11. Smuts, Holism, and Political Philosophy

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Introduction

After his defeat in the South African parliamentary elections in 1924, Jan Christiaan Smuts briefly 'retired' to his farm at Irene where, in an eight-month period, he produced a 350-page book, *Holism and Evolution* (Smuts, 1926). To some, this was idiosyncratic; Smuts was known as a military and political leader, but not as an academic writer. Nevertheless, Smuts's book was widely reviewed and, although it did not have lasting scholarly impact, it introduced a new term into popular discourse - holism. The views expressed in *Holism and Evolution* were, arguably, influenced by Smuts's studies and long interest in philosophy and may have had an influence in his later political activity both in South Africa and internationally (e.g., in the creation of the United Nations and in its Universal Declaration of Human Rights). In recent years, *Holism and Evolution* has been reprinted, and there have also been a number of studies on Smuts's life and his political career, and so a discernment of his views - and, specifically, given the focus on his politics, of whether he had a political philosophy - is timely. The present paper attempts to discern Smuts's political philosophy by focusing on *Holism and Evolution* - his most mature work - and, to an extent, a late essay on 'freedom.'

In this chapter, I want to argue that the early twentieth century South African political leader, Jan Christiaan Smuts (1870-1950), may rightly be regarded as having a political philosophy, and that its foundations can be found in his 1926 work, *Holism and Evolution*. In doing so, I want to argue

that this political philosophy also reflects the influence of philosophical idealism, and that it illustrates a relation of this idealism to politics. (This is not an unusual view, as a number of South African philosophers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries took an interest in, and sometimes were involved in, politics (Lord, 1921/2006; Hoernlé, 1939; Sweet 2010a). Indeed, many of them were influenced by the idealist movement in philosophy, which itself saw a connection, or exhibited a connection, between philosophy and politics.[1] Still, Smuts is an unusual case. He never taught philosophy, and most of his life was engaged in the public sphere - as a lawyer, as a military leader, and as a political leader. Moreover, Smuts himself denied that *Holism and Evolution* was a ''treatise on philosophy''[2] and, in this work, he made few explicit references to the philosophers of his time.

The aim of this chapter is to detect what kind of *political* philosophy one can discern in Smuts's mature writings, what are its foundations; and what are some of its implications. To do this, I begin with a brief account of Smuts's intellectual background. I then provide a summary of his theory of holism, as presented in *Holism and Evolution* and, though to a lesser extent, two short essays from the late 1920s. Third, I identify three key concepts central to what I claim is his political philosophy, explain what he sees as their implications, and briefly consider a challenge to them from a leading figure of the period. I conclude that what Smuts offers is a nascent political philosophy that reflects broadly liberal, idealist views.

Background

Jan Christiaan Smuts had an eclectic and broad education and formation, and it was one in which philosophy had an important role. When he graduated from Victoria College

1 More broadly, see, for example, Green (1888/1997); Bosanquet (1923/2001); Jones (1909).

2 Smuts (1927). Although *Holism and Evolution* was first published in 1926, Smuts found that it had several misprints or errors. These were corrected in the 1927 edition.

at Stellenbosch in 1891, he was unique amongst students in the BA examination - indeed, for at least the two preceding decades - to have received honours in both 'literature and philosophy'' and 'mathematics and natural science.'[3] His professor in philosophy and literature was Thomas Walker, and Walker had an influence on Smuts. Walker had studied at the University of Edinburgh (MA 1870, 1st, Classics), before a brief period of study on the European continent and emigrating to South Africa in 1876 (Sweet, 2010b). Walker was influenced by British idealism (Duvenage, 2001); his teachers were the personal idealist, Alexander Campbell Fraser, and the anti-Hegelian, Henry Calderwood[4], and, as we see from student notebooks from the period, Walker passed these ideas on to his students.[5]

Following graduation, Smuts received the 'Ebden Scholarship for Overseas Study,' which he used to study law at Christ's College, Cambridge. At that time, Cambridge was home to a number of 'young' idealist philosophers, such as J.M.E. McTaggart (1866-1925) and J.S. MacKenzie (1860-1935). And though Smuts dedicated himself to his legal studies, he also sought to attend the lectures of James Ward, usually regarded as a 'personal idealist' philosopher. Although Ward apparently refused Smuts permission to attend his classes, Smuts maintained an interest in philosophy as well as in

3 See University of the Cape of Good Hope (1912:520). Smuts ranked second in honours in both of these areas; Peder Anker's comment (2001:42) about Smuts's ranking seems to be mistaken.

4 Some approximate contemporaries were D.G. Ritchie (at Edinburgh, 1869-74) and Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison (at Edinburgh 1873-78); like Walker, they had Calderwood and Campbell Fraser as professors.

5 Smuts graduated one year after the Afrikaner philosopher and clergyman Nicholas J. Brümmer and they had mutual friends. For some information on philosophy at Strassburg at the time, see "B: Europa," in N.J. Brümmer papers. For Smuts's notebooks from Victoria College and Cambridge, see Smuts papers, National Archives, [New] Box 313/2.

literature and natural science.[6] Moreover, during his time in Cambridge, he audited courses in related areas (such as lectures on politics by Henry Sidgwick (Smuts, 1930:151)) and wrote on philosophical questions - an essay on *Nature and Function of Law in the History of Human Society* (published as *Law, A Liberal Study*) (1893), and an essay on science and philosophy, *On the Application of some Physical Concepts to Biological Phenomena* (1892-93).[7]

Upon graduating in law, with the distinction of having passed 'brilliantly' both tripos in a single year (Hancock, 1962:47), Smuts spent the summer of 1894 in Strassburg (today Strasbourg in France, but at that time in Germany), where he went to study 'Hegelian philosophy' - although it is not certain exactly what texts he studied or with whom.[8] Smuts had, by that time, also come to be interested in (German) Romanticism and American transcendentalism. When he returned to England to study for admission to the bar, he received a grant to write on a topic of his choosing (Anker, 2001:43). Thus, from the end of 1894 to the beginning of 1895, Smuts wrote a book on the American transcendentalist poet, Walt Whitman, and Whitman's notions of 'the whole' and of 'personality.'[9] Whitman had been influenced by Hegel, and so,

6 See Smuts's letter to Ward of 8 Dec 1920, where Smuts refers to meeting Ward at the home of H.J. Wolsterholme in 1892 and asking whether he might attend Ward's lectures on metaphysics. See [New] Box 186 [old Box 1], Folder 1. MSP 94 Jan Smuts papers. National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria.

7 See Smuts papers, National Archives; see also Hancock (1962:36, 38).

8 See letter to M.J. Farrelly, August 27, 1894. Smuts papers, National Archives, Box 186 [old Box 1]; see also Hancock and van der Poel (1966). In the remains of his personal library in the Smuts House Museum at Irene, South Africa, there are copies, annotated by Smuts, likely in the mid-1890s, of Friedrich Paulsen's *System der Ethik* and of Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* and *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*.

