

## **Being spirit: The requisite alchemizing essence for the restoration of African ascendent people**

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### **About spirit (Intro)**

In the modern world, the word spirit has multiple connotations. In a colloquial sense it conjures notions of a dark, hauntingly unknown, ghostly entity. In another sense, it is understood as the psychic presence or soul of a once living person, such as an ancestor. In the context of religion, where it is most commonly referenced, spirit is thought of as a benevolent or malevolent essence that influences living beings in positive and negative ways, such as God and Satan. Regardless of the characteristics that one attributes to it, generally speaking, spirit is conceptualized as an immaterial, anthropomorphic essence lacking in form and matter.

In the context of this writing, spirit is neither characterized from a colloquial nor religious perspective. Here “spirit” references a more expansive, concept that extends beyond these common contemporary connotations. Spirit, as it is referred to here, is a knowable, incorporeal, sentient, intelligent, divine energy essence from which everything of the visible and invisible realms evolves and through which everything is connected.

From this vantage point, spirit does not exist solely in the margins of our human experience as an abstract aberration or optional belief system; spirit is absolutely fundamental to the fullness of our being. It is not separate from us, but integral to the totality of human existence. Furthermore, the illumination of this aspect of our beingness is vital if we are to fully experience wholeness and wellness. To exist oblivious to our spiritness (state, quality, or activity of being spirit), therefore, results in an incomplete, discordant, fractured existence.

It is important to note that a fundamental assumption of this writing is that Black people, as the original people of the earth, are innately imbued with a propensity toward spiritness. And that the maafa and colonialism, for diasporan and continental Africans, respectively, caused an estrangement in relationship to spirit, producing a low vibrational, fractured state of being. It is proposed that the alchemy necessary to restore the high vibration of full humanness is a renewal of the spirit self.

This paper will explore three perspectives that support spirit as an integral dimension of beingness. Each of these perspectives reveal spirit in ways that extend beyond common mystical notions.

### **Juxtaposing African & western views of spirit**

“We are matter in appearance and spirit in reality.” (Nobles, 2020). If exclaimed during a Sunday morning church service, anywhere in Black America, the congregation would undoubtedly jump to their feet shouting “AMEN”. But can we really be both matter and spirit?

Today’s world is dominated by western thought making the idea of conjoining matter and spirit significantly challenging to reconcile. Through a western lens, the polarizing dialectic between matter

and spirit is rooted in a contradictory duality, where matter represents all physical realities perceptible by the senses and spirit represents an unknown and unknowable, mind-made construct wholly subject to the belief system of the individual. It is due to the limitation of the western episteme that makes this matter-spirit dialectic most challenging.

The “I think therefore I am”, orthodoxy of the western world is a highly subjective, reductionistic, materialistic worldview that posits man at the center of all knowing, thereby assuming that all truth flows from the individual as opposed to entertaining the possibility that the individual flows from all truth. This worldview is further fettered by its adherence to empirical evidence as the only truth, which makes a scientific interrogation of spirit quite difficult to pursue, effectively relegating it to the margins of mysticism. Conversely, the spirit-informed, preter-rational epistemology of the African facilitates an intuitive knowing of spirit quite well.

From a traditional African perspective, the question of the union of matter and spirit is a non-question as matter and spirit are each considered to be oppositionally related to the other. African cosmologies have at their core spirit as a single primordial universal life force from which ‘all that is’ emanates and by which ‘all that is’, is interpenetrated. Ancient African deep thought additionally recognizes a fluid, permeable, bi-directional interrelationship among the living, the dead, and the yet to be born.

In the wake of the maafa, colonialism, systemic oppression, and the indoctrination of white supremacy, African ascendent people were stripped of their names, language, culture, land, religion, a true sense of self, and much more. I claim no hierarchy of value among these losses, as each one subtracted from the totality of their beingness, leading to the death of their spiritness.

Parenthetically, my reference to the “death of their spiritness” is to an extent hyperbole. In actuality, Black people can never be completely devoid of spirit as spirit is the very fabric of our being. This will be discussed in more detail later in this writing. A more accurate statement, however, would acknowledge that Black people have suffered from a devastating, and in some instances fatal, interference of their beingness that has drastically reduced the power and viability of their spiritness.

## **Melanin & spirit**

I lead with a discussion of melanin, not because melanin, itself, is spirit but because melanin implicates spiritness. Melanin mediates the interplay between the physical self and the spirit or energetic self, thereby evincing the sentient, intelligent quality of spirit.

