

WISH AND WILL.

A REPLY TO MR. SALTER'S LETTER.

My pleasure in Mr. Salter's article in the October *Monist* is akin to his pleasure in mine. Both are trying to present new facts in old language and stumble in the attempt. The best that can be done is to avoid certain terms and to use other ones in a slightly different sense. When an expression is altered a singular often becomes a plural and what before was multiple gains a unified term. For this reason I avoid using such words as *ultimate*, *permanence*, *reality*, *original*, and *primary* which raise questions that have no point when restated in modern terms.

There was a time when everything was assumed to have a foundation and to be held up by some material support. Language developed in this period and has not been altered to meet new conditions. Now, we should not think of things being supported, caused, or as being ultimate but as parts of the series through which they manifest themselves. All change resolves itself into changes of form, never into change of substance. Any series can be traced in a fixed form for a given distance and then is lost. To go further means to hunt the consequent in the new form it assumes. We can therefore consistently ask what is the antecedent in a series and what the consequent, but it is a mere puzzle to ask what is the ultimate or which the reality. Each antecedent is in turn a consequent and each consequent an antecedent. Wherever a beginning is made there is a consequent; when we have traced it to some preceding form there we have an antecedent which in turn may be a consequent in another series.

It is only by making the ultimate something concrete which cannot be transformed without losing its essence that the opposition arises which older thinkers found between the material and spiritual. If spirit and matter are entities all hope of a consistent philosophy disappears. Instead of thinking of ups and downs which leads to irreconcilable ultimates we should use terms that imply a circuit, thus permitting objects to be both before and behind each other. A dog chasing his tail is both ahead and behind his tail. Perhaps my evolution in this regard will help others. I wanted an economic interpretation of history based on food production but found that it exhausts the soil and leads to diminishing returns.

I strove therefore to find ways in which a return flow is obtained giving back to the soil what is lost in production. Finding this impossible in terms of soil I sought a larger circuit. Food becomes what?—Bone, muscle, and blood. Here I struck a snag. More food should lead to better blood and muscle, but I found it said that uplifts came not through better food but through toil, hardship, and sacrifice. This doctrine can be refuted by showing that the measure of good diet is not its quantity but the amount transformed into pure blood. It is this surplus that counts and not the waste incurred.

No sooner did I get to blood than a new obstacle intruded. Thought, it is said, depends on the nerves with which blood-processes have little to do. If this is true the circuit fails as fully as it did at the other break. But if thought-processes are fundamentally blood-processes, not nerve stimulation, another step may be taken in the circuit. This is true if the antecedent to consciousness is a blood illumination, not a nervous shock. Shock is a form of illumination, not illumination a consequence of shock. The nervous circuit is a side circuit helping in adjustment, but not the source of conscious life.

At this point the series shifts from a physical to a psychic basis. Every illumination has a form and it is through the form that the interpretation takes place upon which thought-processes depend. Nerve action arouses thought only as it alters the form of the illumination we perceive. Form is the basis of thought; conscious processes are its interpretation.

If this is correct the rest of the circuit is easy traveling. The form becomes wish, the wish creates structure; with the aid of structure it becomes will, and will through muscle transforms the external world in the direction of wish-fulfilment. A better world results in which more food is produced. A new circuit then begins with a greater effectiveness because it has back of it at each step a greater surplus. Each circuit on its physical side produces more surplus and on its mental side better articulated forms. Surplus and form are thus the measure of progress, each in its own sphere.

I do not state this to show it to be logical but to show the nature of a circular process. In it, every element is both ahead and behind its neighbor. Each particular investigation can be carried on in its own terms for a while but soon a substitution must be made and a new series created that starts with itself and ends in something else. It is just as true but no truer to say the antecedent

of thought is food as to say food is the consequence of thought. Each statement needs the other as its complement.

