoics, flows from fostering a calm mind (*ataraxia*) and embracing what is not within one’s control (Epictetus, trans. 1995).

Wellness in the Christian medieval era was frequently contemplated in terms of the soul’s connection to God. Whether thinkers like St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas (who saw final human well-being as union with the divine) or the relatively secular Aristotle (who thought that virtue was an end in itself, to be achieved via the exercise of virtue), these figures saw a deeper meaning in life. The Christian theologian and philosopher Aquinas combined Aristotelian thought and Christian theology to maintain that true happiness (*beatitudo*) consists in the vision of God and moral virtue (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*). The Enlightenment ushered in a more secular conception of wellness. Compatibilists like Immanuel Kant have emphasized moral autonomy and rationality as central to a human being’s dignity and fulfillment. It was connected to personal freedom, reason, and moral obligation (Kant, trans. 1997). In modern philosophy, wellness includes existential and psychological aspects. Philosophers, inspired by ancient practices of self-care, theorized that individuals have the ability to define themselves (and their physical identity) through rigorous self-cultivation (Foucault, 1988). Much of the Western philosophical tradition understands wellness as multi-faceted, as multi-dimensional and laden with value, building from virtues and rationality in antiquity, to self-awareness and ethical freedom in modernity. These concepts echo in contemporary wellness movements that emphasize balance, meaning and ethical living.

Eastern Philosophical Traditions:

It also draws from Eastern philosophies: Taoism, with its balance, and natural flow. One other is Buddhism, especially the concepts of mindfulness and the Middle Way. Ayurveda, which seeks balance between body, mind and environment. Wellosophy not only draws from white and narrow, but instead intertwines different traditions making it a more adaptable philosophy that is inclusive.

African Philosophical Tradition

Wellosophy is based on African as well as Abrahamic philosophical tradition. The concept of wellosophy may have modern roots, but the real principles behind it—integrated wellness, community living, moral obligation and spiritual meaning—are well nurtured in these two traditions. Africa Philosophy is man, earth and divinity. That aligns very well with the three pillars of wellosophy.

- **Holism and the Interconnected Self:** Indeed, African traditional thought underscores the inseparability of the body, mind, and spirit, which is aligned with the holistic nature of wellosophy. As John Mbiti (1990), the great philosopher of the African experience, put it: “I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am.” This Ubuntu philosophy underscores the communal aspect of personhood and health; an individual’s health cannot be detached from that of the community. “Human beings in African ontology are not understood, as it is generally in the philosophy of the West, in isolation but as members of a wider cosmic and social order” (Gbadegesin, 1991). This sense of communal worldview is seen in wellosophy’s social and environmental wellness pillars, which associate individual flourishing with the well-being of others and the environment.
- **Moral and Spiritual Wellness:** Many indigenous African traditional religions and philosophies emphasize a moral order of the universe. Wellness is achieved by living ethically, respecting our ancestors, and aligning ourselves with natural and spiritual forces. African moral thought, as Gyekye (1995) puts it, is essentially humanistic; the good life refers to a morally upright life that fosters collective harmony. Wellosophy mirrors this in addressing spiritual and ethical aspects of health — not just the absence of disease, but a healthy, well-rounded, morally fulfilled life. Practicality and Wisdom and Balance The African notion of Sage Philosophy —derived from the wisdom of traditional elders—is based on lived experience, reflection and balance. This is consistent with wellosophy’s emphasis on personal reflection and wisdom for cultivating a meaningful, healthy life (Oruka, 1990).

Abrahamic Philosophical Tradition

The aim of wellosophy is to establish theological attention to the the human heart/soul/spirit, as developed in the Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and their philosophical-historical insights into human flourishing, spiritual well-being, and moral life—as explored in:

- **Human Dignity and Wellness:** Humans are created in the image of God in all three Abrahamic traditions (Imago Dei in Christianity and Judaism; Khalifah or vicegerency in Islam). This confers an inherent dignity and demands self-care, corporeal and spiritual. “Do you not realize that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit? (1 Corinthians 6:19, The Bible). Both such perspectives play into wellosophy’s emphasis on both physical and spiritual self-care, linked to divine guidance.
- **Moral and Ethical Wellness:** Moral development is central to a good life in each tradition: In Judaism, shalom (peace and wholeness) is a condition of personal and communal wellness. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5) espouse virtues that indicate inner wellness such as mercy, humility, and peacemaking — core to Christian belief. As do the spiritual practices of *tazkiyah* (purification of the soul) and *ihsan* (excellence in faith and action) in Islam, which are intended to lead to wellness through ethical living and inner purity. They echo wellosophy’s notion that wellness is both physical, requiring care of the body, and virtuous, requiring the cultivation of internal harmony.

