

## PERSONS AND ULTIMATE CONCERNS: WHO WE ARE IS WHAT WE CARE ABOUT

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The sociological problem of conceptualising the person is how to capture someone who is partly formed by their sociality, but also has the capacity to transform their society in some part. The difficulty is that social theorising has oscillated between these two extremes. On the one hand, Enlightenment thought promoted an ‘undersocialised’ view of man,<sup>1</sup> one whose human constitution owed nothing to society and was thus a self-sufficient ‘outsider’ who simply operated in a social environment. On the other hand, there is a later but pervasive ‘oversocialised’ view of man, whose every feature, beyond his biology, is shaped and moulded by his social context. He thus becomes such a dependent ‘insider’ that he has no capacity to transform his social environment.

Instead, if we are to understand and model the human being as *both* ‘child’ and ‘parent’ of society there are two requirements. Firstly, social theory needs a concept of man whose sociality does make a vital contribution to the realisation of his potential *qua* human being. Secondly, however, it requires a concept of man who does possess sufficient relatively autonomous properties and powers that he can reflect and act upon his social context, along with others like him, in order to transform it.

It is argued that both the ‘undersocialised’ and the ‘oversocialised’ models of humankind are inadequate foundations for social theory because they present us with either a self-sufficient *maker* of society, or a supine social product who is *made*.

<sup>1</sup> ‘Man’ and especially ‘rational man’ was the term current in Enlightenment thinking. Because it is awkward to impose inclusive language retrospectively and distracting to insert inverted commas, I reluctantly abide with the term ‘man’, as standing for humanity, when referring to this tradition, its heirs, successors and adversaries.

The preliminary part of this paper seeks to show how these two defective models of the human being have sequentially dominated social theory since the Enlightenment, and to indicate their deficiencies for social theorising. The bulk of the paper attempts to substitute a better conception<sup>2</sup> of man from the perspective of social realism. This re-conceptualisation grants humankind (i) temporal priority, (ii) relative autonomy, and (iii) causal efficacy, in relation to the social beings that they become and the powers of transformative reflection and action which they bring to their social context – powers that are independent of social mediation.

#### MODERNITY'S MAN AND SOCIETY'S BEING

Two unsatisfactory models of the human being have sequentially dominated social theorising since the Enlightenment. These are mirror images of each other, since the one stresses complete human self-sufficiency, whilst the other emphasises utter social dependency.

In cameo, the Enlightenment had allowed the 'death of God' to issue in titanic Man. Thus, the secularisation of modernity was accompanied by an endorsement of human self-determination: of people's powers to come to know the world, master their environment and thus to control their own destiny as the 'measure of all things'. Not only does *'Modernity's Man'* stand outside nature as its master, he also stands outside history as the lone individual whose relations with other beings and other things are not in any way constitutive of his self but are merely contingent accretions, detachable from his essence. Thus the modern self is universally pre-given.

As the heritage of the Enlightenment tradition, *'Modernity's Man'* was a model which had stripped-down the human being until he or she had one property alone, that of instrumental rationality, namely the capacity to maximise his preferences through means-ends relationships and so to optimise his utility. Yet, this model of *homo economicus* could not deal with our normativity or our affectivity, both of which are intentional, that is they are 'about' relations with the various orders of reality: the natural, practical, social and transcendental. These relationships could not be allowed to be, even partially, constitutive of who we are. Instead, the lone, atomistic and

<sup>2</sup> All arguments presented here are developed more fully in Margaret S. Archer, *Being Human: The Problem of Agency*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000.

opportunistic bargain-hunter stood forth as the impoverished model of man.

On the one hand, some of the many things social with which this model could not deal were phenomena like voluntary collective behaviour, leading to the creation of public goods, or normative behaviour, when *homo economicus* recognised his dependence upon others for his own welfare, and, finally, his expressive solidarity and willingness to share. On the other hand, one of the most important things with which this model cannot cope is the human capacity to transcend instrumental rationality and to have 'ultimate concerns'. These are concerns that are not a means to anything beyond them, but are *commitments which are constitutive of who we are* and thus the basis of our personal identities. It is only in the light of our 'ultimate concerns' that our actions are ultimately intelligible. None of this caring can be impoverished by reducing it to an instrumental means-ends relationship, which is presumed to leave us 'better off' relative to some indeterminate notion of future 'utility'.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, this was the model of man which was eagerly seized upon by social contract theorists in politics, Utilitarians in ethics and social policy, and liberals in political economy. *Homo Economicus* is a survivor. He is also a colonial adventurer and, in the hands of Rational Choice theorists, he bids to conquer social science in general. As Gary Becker outlines this mission, 'The economic approach is a comprehensive one that is applicable to all human behaviour'.<sup>4</sup>

However, the rise of postmodernism during the last two decades represented a virulent rejection of '*Modernity's Man*', which then spilt over into the dissolution of the human subject and a corresponding inflation of the importance of society. This displacement of the human subject and this celebration of the power of social forces to shape and to mould, reaches back to the Durkheimian view of the human being as 'indeterminate material', at least in the *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Nowadays, in Lyotard's words, 'a *self* does not amount to much',<sup>5</sup> and in Rorty's follow-up, 'Socialisation ...