9 Smuts (1973). Why Smuts chose to write on Whitman is a subject of speculation. Smuts writes that he would have preferred to write on Goethe, but that the literature on Goethe was extensive, whereas that on Whitman was much

perhaps not surprisingly, we find in this early book references to Hegel, as well as to Plato, Aristotle, and particularly Goethe - though the book was not published during Smuts's lifetime.

When Smuts returned to South Africa at the end of 1895, his interests focused on law and politics. He served as a military leader in the Second Anglo Boer War (1899-1902), and, afterwards, as a cabinet minister in the Transvaal government, and was instrumental in the creation of the Union of South Africa (1910). Throughout this time, he maintained an interest in philosophy. It is reported, for example, that, during the war, he carried with him a copy of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.[10] Moreover, from about 1909 to 1912, Smuts wrote a 13-chapter philosophical 'essay' entitled *An Inquiry into the Whole* (Smuts, 1912), though it, too, was left unpublished. Smuts served as Prime Minister of South Africa from 1919 to 1924, but also sought to keep abreast of philosophical currents and discussion, and had English friends send him, periodically, philosophical books.[11] Moreover, in addition to pursuing interests in natural science and ecology, Smuts carried on correspondence on philosophical topics, so that,[12] after his defeat in parliamentary elections in 1924, he had the materials at hand to write *Holism and Evolution* in just eight months.

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less so. Some say that Whitman was, in fact, much closer to Smuts's thinking. According to Callie Joubert, Whitman had a clearer understanding of the 'whole' and of 'personality,' and so "Smuts used Whitman to *illustrate* that personality is the highest phase in the process of creative evolution" (Joubert, 2016, emphasis mine).

10 Smith (1923:xxvi). See also, for example, Gravett (2022:18).

11 For example, from 1902 to 1917, he had the help of his friend and confidant – who was also a close friend of James Ward – H.J. Wolstenholme (1846-1917). In 1920, he also asked Ward whether he might do so as well.

12 For example, with Wolstenholme, J.M. Keynes, and Ward – see "Jan Smuts Letters, 1902-1950," in Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa; See also the Smuts letters in the National Archives, Pretoria, and at the Smuts House Museum, Irene, South Africa.

Archives reveal subsequent correspondence with some philosophers about *Holism and Evolution* and the idea of holism in general[13], and the book was lightly revised in 1927 and in 1936, although Smuts never carried out a proposed second volume[14] or a contemplated entirely rewritten volume. He wrote a few short expositions of his theory of holism in 1929 and - perhaps his only other philosophical text - a 1934 lecture as Rector of University of St. Andrews on the topic of 'freedom.'

Smuts's philosophical views, then, are to be found principally in his three books - *Walt Whitman: A Study in the Evolution of Personality*, *An Inquiry into the Whole*, and *Holism and Evolution* - but, obviously, his mature views are to be found most extensively in the latter volume.

Holism and Evolution is a curious text. Smuts himself writes that it is neither a book of philosophy nor of science, and it contains relatively few references to contemporary philosophical theories. Indeed, the discussion of philosophical issues is rather cursory. Smuts says that it is a book on the borderland of philosophy and science, but also that it is 'an introductory sketch' (Smuts, 1927:x). He says little of its purpose or provenance, but it has been argued that one finds in this work ideas that have a close affinity with many idealist views (Sweet, 2024). Interestingly, however, the idealism that one putatively finds here is not the 'absolute idealism' drawing on Hegel and on near contemporaries such as Bernard Bosanquet, Henry Jones, and J.A. Smith, but, rather, on Cambridge 'personal idealists,' such as James Ward and Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison. Thus, to appreciate Smuts's political philosophy, one needs to have a sense of his personal

13 For example, with J.H. Muirhead, H.B. Joachim, W.D. Ross, R.B. Haldane, and J.A. Smith – see "Jan Smuts Letters, 1902-1950," in Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

14 Smuts (1927) writes: "I have no time at present to do more than write an introductory sketch; but I hope in the years to come to find time to follow up the subject and to show how it affects the higher spiritual interests of mankind" (Smuts, 1927:x).

idealist or personalist philosophy in general, and, in particular, of what he called his theory of 'holism.'[15]

Holism

Smuts wrote that *Holism and Evolution* is 'a book neither of Science nor of Philosophy, but of some points of contact between the two' (Smuts, 1927:328). By holism, Smuts means 'the theory which makes the existence of 'wholes' a fundamental feature of the world. It regards natural objects, both animate and inanimate, as wholes and not merely as assemblages of elements or parts. It looks upon nature as consisting of discrete concrete bodies and things... And these bodies or things are not entirely resolvable into parts' (Smuts, 1929:640). Not only are wholes a fundamental feature of the universe, but it is the development of wholes that, he argues, lies behind the evolutionary process (Smuts, 1927:101). Wholes, then, 'are the real units of nature' (Smuts, 1927:101). They 'are not mere artificial constructions of thought, they point to something real in the universe' (Smuts, 1927:88; repeated 101). (He is not, then 'concerned with metaphysical wholes' (Smuts, 1927:145), but about 'life' (Smuts, 1927:100) and 'organisms' (Smuts, 1927:145).) Thus, in *Holism and Evolution*, Smuts writes that 'Every organism, every plant or animal, is a whole, with a certain internal organisation and a measure of self-direction, and an individual specific character of its own.' But, he continues, 'What is not generally recognised is that the conception of wholes covers a much wider field than that of life, that its beginnings are traceable already in the inorganic order of Nature'; indeed, 'in a certain limited sense the natural collocations of matter in the universe are wholes; atoms, molecules and chemical compounds are limited wholes' (Smuts, 1927:100).

15 In addition to *Holism and Evolution* (1st ed.,1926), see Smuts (1929) (the *Encyclopedia Britannica* entry on Holism), Smuts et. al. (1929), and his 1927 lecture "Theory of Holism" (Smuts, 1940). *Holism and Evolution* appeared in two subsequent editions with a series of (minor) revisions, in 1927 and 1936.

How do wholes come to exist? Smuts writes that 'The creation of wholes, and ever more highly organised wholes, ...is an inherent character of the universe' (Smuts, 1927:101). Wholes are also dynamic. Smuts writes, as 'the elements or parts cohere and coalesce into the structure or pattern of a whole, the whole must itself be an active factor or influence among them... Whole and parts mutually and reciprocally influence and modify each other...' (Smuts, 1929:640). And, overall, 'from the most inchoate, imperfect, inorganic wholes to the most highly developed and organised - is [Smuts writes,] what we call Evolution' (Smuts, 1927:101).

