

CHAPTER X: PERSONALITY AS A WHOLE

Detailed Chapter Analysis

Section 1: CHAPTER POSITION IN THE OVERALL ARGUMENT

Chapter's Role in the Book's Overall Argument

Chapter X occupies the penultimate position in Smuts's ascending hierarchy of holistic structures, marking the culmination of his theoretical apparatus. Having established the general concept of Holism (Chapter V), its functions and categories (Chapter VI), its relationship to Mechanism (Chapter VII), Darwinism (Chapter VIII), and Mind (Chapter IX), Smuts now arrives at Personality as "the latest and supreme whole which has arisen in the holistic series of Evolution." This chapter represents the point where Smuts's cosmological theory intersects most directly with human self-understanding.

The strategic importance of this chapter lies in its demonstration that Personality is not an isolated phenomenon requiring separate metaphysical explanation but is rather the highest expression of the same holistic tendency operative throughout nature. Smuts explicitly positions Personality within the evolutionary continuum: "It is a new structure built on the prior structures of matter, life and mind." This move is philosophically crucial because it allows Smuts to address the mind-body problem, the nature of the self, and human uniqueness within his naturalistic framework without abandoning the explanatory power of holistic principles.

High-Level Summary of the Chapter's Central Claim

The central claim is twofold: First, Personality is the supreme holistic achievement of evolution—the most complex, integrated, and creative whole that has yet emerged in the natural order. Second, recognizing Personality as a genuine whole rather than a compound of independent substances (body and mind) provides the only coherent solution to the ancient philosophical problems surrounding personal identity, the body-mind relation, and human freedom.

Smuts argues that traditional attempts to explain Personality have failed precisely because they have "tacitly ignored" the holistic factor—treating body and mind as independently real substances that must somehow interact. His alternative is to view the holistic Personality itself as "the dominating factor in the situation," with body and mind being not separate reals but "elements in the whole of Personality."

Relationship to Preceding and Subsequent Chapters

Relationship to Chapter IX (Mind): Chapter IX established Mind as a new structural departure in evolution—"a superstructure on the basis of the pre-existing physical and physiological structures." Chapter X builds directly on this by showing how Mind, combined with Body within the creative matrix of Personality, achieves its highest expression. The chapter explicitly references "the last chapter" repeatedly, treating Mind's analysis as preparatory to understanding Personality.

Relationship to Chapter VII (Mechanism and Holism): Chapter X explicitly returns to the mechanism-vitalism debate addressed in Chapter VII. Smuts notes: "In Chapter VII I tried to reconcile the conflicting claims of Mechanism and Vitalism in the larger setting of Holism. In considering the behaviour of organisms... when, however, we come to the conscious human Personality the question loses all its force." At the level of Personality, mechanistic explanation becomes patently inadequate.

Relationship to Chapter VIII (Darwinism and Holism): The discussion of heredity in Chapter X extends Chapter VIII's treatment of variation and selection. Smuts argues that "the general principles of organic descent were discussed in Chapter VIII" and now applies them to show how human psychic inheritance differs fundamentally from mere organic inheritance.

Relationship to Chapter XI (Functions and Ideals of Personality): Chapter X establishes Personality's ontological status; Chapter XI explores its functional expression through freedom, creativity, and the generation of values. The concluding pages of Chapter X explicitly anticipate this: "I shall conclude this chapter with a brief statement of Freedom and Wholeness... The creative Ideals of Holism in their human aspects... will not be dealt with at this preliminary stage."

Section 2: KEY CONCEPTS INTRODUCED OR DEVELOPED

Personality

Definition: "The conscious individuality in each of us which arises from the synthesis of our psycho-physical elements, uniquely blended in each case." More technically: "a new whole... the highest and most complex of all wholes, the most recent conspicuous mutation in the evolution of Holism... a creative synthesis in which the earlier series of material, organic and psychical wholes are incorporated with a fresh accession or emergence of Holism."