From a traditional African viewpoint, we, as human beings, are an intrinsic component of a harmonic, energetically balanced universal ecosystem. As such we are an existential aspect of the earth, its habitat, and the universe. This universal energetic resonance is spiritness, though, due to contemporary connotations, we may not ordinarily identify it in this way.

There is a saying that “we are spirit beings on a human journey”, which places the human being at the intersection of both the physical and spiritual worlds. In this sense, our physical reality is a manifestation of a spirit reality and a spirit reality is the substance of our physical reality. This begs the question, “What is it that allows the human being to simultaneously traverse both physical and spiritual realms?” Some scientists purport that melanin is the molecule that mediates this human-spirit interchange. In other words, melanin facilitates spiritness.

Long gone are the days where it was believed that melanin's only function was to pigment skin, hair and eyes. While a cursory search into melanin still only purports its primary function as pigmentation, just beneath this surface description is a rich and vastly profound account of the wonders of melanin. Experts like Dr. T. Owens Moore (1995) have taught us that melanin has antioxidant properties; that it's believed to protect genes and repair damaged DNA; it enhances psychomotor development; plays a significant role in conception and fetal brain and nervous system development; and much more. It is additionally noteworthy to mention that melanin is not only found in the human being but it is also found in plants, and other organisms, as well as in the earth's orbit.

There is another aspect of melanin, however, that is vital to this discussion, which is its ability to facilitate energy transmission or to be a superconductor. Melanin is known to have bioelectronic properties that facilitate the conduction of energy. According to Moore (1995), "It is this dark matter (melanin) that maximizes the connection of myelinated human bodies to the spirit of the universe." (p.109). Melanin is the link between the physical being and the electromagnetic energies that permeate nature and interstellar space forming a coherent energetic ecosystem. This makes melanated people an integral part of the circuitry of energy flow between themselves, other living organisms, and the universe- *this is spiritness*. Consider: Might this melanin-mediated electromagnetic connectivity be what allowed George Washington Carver to communicate with, and extract the secrets of plants, without the aid of any scientific instrument or method? Or how ancient Africans built pyramids with precise cosmological geometric alignment.

Melanin expert Dr. Ann Brown (2005) asserts that melanin grounds and protects Black people from strong electromagnetic currents of the earth. She further asserts that the earth has a pulse and that the pulse of the earth is affected by the tone of the thinking of the people. So, there is reciprocity in the balance between the pulse of the earth and the thought vibration of the people. Melanated people, therefore, are integral to the earth maintaining an energetic balance. So, regardless of whether it is due to the loss of knowledge of self or the interference of modernity, whenever there is a reduction in the resonance between the thinking of the people and the earth, the earth responds- *this is spiritness*. Consider: Could this be why, according to NASA, we are experiencing an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme and unusual weather events such as droughts, tornadoes, flooding, heat, and wildfires? Could it be that the phenomenon that they call global warming is actually the earth's attempt to cleanse and rebalance itself in resonance with the vibration of the thinking of the people?

Dr. Edward Bruce Bynum (2005) posits a connection between neuromelanin (melanin in the brain) and spiritual consciousness. He postulates that neuromelanin bridges the consciousness of the individual with universal super-consciousness. This generates what we commonly understand to be collective consciousness- *this is spiritness*. Consider: Could this be why the death of George Floyd sparked worldwide uprisings and protests. Or why white women in Oregon, expressly moved by Floyd's cry for his mother and knowing that they would not be assaulted, used their bodies as a barrier to protect protesters from the national guards. Could it be a growing collective consciousness, yearning for liberation, that inspires President Ibrahim Traore, who expressed in an interview that he is moved by a message that he is receiving from the youth.

There is no question about the multi-faceted advantages of melanin and its power to facilitate energy transmission. Recent scientific advances provide even more evidence of the power of melanin. Due to its ability to facilitate communication between electronic components and biological systems, today, in the field of medicine, melanin is experimentally used as a bioconductor for implantable bioelectronic

devices. Owing to its ability to transduce energy, in the field of technology, melanin is also being explored for use as a semiconductor in computer chips and cell phones.

It is evident that in today's modern world we are still discovering the wonders of melanin, but our ancient African ancestors well understood its power. Bynum (2005) notes that they called it the "chemical of the soul" (p.49) because they understood it to be the portal through which the soul of the person connects with the spirit of the universe. We may not ordinarily think of it as such, but as the power of our melanin operates in concert with the electromagnetic forces of the universe, we are "being spirit".

### **African Concepts of Spirit**

This next section will explore African cosmologies with respect to "being spirit". You will find that these cosmologies align well with the spirit concept related to melanin as previously discussed.