Smuts is influenced by Darwin's account of evolution, but there are differences. First, Smuts sees evolution in terms of the evolution of wholes, and not species via natural selection. Second, he writes that the task of evolution is 'whole-making,' as distinct from – as some idealists had it – 'soul making' (Smuts, 1927:327, 346).[16] Third, this 'whole-making' is creative, it is not 'determined' (Smuts, 1927:146, 319). Smuts writes that 'Evolution [is] not a mere vague and indefinable creative impulse or élan vital, ... but something quite definite' (Smuts, 1927:102).

In many earlier authors, evolution was regarded as mechanistic, and Smuts suggests that this view is also a feature of some idealisms, such as Hegel's – namely, that 'the full volume of reality was there at the beginning' (Smuts, 1927:90), and that what followed was simply a mechanistic unfolding. Holism, however, provides 'an undetermined, creative element' (Smuts, 1929:642). Moreover, for Smuts, this 'creative evolution' is not just a matter of the development of the physical organism but has an 'inward spiritual holistic character' (Smuts, 1927:89).

Smuts says that one can see this holistic evolutionary development in four stages: matter, life, mind, and personality.

16 Here, there may be an allusion to Bosanquet's discussion of the promotion of individuality as a matter of (what the nineteenth century English poet, John Keats, also called) "soul-making" (Bosanquet, 1913:63-66).

Mind has a distinctive role. Mind is a 'marked central control which [at first] is still mostly implicit and unconscious' (Smuts, 1927:109), but which develops consciousness, freedom, and creative power. It exists in animals. But Mind is also, he writes, 'the basis of the Reason' (Smuts, 1927:252). Moreover, 'In the Reason, Mind, instead of pursuing [an] individualistic, purposive activity,' reflects holism moving 'towards more regulation, a higher coordination and a greater order' (Smuts, 1927:252).

Beyond 'Mind' there is 'the highest most evolved whole,' namely what Smuts calls [human] 'Personality' (sometimes, though not always, capitalised)[17]. Personality is the fourth and final 'series' or stage of evolutionary development (Smuts, 1927:270). Smuts does not provide a clear definition of Personality, but its basis is the Will, it is identified with the Self, and it is 'fundamentally an organ of self-realisation' (Smuts, 1927:303).

In Mind and the earlier 'series' (i.e., life and matter), there were more and less complete wholes, and so, now, it is not surprising that there are more and less complete personalities. Moreover, what personality is, and the value of personality, Smuts writes, have become more apparent over time; recently, however, it has come to be associated with the 'sacredness' of human life and the 'inalienable rights of human beings' (Smuts, 1927:292). Personality is not, however, 'merely a juristic or religious or philosophical concept, but as a real factor which forms the culminating phase in the synthetic creative Evolution of the universe' (Smuts, 1927:292). The study of Personality – what is also 'the synthetic science of Human Nature' (Smuts, 1927:271, 292) – he argues, will 'become the basis of a new Ethic, a new Metaphysic' (Smuts,

17 In *Holism and Evolution*, Personality is distinctively human; there is no divine personality. This is not the case in Smuts's earlier writings, such as *An Inquiry into the Whole*, however (Smuts, 1927).

1927:294), because it presents the most complete sense of 'whole.'[18]

Personality, then, is putatively the highest stage of holistic development or evolution. While, as noted above, Smuts does not offer a definition of 'personality,' one can understand personality, he claimed, by looking at biographies. The reason for this, Smuts writes, is that 'Personality is uniquely individual' (Smuts, 1927:293-294). Thus, to understand such a whole, we need to look, not at a generic description of a person, but to specific individuals. Consequently, Smuts proposes that one 'should study the biography of noted personalities as expressions of the developing Personality' (Smuts, 1927:293-94) - something which he had suggested and developed in earlier work, such as in his book on Walt Whitman.

Interestingly, however, not all 'personalities' are suitable for understanding Personality. For example, Smuts writes that 'Many distinguished persons appear to be full grown in early manhood [but] thereafter to undergo no further growth' (Smuts, 1927:295) - and, so, they do not help one to grasp Personality. '[A]nother class of persons [he writes]... consist of those who do not seem to have much of an inner self at all, whose activities and interests are all of an external character, who live not the inner life of the spirit but the external life of affairs' (e.g., 'public men, men of affairs, administrators, business men and others, whose whole mind seems to be absorbed by the practical interest of their work') (Smuts, 1927:295). Smuts allows that they 'may be able, competent, conscientious men, they may even be brilliant men of affairs, with great gifts of leadership... [but that] they [too]

18 It is interesting that Smuts does not elaborate on these connections to ethics and metaphysics in *Holism and Evolution* and, only indirectly, in his later work. References to 'dignity' and 'individual rights' that are not simply juristic suggest that there is a basis for them that is not merely 'empirical.' Presumably, these issues were to be the focus of his hoped-for later work on holism, although they are also anticipated in his earlier writings.

are lacking in that inwardness, that inner spiritual life which is the most favourable medium for the study of Personality' (Smuts, 1927:295-296). Instead, to understand Personality, Smuts holds, we need to look at the 'inner self' of a person, and its capacity for growth, i.e., 'the lives of poets, artists, writers, thinkers, religious and social innovators ... They are often people with inner lives and interesting personalities, with an inner history of continuous development' (Smuts, 1927:297). These, then, are illustrations of the 'wholes at their best' that holism can produce – and which, presumably, people should choose to emulate.

One's 'inner life' and one's relations to other personalities, then, are important to the development of Personality. But Smuts does not suggest that these features are a matter of religion, ethnicity, or race[19] - and when he uses the term 'race' in *Holism and Evolution*, it is almost always as a synonym for 'species.'[20]

19 Indeed, Smuts envisages that the human race will be succeeded by a "higher race" (Smuts, 1927:187).

20 The sole passage in *Holism and Evolution* where Smuts may possibly be referring to 'race' in a narrower sense than that of the human species is in Smuts's critique of the views of the German evolutionary biologist August Weismann (1839-1914) (Smuts, 1927:199, 208-212). Here, Smuts discusses the issue of the differentiation between the "reciprocal development" of the individual and the race.
There have been some allegations that Smuts's holism was "racist" and "eugenicist"; (American Marxist sociologist) John Bellamy Foster states that a junior contemporary of Smuts, the Marxist biologist Lancelot Hogben (1895-1975), attacked Smuts for his "racial eugenics" and his "ecologically racist holism" (Foster, 2010a:324; see Foster 2010b, and the reference to Smuts's "racist eugenics" at p. 116). Hogben's *The Nature of Living Matter* (1930), which reprints, with minor changes, his 1929 response to Smuts's paper of 1929, presented at the British Association for the Advancement of Science (Smuts et al., 1929), does not, however, make any association between the notion of eugenics (a term used only four times by Hogben) and Smuts. Hogben's (and Foster's more polemical) critique of holism seems to be that holism is associated with an 'anti-mechanism' or a 'vitalism' or an idealism - terms that they neither explain nor define - that