Terminological note: Smuts explicitly addresses the etymology of "Personality." He notes that Greek philosophy "never rose to a clear grasp of the idea of Personality" and that "there is no term in Greek to express the notion of Personality." "Persona" is a Roman legal concept denoting "the legal status of the individual who was by law clothed with rights and duties in his own right." This legal-Roman origin shapes Smuts's emphasis on Personality's uniqueness and self-possession.

Personology

Definition: A proposed new discipline "whose task it would be to study Personality as a whole and to trace the laws and phases of its development in the individual life." Smuts explicitly coins this term, preferring it to "Characterology" (suggested by Professor James Ward).

Rationale: Psychology's "necessarily analytical character... largely disqualifies it from being a real foundation for a doctrine of Personality." Personology would study Personality "synthetically as living unities and wholes rather than in the analytical manner of psychology."

Method: Biography serves as the primary methodology: "Such a study of personal biographies will... have the priceless advantage of studying personalities synthetically as living unities and wholes." This methodological innovation anticipates narrative approaches to psychology and phenomenological life-study.

Interaction / Peraction / Intro-action

Context: Terms describing the body-mind relation.

- **Interaction:** The popular view that body and mind "mutually and directly act on each other." Smuts finds this conceptually problematic.
- **Peraction / Intro-action:** Smuts's preferred alternative: "Mind does not so much act on Body as penetrate it, and thus act through or inside it. 'Peraction' or 'intro-action' would be preferable to 'interaction' as a description of the relation of Mind to Body."

Creationism (in the context of Personality)

Definition: Not religious creationism but the view that "with human Personality we enter a domain of creationism, a domain where, far more than elsewhere in nature, creation is at work." Each human Personality represents "a unique creative novelty."

Clarification: This does not make Personality "incalculable" or random—rather, it shows maximal creativity within inherited materials: "As the process advances this creativeness increases and intensifies, until in the origin of the highest known structures... the creativeness rises to a maximum in relation to the inherited materials used in the new structures."

Subject / Object (Epistemological Orientation)

Definition: "For psychology and epistemology the individual Subject is the centre of orientation in all experience and reality; it is the Subject of experience to which all the rest is the Object of Experience."

Significance: "The appearance of Personality, therefore, marks a new and fundamental departure in the evolution of the universe." With Personality, "the whole universe becomes reorganised, transformed and almost recreated round it as the new centre."

Inter-Relationships Between Concepts

Personality stands as the integrating concept, with other concepts orbiting around it:

- Personology is the proposed science of Personality
- Peraction describes relations within Personality
- Creationism explains Personality's emergence
- The Subject-Object relation describes Personality's epistemological role

Section 3: DIALECTICAL CONTEXT

Views Being Critiqued or Rejected

Substance Dualism

The traditional view that body and mind are "independently real substances" which must somehow "interact with each other." Smuts traces this to inappropriate analysis: "Our perfectly fair and justifiable attempt at analysing Personality into mind and body has landed us in an inextricable confusion, which has vexed the soul of philosophy for hundreds of years." The error is "substantiation or hypostasis, as individual reals, of elements which have meaning and reality only as elements in a whole."

Psychophysical Parallelism

The view that physical and mental series "run parallel to each other, without any attempt to explain the ground of this psycho-physical parallelism." Smuts's objection: "One series does seem to influence the other, and not merely to run parallel to it. Our consciousness in voluntary action, for instance, does seem to reveal most clearly that our mental state can influence external actions."

Interactionism (Traditional Form)

Even the view Smuts finds partially valid—that body and mind interact—is criticized in its traditional form because "how can direct action of the physical or material on the mental or spiritual and vice versa be conceived? The two supposed interacting factors are not of the same order at all."

Occasionalism and Pre-established Harmony

Berkeley and Geulincx's view that "God is the medium and agent" between body and mind, and Leibniz's "Pre-established Harmony." These invoke supernatural mediation to solve what Smuts sees as an artificially created problem.

