



HOLISTIC LIFE SPIRITUALITY INSPIRATION FROM HENRICUS LEVEN

SPIRITUALITAS HIDUP HOLISTIK INSPIRASI DARI HENRICUS LEVEN

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62567/micjo.v3i1.2238>

Abstract

Holistic spirituality is an approach to life that integrates the physical, mental, social, and religious dimensions. In the context of the rapid development of modern society, the concept of holistic spirituality is increasingly relevant as a response to the crisis of meaning, stress, and human alienation. This article examines Hendrikus Leven's ideas on holistic spirituality, which emphasize self-balance, harmonious relationships with others, and a deep connection with God and the universe. Through a descriptive-analytical approach, this discussion illustrates the contribution of Leven's thinking to enriching the understanding of modern spirituality, including its relevance to personal life, education, pastoral care, and character development. This study concludes that Hendrikus Leven's holistic spirituality can become a paradigm for life renewal that touches all aspects of human existence and offers a path to building a more meaningful, balanced, and sustainable life.

Keywords : Spiritual values, life, holistic, inspiration, Hendrikus Leven.

Abstrak

Spiritualitas holistik adalah pendekatan hidup yang mengintegrasikan dimensi fisik, mental, sosial, dan religius. Dalam konteks perkembangan pesat masyarakat modern, konsep spiritualitas holistik semakin relevan sebagai respons terhadap krisis makna, stres, dan keterasingan manusia. Artikel ini mengkaji gagasan Hendrikus Leven tentang spiritualitas holistik, yang menekankan keseimbangan diri, hubungan harmonis dengan orang lain, dan koneksi mendalam dengan Tuhan dan alam semesta. Melalui pendekatan deskriptif-analitis, diskusi ini menggambarkan kontribusi pemikiran Leven dalam memperkaya pemahaman tentang spiritualitas modern, termasuk relevansinya terhadap kehidupan pribadi, pendidikan, pelayanan pastoral, dan pengembangan karakter. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa spiritualitas holistik Hendrikus Leven dapat menjadi paradigma untuk pembaruan hidup yang



menyentuh semua aspek keberadaan manusia dan menawarkan jalan untuk membangun kehidupan yang lebih bermakna, seimbang, dan berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci : Nilai-nilai spiritual, kehidupan, holistik, inspirasi, Hendrikus Leven.

1. INTRODUCTION

Leven's spirituality is not merely a conceptual or theoretical framework, but a lived and radically practiced form of what can be described as a "People's Theology." Rooted deeply in real human experience, this spirituality emphasizes a concrete encounter with suffering, marginalization, and social injustice. At the heart of the spirituality developed by Hendrikus Leven within the CIJ tradition lies the mystery of the Incarnation—God who willingly became human in the person of Jesus Christ. For Leven, this theological truth was not an abstract dogma, but a practical call to action. If God chose to humble Himself, dwell among humanity, and share in human vulnerability, then the followers of Christ are likewise called to immerse themselves in the lived realities of the people, especially those who endure poverty, illness, and social exclusion. Acts such as caring for the sick, educating children deprived of formal schooling, and serving the poor were therefore understood not merely as social or humanitarian efforts, but as direct encounters with Christ Himself in His suffering members.

This incarnational spirituality became particularly significant in the historical context of the 1930s, when mission territories in Flores and Timor faced severe challenges due to the global economic crisis and the limited availability of missionaries from Europe. Rather than perceiving these constraints as obstacles, Leven approached them as opportunities to cultivate local strength and self-reliance. His response reflected a holistic and visionary spirituality that emphasized empowerment from within the community. One of his most groundbreaking initiatives was the establishment of a local religious congregation for indigenous women, a bold and transformative step at a time when leadership roles were largely reserved for Europeans or men. By entrusting local women with responsibility and formation, Leven not only elevated their dignity but also positioned them as key agents of social, educational, and spiritual transformation. This approach demonstrated his conviction that the Church's vitality and resilience depend on the empowerment, trust, and education of local communities.

Leven's spirituality was also characterized by a radical inclusivity, captured in his well-known expression, "My home is your home, and your home is my home." This motto symbolized a profound commitment to hospitality and solidarity that transcended social, cultural, and hierarchical boundaries. He intentionally dismantled the distance between Church leadership and the ordinary faithful, rejecting models of authority that relied on formality or separation. Instead, his leadership was expressed through presence and accompaniment. Regular visitations to remote villages allowed him to experience firsthand the daily struggles of the people, enabling him to lead not from behind an administrative desk, but through empathy, shared hardship, and genuine relational closeness. Such servant leadership fostered a Church that was not distant or elitist, but deeply rooted in the lives of its people.