With this explanation as a basis I can answer the questions Mr. Salter asks. I did say that no explanation of consciousness was adequate that did not relate it to its physical antecedents, but I would also have said, if occasion demanded, that no explanation of physical structure is adequate that does not reveal its psychic antecedents. Structure is a manifestation of wish and conscious wishes are the result of physical structures. This is not a play on terms but an endeavor to present thought as a process, not as an entity. Physical structure is thus a part of a process with antecedents and consequences neither of which are structure. In a circuit such as I have described the vital elements—energy and wish—assume a temporary form in each of their stages. If this form disappeared with each transformation the next circuit would be as difficult as the preceding. But if each form persists it will be there on subsequent circuits to direct the vital forces. Structures endure longer than the circuit of which they are a part. An ax or tool can be used several times. The psychic struggles of any individual create structure—which structure not only serves this individual end but endures in the descendant making his circuits more effective. They create a surplus, aid in wish-fulfilment and thus lift psychic life to a higher level.

Structure is thus the enduring element of a circuit. Heredity is its higher form but all other structure arises in the same way and performs a like office. The growth of structure is the growth of the universe, yet in its elements there is no such thing as structure. All is flow, transformation, substitution—a fickle mass made coherent by something that comes from it but is not of it.

Mr. Salter asks if wish can modify structure and thus create new structure—why may it not create structure *ab initio*? I thought I had said this. But a necessary qualification may separate my thought from his. A first state in which there were wishes and no structure is foreign to my thought. Each specific structure had a wish as its antecedent, but this specific wish also had a structure antecedent to it. Specific wishes make structure which aids in their fulfilment, but this structure makes new wishes which in turn create some needed structure; and so on *ad infinitum* without beginning or end. It cannot be said that all wishes preceded structure nor that structure as a whole preceded wishes but it can be said that

before each structure was a wish and after it a new wish demanding new structure.

Nerves are structure, they persist; we can dissect them and analyze their content. It thus seems that they give a more secure basis of consciousness than a current of blood. This again is a case where words and their association mislead us. A flow can form as secure a base as can structure. A ship can be held up by stays or it may be held up by a current of water. If by water its support is constantly changing, our language then makes us think that the support is more fickle than if the support was stone or oak. But the support of the water is as secure as the flow of the river and is likely to be more permanent than stone or wood.

So also is the case of a lamp whose illumination is sustained by a flow of oil. Never for an instant does the flame have the same base and yet it is as permanent as the flow on which it depends.

This discussion leads to a problem which might as well be immediately faced. The terms *first cause*, *permanence*, *reality*, and *original force* are applied to God who seems to be degraded without them. It should be remembered that religious emotion centers about the thought of divine protection and not about material origins. Even now, as the late war shows, the war-god stands first in popular affection. It is the philosophers and not the people who have invented the above terms, and they did it to save from a crushing defeat and not to gain a complete victory.

Science drove God out of the sensory world. This defeat the philosophers accepted but tried to save the concept by a retreat from the world of sense. Such a position has never proven satisfactory. God must be a God the sense can reach or be dethroned with the fairies, ghosts, and demons. All there is to the *First Cause* and similar concepts is the associations which philosophy has created, which associations should be altered to meet new conditions just as astronomy was transformed by the growth of science. The insecurity which people felt about mill ponds losing their water was soon displaced. Gravitation held the water better than the older devices. So also will our relations to God become more secure when philosophy places him in a truer light.

God is not the First Cause in the sense philosophers defined it. He is the Great Wish—the Super-Will expressing itself through material structure. Will is not that from which we come but the force that drives us on to fitting goals. Causes, first and last, are

mere trinkets in comparison with the Wish and the Will which makes the universe move onward and upward. The *Was* never equals the *To-Be*.

This view will be called anthropomorphic. So it is. I accept a term meant to deride as a mark of honor. We do create God in our image and give him attributes we cherish. But if our wishes are the outcome of an urge that all feel, pointing to ends which all structure strives to attain, then the true God can be no other than the wished God. We make him and he makes us. It is just as true to say that God is a manifestation of nature as to say nature is a manifestation of God. The wish makes structure and the structure aids in wish-fulfilment. This is the ultimate circuit after which all other circuits are modeled. The higher concept of God is not that he is perfect, absolute, independent, and underivable. He is due to a long series of circular processes just as our material world is. Neither were made in the sense that they had a beginning but both grew in the direction of wish-fulfilment. The Growing, the Becoming is the Ultimate. Philosophy cannot make concepts so perfect as those revealed in nature's processes.