Spinoza's Monism

The view that body and mind "are but two modes of action of the one underlying Substance." Smuts acknowledges "all these theories have an element of truth" but argues they miss the specifically holistic factor.

Analytical Psychology

Smuts critiques psychology's method as fundamentally inadequate for Personality: "The procedure of psychology is largely analytical; it involves an analysis of mental functions and activities, and a detailed study of their several lines of development; and in exceptional cases a perfunctory effort is finally made to

view mind or character as a whole." He uses Professor James Ward's Psychological Principles as his example.

Religious Devaluation of the Body

"The view which degrades the body as unworthy of the Soul or Spirit is unnatural and owes its origin to morbid religious sentiments." Smuts insists: "The body is no worse than the spirit, and can be abused just as the spirit can be perverted."

Thinkers Engaged

- **René Descartes:** (implicit) Background to the substance dualism being critiqued
- **George Berkeley:** Occasionalism—God as mediator of body-mind relation
- **Arnold Geulincx:** Occasionalism
- **Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz:** Pre-established Harmony
- **Baruch Spinoza:** Mind and body as modes of one Substance
- **Immanuel Kant:** Referenced approvingly for the "central 'synthetic unity of apperception'"
- **Professor James Ward:** Cambridge psychologist; his Psychological Principles criticized as exemplary of analytical limits

The Problem the Chapter Addresses

The chapter addresses multiple interlocking problems:

1. **The ontological status of Personality:** Is Personality a genuine unity or merely an aggregate?
2. **The body-mind relation:** How can such disparate elements relate within a single person?
3. **Personal identity and uniqueness:** Why is each person irreducibly individual?
4. **Heredity and freedom:** How can we be both products of inheritance and genuinely free creators?
5. **Methodological adequacy:** How should we study Personality?

Section 4: MAIN ARGUMENTS AND THEIR STRUCTURE

Argument 1: Personality as Supreme Evolutionary Whole

Premises:

1. Evolution proceeds through the production of increasingly complex and integrated wholes (established in Chapters IV-IX).
2. Each new evolutionary level incorporates prior structures while adding something emergent.
3. Mind emerged as a "new structure" building on organic foundations (Chapter IX).
4. (Implied) No evidence exists for a still higher achieved whole beyond human Personality.

Reasoning:

Personality synthesizes all prior levels: "a creative synthesis in which the earlier series of material, organic and psychical wholes are incorporated with a fresh accession or emergence of Holism." Therefore:

Conclusion: "In Personality we reach the latest and highest phase of Holism and therefore the culminating problem, which all the preceding discussion has led up to."

Argument 2: The Holistic Solution to the Body-Mind Problem

Premises:

1. Traditional theories (interactionism, parallelism, occasionalism, monism) either fail to explain how body and mind relate or invoke supernatural agencies.
2. The source of these difficulties is "substantiation or hypostasis... of elements which have meaning and reality only as elements in a whole."
3. "Disembodied Mind and diminded Body are both impossible concepts, as either has only meaning and function in relation to the other."

4. Holistic wholes exhibit creative, synthetic activity that transforms all relations within them.

Reasoning:

Body and mind should be understood as elements within the whole of Personality, not as independent substances. "The holistic view of Personality, of Personality as an integral whole, and not as a compound of independently real substances, is the only solvent for these difficulties."

Conclusion: "Mind and Body are elements in the whole of Personality; and that this whole is an inner creative, recreative and transformative activity, which accounts for all that happens in Personality as between its component elements."

Argument 3: Personality's Creative Independence from Heredity

Premises:

1. Human psychic inheritance differs from organic inheritance in conferring "plasticity of reaction," "educability," and the capacity for novel experience.
2. "What above all is inherited is freedom, and the capacity of free and self-determined action."
3. "I inherit various capacities, but my own Personality itself is not inherited, but is uniquely and originally mine."

Reasoning:

"The freedom must belong to an agent; the plasticity implies a creative moulder." The inherited capacity for freedom requires something beyond inheritance to exercise that freedom—namely, Personality itself as a creative whole.