Admittedly, Smuts does suggest that there are things beyond individual 'personalities' that might seem to be greater 'wholes' (Smuts, 1927:176, 271 seq.). For example, in *An Inquiry into the Whole*, Smuts refers to 'the Whole' (capitalised and in the singular) and, in *Holism and Evolution*, at times he refers to 'the great Whole' (capitalised, Smuts, 1927:250; but see 102, 347, with no cap) or a 'Supreme Whole' (Smuts, 1927:347; see 250). Moreover, he mentions 'human associations like the State' (Smuts, 1927:110), 'the creations of the human spirit in all its greatest and most significant activities,' 'works of art,' and 'the great ideals of the higher life' (Smuts, 1927:100-101) - all of which have characteristics of the whole or are even called 'wholes.' Or, again, one may speak of a divine being, or the universe itself, as a 'whole,' that would suggest something beyond Personality. Yet Smuts argues that to read him in this way is a mistake.

In the first case, while he does sometimes capitalise the word 'Whole' in *Holism and Evolution*, and uses terms such as 'the great Whole,' this is an exception in his later work. Rather, he almost always refers to 'wholes' - plural and with a lower case. And he explicitly distinguishes his view from the 'Absolutists' (whom he leaves nameless in Smuts (1926)), who might hold that the Absolute is such a whole.

In the second case, although Smuts allows that some might refer to 'human associations like the State,' or 'creations of the human spirit,' or to works of art as 'wholes,'

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is opposed to their own Marxism. (Similar claims have been made in reference to another contemporary critic of Smuts, A.G. Tamsley (see Foster, 2010b:116)). While I cannot enter into the discussion here, Foster's presentation of Hogben and, more generally, of Smuts's holism seems simply to repeat the account of Peder Anker (2001), and neither point to any text in *Holism and Evolution*, or in Smuts's accounts of holism, to support their claims of a direct relationship between the theory of holism and racial hierarchy. (Bowler, 2014:177, and Tobey, 1981:189, provide a more balanced account of early critiques of Smuts.)

he regards them, rather, as what he calls 'fields.'[21] Wholes, Smuts writes, are 'interlocked, and embrace and influence each other' through their 'fields' (Smuts, 1927:18) - and it is in this way that they connect with one another. This notion of 'field' is 'a phenomenon which, Smuts writes, is 'universal in the realms of thought and reality alike.' Every 'thing' [and every concept, and every whole] 'has its field.' Smuts proposes that 'It is in these fields and these fields only that things ... happen'; 'but for their fields, [wholes] would be unintelligible, their activities would be impossible, and their relations barren and sterile' (Smuts, 1927:18).

Thus, he writes,

> When we come to consider a group of wholes we see that, while the wholes may be mutually exclusive, their fields overlap and penetrate and reinforce each other, and thus create an entirely new situation. Thus we speak of the atmosphere of ideas, the spirit of a class, or the soul of a people. The social individuals as such remain unaltered, but the social environment or field undergoes a complete change..., which creates the appearance and much of the reality of a new organism. Hence, we speak of social or group or national organisms. But as a matter of fact there is no new organism; the society or group is organic without being an organism; holistic without being a whole (Smuts, 1927:348).[22]

21 Smuts explains: "One of the most salutary reforms in thought which could be effected would be for people to accustom themselves to the idea of fields, and to look upon every concrete thing or person or even idea as merely a centre, surrounded by zones or aurae or penumbrae of the same nature as the centre, only more attenuated and shading off into indefiniteness" (Smuts, 1927:19).

22 There seem to be some resonances here between Smuts's notion of 'group fields' or 'conjoint fields' and idealist notions of 'dominant ideas' and 'general will' (see Bosanquet, 1894, 1897). Smuts writes, for example, "The group field is so to say the multiplication of all the individual fields," and that this is a matter of "social psychology" (Smuts, 1927:348).

In short, Smuts writes: 'Groups, families, churches, societies, nations are organic but not organisms' (Smuts, 1927:348).

To the third concern - whether the universe or a divine being is a whole greater than 'Personality' - Smuts's response seems somewhat evasive. He writes 'It may be that the universe is a whole in the making. That has been suggested as a possible view. But as yet no such whole can be discerned or inferred' (Smuts, 1927:350). Still, it is difficult to say how far is Smuts is committed to this assertion. Interestingly, in his earlier work, such as *An Inquiry into the Whole*, he does allow that there may well be a divine being or that the universe overall is a 'whole.' Moreover, in *Holism and Evolution*, Smuts realises that he leaves questions of ethics and metaphysics unresolved - 'These applications of the concept of Holism lie beyond the scope of the present work' (Smuts, 1927:269) - hence, the mention of the need for a further volume. Now, in *Holism and Evolution*, there is nothing beyond 'Personality' - or, at least, he cannot say that there is anything beyond this 'holistic evolutionary development.' Yet, it seems that he cannot preclude this either; he writes 'a scale of wholes forms the ladder of Evolution' (Smuts, 1927:110), and that 'It is through a continuous and universal process of whole-making that reality rises step by step, until from the poor, empty, worthless stuff of its humble beginnings it builds the spiritual world beyond our greatest dreams' (Smuts, 1927:110). In any case, whatever such a further development might be, Smuts neither locates it out of nature nor in an 'ethical institution,' such as society or the state.

In *Holism and Evolution*, then, 'holistic creative evolution' culminates in Personality, and one sees some key characteristics of wholes in Smuts's account of it - specifically, that such wholes exhibit or lead to purposiveness, individuality, and freedom.

Holism exhibits purposiveness: as 'a special form of that unified organic action .... It means a correlation and unification of actions towards an end, whether this is consciously conceived or apprehended or not' (Smuts, 1927:147). There

is, then, a tendency to unity, a kind of teleology, and even progress (and not just change) in reality, though Smuts does not see this as entirely determined (Smuts, 1927:319); for 'what above all is inherited is freedom' (Smuts, 1927:283).

Holism also promotes 'individuality.' Smuts writes that holism 'is the principle which works up the raw material or unorganised energy units of the world, utilises, assimilates and organises them, [and] endows them with specific structure and character and individuality' (Smuts, 1927:110). This move to individuality is characteristic throughout reality - 'through things and plants and beasts and men' (Smuts, 1927:110) - and is a product of evolution (Smuts, 1927:241-242; 284-285). It is a value, and it is essential to what is valuable.