Education occupied a central place within Leven's spiritual vision, as he firmly believed that genuine liberation from poverty and social stagnation could only be achieved through intellectual and moral formation. Drawing from his experience as a former Inspector of Mission Schools, he recognized that spirituality devoid of knowledge and critical thinking would be ineffective in addressing structural injustices. Consequently, mission schools and the formation programs of the CIJ sisters were designed to emphasize pedagogical competence, practical skills, and intellectual growth. For Leven, loving God was inseparable from nurturing the human intellect, since reason itself is a divine gift meant to be developed for the common good. His approach reflected a holistic understanding of the human person, integrating spiritual devotion with intellectual empowerment.

Despite his intense involvement in organizational, educational, and social initiatives, Leven remained deeply rooted in a life of prayer. He was widely known for his contemplative disposition and his devotion to prolonged prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. In his spiritual outlook, prayer was not a retreat from action but its vital source of strength. He believed that social engagement, no matter how noble, would become dry, exhausting, and ultimately unsustainable if it was not grounded in an intimate relationship with God. This conviction led him to embrace the balance of *ora et labora*, where prayer and work are not opposing activities but mutually enriching dimensions of a holy life. Work becomes an expression of prayer, while prayer provides the spiritual breath that animates all forms of service.

In conclusion, the spirituality of Hendrikus Leven offers a profound vision of authentic religious life, in which piety is measured not by personal devotion alone, but by concrete solidarity with those who suffer the most. Through the CIJ movement, Leven left a lasting legacy of an incarnational spirituality that dares to enter the complexity and brokenness of the world. By engaging directly with poverty, ignorance, and human suffering, this spirituality seeks to manifest the transformative presence of God's love in tangible and life-giving ways.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a literature review method combined with qualitative content analysis (Nugraha, 2025). The data were collected from a wide range of secondary sources, including academic books, journal ARTICLES, theological writings, and other scholarly works that discuss the teachings of Hendricus Leven and the broader concept of spirituality. These sources were selected based on their relevance, credibility, and contribution to understanding holistic spirituality and human development. The collected data were then analyzed qualitatively through careful reading, interpretation, and categorization in order to identify key themes, patterns, and conceptual frameworks aligned with the objectives of the research. This methodological approach allows for an in-depth exploration of Leven's spiritual thought and its implications for human life, values, and personal transformation.



3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. The Concept of Spiritual Values According to Hendricus Leven

Hendricus Leven is a prominent figure in modern spiritual thought who emphasizes that spirituality is not merely confined to religious rituals or formal practices. Instead, he views spirituality as a holistic way of understanding, experiencing, and living life in its entirety. According to Leven, spirituality represents the deepest core of human existence, providing direction, meaning, depth, and identity. Spiritual values, therefore, are not limited to doctrinal teachings but are expressed through the quality of human existence itself, manifested in peace, wisdom, love, compassion, and self-awareness. In this sense, spirituality becomes a lived reality that shapes how individuals relate to themselves, others, nature, and the Divine.

Spirituality, in Leven's perspective, is fundamentally holistic, meaning that human life cannot be divided into separate compartments of body, mind, and soul. Instead, spirituality enables individuals to integrate emotional, intellectual, moral, and religious dimensions into a harmonious whole. Through this integration, individuals are able to align inner values with outward actions, achieve balance amid the pressures of modern life, and live authentically without internal fragmentation.

Furthermore, Leven emphasizes spirituality as a continuous search for meaning. Human beings, by nature, are meaning-seeking creatures, and spiritual values assist them in understanding the purpose of life, interpreting experiences of suffering and success, and situating personal existence within a broader and deeper perspective. In this regard, spirituality serves as an inner compass that guides individuals toward a meaningful and purposeful life.

Although Leven adopts a universal approach to spirituality, he strongly affirms that spirituality is always rooted in a relationship with God or the Divine. This transcendent relationship is reflected in attitudes of gratitude, humility, trust, and the recognition of life as a sacred gift. Such spiritual awareness fosters a deep sense of dependence on and surrender to God, especially in the uncertainties of human existence.

Equally important is Leven's emphasis on spirituality as the wholeness of human relationships. A spiritually mature person is characterized by sensitivity, empathy, compassion, selflessness, and solidarity with others. Spirituality, therefore, is not an inward-focused experience alone but is expressed concretely in social responsibility and genuine care for fellow human beings.

Leven also views spirituality as a process of self-development and character formation. Spiritual growth involves self-awareness, reflection, emotional discipline, inner honesty, and the courage to change. Spirituality is not an instant achievement but a lifelong journey of inner maturation and continuous transformation.