Conclusion: "Personality is a unique creative novelty in every human being, and... no explanation which ignores this creative Holism can even pretend to account for Personality."

Argument 4: The Inadequacy of Psychology for Studying Personality

Premises:

- (a) Psychology's procedure is "largely analytical."
- (b) Psychology studies generalized mental functions, not unique individuals.
- (c) Personality's essence lies in its unique wholeness.

Reasoning:

"The necessarily analytical character of psychology largely disqualifies it from being a real foundation for a doctrine of Personality." Ward's *Psychological Principles* exemplifies this: extensive analysis of mental functions with only "a perfunctory effort... to view mind or character as a whole."

Conclusion: "Personality is deserving of having a discipline to itself"—hence "Personology."

Section 5: EVIDENCE AND EXAMPLES USED

Empirical Evidence Cited

- **Phenomenology of voluntary action:** "Our consciousness in voluntary action, for instance, does seem to reveal most clearly that our mental state can influence external actions in a particular direction."
- **Observation of personal uniqueness:** "However similar the inheritance may be, yet I am a new person, a new self-consciousness, a personal centre absolutely distinguished from those who gave birth to me."
- **Human vs. animal learning:** "The animal... appears with its very limited range of faculties ready made... and in its individual life learns very little beyond this definite endowment for specific activities. The human person, on the contrary... has a capacity for acquiring new experience and learning new ways of acting and reacting."
- **Scientific advances in understanding the body:** "Science has come to the rescue of the body and thereby rendered magnificent service to human welfare."

Illustrative Examples

The Inadequacy of Ward's Psychology: Smuts uses Professor James Ward's Psychological Principles as a concrete example of psychology's limitations. He details its structure—"eighteen chapters... the first four devoted to a general analysis and description of mental functions... the main body... contains a detailed discussion of the various forms of mental activity"—to demonstrate that even the best psychology treats Personality only as an afterthought.

Historical Philosophical Theories: Berkeley's occasionalism, Leibniz's pre-established harmony, and Spinoza's substance monism serve as historical examples of failed attempts to solve the body-mind problem through non-holistic means.

Roman Legal Concept of "Persona": The etymological example grounds Smuts's terminological choice while illustrating that Personality involves self-possession, rights, and genuine individuality.

Scientific Sources Invoked

- **Kant's epistemology:** "Just as Kant at last gave the explanation of mental activity by pointing to the central 'synthetic unity of apperception,' in other words, to the holistic Subject as the pervading dominating factor."
- **James Ward's psychology:** Explicit reference to Psychological Principles (footnoted on p. 431)
- **Roman jurisprudence:** Historical source for the concept of "persona"

Section 6: KEY QUOTATIONS FOR REFERENCE

Quotation 1: Definition of Personality

"Personality then is a new whole, is the highest and most complex of all wholes, is the most recent conspicuous mutation in the evolution of Holism, is a creative synthesis in which the earlier series of material, organic and psychical wholes are incorporated with a fresh accession or emergence of Holism, and thus a new unique whole of a higher order than any of its predecessors arises."

(p. 260)

Quotation 2: The Holistic Solution to the Body-Mind Problem

"The fact is that all these theories have an element of truth; the real explanation being that Mind and Body are elements in the whole of Personality; and that this whole is an inner creative, recreative and transformative activity, which accounts for all that happens in Personality as between its component elements. No explanation will hold water which ignores the most important factor of all in the situation, and that is the holistic Personality itself. Holism is the real creative agent."

(pp. 258-259)

Quotation 3: Freedom as the Content of Inheritance

"The free, creative, holistic activity of mind appears conspicuously in its hereditary transmission, so that our human inheritance does not fetter us, but by its very nature confers plasticity, freedom and creativeness upon us. What we inherit is not a ready-made affair but a wide possibility and potency of moulding ourselves in our lives. In other words, what above all is inherited is freedom, and the capacity of free and self-determined action and development in our individual lives."

