

Review of: "Jan Smuts' Theory of Holism as an Uplifting Philosophy for Philosophical Counseling"

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Potential competing interests: The author(s) declared that no potential competing interests exist.

Holism is, in the current usage, the idea that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. In the widest sense of the word, it includes all ideas that question the validity of reductionism. Emergentism could be included in holism depending on thinkers. The word "holism" was originally coined by a South-African thinker (philosopher as well as political man) Jan Smuts as a word having a different meaning.

The author of the article tries to find an existential implication in it and suggests a potential use of the notion in psychological therapy in the form of philosophical counseling. The article consists of the following parts: Introduction, historical background, Smuts' influence on Anglo-Saxon psychology, Smuts' theory of holism, the roots of Smuts' holistic thinking, *Holism and Evolution*, foundational concepts of holism, and conclusion. What seems strange to me is that the author does not provide a section in which he describes the reason for his proposal to use Smuts' holism in philosophical counseling as "a potentially uplifting philosophy". A philosophy article should describe a logical framework of thinking of the author to justify his/her proposal. For that purpose, essential terms such as holism, philosophical counseling and uplifting philosophy, should be defined without ambiguity, and then he could explain how a philosophical notion "holism" should be "used" in the practice of counseling.

In the current manuscript, the word "holism" seems to be used as both notion and philosophical movement, perhaps reflecting the ambiguity of the original usage of the word by Smuts. According to the author, Smuts' holism is something in motion rather than a simple notion: The expressions "fundamental factor operative towards the creation of wholes in the universe" (line 18, page 5), "ontological notion of our being-towards-freedom" (line 12, page 12) and "wholes are co-creators in the process of freedom" (line 8 from the bottom, page 13) emphasize the dynamic aspect of holism, while asserting that it is a factor, notion, co-creator, namely, a single entity. In my impression, the dynamic nature of holism will contribute to the therapy based on the philosophical understanding of personality, but this is not obvious in the manuscript. I find no clear hint to understand the author's proposal on the utility of holism in philosophical counseling, although the third point (Mind-Body Problem) in the section "foundational concepts of holism" is related to solving the problems in life. I hope the author clearly formulates his proposal in the text.

Point by point comments

Page 2, line 14: Teleonomy should be defined. The word teleonomy was coined by C. Pittendrigh in 1958, but later modified to give at least two different definitions, one by Jacques Monod (1961), and the other by Ernst Mayr (1961). Involvement of evolutionary process in achieving the goal is common in the three definitions, but the actual role of

evolution is not identical. Mayr emphasized program-driven automaton-like process, whereas Monod used teleonomy just to avoid teleology. This citation also tries to avoid teleology, and used evolution to explain the dynamics of achieving teleonomical goal, but the process is not clearly explained. It is true that the evolution of personality is difficult to formulate. I wonder how Smuts considered teleonomical dynamics of achieving the “wholes”. This is still not clear in later sections.

Page 4, the first two paragraphs describe that the holism of Smuts influenced the Gestalt psychology. The Gestalt and the whole seem related with to each other. However, the whole of Smuts is something dynamic, which is realized as a result of long efforts of personality, just like an evolution. In contrast, the Gestalt is a static whole, which includes various parts that remain from the beginning. What was the real effect of Smuts' philosophy on the Gestalt psychology? These two are finally very different.

Page 6, the first line: Spiritual creation is a big word. What is a correct word explaining the whole?

Page 6, the second paragraph: It seems that emergentism can be used for "evolving from matter to life to mind". Emergence is used in different meanings in different fields, but the phrase fits to the commonly used sense of emergence. Smuts' notion of evolving whole may be replaced by emergence, because Smuts did not give detailed mechanisms of evolution. In the widest meaning of the word, emergence may be a good word for the difficult, but somewhat ambiguous notion of holism of Smuts.

Page 7, the first paragraph: Smuts considered the formation of law as a kind of holism. However, the law is a complex, theoretical system, whereas the formation of a personality is a humane problem. How did Smuts find a similarity between the two?

Page 8, the second paragraph: The author uses determinism, materialism, and reductionism as a single notion. They are not identical. I think reductionism is the best notion which contrasts Smuts' holism. Smuts' holism focused on the dynamic changes of parts to form the whole. He used similar ideas for both life and mind. At the time of publication of *Holism and Evolution* in 1926, very primitive knowledge was available in biology and psychology. There were no theories explaining the formation of the whole from its parts. Biochemistry was still in the process of development. Genetics was still working on phenotypic mutants. There was no real explanation of biological evolution, although evolutionary theories were present. Molecular biology was later created in 1953. The neural networks of the brain were still not the target of research. There was no clue for explaining mind in materialistic terms. Smuts refused determinism and materialism, but he had no real deterministic or materialistic explanations to refute at the time. His belief of the dominance of holism over reductionism had no real basis. In the light of the current knowledge, this refusal seems reasonable, but this is an *ad hoc* explanation in later times.

Page 8, the last several lines: The reference to the relativity theory must be an error of Smuts. The relativity theory is indeed highly deterministic and materialistic. It showed a different appearance against the old physics, but this is only a

superficial view. Physics before the complex physics was rigorously different from Smuts' holism. There was no relationship.

Page 9, the second paragraph: "teleological animism" should be used with caution. Animism assumes a non-material element that governs the activity of life. This could be a teleological explanation, but is not necessarily identical to teleology. In the present-day, the holism is a rather ambiguous word, and could include everything. Emergentism is a better word for holism. The current concept of emergentism explains the creation of life from inanimate materials by complex dynamics as an extension of complex physics. There is no element of animism, but we could say the system dynamics involving positive and negative feedbacks is a new materialistic element that replaces "anima". In this way, the essence of "anima", "spirit", or "vital force" is now identified as a system principle, which was not imagined in the early 20th century. Smuts' refusal of various terms reminiscent of animism should be re-interpreted because no precise biological and psychological explanations were possible at his time. If the author attempts to use Smuts' holism in the current counseling, this point should be made clearer. Smuts' holism should be re-defined in the light of the current knowledge of biology and psychology.

Page 10, line 8 from bottom: "fields beyond their observable luminous points": I do not understand this image. Please paraphrase this. If various parts are considered as vague, ambiguous materials having vague extensions, this could in no way contribute to construct the whole. We have to consider active interactions between the parts as described above in terms of systems biology. Smuts' notion described in pages 10-12 is not a solution to the problem. This point should be discussed. The notion "ambiguous field" does not construct an uplifting philosophy and does not help solving the problem of the patient.

<end of review>