The difference, if there be one, between Mr. Salter's position and mine is the relation of the foreground of thought to its background. He seems to imply that the foreground—that of which we are directly conscious—is less than the content of the background; the latter being permanence, reality, and cause. To me the foreground and the background are on an equality. The foreground in any case is the part of a whole which we see, the background is what we infer. In this sense it is possible to speak of the physical background of consciousness as its antecedent without giving this background any priority. Structure is not a group of lifeless molecules arranged by chance; its background is a wish and wish-fulfilment is its end. To it, the wish is the unseen just as the physical is unseen in consciousness.

If nature is made of absolute unchangeable units there is no evolution. We should be honest in our thinking and decide this fundamental problem apart from the conclusions which follow its acceptance. If evolutionary processes mean anything we start at each stage from objective chaos and subjective wish and end the epoch in objective cosmos and subjective will. Wish acting on chaos creates cosmos; then cosmos and wish become will. In other

words, cosmos is the structure through which wish is transformed into will.

Wishes are in their essence desires for permanence. We want to be immortal, we want reality, we want the absolute. All these are attained through structure and to the degree that they are attained we have the cosmos of the external world. Such are our crude wishes which become embedded in objective structure in the fulfilment of which our material satisfactions arise. But wish acting through this structure ceases to be wish and becomes will. It no longer wants permanence and reality, but yearns for self-expression. Thus wish and will get to be opposing forces. As wish I want permanence, as will I strive to become manifestation. I then place less value on self-preservation and more on self-expression. Will is thus a movement from reality to manifestation while wish moves in the opposite direction.

Wish is thus the antecedent of structure—will its consequent. We get the power to do what we wish and then strive to do something else. Hence the circuit—wish striving for reality while will turns reality back into manifestation. Every man has both these urges in him.

Shakespeare lives in two ways. The libraries contain certain texts which give a material embodiment to what he wrote. But the greater Shakespeare is the influence he exerts on subsequent thought. This Shakespeare has no permanent structure. It is now here now there but always present. If all the copies of his books were destroyed he would still live, ever shifting his embodiment to new subjects. This is Shakespeare as will, or as we say, the spirit of Shakespeare.

So, too, our nation and our culture lives in a material form in our laws, art, and other objective structures, but they also live in a supersensual form in the spirit they evoke. They move from age to age not by heredity nor by permanent structures but as a manifestation without an enduring substratum. There is always a clash between those who want permanence of government or art and those who are moved by the spirit our institutions and culture evoke. One element is wish urging continuance and the other is will striving for self-expression.

That sex is wish has been ably presented of late, but advocates of this err in assuming that because it is wish and therefore fundamental we should yield to it. We do wish for sex pleasure, we do

want race continuance, but the process which leads to the fulfilment of these wishes has resulted in the creation of will, and will wants not sex pleasure but some form of self-expression. Will, therefore, suppresses sex that it may gain an end attained not by its own permanence but by its becoming a supersensual urge which lacks a permanent background.

Christianity has always been at cross purpose with itself because it includes the wish to be immortal and the concept of losing life to live in others. The two views are patched together by theological interpretation but the opposition is not thereby dimmed. Christ doubtless expected death as did Socrates. Thought of without resurrection, he is will striving for self-expression; as resurrection he is wish for permanence. Religion is thus either a scheme of self-perpetuation or a manifestation of self through a changing background.

The success of this paper depends on whether I can make clear the difference between the supersensual urge to transform oneself into other more effective forms and the physical wish to continue in some one form. The wish always strives for something specific and permanent. Will seeks for a flow that lacks a permanent embodiment. What I am, wish seeks to continue; what I am not, will seeks to gain. The two are, however, mutually dependent; each is before and after the other. Between them a circuit is formed which results in a permanence of structure which is wish-fulfilment but also in a rapid transformation of structure which is a manifestation of will. Nothing is so temporary as the psychic if we think of it in terms of its physical background, nor so permanent if thought of as an enduring influence. This supersensual heredity is as real as its sensual counterpart. Each would fail but for the possibility of substitution at points where it loses its effectiveness.

I state these things that I may not be open to the charge which Mr. Salter's words imply of putting the physical before the supersensual. If I have done so the facts can just as well be put the other way. If life is a process it is both these in turn. In each the other may be found if we are not led astray by words. Language helps us when we talk of ultimates, permanence, and reality. We can readily tell what is above or below, what abides and what disappears. We have a great affection for the "Rock of Ages" and little respect for what flits from form to form. All our words imply that whatever changes loses and whatever endures is superior. Mr.