(pp. 271-272)

Quotation 4: Each Personality as Creative Novelty

"I inherit various capacities, but my own Personality itself is not inherited, but is uniquely and originally mine... The unique whole, called Personality, is not inherited, however much its constituent qualities and elements have been inherited."

(pp. 271-272)

Quotation 5: The Need for Personology

"Personology would study the Personality not as an abstraction or bundle of psychological abstractions, but rather as a vital organism, as the organic psychic whole which par excellence it is; and such a study should lead to the formulation of the laws of the growth of this unique whole, which would not only be of profound theoretical importance, but also of the greatest practical value."

(pp. 290-291)

Section 7: TIER 1 CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Holism

Development: Chapter X demonstrates Holism reaching its apogee. Personality is "the supreme embodiment of Holism both in its individual and its universal tendencies." The chapter shows Holism as explanatorily sufficient for the most complex entity we know: "Holism is the real creative agent, and not the causes suggested by the above philosophers."

Contemporary connection: Denis Noble's work on cardiac physiology ("The organism is primary") and system-wide integration validates Smuts's claim that holistic principles apply even at the highest levels of organismal organization. Kurt Goldstein's *Der Aufbau des Organismus* (1934) independently develops an almost identical "organismic" approach to personality and neurological function.

The Whole

Development: Personality provides the fullest case study of the Whole's characteristics: creative synthesis, internal regulation, transformation of parts, emergence of novelty. "In Personality, even more than in the earlier structures of Evolution, the whole is in charge, and all development and activity can only be properly understood when viewed as being of a holistic character."

Contemporary connection: Systems biology's emphasis on organism-level properties that emerge from but are not reducible to molecular components mirrors Smuts's treatment of Personality as more than the sum of body and mind.

Fields

Development: Though "field" terminology is less explicit here, the concept operates implicitly. Personality functions as a field that encompasses and transforms body and mind: "Mind does not so much act on Body as penetrate it, and thus act through or inside it." The holistic Personality "pervades" its elements.

Contemporary connection: Michael Levin's work on bioelectric fields in morphogenesis demonstrates that organism-wide informational fields coordinate development—analogue to Smuts's "pervading" Personality.

Creative Evolution / Synthesis

Development: Personality epitomizes creative evolution: "As the process advances this creativeness increases and intensifies, until in the origin of the highest known structures... the creativeness rises to a maximum." Each Personality is "a unique creative novelty." The chapter establishes "creationism" (in Smuts's sense) as the proper description of Personality's emergence.

Contemporary connection: Eva Jablonka and Marion Lamb's expanded conception of evolutionary inheritance systems (genetic, epigenetic, behavioral, symbolic) validates Smuts's insight that human inheritance fundamentally differs from mere genetic transmission—it includes the inheritance of plasticity, learning capacity, and creative potential.

Mind

Development: Chapter X positions Mind within Personality rather than as an independent substance. "Mind is its most important and conspicuous constituent. But the body is also very important and gives the intimate flavour of humanity to Personality." Mind achieves its highest expression through integration with body in the holistic Personality.

Contemporary connection: Embodied cognition research (Varela, Thompson, Rosch) demonstrates that mind cannot be understood apart from body—vindicating Smuts's insistence that "disembodied Mind" is "an impossible concept." Antonio Damasio's somatic marker hypothesis and work on the "feeling brain" shows mind-body integration as functionally essential.

Summary: Chapter X's Contribution to the Holistic Framework

Chapter X accomplishes several crucial tasks within Holism and Evolution:

- Demonstrates that holistic principles scale to the most complex known entity
- Provides a non-reductive solution to the body-mind problem
- Explains human uniqueness and freedom within naturalistic parameters
- Identifies methodological requirements for studying Personality
- Positions the holistic framework as superior to competing philosophical traditions

The chapter thus serves as both culmination and vindication of Smuts's theoretical apparatus, showing that Holism provides conceptual resources adequate to human self-understanding—the ultimate test of any comprehensive metaphysics.