

# For A Holistic Conception of Human Health

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**Abstract:** This article aims to study the holistic conception of the human health. Thanks to the analytical method based on the World Health Organization, Anglo-Saxon scientific and Biblical conceptions of the human health, the author identified four related aspects, which are: physical, intellectual, spiritual and social relation dimensions. Unless they are all well-balanced, humans should not pretend to be healthy. Reason why some strategies were devised to keep healthy the human body, mind, soul and social relations.

**Keywords:** Holistic conception, human health.

**Resume:** Cet article vise à étudier la conception holistique de la santé humaine. Grâce à la méthode analytique basée sur les conceptions de la santé humaine par l'Organisation Mondiale de la Santé, certains scientifiques anglo-saxons et quelques auteurs bibliques, l'auteur en a identifié quatre aspects, à savoir: les dimensions physiques, intellectuelles, spirituelles et sociales. À moins que toutes ces dimensions ne soient bien équilibrées, les humains ne devraient pas prétendre être en bonne santé. Raison pour laquelle certaines stratégies ont été conçues pour garder en bonne santé le corps humain, l'esprit, l'âme et les relations sociales.

**Mots-Cles:** Conception holistique, santé humaine.

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## 1. Introduction

The health of a human being is his/her greatest value. Nevertheless, when we speak of the state of human health, an inadequate conception emerges from some people. There often is an omission of one or both aspects of human health. Some limit it to the physiological level, others to the intellectual level, others to the spiritual level and others to the social level. And there are those who do not know the techniques necessary to maintain the body, the intelligence, the soul and the social relations in balance. This leads us to ask two questions: what can be the holistic conception of human health? And how can humans totally maintain their life in good health?. In anticipation of the answers to these questions, two small hypotheses have been put forward, in particular; the holistic conception of human health could be totalitarian, a conception that would encompass the physiological, intellectual, spiritual and social aspects of human health. By concrete actions at the physiological, intellectual, spiritual and social levels, the humans could totally maintain their life in good health.

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When two people greet each other, one asks the next question, "How are you?" "- In most cases, despite possible psychic, spiritual and social imbalances, the second responds spontaneously: "I am fine "if he/she is physically well. It seems as if the state of human health is limited only to the body.

Imagine the state of psychic health of a parent whose child has just been expelled from school for lack of school fees. For the second or third time, this inconvenience becomes a concern that affects the health of this parent at all levels.

On one side, to promote spirituality, some ascetics do violence to the flesh. On the other side, some scientists are much more concerned with the intellectual aspect than with the spiritual aspect that brings us closer to God. All these observations motivated the choice of this topic that pursues a dual purpose: - It aims at studying four aspects of human health; - and to make a list of useful actions for the body, mind, soul and social relationships balance.

Due to its scientific and practical interest, this article aims to provide readers with practical advice about what they should do to stay healthy physically, intellectually, spiritually and socially. Such a goal can only be achieved by using a certain method of research.

The analytical method, which consisted in analyzing some ambient conceptions and texts relating to our subject, was mainly used to apprehend the present subject. The purpose of this method was to facilitate access to the necessary information. Through such a method, this article includes two parts: different conceptions of human health and some techniques of maintaining the four aspects of human health in harmony.

## II. Different Conceptions of Human Health

In order to fix our readers on this subject, the meaning of the key terms will be given before spreading the different conceptions.

### 2.0. Sense of key terms

The word "conception" does not mean the formation of an egg (conjunction of the spermatozoon and the egg) in the maternal uterus but "formation of the concept, act of thought applying to an object" (P. Robert, 1985). For this case, the object of study is the human health: it means a general understanding of human health.

The adjective « holistic » is from Greek *holos* (masculine), *holê* (feminine), *holon* (neutral), means whole (J.W. Wehnam, 1973). It can be rendered by the adjective "globalizing" meaning "that globalizes". And globalize means "to unite in one whole, to present in a global way scattered elements." (Isabelle Jeuge-Maynard, 2013).

Health is a "good physiological state, regular and harmonious functioning of the human organism during a certain appreciable period, more or less harmonious functioning of the organism, over a long enough period; psychic balance (example: the health of the mind, see P. Robert, 1985). Everyone does not indeed understand human health in the same way.

### 2.1. Different conceptions of human health

While going through some writings on the subject of this investigation, different conceptions of human health were found. Before placing ours, we will present some. These include: the conception of human health by the WHO, by some Anglo-Saxon thinkers and by some biblical writers.