Salter seems to assume that what can be well expressed in words has a superiority to that for which the expression is vague. To test him I shall not ask him to prove he is permanent, absolute, immortal, but ask what is the value of these concepts as compared with self-expression? Would he rather be permanent than be influential? This I understand to be the difference between wish and will. To-morrow's sun must rise on another world. Each form must die to make way for a superior. This is will but it is not wish. Is a sensual immortality better than a transforming influence?

There is a possible confusion of thought it is well to avoid before closing. Can manifestation alter reality? This is a restatement in broader terms of the biologic problem: can personal activity influence the germ-cell? The believer in the absolute has always held what the biologist has now put in concrete terms. If activity can influence the germ-cell an orderly progress of organic beings results. In a deeper sense this is also true if manifestation can alter reality. But if both these questions are answered in the negative no orderly evolution can occur. Accidental changes would still be possible. We might wake up to-morrow and find that germ-cells, atoms, reality, and God are different from yesterday, but on them we could exert no influence. If, however, the difference is a relative one, they being subject to slow cosmic changes and we to the rapid flow of sentiment life, then the reality which is behind all slowly alters to meet first the wish and then the will of transient creatures. In an orderly evolution wish and will must in the end mould reality just as in the biologic evolution action must influence the germ-cell. Between these two views the thinker must choose. The problem is to make the choice a rational one.

What follows is not needed to answer Mr. Salter's questions but is a necessary preliminary to any discussion which may follow. The essential element of my position is the thought of circular processes—transformations which end not in a new creation but in the return of the original in some more complex form. Each circuit means therefore some advance the sum of which is evolution.

Processes are of three kinds, two of which are familiar while the third never has attained the place it deserves. In a mathematical process the terms of the series retain their identity, nothing is either added or taken from their content; in an analytical process elements are subtracted at each step with the result that some pure form is

in the end obtained. This process if judged by results is a devolution, not an evolution. Analytic processes are found only in artificially constructed laboratories while mathematical processes are thought-processes carried on in human minds. All natural processes are synthetic since nature tends toward more complex forms, except where its forces are artificially isolated. It is therefore these syntheses we should try to follow and find how this greater complexity sustains itself.

The difficulty in following such a series comes from the fact that at no one time are all the qualities of the complex unit manifest. Every change makes certain attributes of the antecedent recessive; the new elements may so dominate that the unit seems an independent creation. This is the case with probably all the reactions which we call chemical and certainly is true where the antecedent is physical while the consequent is psychic. In such cases we are likely to lose sight of the fact that we are dealing with a continuous process and think of each link as an independent unit. We thus give to each link a name which indicates its manifest attributes ignoring the recessive traits which are as much a part of the unit as those which at the moment make their presence felt. A synthetic series cannot therefore be traced with the ease which mathematical or analytical series present. The parts seem independent and the isolation is made emphatic by the words we use.

There can, for example, be little doubt but that tropic and instinctive action are closely related, instructive action being more a complex because of the introduction of some new element. Yet we think of them as distinct because their manifestations are so different. A tropic act is judged by its physical antecedents while an instinctive is judged by the behavior which follows its action. We see only the behavior and not the recessive elements which are repressed. Yet doubtless the tropic elements are there and as active as ever, only their consequences are not manifest in behavior. Normal behavior is thus not only certain manifest traits but certain suppressions which prevent the outing of other inherent tendencies.

The doctrine of the subconscious rests on this fact. All of the antecedent tendencies, the simpler grouping of earlier complexes are as active as ever in the mind, but they have no means of manifesting themselves so long as the normal dominance of certain elements is maintained. Break this dominance and the action of the simpler antecedent elements comes to the fore. We then act as if we

were subnormal, subhuman, or even as if tropic reactions due to purely physical events were our masters. We save ourselves this confusion if we recognize that we are dealing not with independent units such as our words indicate but with a synthetic series of growing complexity every element of which is active but only a few of which are manifest in a given conjunction.