Third, Smuts writes that wholes are 'free' - that 'the concept of freedom is rooted in that of the whole' (Smuts, 1927:126) - and that, 'to realise wholeness or freedom (they are correlative expressions) in the smaller whole of individual life represents not only the highest of which the individual is capable, but expresses also what is at once the deepest and the highest in the universal movement of Holism' (Smuts, 1927:321). Liberty or freedom is the 'supreme prize' of every human being, and is necessary for the 'inward self-determination of the Personality' (Smuts, 1927:323).

These characteristics of Smuts's holism are also characteristics of an idealist philosophy, as I have argued elsewhere (Sweet, 2024). Admittedly, some of these characteristics may not seem to fit easily with certain idealisms; Smuts believes that an absolute idealism, such as he finds in Hegel (Smuts, 1927:90), does not leave room for creativity, emergence, contingency, or freedom, and that it adopts a 'mechanistic' approach, where there is a kind of 'logical unfolding' of the absolute in space and time (Smuts, 1927:90). But, as I have argued, other idealisms arguably can allow for both a broad mechanistic approach with an 'impulse to unity' and, at the same time, exhibit 'creative freedom' (Bosanquet, 1913:5, 73). Again, Smuts, like many idealists, holds an 'organic' metaphysical view; that there is a progress

towards an ultimate spirit (Smuts, 1927:110) or absolute; and that this process is 'a process of... self-perfection within a larger Whole' (Smuts, 1927:353). One finds this particularly in some personal idealists such as Ward and Pringle-Pattison. Again, in earlier work, Smuts seems to hold that 'there is something below the phenomena of the semblant world' or 'some underlying reality' (Smuts, 1973:129) – which reflects a position held by many, if not all, of the idealists of the period. In short, in both Smuts's holism and some idealist views, individuality is tied closely to self-realisation, and there is no opposition between individuality and community. Thus, individuality and community are not only consistent but mutually reinforcing; freedom is not 'license,' but reflects and presupposes a principle of order; and there is a purposive character to reality.

These characteristics, particularly individuality and freedom, are not only key concepts in political philosophy, but bear on Smuts's political philosophy in particular.

Political philosophy

Smuts says little, if anything, explicitly concerning political philosophy in *Holism and Evolution*. Yet, given that his account was to be, at the very least, descriptive of reality, it is no surprise that he introduces theories and concepts that bear on the political. Moreover, given his emphasis on Personality as the highest stage of the process of holism, he must also address, at some point, how to promote the development of Personality, how to support Personality, and how persons relate - and should relate - to other persons.

In *Holism and Evolution*, two central themes that bear on political philosophy come to the fore: individuality and freedom. I will, moreover, mention a third theme, only briefly adverted to in *Holism and Evolution*, and that is the state.

a) Individuality

For Smuts, individuality is 'inherent in the holistic process' (Smuts, 1927:241), both externally and internally. Smuts

writes that only wholes are individuals; 'individuality is distinctive of wholes' (Smuts, 1927:147). Further, to be an individual is: to have (1) 'a real character, a unique identity, and an irreversible orientation which distinguishes it from everything else' (Smuts, 1927:147); (2) to be 'unified,' as 'a system of co-ordinated structures and functions' (Smuts, 1927:218); and (3) given the creative - and not mechanistic - character of evolution, to be 'free.'

But, just as there are different kinds of wholes, there are different kinds of individuality. Moreover, the more wholeness, the more individuality. Smuts explains: 'More wholeness not only means a deeper, more intensive individuality in the Self, but also a more perfect order in the structure of Reality' (Smuts, 1927:251). There is also a normative element here. Smuts writes that 'this character of individuality rises with the rise of wholes in the scale of Evolution, and acquires decisive importance at the ultimate level of human Personality.' (Smuts, 1927:147). This suggests that individual persons have utmost value.

But this emphasis on individuality is not individualism. While individuality is fundamental and a characteristic of wholes, the development of the whole and of the individual is only in and through others; 'wholes and parts mutually and reciprocally influence and modify each other' (Smuts, 1929:640). Wholes themselves also reciprocally influence one another (Smuts, 1927:342); specifically, 'it is the intermingling of fields [described above] which is creative or causal in nature as well as life', and it is that by which 'a thing or event transcends its apparent limits' (Smuts, 1927:18). While the wholes, then, are independent and mutually exclusive, this overlap of their respective fields 'create[s] an entirely new situation. Thus, we speak of the atmosphere of ideas, the spirit of a class, or the soul of a people. The social individuals as such remain unaltered, but the social environment or field undergoes a complete change' – and this is a 'higher creation' (Smuts, 1927:100).

Again, Smuts argues that the 'individualistic' will requires rational and ethical restriction. It 'has to be harmonised and through effort and struggle to be adjusted to higher ethical and spiritual ends and ideals' (Smuts, 1927:252). There are ethical implications of this. (1) While an individual is unique, it is - and must be - related to others - for example, we have an 'inheritance from our parents and ancestors' (Smuts, 1927:271) - and, moreover, 'the individual becomes conscious of himself only in society' (Smuts, 1927:234). (2) As it realises itself, the individual also contributes to others; 'The newer, deeper Self becomes the centre for a fresh ordering and harmony of the universal' (Smuts, 1927:252). Thus (3), to speak of 'Pure individualism is a misleading abstraction' (Smuts, 1927:234).

Smuts's emphasis on the individual and on the person is clearly relevant to political philosophy and to the relation of the individual to society and the state - that the individual person has a fundamental value and role, and yet is inseparable from relations to others. Interestingly, this emphasis reflects a view that one also finds in Ward and other personal idealists - that there is an overall principle of reality, that individuals are real, but that individuals cannot be understood without this overall principle. One finds this idealist character expressed vividly in Smuts's foreword to a book by F.C. Kolbe that was perhaps the most extensive response to Smuts's *Holism and Evolution*. Smuts underlines this relation of individuals to one another and to a larger whole: 'The popular view of the finite particular or 'thing' I show to be a false abstraction... Holism by its very nature denies reality to the particular by itself and in itself and apart from the context of its field' (Kolbe, 1928:vii-viii). Still, Smuts reminds the reader that 'The finite endures in the communion of the infinite' (Kolbe, 1928:vii).

(b) Freedom

As one can see from the above, connected with individuality is freedom. Smuts makes freedom an inherent character of the universe; 'Freedom has its roots deep down in the foundations and the constitution of the universe' (Smuts, 1927:316).

Indeed, it is implicit in evolution. For Smuts, evolution, recall, is creative. And even at the level of matter and inorganic structures, one can not only speak of the development of wholes, but of a *kind* of freedom in the process, i.e., contingency - though, strictly speaking, freedom is only at the level of mind, and beyond.