### 2.1.1. The conception of human health by the WHO

The World Health Organization (Anonymous, 2002) argues that health is "a state of physical, mental and social well-being and not just the absence of disease or infirmity". This definition is incomplete for omitting the spiritual aspect of human health.

Let's look at the conception of human health by some Anglo-Saxon thinkers.

### 2.1.2. The conception of human health by some Anglo-Saxon thinkers

There are thinkers, such as Charles Robert Darwin (British naturalist, 1809-1882), Feuerbach Karl Marx (German philosopher and economist, 1818-1883), Sigmund Freud (Austrian physicist and neurologist, founder of psychoanalysis, 1856- 1939) and Ellen Gould WHITE (American, 1827-1915), who respectively conceive of human health as follows:

“Charles Darwin demoted humans to the status of animal driven by survival instincts. Karl Max stressed economic necessity as the driving instinct. Sigmund Freud stressed the sex drive. Collectively, Darwin, Marx and Freud demoted mind and denied spirit.” (cf. Marshall, 2009). To the contrary, it is still an aberration to minimize intelligence and to deny the mind on this point.

When it comes to consider the meaning attributed to education of humans by Ellen G. White, quoted by Marshall (2009), it is easy to realize the omission of the social dimension through her writings below: “True education means the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come”.

Now, it remains to see what the Holy Bible says about the human health.

### 2.1.3. The conception of human health by some biblical writers

When it comes to deal with the health of a human being, the Bible, without neglecting the other aspects, gives priority to spiritual health. That is what the King Solomon, the Apostles Matthew and Paul wrote respectively in the following passages: “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” (Proverbs of Solomon 4: 23) – A parallel passage is written in Matthew 16:26 which places the soul at the interest center: “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” -And Saint Paul exhorts Timothy, his legitimate child in faith, much more to piety than to gymnastics in these terms: “--- train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. (1Timothy 4:7, 8). - He adds that the body and spirit of man belong to God and that the body, being the temple of the Holy Spirit, must be preserved from the defilements of the world (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:12-20).

In the biblical context, there is a striking contrast between a spiritual man and a natural man: “(verse14).The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. (Verse15).The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment ” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:14-15). In fact, appearances often lie because people might think someone is in good health while he is spiritually dead. This is what should be understood by the statement below : “(Verse1).As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, (verse 2) in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at

work in those who are disobedient.--- (Verse 3) All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.” (Ephesians 2:1-3).

After all these analyzes, now we will approach the holistic conception of human health.

#### **2.1.4. The holistic conception of human health**

As possibly understood, the holistic view of human health is totalitarian, meaning that it encompasses all four aspects of human health: body health, health of the mind, soul health and health of social relations.

The good physiological state mentioned above means the body health, that is to say, the health of the material part of a man. When there is balance of the internal and external organs of the human body, the latter is in good health.

The health of the mind should not be confused with the health of the soul, especially since "the soul and the spirit are different aspects of the same essence" (T.C.Hammond, 1983). By the health of the mind, we imply mental health, which "relates to the intellectual functions of the mind" (Robert, 1985). King Solomon (Proverbs 1: 1-6) further illustrates this truth in these terms: (verse1).The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: (verse 2) for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; (verse 3) for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; (verse 4) for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young- (verse 5) let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance - (verse 6) for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.

This text shows words and expressions that are compatible with intelligence, including: divine wisdom, that is, know-how. Because it is the latter who directs the intelligence in the right way. Man obtains wisdom when he asks without doubting God (James 1: 5-8); instruction or training of the spirit; the intelligence or faculty of man allowing him to apprehend reality, the lessons of common sense characterized by discipline and prudence, justice characterized by equity and righteousness; discernment that is useful for distinguishing error from truth, knowledge or understanding, reflection or deep thought. These are the terms characterizing the intelligence of man.

When intelligence is well nourished, it brings forth ideas that, as Stott (1979) tells us, "if they are based on truth and justice will eventually prevail over the bayonets of infantry, artillery guns and cavalry charges." - While knowledge or science refers to theoretical knowledge, thanks to skill, a human person can act with skill and skill. And to grasp the meaning of a proverb or an enigma, the words of the wise and their sentences, one must also be wise.

While the health of the soul is the balance of a "man's immaterial part which survives after death" (Hammond, Op.cit.) - Someone can be intelligent without necessarily being spiritual. In this case, such a man is intellectually sane but spiritually ill. It remains to write the meaning of the health of social relations, which is perceived as the harmony of relations with our entire human, animal and ecological environment. Phillips, quoted by Wills (2009) went in the same direction as us saying: "Being sociable looks like one of the best ways to add years to life. Relationships with family, friends, neighbors, even pets, will do the trick, but the longest boost seems to come from marriage or an equivalent significant other relationship."