<sup>3</sup> For a critique of Rational Choice Theory's 'model of man', see Margaret S. Archer, 'Homo Economicus, Homo Sociologicus and Homo Sentiens', in M.S. Archer and J.Q. Tritter (eds.), *Rational Choice Theory: Resisting Colonization*, Routledge, London, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> G. Becker, *The Economic Approach to Human Behaviour*, Chicago University Press, 1976, p. 8. It seems regrettable that Becker termed this 'the economic approach' because of the erroneous implication that all economists endorse it.

<sup>5</sup> J-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984, p. 15.

goes all the way down'.<sup>6</sup> To give humankind this epiphenomenal status necessarily deflects all real interest onto the forces of socialisation. People are indeed perfectly uninteresting if they possess no personal powers which can make a difference.

The de-centring of the Enlightenment concept of the human being thus leads directly to an actual dissolution of the self, which becomes kaleidoscopically shaped by the flux of historico-cultural contingencies. References to the human person become indefinite, since contingency deprives him or her of any properties or powers which are intrinsic to humankind and inalienable from it. Consequently, to Foucault, 'Man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea.'<sup>7</sup>

Postmodernism has massively reinforced the anti-realist strand of idealism in social theory and thus given ballast to Social Constructionism. This is the generic view that there are *no* emergent properties and powers pertaining to human persons, namely ones which exist in between human beings as organic parcels of molecules and humankind as generated from a network of social meanings.<sup>8</sup> The model of '*Society's Being*' is Social Constructionism's contribution to the debate, which presents all our human properties and powers, apart from our biological constitution, as the gift of society. From this viewpoint, there is only one flat, unstratified, powerful particular, the human person – who is a site or literally a point of view. Beyond that, our selfhood is a grammatical fiction, a product of learning to master the first-person pronoun system, and thus quite simply a theory of the self which is appropriated from society. Constructionism thus elides the *concept of self* with the *sense of self*. We are nothing beyond what society makes us, and it makes us what we are through our joining society's conversation. *Society's Being* thus impoverishes humanity, by subtracting from our human powers and accrediting all of them – selfhood, reflexivity, thought, memory, emotionality and belief – to society's discourse.

What makes human subjects act now becomes an urgent question because the answer cannot ever be given in terms of people themselves; they have neither the human resources to pursue their own aims nor the

<sup>6</sup> Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 185.

<sup>7</sup> M. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, New York, Random House, 1970, p. 387.

<sup>8</sup> The best example of this model is provided by the work of Rom Harré. The leitmotif of his social constructionism is the following statement: 'A person is not a natural object, but a cultural artefact'. *Personal Being*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983, p. 20.

capacity to find reasons good if they are not in social currency. This means that to the Constructionists people can only be moved by reasons *appropriated* from society and are thus effectively condemned to being *conventionalists*. Constructionists are unable to explain why some people seek to replace society's rules and are unwilling to allow that this originates in people themselves – from their personal concerns that are forged in the space *between* the self and reality as a whole.

#### THE NEED FOR REALISM'S SELF

From the realist point of view, the central deficiency of these two models is their basic denial that *the nature of reality* as a whole makes any difference to the people that we become or even to our becoming people. *Modernity's Man* is preformed and his formation, that is the emergence of his properties and powers, is not dependent upon his experiences of reality. Indeed, reality can only come to him filtered through an instrumental rationality that is shackled to his interests – one whose own genesis is left mysterious. Preference formation has remained obscure, from the origins of the Humean 'passions' to the goals optimised by the contemporary rational chooser. The model is *anthropocentric* because man works on reality as a whole but reality does not work upon man, except by attaching risks and costs to the accomplishment of his pre-formed designs. In short, he is closed against any experience of reality which could make him fundamentally different from what he already is.