In the Igbo cosmology there is a single creator (spirit) which is believed to be the source of, as well as inherent in, all visible realities. This life-giving spirit is grounded in an appositional balance of polarities such as sky and earth or the principles of masculine and feminine. It is relevant to note that as balance is a cosmological imperative, "for the Igbo, death including drought, disease, famine and suffering results from cosmological imbalance." (Wesley, p7) This is a salient point in connection with Dr. Ann Brown's assertion that melanin mediates the reciprocal resonance between the earth and the thinking of melanated people, facilitating an energetically balanced ecosystem.

The Oromo cosmology recognizes Waaqa as the supreme being (spirit); a single source of divine energy from which all life emanates. Similar to the Igbo, the Oromo believe that Waaqa's spiritual essence or divine force, Ayyaana, indwells all material things. Given that we know that melanin mediates the visible and invisible realms, the notion of the omnipresent inherence of spirit in all things, would corroborate melanin existing within all living organisms, nature and in earth's orbit, as previously discussed.

The cosmology of the Bantu Kongo people also recognizes a cosmic force, the supreme source of all things (spirit) that they refer to as Mpungu that ordered the universe, creates life, and, like the Igbo and Oromo, inheres all things. Interestingly, the Bantu Kongo cosmology assumes a cyclical flow of energy between the visible and invisible realms of life. Given our discussion of melanin in the previous section, one might argue that this cyclical flow of energy between visible and invisible realms, is mediated by melanin.

These are just three examples, but the common thread is clear, most African cosmologies espouse the notion of a supreme eternal, primordial essence. Muhammad (2024) notes that, "This Divine Force does not stand over creation from the outside but sustains creation from the inside. The Supreme Force underlies and inheres within everything." (p. 18). He further explains that in contrast to a western worldview, where matter and spirit stand over and against each other, in the African worldview they are harmoniously integrated. Hence the African ideal cited by Nobles (2019) that says, "if it exists, it most assuredly is spirit". (p.8)

The fundamental notion that all things, animate and inanimate, come from a single divine eternal essence, and that this essence inheres all that exists, was an existential bedrock for the original people of the earth. There was also a conscious, fluent and balanced interchange between the visible and invisible

realms. They existed as both matter and spirit, therefore, their spiritness was in balance with their humanness.

This is why the original people evolved a view of themselves as a holonic element in a universal ecosystem of life for which harmony and balance was an absolute imperative. Therefore, rooted in the understanding of their oneness, and the sanctity of spirit, the original people were attuned to the universe. They were aligned and in rhythm with nature, they had an intricate knowledge of astrological bodies and could read the stars. They knew the medicinal properties of plants, herbs, fruits, and trees, and their mastery of the sciences was far superior to what exists today. This advanced, high vibrational existence was owing to their understanding of self as spirit interconnected with the Supreme primordial spirit, which interpenetrates all things. To know self in this way, is to know all things including the Supreme being or source of all creation.

### **Scientific perspectives on spirit**

In the previous section we saw how African cosmologies aligned with the inference of spirit as it is associated with the properties of melanin. In this section we will see how these very same cosmological concepts align with spirit-inferred concepts in science as well.

From the western frame of reference, academia and scientific inquiry is reserved for exploring and explicating observable, measurable phenomena. Characteristically, western scientific thought has an inherent propensity to reduce, separate, objectify, hierarchize, and quantify the subject of its inquiry. Western culture is rooted in the ontological perspective that reality is material and therefore adheres to the notion that empirical truth is the only truth. All of this gives western science a structuralist, reductionistic, and relativistic underbelly. Queries of human-ness, therefore, presuppose that the physicality of the human being is primary. So, western science separates the human and the spirit, casts one against the other in a hierarchal relationship, bringing the physical aspects of being center stage, and spirit, if included in the paradigm at all, is casted in a supporting role.

Despite a cultural commitment to all things physical, there are unsung vestiges implicating the concept of spirit in western science going back to Newtonianism. While mainstream science today still does not center interrogations of spirit, quantum mechanics and psychology are increasingly invoking the idea of spirit with greater and greater frequency.

Neuropsychologist Dr. Lisa Miller (2021) postulates that we all have a natural inbred spiritual capacity. She studies the neuro-correlates of spirituality and concludes that a loss of spirituality, not religion, is at the core of widespread despair, depression, addiction, and suicide in today's society. Her hypothesis of the breakdown of humanity as due to loss of "spirituality", or what I call "spirit-ness", harkens back to the African ideal of the cosmological imperative of a spirit-matter balance as well as the immutable melanin-mediated ecosystem coherence discussed earlier.

