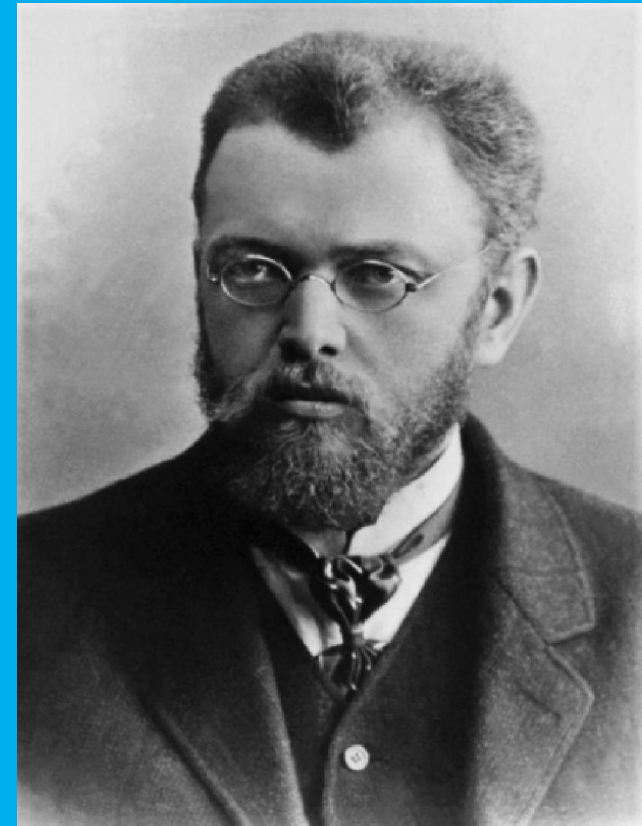


ФІЛОСОФІЯ РЕЛІГІЇ ТА МЕДИЦИНИ В ПОСТСЕКУЛЯРНУ ДОБУ



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МІНІСТЕРСТВО ОХОРОНИ ЗДОРОВ'Я УКРАЇНИ
НАЦІОНАЛЬНИЙ МЕДИЧНИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ ІМЕНІ О. О. БОГОМОЛЬЦЯ
Кафедра філософії, біоетики та історії медицини
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**Секція IV.
РЕЛІГІЯ ТА КЛІНІЧНА МЕДИЦИНА**

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**DEVELOPMENT OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN AFRICA:
PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS TRENDS INTERACTION**

Before the establishment of science-based medicine, “traditional medicine was the dominant medical system for millions of people in Africa. The arrival of Europeans was a noticeable turning point in the history of ancient traditional cultures” [5]. Modern scientific medicine is successful in most developed countries, but it doesn't have the same positive impact on many of underdeveloped African countries. The Western practices can make an impact on many health care practices, and yet it cannot integrate wholly into the African culture and society. This makes the traditional African practitioners a vital part of their health care system. There are many reasons why the Western medical system has not been as effective in Africa as it has in more developed parts of the world. Hospitals and medical facilities are difficult for many Africans to get to. With vast areas of land and poor road and transportation systems, many native Africans have to travel immense distances on foot to get medical help. Once they arrive they are often required to wait for up to 8 hours in the queue, especially in urban areas. The lack of clinics and resources cause over-crowding and patients are often not told the cause of their illness or sufficient information about it, so they have no way to prevent it or prepare for possible consequences. The technologies and equipment used are usually of poor quality, which impairs the quality of treatment. Modern medicine can also be too expensive for an average African to afford, making it difficult for them to receive proper care. Finally, modern medicine alienates native Africans from the cultural tradition of spiritual healing and forces them into a setting that they are not comfortable with, away from their families and tribes which are of utmost importance to them [1].

During Colonial era, official European medical science considered methods of traditional African medicine to be primitive, backward and pagan, so tribal diviners-healers were outlawed as practitioners of witchcraft and magic by the colonial authorities and Christian clergy, which led to the war or crusade against many aspects of the indigenous culture that were seen as witchcraft. During this time, attempts were also made to control the sale of herbal medicines. Nearly the same attitude was practiced by later communist regimes. As for example, “after Mozambique obtained independence in 1975, attempts to control traditional medicine went as far as sending diviners-healers to re-education camps” [5]. Colonial administration and later Soviet-supported state leaders built many general or public hospitals, in which the scientific style medicine was practiced, and Christian missionaries built private hospitals, with the hopes of making headway

against widespread diseases. Little was done to investigate the legitimacy of traditional African medicine teachings and practices, as most foreigners believed them to be just superstitious and so easily fixed or replaced by inheriting Western or Soviet methods of diagnostics and treatment. During post-colonial times of regional ethnical and political conflicts, native population was most likely to call on the supernatural realm aid and because of these tribal diviners-healers frequently got some political authority. Consequently, state power representatives feel and act hostile towards them. Based on this, state supported doctors and health practitioners have, in most cases, use this tendency to continue or even increase shun and suppress traditional practitioners despite their contribution to meeting the basic health needs of the population [2].