From matter, through life, to Mind, what one finds, Smuts writes, is that 'external determination is transformed by the whole into self-determination or freedom' (Smuts, 1927:126, 145). At the level of Mind, Mind gradually comes to control 'its own conditions of life' (Smuts, 1927:235). And 'at the human stage' - 'on the level of human personality' - 'freedom takes conscious control of the process and begins to create the free ethical world of the spirit' (Smuts, 1927:127), bringing about what Smuts calls a 'new ideal world of spiritual freedom' (Smuts, 1927:234).

But, Smuts writes, this freedom is not random or voluntaristic. For (1), as noted earlier with the development of wholes, 'the new always arrives in the bosom of the pre-existing structure'; (2) this freedom is rational and ordered, for 'Mind [is also] a part of the universal order' (Smuts, 1927:238); and, (3) freedom involves restraint; holism can be, as it were, 'inhibitive' (Smuts, 1927:192, 224). Smuts states that 'Holism is not merely creative of variations, but just as much repressive of variations. ... it holds in check certain features while it releases and pushes forward others' - a view that Smuts finds ignored in Darwinism (Smuts, 1927:192; cf 224).

All wholes, all individuals, then, have freedom in some sense. But when it comes to the level of personality, what is most relevant is not an independence from others in an external sense, but what occurs in internal life. (Hence, Smuts's reference, in *Walt Whitman: A Study in the Evolution of Personality*, to the personalities and character of Goethe and Whitman and, in *Holism and Evolution*, to figures such as Shakespeare [Smuts, 1927:297].) Freedom is, as noted above, not a 'capricious power peculiar to the will' (Smuts, 1927:300),

but means 'holistic self determination' (Smuts, 1927:317). It is essential to self-realisation.

This freedom, freedom of the individual, clearly bears on Smuts's political philosophy. While it is, at basis, a moral and a psychological freedom, the individual must have a freedom to act, to associate, and to pursue the good, all of which involve others. Yet, it is not an absolute freedom; Smuts is not endorsing license. This, then, requires an appreciation of how Smuts understands the state (and, more broadly, values), and the relation of the individual to the state.

(c) The state

Smuts makes only two or three references to the term 'the state' in all of *Holism and Evolution*. He explains there that the state is a human association, an association of persons. Yet he adds that it exists at a level higher than personality and has, 'for its higher purpose, the fostering and spiritual development of this ... whole of personality.' Specifically, the state offers an organisation beyond what the individual person can accomplish. So, in the state, 'central control becomes super individual' (Smuts, 1927:109).

Smuts refers to the state, then, as being a whole, 'in a sense' (Smuts, 1927:100). But Smuts also says that, even though it is a structure on the analogy, and with many of the properties, of wholes, the state is not a real whole. It is, rather, what he calls a 'group field' (Smuts, 1927:348). What he means by this is that while wholes - e.g., persons - are distinct from one another and (as noted earlier) 'may be mutually exclusive, their fields overlap and penetrate and reinforce each other, and thus create an entirely new situation.... [with] a multiplication of force,' and can lead to the creation of a 'common field' (Smuts, 1927:348). (The 'common' or 'group field' may, perhaps, be seen as a set of dominant ideas or a general will.[23]) It is this 'mutual penetration and overlap' 'which creates the appearance and much of the reality of a new organism.' And so we can speak of 'the atmosphere of ideas, the spirit of

23 See note 22.

a class, or the soul of a people.' But we can also, at a certain level, speak of 'social or group or national organisms' (Smuts, 1927:348). Strictly speaking, however, recall that Smuts holds that, 'as a matter of fact there is no new organism; the society or group is organic without being an organism; holistic without being a whole.' Moreover, 'The group field is so to say the multiplication of all the individual fields....We have in such cases an organic situation but not an organism.' As noted earlier, 'Groups, families, churches, societies, nations are organic but not organisms' (Smuts, 1927:348).

The state is, therefore, a product of the whole-making power of human individuality; 'we are members one of another' (Smuts, 1929:643). It also has normative force - perhaps like a 'general will' - for, as such a 'group field,' a state has control - indeed, appropriate control - over the individual. That being said, since the state is not a whole, the state must or ought leave room for an individual's creativity. It has, 'for its higher purpose, the fostering and spiritual development of this supreme whole of personality' (Smuts, 1929:643). Smuts certainly does not see the state as ultimate.

It would seem that the relation of the individual to the state, then, is the relation of a whole within a larger order. Here, the individual whole can be creative, emergent, and free. The individual, therefore, is in a way undetermined but, in a way, not. Smuts recognises that structures can, and should, inhibit the individual, and, as we have seen, there is a 'vast plan of extensive coordination' amongst them (Smuts, 1927:250). Still, the function of this structure is 'to foster little centres of intensive wholeness in individuals' which reflects the 'individualistic nature of mind' and to ensure that 'individuation is part of the holistic advance' (Smuts, 1927:251).

Specifics on the nature and form of such an association as the state are not given; not surprisingly, terms such as democracy do not appear in *Holism and Evolution*, and the state is not unique as a group field. (There is also, as we have seen, 'the atmosphere of ideas,' and 'families, churches and

nations.') Yet, while there is no account of the nature and form of the state in *Holism and Evolution*, or of its relation to other 'group fields,' certain features of the state are evident.

First 'Reason' has a role**.** Smuts writes 'Reason is the organ of universality…' (Smuts, 1927:252); it is 'largely creative of the new structures of reality and truth' (Smuts, 1927:252). Order is essential. Smuts writes: 'There is the holistic order' (Smuts, 1927:344), and 'Reason becomes the basis of the new order in the universe' (Smuts, 1927:252). Second, whatever is regulative in such situations seems to be 'dialectical.' For example, recall Smuts's view of the reciprocal and mutual relation of wholes and parts, and of wholes to each other, in the development of wholes. Third, it seems as though values also have a role in 'limiting' the state for, beyond the state, there are 'the ideal wholes, or holistic ideals, or absolute values' such as 'Truth, Beauty, and Goodness' (Smuts, 1927:109). Finally, this emphasis on individuality and freedom suggests a basic political pluralism in Smuts's view. (This also seems implied in Smuts's effort of preserving individuality within the state.) While Smuts rejects some metaphysical pluralisms, such as the 'spiritual pluralism' or spiritualism of James Ward (Smuts, 1927:327, 343)[24], he nevertheless appears to endorse something of the kind in his early book on Whitman [Smuts, 1973:129].) In other words, Smuts may be open to a pluralism that seeks to protect individuality, but which is not reducible to individualism. Thus, a plurality may be consistent with holism.