From the human viewpoint, social relations mean relationships maintained by a person with his/her own family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, classmates, etc. They must be well cared for because the human person's life depends on them. The social aspect also extends to pets, such as cats, dogs, cows, goats, chickens, etc. If they are sick, the human person risks being contaminated (for example, rabies and bird fever are to be feared).

Ecologically, different environments play an important role in human health. For his part, Lecourt (2004) had already emphasized this point in these words: "The recognition of the environment influence on health is not a new idea". After the explanations of the four dimensions of human health, it is appropriate to write a few paragraphs on the techniques of keeping them in equilibrium. This is the main thing of the next point.

### III. Techniques of Maintaining the Four Aspects of Human Health in Harmony

In this section, techniques of maintaining the body, mind, soul and social relations in balance are developed.

To maintain his body in good health, the man must take concrete actions that we will report in the following lines. Such actions are numerous (Mbarga, 1986) and concern in particular: hand hygiene, food hygiene, dental hygiene, water hygiene, latrine hygiene, environmental hygiene, hygiene of clothes, hygiene of the whole body. Here are some details.

Hand hygiene requires us to wash them with soap and flowing water and dry them with a clean ironed towel. Hand hygiene differs from food hygiene. "For the hygienist, the human diet poses both quantitative and qualitative problems ... the food ration must be in sufficient quantity and balanced," says Boyer (1969). It essentially requires the presence of constructive, energizing and protective foods. Two illustrations would not be superfluous to be understandable: the first is from Courtejoie (2007) with the appropriate examples for each category of food, namely: foods that give strength and energy (examples: bread, corn, yam, banana, sugar cane, etc.)- Constructive foods are derived from animal proteins (e.g. fish, cow's milk, meat, eggs, etc.) and vegetable proteins (e.g. peanuts, soybeans, beans, green leaves, etc.) and protective foods, such as vegetables (examples: green leaves, tomato, etc.) and fruits (for examples: pineapple, banana, avocado, etc.)- The second comes from Steffe and Krey (1982), who went further about health in the American context, saying, "... maintain ideal weight, avoid too much fat ... and cholesterol, avoid too much sugar and too much sodium, and if you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.

Note that the above elements are essential for the maintenance of physical health in balance not only of Americans but also of any human being. In addition, fruits and vegetables should be washed before eating. People will take care not to eat on one plate to avoid contamination. The teeth will be cleaned with toothpaste with a brush in the morning, in the evening and every time after the meal. Avoid irritating them with water that is too hot or too cold.

About water hygiene, it will be useless to draw dirty water. And the water must be boiled to be potable, or well filtered and well preserved. In any case, it takes a change of mentality that the African does not die of germs. The hygiene of the latrines and the environment forces humans to cleanly build the toilets, to avoid doing stools outdoors, to cover the holes of our latrines once used and to use disinfectants.

In the context of environmental health, people have to look after not only cleanliness in their homes but also sanitation of their plots. In addition, it will be necessary to wash and iron the

clothes regularly. For the whole body hygiene, it should be washed at least three times a week and each time after sweating away from work or physical exercise. A human person must wash his/her head every day and, if needed, apply oil to make his/her face shine (Psalm 104:15b). It is important to have regular checkups (at least once a year).

In addition, physical exercise is essential for the balance of the human body. Because according to the statement appreciated from Schneider (1976), "by physical exercises and muscle training, it is possible to prevent and even cure certain diseases (example: rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, obesity, etc.)." And to be safe from anopheles mosquitoes, it is necessary to sleep under a mosquito net impregnated according to the World Organization of the Health (Anonymous, 2002). This list is not exhaustive. All these hygiene rules must be strictly observed for the prevention of diseases, because according to an English saying, "*prevention is better than cure*" (cf. Dr. Landless, quoted by Wills, 2009).

Just as the individual cares for his body, in the same way he has an obligation to take care of his/her mind. This corresponds roughly to a Latin proverb which says: « *Mens sana in corpore sano* » (literally translated, a sound mind in a healthy body).

Let's now look at the actions to be taken to maintain balanced intellectual health. Reason is nourished by writing, art, music, radio, television, the Internet, narration and the use of imagined language. Here are their details. Indeed, according to a Latin saying "*verba volant sed scripta manent*" (the words fly away but the writings permanently remain). There is no publication without research since the various authors whose works have been published have made it easier for researchers to make available the information they are looking for. From here was born the book which, according to Labarre (1970), "is above all text, it is its reason for being. It has long been the main, if not the only, means of disseminating and preserving knowledge ... "To access it, humans have to read it.