In recent years, the treatments and remedies used in traditional African medicine have gained more appreciation from researchers in science. Developing countries have begun to realize the high costs of modern health care systems establishments and personnel upkeep, pharmacies, instruments and technologies required for it. Due to this, interest has recently been expressed in integrating traditional African medicine into the continent's national health care systems. This concept was embraced by making a 48-bed hospital, the first of its kind, in Kwa-Mhlanga, South Africa, which combines traditional methods with homeopathy, iridology, and other western healing methods, even including some traditional Asian medicine. The traditionalist oriented politics also publically support the opinion, that the highly sophisticated technology involved in modern medicine, which is beginning to integrate into Africa's health care system, could possibly destroy Africa's deep-seated cultural values.

African traditional medicine existed for many thousands of years and currently exists in different forms ranging from indigenous tribal therapeutic herbalism, proto-surgery traumatic healing, midwives practice tradition, up to "spiritual healing" activity of Ngai diviners, Yoruba clergy, Voodoo cultists and so on. Practitioners of traditional African medicine claim themselves and are believed by majority of native population to be able to not only healing simple wounds and burns, but as well to cure various and diverse conditions such as high blood pressure, epilepsy, asthma, eczema, fever, anxiety, depression, benign prostatic hyperplasia, cholera, most venereal diseases, psychiatric disorders, urinary tract infections, gout, and even cancer, HIV/AIDS or Ebola (with doubtful proves of the later).

For traditional medicine users, diagnosis is made not only by physical conditions examination, but also by spiritual means of analyzing nervous and psychical conditions and reasons of patients' injuries, often associated with "curses" of angry sprits or hostile witches and shamans. "The prescribed treatment usually consists of herbal remedy consumption, which is considered to have not only healing abilities but also symbolic and spiritual significance. Traditional African medicine believes that illness is not derived from chance occurrences, but through spiritual or social imbalance, and so differs greatly from modern scientific medicine, which is technically and analytically based. The enduring popularity of traditional medicine is supported not only by great traditionalism and mental stubbornness of rural and city slums population, but also by the fact, that even in the 21st century modern medical diagnostic and healing procedures, as well as industrially

produced pharmaceutical substances, remain inaccessible to large numbers of African people due to their relatively high cost and concentration of hospitals and modern pharmacies trade centers in large cities or ports, access to which is denied by both transport problems and continuous military conflicts in most regions” [5].

“The diagnoses and chosen methods of treatment in traditional African medicine rely heavily on spiritual aspects, often based on the belief that psycho-spiritual aspects should be addressed before physiological medical aspects” [5]. In African culture, it is believed that “nobody becomes sick without sufficient reason” [3]. Traditional practitioners look at the ultimate “who” rather than “what” when locating the cause and cure of an illness, and the answers given come from the cosmological beliefs of the people “rather than looking for the medical or physical reasons of the illness. Traditional healers attempt to determine the main root of the disease, which is believed to stem from a lack of balance between the patient and their social environment or the spiritual world” [5], not due to purely natural causes. Natural causes are, in fact, not seen as natural at all, but as manipulations of spirits or the gods. For example, sickness is sometimes said to be attributed as punishment for guilt of the person, family, or village for a sin or moral infringement. The illness, therefore, would stem from the displeasure of the gods or god, due to an infraction of universal moral law. “According to the type of imbalance the individual is experiencing, an appropriate healing plant will be used, which is valued for its symbolic and spiritual significance as well as for its medicinal effect” [5].

“Traditional practitioners use a wide variety of treatments ranging from “magic” to biomedical methods such as fasting and dieting, herbal therapies, bathing, massage, and surgical procedures. Migraines, coughs, abscesses, and pleurisy are often treated using the method of “bleed-cupping” after which an herbal ointment is applied with follow-up herbal drugs. Animals are also sometimes used to transfer the illness while manufacturing medicines for zoo therapy. Some cultures also rub hot herbal ointment across the patient’s eyelids to cure headaches. Malaria is treated by both drinking herbal mixture and using the steam from it. Fevers are often treated using a steam bath. Also, vomiting is induced, or emetics, in an attempt to cure some diseases, first of all alcoholism. Benin natives have been known to use the fat of a boa constrictor to allegedly cure gout and rheumatism, and it also is thought to relieve chest pain when rubbed into the skin. Within South Africa some examples of zoo therapy are the utilization of the bones of baboons as a treatment for arthritis, or the rubbing of the terpenoids of the blister beetle (*Mylabris* sp.) into the skin as a treatment for skin diseases. Approximately 60%-80% of people in Africa rely on traditional remedies to treat themselves for various diseases. A recent systematic review estimated that close to 60% (58.2%) (4.6%-94% in different regions) of the general population in sub-Saharan Africa use traditional and complementary medicine product. A large percentage of people in South Africa also rely on traditional remedies to treat their animals for various diseases. Ebola survivors in Sierra Leone have recently been reported to use traditional and complementary medicine alone or together with conventional medicine” [5]. The hope to find a cure for Ebola or Marburg virus infections has been unsuccessful up to now. However, this problem is also true for modern medicine.