Overall, however, at the root of Smuts's account of the state is freedom. Smuts takes up the discussion of freedom in his Rectoral address at the University of St Andrews in 1934. Here, Smuts is aware of the increasing militarisation of Europe, and, although he has a somewhat positive - but, as it turned out, far too optimistic - view that war will be averted, he is insistent that freedom is essential to combat it. Although he does not explicitly mention *Holism and Evolution* in this

24 For his discussion of Ward's views in *The Realm of Ends* (1911), see Smuts, 1927:289-291, 343.

lecture, he does focus on 'creative freedom' (Smuts, 1934:35) - which, in *Holism and Evolution*, he describes as 'the essence of Personality' (Smuts, 1927:300) and here, in this address, as 'the watchword of the new order' (Smuts, 1934:35). Creative freedom involves, first, 'inner freedom and harmony of soul' (Smuts, 1934:35). It also involves 'intellectual freedom' and 'political freedom' (Smuts, 1934:29), by which he includes freedom of conscience, speech, thought, and teaching; this is 'liberty in its full human meaning' (Smuts, 1934:30). Finally, he refers to 'international freedom' (Smuts, 1934:35), by which he means 'the rule of peace and justice' throughout the world which may presumably be preserved by an 'international order' (Smuts, 1934:22) - perhaps by a League of Nations.[25] He sees these freedoms as being opposed to the 'absorption of the individual by the state' (Smuts, 1934:31), and he situates himself against authoritarian or totalitarian regimes - what he sometimes refers to as 'Prussianism' - which restrict private rights and civil liberties.

In general, then, Smuts emphasises that freedom is natural and necessary to self-realisation and to peace. Smuts writes that 'Freedom is the most ineradicable craving of human nature' (Smuts, 1934:32) and says that 'without it, peace, contentment, and happiness... are not possible' (Smuts, 1934:32); freedom is 'what is deepest in our spiritual nature' (Smuts, 1934:33), and is opposed to what one might call the 'unfreedom' of a 'materialist mechanist civilization' (Smuts, 1934:33).

There is, Smuts acknowledges here, a need for the state, but the state must have as its foundation the individual, social freedom, and equality; he writes that 'the individual is basic to any world order that is worthwhile' (Smuts, 1934:26) and that 'social freedom and equality before the law [serve] as the foundation of the State' (Smuts, 1934:35). This echoes his remarks, earlier, in *Holism and Evolution*, where he notes that the importance of the individual is marked by the presence of

25 See, for example, Smuts (1918), and his arguments in Smuts (1930, esp. Ch 5). See also Heyns and Gravett (2017).

dignity - of 'dignity' in the law (Smuts, 1934:292), but also the 'spiritual dignity' and 'sacredness' of the person (Smuts, 1927:292).[26]

One might well ask what the implications are of such an account of the state. Does Smuts suggest the kind of state or the kind of policies such a state might undertake? Interestingly, in his writings of the 1930s, Smuts is somewhat cautious about democracy. He notes that democratic institutions have been under attack (Smuts, 1930:152), that the public is increasingly indifferent to the political process (Smuts, 1930:160), and that the 'machinery of democracy' (Smuts, 1934:32) calls for reform. He finds 'continental democracy' weak (Smuts, 1934:27) - no doubt because of the rise of fascism and communism in several countries - and that democracy has not been able to keep its 'promise of international peace' (Smuts, 1934:18). Nevertheless, in his book on Walt Whitman (Smuts, 1973:137-157) and in his 1929 Sidgwick Memorial Lecture, 'Democracy,'[27] he provides a sustained defence of democracy, arguing that no better alternative as a basis of government has presented itself (Smuts, 1930:153), and that the 'active co-operation of the governed in their government still holds the field as the first axiom of political philosophy' (Smuts, 1930:153).[28] It is simply, however, that 'Society is in

26 It is worth noting that Smuts wrote much of the Preamble to the United Nations Charter of 1945 and was reportedly responsible for the insertion of the term "human rights" in the Charter. Moreover, according to Charles Malik, who was a member of the committee of the Commission on Human Rights that drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the term 'dignity' was inserted in the Charter at the suggestion of Smuts. See the remarks in the John Peters Humphrey diaries, entry for October 6, 1948, cited in Hobbins (1991:155). (Humphrey had been the Secretary of the Commission on Human Rights.) See also Humphrey (1983:427).

27 Smuts's Sidgwick Memorial Lecture was delivered at Newnham College, Cambridge, on 30 November 1929. It appears in Smuts (1930).

28 Again, Smuts writes: "The consent of the governed is the only secure and lasting basis of government, and liberty is

its essence dynamic,' that 'our political institutions require continual reshaping' (Smuts, 1930:172), and that 'the methods of enabling the people to exercise in freedom their influence on government may have to be altered from those at present in vogue' (Smuts, 1934:32). What Smuts seems to have in mind, is having a more scientific and impartial level of administration that can avoid what we might call populism, i.e., 'both the organization and the functioning of the state should become more scientific, impartial, businesslike, and less purely political in the old sense' (Smuts, 1930:177).

At the base of Smuts's account of the state and of his critique of 'Prussianism,' is his emphasis on the person / individual. This emphasis is present, as noted earlier, in some idealist movements as well. While the personal idealists had little to say on political philosophy, their emphasis on the nature and value of the individual person is congenial with Smuts's political approach.[29] Again, given Smuts's emphasis on freedom and individuality, and, as noted above, 'dignity,' 'equality,' and the 'essential' (Smuts, 1930:30) or 'inalienable rights of human beings' (Smuts, 1927:292), one might well see Smuts as being, broadly, in the 'liberal and democratic' tradition (Hoernlé, 1935:395), though, arguably, not a liberal individualist tradition.

But this broad assignation has been challenged. There have been a number of recent critics, such as Peder Anker, Jeannie Morefield, and J.B. Foster, who have challenged the legitimacy of Smuts's liberal reputation, accusing him at times of a kind of a disingenuity, intellectual duplicity, or sleight

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the condition of consent." (Smuts, 1930:175).

29 Smuts does not refer to the major idealist philosophers, such as T.H. Green and Bernard Bosanquet, though copies of their books are to be found in his personal library, and he also corresponded with South African idealist political philosophers, such as A.R. Lord (and, as detailed below, R.F.A. Hoernlé). See letters from Lord in the National Archives, Pretoria, and the Smuts House Museum, Irene, and letters from Hoernlé in the Smuts letters, National Archives, Pretoria, and the *Historical Papers Research Archive*, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

of hand (Morefield, 2014:175). Smuts clearly did support segregationist views, though most scholars acknowledge that, politically, he was more moderate than the opposition National Party which, after Smuts's political defeat in 1948, instituted the policy of 'apartheid.' Still, one might ask whether Smuts's political practice and defence of segregation reflect principles of his holism. These recent critics claim that there is a connection. They draw little, however, on Smuts's philosophical works - and, to the extent that they do, they fail to cite texts that show a connection between holism and an illiberal view. Again, some suggest that there is a relation between Smuts's racial views and his idealism, although these authors read Smuts as adopting a kind of Hegelianism (Anker, 2001:44; Morefield, 2014:180-181) that Smuts, in fact, explicitly rejected. While these critics cite second-hand accounts of Smuts's policies or contemporary attacks on his character, again there appears to be no demonstrated relation to Smuts's holistic principles - and, so, whether the interpretations of these critics can be supported by a scholarly reading of Smuts's holism is an issue that is, at best, unresolved.