I shall give a series of these synthetic changes to illustrate my point, but the reader, to follow the series, must guard himself against the pitfalls which language creates. With each term he will have associations which dim the relation between antecedent and consequent, if not completely destroy it. Each term in the synthetic group will seem independent because we name it and think of it in connection with its manifest traits and ignore those which are for the moment recessive. With this warning I shall state the series and give a subsequent explanation of the connection between them which exists when we think of them in terms of their recessive attributes.

Tropism becomes strain.

Strain becomes visual form.

Form becomes association.

Association becomes wish.

Wish becomes structure.

Structure becomes will.

Will becomes cosmos.

We have no good word to use as the connecting link in these cases. Perhaps "is the antecedent of" or "is transformed into" would be better in specific instances. What I have tried to do is to name each step in the series of the dominant manifestations made at this point. This creates a jolt unless the reader keeps in mind the complex unit which is being carried along and thus disregards the associations the words almost inevitably impose on thought.

I start with tropisms because they have in them no element of heredity, being determined solely by objective conditions. But if a tropism is judged as conduct it manifests itself as strain. The part is held in certain fixed relations and other acts than the one manifest are prevented. Strain, however, is manifest in consciousness not as strain but in some visual form. By it, the internal illumination is altered into some figure and through it we judge of what is happening externally. These forms become associations or complexes, and thus we get a series of mental substitutions which

become the basis of thought-processes. Out of these arise our wishes and aversions, the one being the index of external adjustment and the other of nonconformity with nature. Wishes then become structure which aid in their fulfilment, and structure manifests itself in will. Will in turn is plainly the result of the pressure for wish-fulfilment, but when once acquired moves not in this direction but toward the betterment of cosmic processes. The circuit thus starts with a given perfection of cosmic processes represented by tropic actions and ends in an improved cosmos.

Such I take it to be the essence of a synthetic process. It seems disjointed because in each stage so many of its attributes are recessive. It is the only true natural process in spite of the fact that thought and laboratory processes seem to be of a higher order. Their simplicity, however, is their fault for it leads to the neglect of factors which are active even if incapable of observation. Some day we may manufacture a language which will enable us to carry a synthetic series through its complexities as readily as we now think in terms of mathematics or of the laboratory, but in the meantime even the most alert will lose their way in the intricacies which synthetic processes present.

There is a further point to which I return not because its bearings are obscure to Mr. Salter but because others may not see them as clearly as he does. To me, it is fundamental that the wish to do precedes the structural power to do what is wished. This will by most readers be turned into the familiar problem of the inheritance of acquired characters, to which I am not adverse if I am permitted to show the present status of this problem. The question thus asked cannot be answered by a direct yes or no but must be met by some new statement of the problem involved. By its propounders the doctrine of acquired characters was upheld by the assumed inheritance of birthmarks and defective traits. Subsequent investigations proved the falsity of these assumptions and thus left the original position without a firm foundation. Admitting this, is it not likewise true that recent investigation has undermined the opposite doctrine? Its premises are: descendants vary, numbers increase, the less adjustive fail to survive and thus arises a steady tendency for a type to vary in the direction of better adjustment, a doctrine which falls as soon as the Mendelian law and that of unit characters are promulgated. Variation in descendants is due not to the modification of unit characters but to their dominance and

recession. A person who does not manifest a given unit character may have it in his heredity as fully as he who manifests it. His descendant may show again the trait which seems absent in the parent. The apparent new is not new but a new combination of the inherent unit characters. Variation is thus merely a variation in dominance, not a variation in heritable traits. Under these conditions elimination merely reduces the variety of combinations which may attain dominance. It tends to produce a pure stock, not a new stock. We see plenty of evidence of this in the various species of animals that have assumed a fixed form. Elimination thus tends to a fixity, not to an improvement. The premises of the argument depending on variation and elimination are thereby undermined and the position of the orthodox group becomes no sounder than that of the believer in the inheritance of birthmarks and physical defects.

The solution to the problem involved must come from some new approach. Questions must be asked to which an answer can be given, and these must be more specific than those involved in the old controversy.

In harmony with this program I would first ask: can wishes influence structure? The only possible answer to this question is that they can. The wish to be a blacksmith leads to development of arm muscles. Exercise which has a wish back of it invariably leads to an increase of the power to execute.