When the human creature admires an art object, it feels attracted by the beauty that awakens the intellect and encourages it to reflect on the artist and the way he conceived of such a work. As for music, once accompanied by educational songs, it is rather edifying than destructive of humanity. Dancing is also the expression of joy: "Then maidens will dance and be glad, young men and old as well" (Jeremiah 31:13a, b).

Through radio, television and the Internet, users can cultivate their intelligence as long as these media fight ignorance by providing them with the necessary information. For example, all you have to do is access the Internet to easily and quickly communicate and learn online. In the traditional African milieu, and in some modern families, other means are used to enhance man's intelligence in socio-cultural and moral frameworks. These include: narration (when better-informed and educated people often tell their relatives some astonishing and charming events), the use of pictorial language, talking in proverbs, maxims, riddles, etc. (Colle, 1971) in order to push reason more deeply into a chosen topic.

In addition, the man must observe a period of rest (pause, reconstitution leave), in order to recreate the memory and the whole organism. Schneider (1976) expresses it better when he says: "The holidays must bring a real relaxation and a new enrichment in terms of knowledge and reflection. This time of freedom is an opportunity for man to recreate himself physically, morally is spiritually. Sleep loss should also be avoided for fear of damaging consequences such as overwork. This is also what Cauter (quoted by Wills, 2009) presupposes in the line below: "We suspect that chronic sleep loss may not only hasten the outset, but could also

increase the severity of age and related ailments such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity and memory loss.”

According to Wyler (1967), "If Jesus lived (on the planet Earth) today, He would not be against sport!" - "True sport is practiced sport ... conceived as a relaxation that recreates body and mind, apprehended as a means to discover one's physical reserves and to fully realize the possibilities of this admirable body that God gave us."

Moreover, the importance of laughter and smile is shown by Douglas (quoted by Willis, 2009) in these words, "people born with a sunny disposition cope better with stress, such a temperament increases their chances of reaching a ripe old age... laughing and smiling also reduce cortisol levels. A happier life is likely to be a longer one." -And when people relax, the stress goes away also.

Regarding the actions to be taken to maintain the soul in balance, several possibilities have been envisaged. They consist : in living as a result of the Christian faith manifested by the fear of God by fleeing sins (Proverbs 8:13 "The fear of the Lord is the hatred of evil, the arrogance and the pride, the way of evil and the perverse mouth, that is what I hate " ; - in carrying the fruit ( karpos, written in singular in Greek, John 15: 1-8), that is to say the character of Jesus-Christ (Paxson, 1948); - in being sanctified by the Spirit of God, as Saint Paul emphasizes in 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:13 "... God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation, by the sanctification of Spirit and faith in the truth. " – and in accepting regeneration by the Word of God according to 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1: 23, " Since you have been regenerated, not by a corruptible seed, but by an incorruptible seed, by the living and permanent Word of God." But the latter is not received anyhow. Here are the manner and purpose for receiving it. God's word is received with great eagerness (Acts 17:11), with faith ((Acts 24:14), and humbly accept it (James 1 :21). These three references show the way in which Bible readers can receive the divine message while the two following describe its purposes.

Scripture is received to be probed (cf. John 5:39 "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me"). Man receives God's word to retain it (cf. 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1 :13 " What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus." This is very important because "...man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord ." (Deuteronomy 8:3 e, f) - From God's word, Vernet (1978) makes an exhortation in these terms: "Take it then, open it, without bias, without a priori, without prejudice, without any prevention! So, I assure you, you will not be disappointed, you will see her old pages come alive with an intense singular life, the story it brings back to us, a story that interests all of us directly, to take back its life, to explain the present, our present, and to illuminate the future, not only the future of the universe, that of our planet, that of humanity as a whole, but above all our future for everyone, our personal future."

Finally, confessing one's sins is recommended (1<sup>st</sup> John 1: 9). Indeed, it is sad to say that unconfessed sins make humans lose weight. But to hear the experience of King David (Psalm 32: 1-5) after he committed adultery with Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite (Psalm 51 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 11), it is appropriate to learn a good lesson: "(verse 1) Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.(verse 2) Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.(verse 3)When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.(verse 4) For day and night

your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.(verse 5)Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord ' - and you forgave the guilt of my sin."