To discern and make some assessment of Smuts's political philosophy, it is useful to look at a contemporary of Smuts. Perhaps the most distinguished of those to challenge Smuts's political philosophy is R.F.A. Hoernlé.[30]

30 As noted above, Smuts was also criticised at the time by the Marxist biologist Lancelot Hogben (who briefly taught in South Africa, from 1927 to 1930). Although Hogben clearly found Smuts's politics objectionable, his criticism was more an attack on Smuts's putative vitalism and the implications for science than on his philosophical holism, and Hogben does not make any connection between Smuts's holism and racial issues. Similarly, while the English botanist Arthur Tansley also challenged Smuts, his focus was on the 'holism' of South African Professor J.F.V. Phillips - and here, too, it was more on the notion of teleology in nature than on matters related to race. (Tansley, 1935). It is a stretch, therefore, to conclude that "the naturalized hierarchy that constituted Smuts's theory of ecological holism gave

Hoernlé was a philosopher and well-schooled in idealism, although he was sympathetic to absolute rather than personal idealism. Hoernlé knew Smuts reasonably well. Early in his career (1905-08), Hoernlé taught at the South African College in Cape Town, and, after 1921 until his death in 1943, at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Hoernlé's wife, Agnes, was the daughter of a South African senator who worked with Smuts. Hoernlé and Smuts exchanged letters periodically for some decades,[31] and Hoernlé himself was a well-known figure in the movement for racial justice in South Africa. Hoernlé reviewed *Holism and Evolution* when it appeared in 1926. While he acknowledged that there was 'a certain measure of originality in holism' (Hoernlé, 1926:89), he did not see it as being particularly novel. Hoernlé made no comments on the social and political implications of the work.

Nevertheless, Hoernlé responded to Smuts's Rectoral address in a lecture at the University of the Witwatersrand, entitled 'Freedom in the Present-day World' (Hoernlé, 1935). There, Hoernlé presents a number of cautions about Smuts's 'prizing' of 'the liberal and democratic tradition' (Hoernlé, 1935:395). First, Hoernlé notes that Smuts's emphasis on the individual is ambiguous and that, as far as it goes, it goes too far. Hoernlé insists that individuality has value only if it is grounded or in 'the service of supra-individual values' (Hoernlé, 1935:397). Second, Hoernlé states that Smuts's emphasis on creative freedom needs to be clearer about what is being created, what exactly is this freedom, and what are the practical limits on freedom. Hoernlé notes that creative activity in itself is not supportive of freedom. He also emphasises that freedom is not an unconditioned value, and that, in any case, the exercise of freedom requires learning, discipline, truth, and a commitment to unity and coherence, ideally within a context of common convictions.

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seeming philosophical-scientific support to his racial views" (Foster, 2010a:318).

31 See note 29, above.

Given these general concerns, Hoernlé then raises the question of Smuts's account of the nature of political freedom. What, on Hoernlé's view, are the implication of Smuts's position? Hoernlé suggests, first, that Smuts is inconsistent by, on the one hand, favouring democracy for all, and, on the other, not 'attempting' - or feeling that he could not attempt - 'the solution of South Africa's great problem of the relations between Whites and Blacks' (Hoernlé, 1935:399). (Hoernlé returns to this point about 'liberalism' in South Africa, in his later work [e.g., Hoernlé, 1939 and 1945].) Speaking generally, Hoernlé notes that 'What none has done is to re-examine, in the light of the experience of a multi-racial society, like South Africa, what liberty means and how, if at all, it can be realized in that sort of society' (Hoernlé, 1945:xxxiv).

Second, Hoernlé emphasises the importance of reason, persuasion, and consent in democracy, and that, in order to promote toleration, there need to be pre-existing common civic loyalties. (One can see this emphasis on 'common convictions' and 'common civic loyalties' as an echo of the idealist view of the importance of shared dominant ideas or a general will and a common good, and that such a good is necessary to fleshing out both the description of creative freedom and the value of individuality.) It seems clear, then, that Hoernlé did not regard Smuts as providing a consistent and thorough-going liberal and democratic philosophy or, at least, a political philosophy that he, as a liberal and an idealist, would find acceptable. Hoernlé certainly values individuality and freedom, but would demur from Smuts's account and, indeed, similar accounts by personal idealists such as Ward and Pringle-Pattison, as he sees them to be incomplete.

Conclusion

There is good reason to hold that Smuts had a political philosophy and that one can find its foundations in *Holism and Evolution*. One can also see traces of this political philosophy in Smuts's earlier writings, for example, his book on Walt Whitman, but also in later writings, especially his Rectoral

address on freedom. While he did not write on political philosophy as such, core themes of 'the whole,' 'personality,' 'individuality,' and 'freedom' recur in his writings on, and his articulations of, holism, and his approach to these themes mirrors and, arguably, is influenced by, a philosophical idealism that influenced him throughout his life.

In this essay, I have argued that Smuts's holism, with its advocacy of Personality, offers an explanation of the existence, value, and the importance of freedom, individuality, and democracy. In particular, I have noted Smuts's view that 'wholes' have value, and that the more complete, less inconsistent, and integrated a whole, the more important it is. For Smuts, there is no greater whole than persons or personality, and this standard has a normative force.

While individuality is a fundamental feature of wholes, it is important to note that Smuts rejects individualism. Dignity and rights are, to be sure, to be ascribed to individual persons, but they are a product of the 'group fields' amongst persons. Still, while the state and other ethical and social institutions have a central role in the development of persons, they do not have a value above the person and, therefore, Smuts rejects any kind of statism or authoritarianism. Moreover, higher values, such as 'love, goodness' (Smuts, 1927:151), 'beauty and truth' (Smuts, 1927:110), have a central role in the limitation of the activity of the state. This political consequence is consistent, again, with the personal idealism that is reflected in Smuts's holism.

Many idealist authors of the period argued for a similar view, a view which is generally accepted as 'liberal.' And Smuts's political philosophy is, arguably, also a liberalism but - like that of many idealists - simply not a liberal individualism. Moreover, the importance of individuality, personality, and freedom - taking care to understand how these terms are used in Smuts's holism - leads to a state that Smuts describes as broadly democratic and, given his account of the role of the individual and his emphasis on freedom, also pluralistic. Smuts's holism, then, provides a ground for

a political philosophy in the idealist tradition. It remains to be determined, however, whether and, if so, how this political philosophy had a presence or resonance in Smuts's political practice.

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