Miller espouses an "awakened awareness", or having a sustained spiritual life, as neuroprotective. She argues that this "awakened awareness" is the key antidote to the downward spiral of humanity. She asserts that we are all a "point and a wave", meaning that we are a complete unit of life within ourselves and yet we are also part of one unified field of life as well. This syncs with how the original people understood themselves as a holon in a larger web of spiritness where they were simultaneously one and many.

Psychologist Dr. Steve Taylor (2019) promotes a theory that he calls panspiritism, which holds that consciousness is not in the brain but is a fundamental quality of the universe and that it pervades everything around us. According to Taylor, all material things have consciousness. He goes so far as to say that consciousness is the very source of the universe and calls this universal consciousness “spirit”. He views personal spirit-consciousness as part of the whole of universal spirit-consciousness. This panspiritism theory aligns with the African cosmological concept of the consubstantiation of spirit. It also parallels the idea of a universal super-consciousness mediated by neuromelanin purported by Bynum (2005). It is relevant to note that Taylor expressly admits that he arrived at his theory by studying indigenous cultural worldviews.

Similar to Taylor, cellular biologist, Dr. Bruce Lipton (2017), suggests that consciousness or spirit, as he refers to it, exists outside of the physical body. He postulates that self-receptors located on the surface of our cells interface between the physical body and the non-localized, non-physical mind or spirit. His idea of environmentally influenced genetic expression implicates the functionality of melanin as postulated by Moore (1995).

In his experiments with stem cells, Dr. Lipton (2017) discovered that genes express in accord with their external environment. He put genetically identical cells in different petri dishes, each with different culture mediums. He observed that although the cells that were put in each petri dish had the exact same genetic make-up, the genes in each dish expressed differently. He concluded that it was the environment (modified culture medium) of the petri dish that ultimately determined how the cells formed. For Lipton this observation dispelled his previous notions of genetic determinism and implicated environment, or consciousness, as a determinant of gene expression. To simplify this point, he metaphorically likens the cell to a television and the culture medium of the petri dish to the signal in the environment of the TV. He asserts that the TV is a mere broadcast of the signal that it receives from the environment (outside of itself). When the TV breaks or dies out, the signal itself does not die; it continues to exist. Consciousness or spirit, according to Lipton, like the TV signal, is outside the body. He further supports this theory citing studies that examine how people who received organ transplants tend to acquire characteristics of the person from whom the organ came. According to the studies, this is particularly true of heart transplants recipients. Lipton explains that this happens because the self-receptors on the cells of the organ are still receiving the active extracorporeal consciousness, or spirit, of the donor. Lipton’s discoveries bear witness to the notion of our being spirit beings as posed by the cosmologies of our African forefathers.

Lipton (2023) additionally cites experiments where cells were collected and separated from their donor at significantly far distances. Upon exposing the donor to emotion-inducing stimuli, both the donor and the cell sample would show the exact same response, in real time. In western science, the earliest discovery of this phenomenon was by Isaac Newton, and it was later explored by Albert Einstein who referred to it as “spooky action at a distance”. In quantum physics this idea is known as entanglement. The concept of entanglement holds that particles that are linked, will share the same properties and behavior regardless of distance. This phenomenon defies western concepts of nature and time and alludes to a level of interconnectedness well known by our African predecessors.

The tenets of quantum physics do not expressly name spirit perse but, similar to the previous examples from psychology and biology, it espouses notions that align with and infer spirit. A fundamental principle of quantum physics is that there is no physical universe because all matter is composed of energy. The notion that there is no physical universe directly challenges our commonly held assumption of the

physicality of the human being. Quantum physics explains that physicality is an illusion of perception- “matter in appearance and spirit in reality”. This idea of universal non-physicality is on par with the ancient cosmological principles of the African ideal, “if it exists, it most assuredly is spirit”.

Quantum science further explicates that the appearance of the physicality of matter is derived from “the Higgs field”. The Higgs field is an energy essence that is believed to permeate the entire universe and everything in it and it is purported to be what gives mass to what we perceive as physical matter. So, from this perspective, it is the movement of a particle through this energy field that gives it mass or according to Einstein, "The field is the sole governing agency of the particle". What is interesting about the Higgs field, is how its universal, all encompassing, omnipresent nature, and its capacity to create what we perceive and experience as matter, parallels the attributes of the single primordial essence of our African forefathers. For example, our Kemetite ancestors, in particular, had a concept known as the “net”, which creates and sustains all physical existence.