- **Having a Purpose, Meaning, and Transcendence:** With its emphasis on living with intentionality, Wellosophy resonates with the Abrahamic belief that life is empty without God, community service and personal growth. As Jewish existential thought-based Viktor Frankl wrote: “Those who have a ‘why’ to live can bear with almost any ‘how’” (Frankl 2006). The focus of Wellosophy on finding personal meaning and anchoring one’s life in deeper values mirrors the legacy of Abrahamic faiths.

And so in a nutshell, wellosophy is a modern synthesis of ancient wisdom and contemporary wellness science. It advocates for an introspective, purposeful life anchored in wholeness of physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being. It is not yet an academic discipline, but even is a rich movement of thoughts that can help individuals to develop a compass to navigate oneself through the complexities of contemporary life. To realize this potential, it needs to be rooted in ethical reflection, resist commodification, and incorporate broader societal dimensions of well-being. As we grapple with global crises — pandemics, climate change, mental health epidemics — the time for a wellosophical life is not just timely, it is essential. But wellosophy, though relatively new, is very old and deeply anchored in African and Abrahamic philosophic paths. From African philosophy, it inherits the holistic, communal, and balanced view of well-being, while from the Abrahamic traditions it finds a strong sense of moral purpose, spiritual alignment and human dignity. These tax-exempt structures are evidence that living that well is not a new concept, but a tradition that reaches back thousands of years and is steeped in community wisdom and divine intention.

Appreciation of African Wellness

The African indigenous practices of positive health or wellness are not limited to traditional medicine, but also include spiritual, communal and ecological aspects of life that contribute to holistic health. These practices are rooted in indigenous African cosmologies, which stress holistic approaches to personal and community health, embodying the physical, mental, spiritual and social dimensions of life. Traditional medicine is one aspect of African wellness that uses herbal remedies, animal-based medications, and minerals. Traditional healers — called *sangomas* or *inyangas*, or *babalawos* in other parts of the continent — are central players in the diagnosing and treatment of illness. Their approach takes into account causes of illness not well understood by Western medicine, like displeasure of ancestors or lack of harmony with the environment (WHO, 2013). Healing rituals often include offerings, chants, drumming, and the summons of ancestral spirits to restore harmony (Mbiti, 1969).

At the root of African wellness practices is spirituality and the veneration of our ancestors. An unbroken stream of connection with the ancestors is thought to come with their protection, guidance, and health. Ancestors are honored and invoked through rituals such as libations, prayers, and sacrificial ceremonies (Opoku, 1978) This Helps to Ensure Mental and Emotional Health as Individuals Can Sense Connection, Purpose, and Belonging Through These Practices. Rather, there are therapeutic and social roles for storytelling, music, dance, and communal meals. The utilization of music and dance in ceremonial and therapeutic settings provides an outlet through which individuals can expel physical and emotional stressors while cementing social bonds (Nzewi, 2002). Storytelling, particularly through proverbs and folktales, passes on moral values, historical memory, survival strategies from one generation to the next, ensuring psychological wellness and cultural identity.

African wellness also have ecological practices. Many communities have sacred groves, rivers, or mountains that are protected not just for spiritual reasons but also for their environmental and health benefits. These Spaces as Sites of Meditation, Healing and Ritual: The roles and importance of land stewardship to sustainable wellness (Kambon, 2015). The nutrition and diet have been traditionally based on local, seasonal, and organic foods. Traditional African diets characterized by grains, legumes, vegetables and fermented products are inextricably linked to preventive health. Ceremonial preparations and consumption of food are collective and spiritual practices, and truly a rite of passage,

embracing participation, rituals, and community ties that maintain a bond (Oniang'o et al., 2003). And finally, rites of birth and death, initiation, and adolescence are essential wellness practices that both recognize and negotiate significant transitions and cultivate identity. These rituals offer emotional support, cultural grounding, and communal recognition, all of which are essential for mental and social well-being. Ultimately, these practices illustrate a holistic view of health, which is at once relational and spiritual, grounded in cultural identity and ecological awareness.

African Wellness: An Indigenous Guide to Health and Holistic Harmony

Health practices common in Africa promote holistic approaches to health that encompass physical, mental, spiritual, and communal aspects. Such systems center their approaches around aligned living with nature, a focus on community and ancestral wisdom (Airhihenbuwa, 1995). Interconnectedness is at the heart of African wellness philosophies. As Mbiti (1990) once wrote, "I am because we are," an illustration of Ubuntu, the belief that the community is necessary for the well-being of each person. This participation based view of health is inherently relational and not individualistic (Metz & Gaie, 2010). It is both traditional and ancient and based on a sense of order, anywhere there is disorder there is illness, hence "African healing practices are oriented toward the restoration of balance between the individual and their social environment, the natural world, and the spiritual realm" (Ademuwagun et al., 1979, p. 28).