There is no exaggeration to say with Narramore (1960) that spiritual health can be a cure for stress, in these words: "It has been demonstrated that disturbed relationship with the family, the school; the job, the church or military unit may limit further the capacity of a person to respond to stressful change. These difficulties can be minimized through trusting in Christ. We know that much stress in life need not be absorbed by the born-again believer. When we accept Christ as our personal Savior, then trust in Him daily, He gives us unusual peace. This fortifies us against much emotional distress." - Once the material and immaterial aspects of human health are over, let's look at preventive actions from the social point of view.

In order not to offend his fellows, the man must ask himself important questions before acting, namely: Do my actions /words/glances edify my fellowmen? If so, better act as well. Otherwise, it is better to leave because my actions may ruin their confidence (Buhendwa, 2015).

In Christian Social Ethics, a human being "ought not to do to others what he/she does not want to be done to him/her". Then, here are some requirements for a good maintenance of social relations : a) a human being should love his/her neighbor as himself/herself (Matthew 22 :39), because love (agapê) covers a multitude of sins (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4 :8b ; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13 :4-7 ; Proverbs 10 :12) ; b) to be of noble character as for forgiveness even if it were not asked for by the offender; c) as far as it depends on humans, make every effort to live in peace with everyone (Romans 12 :18 ; Hebrews 12 :14a).

In the case of animals, it is necessary to: (a) have them vaccinated regularly, (b) graze them "in green pastures" (Psalm 23:2); c) water them; (d) keep clean their bodies, manger/through/feeding tray, barns, henhouses or cages, as the case may be; e) do not mistreat them. As for the environment, subject to the preceding paragraphs (review hygiene of water, latrines and environment), Dupupet's advice (1984) should have been followed since it is necessary to "bring one's food, (but) take away the garbage." - Often some passersby, and especially those in Bukavu town, bring their food while they are traveling. However, after eating, they throw garbage along the pathways! Someone will not blame the author when he says that fines could be imposed on them, following the examples of Rwanda and the USA.

When social relations are sound, they produce good results. Munkulu (2008) builds on this when he says: "The (African) people have pooled their intelligence, their physical and mental strengths and all the means at their disposal to achieve the collective goals and for the satisfaction of their basic needs ". He goes on to say: "Among the Bakongo, solidarities, while affirming their sociological and cultural identity, are a catalyst for community development."

Thus, humans take advantage of domestic animals, as Morris (1989) demonstrates in the following lines: "the domestication of animals was almost as important as that of plants, for a stable civilized society. Dogs were needed for hunting, cattle and sheep for food and clothing, horses and camels for transportation. " - The following aspects should be added: the dog can also secure our flock or even our home. Experimentation in the medical field (testing medications) can be done from domestic animals. Finally, cows can provide leather for

making shoes. Their dung, after a while, can be used to increase the fertility of the fields. In turn, the plants give fresh air and serve as food and medicine for animals and humans.

In addition, Boyer (1969) specifies that green spaces are a necessity in these terms: "On the one hand, they reduce the crowding of the population, if they are of sufficient surface, they create zones of silence, where the air is less flawed, where mothers can walk their infants, where children have the opportunity to frolic in the sun. On the other hand, they are useful to the mental balance of the city dweller. These are some very interesting examples of the importance of animals and plants to the human health. That's why we need to clean up our environment and protect biodiversity.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, to be totally healthy, the body, mind, soul and social relationships must be sound. The wish, like that of Saint Paul (1Thessalonians 5:23), is that "all your being, the spirit, the soul, and the body, be kept blameless, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ! " This is not without watering blessings our social relations. Thus the physiological, intellectual, spiritual and social dimensions constitute the four aspects of human health. This meets the first hypothesis according to which the holistic conception of human health should include the physiological, intellectual, spiritual and social aspects of human health.

Finally, some techniques were devised to maintain these four aspects in balance, including: the observation of the rules of hygiene, the physical exercise and the check-up for the human body; scientific research, relaxation, laughter and a smile for the benefit of intelligence; the daily walk with God through sanctification by the Holy Spirit, regeneration through the living and permanent Word of God, by fleeing sins, for the sake of spiritual health; and finally, the sound management of social relations, in relation to men, animals and our entire environment, is indispensable. This list is not exhaustive. All these results qualify our second hypothesis according to which by taking concrete actions physiologically, intellectually, spiritually and socially, the human being could totally maintain his/her life in good health. Thus, one aspect should not be neglected. It is now up to each of our readers to visit a physician for in-depth advice on physical health, a psychologist and psychiatrist for further mental health information, a pastor for more spiritual health needs, a sociologist, an ethicist and an anthropologist for more strategies to balance social relations.

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