The next question is: can the action of parents accelerate and retard the development of offspring? Here again the reply seems plain. Our educational processes are processes of acceleration. In each generation we transfer our wishes to our offspring at an earlier date and also give to them a greater power of execution. Wishes are thus not only transferred to offspring but also modify structural development in the direction of wish-fulfilment.

I shall at this point be expected to jump to the conclusion that acquired traits are inherited. But this is going too fast. We have control of one element of the problem but have left a more important one in the background which likewise needs a solution. Heritable action is through structures, and structures are the visible manifestations of unit characters. Is activity of this sort the first kind of activity or has it a predecessor? This brings up the relation of structural to tropic activity. Are we forced to make a given movement and then acquire a structure with which to do it, or must we wait for the appearance of structure before a given movement

can be performed? The essential element in tropic movement is that it is caused not by inherited structure but by the direct action of external forces. The act is done by the aid of light, heat, gravitation, or other virion pressures. Do forced movements of this sort precede or follow the development of a structure to do the act, or do they follow the appearance of the unit characters out of which voluntary movements arise? This is the real question, and not, Are acquired characters inherited? To it there can be but one reply; the forced movement antedates the voluntary movement depending on structure and unit characters.

The difference between the two views of heredity can be put in this way. If forced movements come first an organism is held to the doing of a particular act through objective forces until the hereditary mechanism is developed by which the movement is made. It does the act and then develops a mechanism by which the act is done in a better way. No use is made of the concept of infinite variability nor of the influence of elimination. Heredity follows along the line along which physical forces compel it to move.

The accepted biologic theory runs counter to this. First variability of offspring, then overpopulation, and then elimination. Progress comes through the competition of living organisms; while the rival theory assumes that it comes through the pressure of external forces on all individuals. The rate of increase of a species is of no consequence if the pressure which leads to progress acts on all members of the group. We thus build a theory of natural compulsion as contrasted with a theory of natural selection.

I use these facts to get an issue in modern terms which when once stated and its import clearly apprehended can have but one answer; yet if left in this form the victory is a barren one. The vital question is not whether there are physical forced movements, but whether these are also psychic tropisms. As the moth approaches the flame because it has no mechanism by which to turn away, do we also act because of unseen forces which we have no conscious mechanism to resist? This is the problem of the unconscious. What we have in consciousness is a group of structural mechanisms, the outcome of certain inherited unit characters. In our subconsciousness we have a group of tropic forces which control our activity until mechanisms are inherited by which they may be suppressed. We gain in freedom as we grow in heredity since the power of suppression depends on the growth of heritable traits. If

this is correct the wish to do precedes the structure by which the act is done. I do not say the wish causes the growth of mental structure but merely that it is the antecedent.

The whole case can be better put by thinking of the wish as the representative consciousness of subconscious forced movements. What we wish we must do even if we have no mechanism with which to do it. It represents therefore the force which is compelling structural growth, while acquired characters represent the distance heredity has gone in the fulfilment of wish, or, in other words, the movement of heredity to meet the demands of the tropic forces acting in our subconsciousness. Wishes and acquired characters are not causes. They are indexes of the pressure exerted by underlying, as yet non-structural forces.

While I have used the term "psychic tropisms" to contrast them with "physical tropisms" I would not be understood to imply that they are *purely* psychic. What seems psychic is mainly physical. We get a better contrast by putting the nerves in contrast to the blood. Most of our heritable mental mechanisms are nervous and from them our conscious acts arise. Most of our mental tropisms act through the blood which in turn has its vital content determined by certain glands. If in the place of heat, light, and gravitation we put certain well-known glands we can explain the tropic part of our activity as readily as we can account for the movement of a moth in the presence of light.

In psychology the question is often asked: does muscular action precede or follow mental emotion? Both answers are in part right. If we act through what we have structure with which to act the action precedes the emotion. This is true in the main of conscious mechanical acts. But if we are in the grip of a subconscious forced movement emotion boils before action begins. This means that certain glands throw their content into the blood, and of the change we become conscious in a rising tide of emotion. Then we must act even if our conscious judgment tells us that action is vain. We must try to do the impossible and keep trying until the mechanism arises on which victory depends. The wish thus becomes will, but what will will do emotion cannot say. It is a law unto itself and may choose not to attain the wish but to suppress the emotion of which the wish is the visible representative.

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