In African cultures, the act of healing is considered a religious act [4]. Therefore, the healing process often attempts to appeal to god because it is ultimately god who can not only inflict sickness, but provide a cure. Africans have a religious world view which makes them aware of the feasibility of divine or spirit intervention in healing with many healers referring to the supreme god as the source of their medical power. For example, "the Kung people of the Kalahari Desert, who still try to cure illness by performing a tribal dance, believe that the great god Hishe created all things and, therefore, controls all sickness and death. Hishe bestows mystical powers for curing sickness on medicine men, presenting himself in dreams and hallucinations. As this god is generous enough to give his power to the medicine men for free, they are expected to practice healing freely, which is opposed to high salaries of Western doctors. Some healers may employ the use of charms, incantations, and the casting of spells in their treatments" [5]. The dualistic nature of traditional African medicine between the body and soul, matter, and spirit and their interactions with one another are also seen as a form of magic. Using charms and amulets to cure diseases and illnesses is an uncertain and clouded practice that requires more scientific investigation.

Africa is endowed with many "plants that can be used for medicinal purposes and traditional healers have taken full advantage of this. In fact, out of the approximated 6400 plant species used in tropical Africa, more than 4000 are used as medicinal plants. Medicinal plants are used in the treatments of many diseases and illnesses, and their healing abilities, ways of use and possible side effects of application are of growing interest to western societies" [5]. In traditional medicine those plants often have symbolic, magical and spiritual significance. A small proportion of plants of ethnic human and veterinary medicine in South Africa "have been researched for toxic effects, mutagenic properties and heavy metal contamination. Serious adverse effects, even death, can result from misidentification or misuse of healing plants. For example, various aloe plants are widely used in tam, but some varieties, such as Aloe globuligemma, are toxic and can cause death. The potential for pharmacokinetic interactions of other herbal remedies is also largely unknown, especially interactions between traditional treatments and pharmaceutical antiretroviral drugs for HIV/AIDS. So, many countries governments claim the need for the collaboration of official medicine with traditional healers in order to determine the degree of safety for traditional herbal remedies and to educate people supplying alternative treatments against unsafe practices" [5]. As well it has been suggested that South African medical schools should review their curriculum regarding traditional, complementary and alternate medicines, especially the possible antiviral efficiency of them as cheap alternative for chemical antiretroviral drugs.

While the field of traditional medicine in Africa is often deeply embedded in cultural and indigenous knowledge, there may not be specific philosophers of medicine in the traditional Western sense. However, certain thinkers and scholars have explored the intersection of African philosophy, culture, and healing practices. The first Nigerian to perform modern medicine in his own country was Nathaniel King who studied in Kings College of London 1874. Latunde Odeku was the first neurosurgeon in Nigeria. (1927-1974). Dr. James Beale Africanus Horton contributed to environmental hygiene in Nigeria. John Mbiti, a Kenyan philosopher and theologian, explored African traditional religions and philosophy.

His work emphasizes the interconnectedness of life, the spiritual dimension, and the significance of community. Cheikh Anta Diop, a Senegalese historian and anthropologist, contributed to the understanding of African history and culture. His work often highlighted the holistic nature of African societies and their traditional healing practices. Ife Amadiume, a Nigerian feminist and philosopher, has explored gender dynamics in African societies. Her work delves into the roles of women, including their involvement in traditional healing practices. Tempels Placide, a Belgian missionary and philosopher, wrote “Bantu Philosophy,” attempting to understand the philosophical underpinnings of African cultures, including their views on health and illness. Molefi Kete Asante, an African-American philosopher, has contributed to the discourse on Afrocentrism. While being not focused solely on traditional medicine, his work explores African cultural identity and the importance of indigenous knowledge systems.

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ПСИХІАТРІЯ ТА РЕЛІГІЯ У ПОСТСЕКУЛЯРНИЙ ДІЙСНОСТІ СЬОГОДЕННЯ

Нещодавно мені до рук потрапив цікавий матеріал, присвячений аналізу місця психіатрії в сучасному постсекулярному світі [2]. Написали її медики – профільні спеціалісти у галузі психіатрії, клінічних медичних досліджень – Ріко Дамберг Ніссен, Фредерік Алкєр Гільдберг, Нільс Крістіан Хвідт.