- **Healers (Spirits, Nature, Ancestors):** For African wellness traditions, spirituality is foundational. Maintaining one's relation to ancestors, across many communities, is seen as a prerequisite for health (Karenga, 2006). Ancestors are seen as advisers and guardians whose knowledge shows the way to right living. "The tie to ancestors roots people and affords them a sense of continuity, a sense of purpose, which is integral to psychological health" (Somé, 1998, p. 43).
- **Practice of the natural medicine and healing:** African tradition medicine uses indigenous knowledge developed over the place of centuries. Plant-based remedies are used here not just for physical ailments but as part of overall wellness systems (Iwu, 2014). As per Okpako (2006), "African traditional medicine addresses illness from many ways, and while addressing the physical symptoms, it also concentrates on the spiritual and social dimensions of disease" (p. 239). This is achieved through indigenous knowledge and herbal medicine
- **Community as Medicine:** In Afrocentric wellness paradigms, most modes of healing are preventative and restorative, hinging on community involvement. Rituals, ceremonies, and celebrations strengthen social bonds that support the health of the individual (Airhihenbuwa, 2007). Mulaudzi et al. (2009) state, "in African communities, the process of healing is a communal activity in which family and community members actively participate in restoring health" (p. 51).
- **Contemporary Integration and Difficulties:** Traditional wisdom is woven into contemporary African wellness; both blend harmoniously with modern practices. Another approach within this tradition is Gyekye (1997), who emphasizes the need for critical examination of traditional features alongside environmental changes. That said, Ademuwagun (1995) notes, "the colonial legacy has disrupted traditional wellness systems, creating challenges for Africans seeking to reclaim indigenous health knowledge" (p. 112).
- **Traditional Self-Care Rituals:** While much African wellness is about physical remedies, it's also about rituals that nourish the spirit, mind and body. Steam baths, body massage, storytelling and music are traditional practices that have been central to healing and self-care for millennia. Steam bathing is common in many cultures in Africa, as it is said to detoxify the body and heal the skin. Eucalyptus leaves in the ethereal "Tish" steam bath in Ethiopia; mint and other indigenous herbs in South Africa. They closely echo today's spa and aromatherapy rituals. Shea butter and African black soap form the backbone of West African beauty rituals. Shea butter is an oil made from

the nuts of the *Vitellaria paradoxa* tree and is high in fatty acids and vitamins A and E which provide a rich moisturizer and antiinflammatory (Maranz et al., 2004). African black soap, traditionally batched from the fermented skins of the plantain fruit along with cocoa pods and palm oil, is recognized for its deep-cleanse and antimicrobial properties.

- **Dance and Embodied Wellness:** Dance is very peculiar to Africans way of life A key pillar of African traditions of wellness is movement by implication traditional African dance. Dance especially provides physical exercise alongside emotional and spiritual expression. Traditional dances are usually performed during rites of passage, healing ceremonies and periodic communal gatherings and serves to reinforce individual and collective identity (Ajayi, 1998). Integrating African dance into healthy living practices fosters cardio fitness, flexibility and mental health. Modern wellness practitioners might take note by incorporating dance therapy or Afrobeat-influenced fitness classes into holistic wellness offerings.
- **Spirituality and Ancestral Connection:** African paradigms of health are steeply integrated with spirituality. Healing often involves appeasing ancestors or actionable daily rituals or interactions with spiritual leaders. This approach recognizes the metaphysical aspect of disease and health, an idea which is reflected in contemporary holistic medicine (Gyekye, 1995). For instance, one uses various rituals — such as libation pouring, drumming, and chanting — to restore balance between the physical and spiritual realms. In contemporary wellness environments, these practices could be adapted as mindfulness exercises, sound and vibrational therapy, or guided meditations informed by African spirituality.
- **Environmental Harmony and Sustainability:** This is a form of ecosophy. Similar is the ethos of African philosophies which stresses harmonious living with nature. Sustainable harvesting, organic farming and seasonal eating have been practices of traditional societies for propitiously long. These practices resonate with the increasing demand for eco-friendly wellness products and lifestyles. African wellness brands have the capability to encourage the local sourcing of ingredients such as baobab, moringa, rooibos, and many others, which would ensure sustainability whilst empowering local economies. This not only protects biodiversity but also subjects legitimate communities to ethical entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

African wellness traditions embrace holistic perspectives on health that include community, spirituality, and environmental harmony. These perspectives acknowledge true well-being derives from harmonious relationships across various dimensions of existence. To Africanize Wellosophy is not mere cultural revival, but a vital expansion of the global wellness paradigm. Incorporating African cultural practices, philosophies such as Ubuntu, traditional medicinal knowledge, spiritual practices and sustainability, we seek to create a more integrative, community-oriented, and holistic perspective on well-being. By doing so, we also activate the wisdom of our African ancestors and contemporary practitioners and make our way to wellness more meaningful, rooted, and transformative.

*Jude I. Onebunne, PhD

Department of Philosophy
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
juno.anyi@gmail.com
ORCID iD: 0000-0002-89956097

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