Inner peace is regarded by Leven as one of the most significant fruits of spirituality. Spiritual values help individuals manage stress, maintain calmness amid busyness, and purify the heart from destructive emotions such as egoism, envy, and resentment. In addition, Leven highlights spirituality as a form of connectedness with nature, emphasizing that humans are



inseparable from the natural world. Respect for nature, environmental responsibility, and harmonious living with the ecosystem are integral expressions of authentic spirituality.

b. The Implementation of Spiritual Values According to Hendricus Leven

Hendricus Leven perceives spirituality not merely as an abstract concept but as a way of life that must be concretely implemented in daily attitudes, behaviors, relationships, and lifestyle choices. In the relationship with God, spiritual implementation is reflected through gratitude, prayer, contemplation, trust, and sincerity. Individuals are encouraged to recognize life as a divine gift, cultivate gratitude in both joy and suffering, and experience prayer as an inner dialogue rather than a mere ritual.

In relation to oneself, spirituality is practiced through self-reflection, holistic personal growth, emotional self-control, inner honesty, and simplicity of life. This involves integrating body, emotions, mind, and soul into a coherent whole, managing negative emotions, living authentically without pretense, and embracing simplicity as a path toward inner freedom and peace.

Within social relationships, the implementation of spirituality manifests in love, compassion, empathy, tolerance, justice, honesty, and forgiveness. Spiritual individuals are sensitive to the suffering of others, act selflessly, respect differences, reject injustice, and cultivate reconciliation rather than resentment. These values reinforce the idea that spirituality is inseparable from ethical and social responsibility.

c. The Meaning of Life According to Hendricus Leven

Hendricus Leven understands life as a dynamic process of becoming fully human in a holistic sense. Life is not merely physical existence but a comprehensive journey that involves the body, mind, heart, soul, relationships, and a deep connection with God. Meaningful life, therefore, is achieved through the integration of all these dimensions into a balanced and harmonious whole.

d. Holistic Values and Spirituality in Leven's Thought

Leven's holistic perspective emphasizes that human beings must be understood as unified entities in which physical, mental, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual aspects are interrelated and mutually influential. A holistic approach does not focus on isolated aspects of life but considers the entire system of human existence. Within this framework, spirituality plays a central role, as it provides meaning, inner wisdom, and transcendental orientation. Human development, according to Leven, can only reach its fullness when spirituality is balanced with physical, emotional, and social dimensions.

e. The Role of Inspiration in Human Life According to Hendricus Leven

In Leven's spiritual framework, inspiration plays a crucial role in shaping human attitudes, growth, and life direction. Inspiration, derived from life experiences, role models, spiritual values, or deep reflection, helps individuals discover meaning, understand their identity, and orient their lives toward authentic goals. Inspiration functions as an inner guide that leads individuals toward deeper awareness and purposeful living.

Biography of Hendricus Leven



Henricus (Heinrich or Hendricus) Leven, SVD, was born in Lank on June 13, 1883, to Wilhelm Leven, an elementary school teacher, and Catharina Classen. He entered the mission house in Steyl, the Netherlands, on October 3, 1899, at the age of sixteen. He professed his first vows on November 1, 1907, and his perpetual vows on September 7, 1910. Leven was ordained a priest on September 29, 1910, in Vienna, Austria. On March 25, 1935, he founded the Congregatio Imitationis Jesu (CIJ), known in Indonesia as the Congregation of the Followers of Jesus. He also established the first local women's religious congregation in Flores, focusing on empowering women and serving the poor. During his leadership, the Catholic Church in the Lesser Sunda Islands experienced significant growth in education, pastoral work, and missionary expansion, including the ordination of indigenous priests and the establishment of numerous schools and social institutions.

f. Core Spiritual Values According to Hendricus Leven

The spiritual values emphasized by Leven include self-awareness, simplicity, love and compassion, hope, and surrender or trust in God. Self-awareness enables individuals to recognize their thoughts, emotions, motivations, and limitations honestly. Simplicity frees the heart from excessive attachment to material concerns. Love forms the foundation of ethical and compassionate action. Hope sustains inner strength amid difficulties, while surrender fosters peace through trust in a reality greater than oneself.

Implementation of Leven's Values in Daily Life

These values are concretely implemented through service to others, simplicity of lifestyle, compassion and care, responsibility, strong faith, commitment to education, courage, and sacrifice. Leven's life exemplified service-oriented leadership, dedication to education, disciplined responsibility, and unwavering faith, even in the face of hardship and uncertainty.

4. CONCLUSION

The holistic spirituality proposed by Hendricus Leven emphasizes that human beings must be understood as integrated entities encompassing physical, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions. In the face of modern challenges such as value crises, stress, and the fast pace of life, holistic spirituality serves as a vital guide for restoring inner balance. Leven asserts that a meaningful life can only be achieved when all dimensions of human existence are harmoniously integrated. Through the practice of holistic spirituality, individuals can cultivate self-awareness, inner peace, harmonious relationships with others, and a deeper connection with God. Overall, this study concludes that Hendricus Leven's holistic spirituality offers a powerful inspiration for modern humanity to rediscover life direction, personal wholeness, and authentic well-being.

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