Interestingly, discoveries in modern quantum physics resonate well with ancient African concepts of spirit. In this respect, the notion of the existence of the Higgs field, from a quantum science perspective, bears witness to the consubstantiation and connectedness of all things, deriving from the wisdom tradition of ancient Africa. It is also interesting how the quantum concept of entanglement collapses time and space and elevates the reality of superposition, reflecting a fluidity of state and positionality, alluding to a coexisting connection between us, as contemporary beings, and our ancestors. An argument can be made, therefore, that, in real time, we are our ancestors.

Nobles’ (2025) idea that we, as human beings, are actually divine energy made manifest (DEMM), “not only explains the manifestation of divine energy in persons but also offers a framework for understanding how African consciousness remains interconnected across the continent and the diaspora. This shared consciousness can be understood as a form of “quantum resonance,” where the collective memory, spirit(ness), and cultural practices of African-ascendent peoples continue to vibrate at the same frequency, despite geographic and temporal separation.” (p.8) This elucidation of the shared consciousness of African ascendent people shows alignment of the quantum science ideas of resonance, coherence, and entanglement with Bynum’s (2005) melanin-mediated super-consciousness and Taylors (2019) universal spirit-consciousness.

Biology references a melanin-mediated conduction of universal energy; psychology speaks of an awakened awareness and panspiritism; quantum science refers to the Higgs field, entanglement, resonance, coherence, and superposition; African cosmology centers a primordial supreme spirit or essence that creates and inheres all. Each of these perspectives espouses an immutable, life sustaining, universally interpenetrating essence, that exists independent of our awareness, and agreement. This author maintains that each of these perspectives evinces spirit.

### **Spirit: the alchemizing essence (conclusion)**

*“The spiritual journey does not consist in arriving at a new destination where a person gains what he does not have, or becomes what he is not. It consists in the dissipation of one’s own ignorance concerning one’s self and life, and the gradual growth of that understanding, which begins the spiritual awakening. The finding of God is a coming to one’s self.”* Haldous Huxley  
(Huxley, as cited in Muhammad, 2006, p. XX)

By virtue of the fact that western thought dominates our discourse and the fact that the western grand narrative marginalizes conversations of spirit, in mainstream modern society we tend to subordinate and even to dismiss notions of our inherent spiritness. This western worldview is in direct contrast to the African worldview, where spirit is integral to humanness. The African worldview is rooted in the consubstantiation of all things, the ontological notion that we are spirit beings, and an imperative that demands spirit alignment and balance between fellow man, nature, and universe.

Dr. Linda James Myers asserts that “Our very socialization into the worldview of our capturers, white dominate frame is itself destructive and dismantling to the self.” Dr. Amos Wilson warned us of “treating” Black people with a psychology grounded in Eurocentric cultural ideologies. Metaphorically speaking, it is like giving sugar to a diabetic in crisis. In reference to this, Wilson asserts that “The very cure itself represent illness.” In other words, the internalization of western culture by African people results in their denaturation, which compromises the integrity of their humanness resulting in dis-order or what we call psychological illness. If there is to be restoration, healing, and wholeness for African ascended people, it cannot occur by giving them more of the very same poison that created the illness.

From the vein of African/Black psychology, there is a significant amount of literature advancing healing modalities for African people. Much of this literature mandates a return to, or a reintegration of, indigenous culture, traditions, and rituals in everyday life. Subscribing to traditional ways of being is hugely restorative but at the core of any healing modality targeting Black people, must be spirit. If we are spirit beings, as declared by African cosmologies, as inferred by biology, as theorized in psychology, and as implied by quantum physics, then spiritness is the very essence of beingness. Spirit, therefore, is the vital alchemizing element essential to wholeness and wellbeing. This is why Nobles (2025) urges us to recognize that “In the African diaspora, the continuity of spirit defined epistemologies offers a form of resistance to the erasure and fragmentation caused by slavery and colonialism.” If a western epistemology grounded in empiricism and materialism cannot comprehend the infinitely vast, universal, unified nature of spirit, then a western psychology cannot offer the core healing that African ascended people need to be whole.

bell hooks said “The souls guiding light still shined no matter the extent of our collective blindness, at any moment, at any time, we can turn toward this light to renew our spirits and restore our souls”. African ascended people, have long searched far and wide outside of themselves seeking the antidote to their wretched condition. Like the stage play, *The Wiz*, the antidote was within us all along. We already are all that we need to “be”. So, illuminating the spirit essence of self, increases the vibration of humanness, which will bring us into wholeness and wellness, restoring a natural state of balance and harmony. This is the alchemy of being spirit.

The wellbeing of African ascendent people mandates a return to spirit, the essence of who we “be”, as an existential imperative lifted in the words of the African proverb that says, “If we want to know the end, look at the beginning”.

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