Similarly, *Society's Being* is also a model which forecloses direct interplay with most of reality. Here the whole of reality comes to people sieved through one part of it, 'society's conversation'. The very notion of being selves is merely a theory appropriated from society and what people make of the world is a matter of permutations upon their appropriations. Again this model cuts man off from any experience of reality itself, one which could make him fundamentally different from what social discourse makes of him. Society is the gatekeeper of reality and therefore all that we become is society's gift because it is mediated through it.

What is lost, in both versions, is the crucial notion of experience of reality; that the way matters are can affect how we are. This is because both anthropocentrism and sociocentrism are two versions of the 'epistemic fallacy', where what reality is taken to be – courtesy of our instrumental rationality or social discourse – is substituted for reality itself. Realism cannot

endorse the 'epistemic fallacy' and, in this connection, it must necessarily insist that what exists (ontologically) has a regulatory effect upon what we make of it and, in turn, what it makes of us. These effects are independent of our full discursive penetration, just as gravity influenced us and the projects we could entertain long before we conceptualised it (epistemologically).

Relations between humanity and reality are intrinsic to the development of human properties which are *necessary* conditions of social life itself. Thus, I am advancing a transcendental argument for the necessity of a 'sense of self' to the existence of society. The continuity of consciousness, meaning a continuous 'sense of self', was first put forward by Locke.<sup>9</sup> To defend it entails maintaining the crucial distinction between the evolving *concept* of self (which is indeed social) and the universal *sense* of self (which is not). This distinction has been upheld by certain anthropologists, like Marcel Mauss<sup>10</sup> to whom the universal sense of 'the "self" (Moi) is everywhere present'. This constant element consists in the fact that 'there has never existed a human being who has not been aware, not only of his body but also of his individuality, both spiritual and physical'.<sup>11</sup> However, there has been a persistent tendency in the social sciences to absorb the *sense of self* into the *concept of self* and thus to credit what is universal to the cultural balance sheet.

The best way of showing that the distinction should be maintained is a demonstration of its necessity – i.e. that a *sense of self* must be distinct from social variations in *concepts of selves* because society could not work without people who have a continuity of consciousness. The demonstration consists in showing that for anyone to appropriate social expectations it is necessary for them to have a sense of self upon which these impinge, such

<sup>9</sup> Locke put forward a definition which has considerable intuitive appeal, such that a person was 'a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places' (*Essay II*, xxvii, 2). From Bishop Butler onwards, critics have construed such continuity of consciousness exclusively in terms of memory and then shown that memory alone fails to secure strict personal identity. See, for example, Bernard Williams, *Problems of the Self*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1973. A defence of a modified neo-Lockean definition is provided by David Wiggins, 'Locke, Butler and the Stream of Consciousness: and Man as a Natural Kind', *Philosophy*, 51, 1976, which preserves the original insight.

<sup>10</sup> Marcel Mauss, 'A category of the human mind: the notion of person; the notion of self', in M.Carrithers, S.Collins and S.Lukes (eds), *The Category of the Person*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

that they recognise what is expected of them (otherwise obligations cannot be personally appropriated).

Hence, for example, the individual Zuni has to sense that his two given names, one for Summer and one for Winter, apply to the *same* self, which is also the rightful successor of the ancestor who is held to live again in the body of each who bears his names. Correct appropriation (by the proper man for all seasons) is dependent upon a continuity of consciousness which is an integral part of what we mean by selfhood. No generalised social belief in ancestral reincarnation will suffice; for unless there is a self which (pro)claims *I am that ancestor*, then the belief which is held to be general turns out to be one which has no actual takers! Nor is this situation improved by vague talk about 'social pressures' to enact roles or assume genealogical responsibilities. On the contrary, this is incoherent for it boils down to meaning that everyone knows what roles should be filled but that no-one has enough of a sense of self to feel that these expectations apply to them. The implication for society is that nothing gets done. For without selves which sense responsibilities to be their own and which also own expectations, the latter have all the force of the complaint that 'someone ought to do something about it'. Thus no version of socialisation theory can work with 'indeterminate material'. Human beings have to be determinate in this one way at least, that of acknowledging themselves to be the same beings over time. In other words, Zuni society relies upon a 'sense of self', even though, concepts of the self, within Zuni culture, are unlike ours.

To reinforce this transcendental argument, it should be noted that the two impoverished sociological models of the person, examined earlier, are also dependent upon a continuity of self-consciousness – of which they give no account. '*Society's Being*' needs this sense of self in order for a subject to know that social obligations pertain to her, rather than being diffuse expectations, and that when they clash it is she who is put on the spot and has to exercise a creativity which cannot be furnished by consulting the discursive canon. Unscripted performances, which hold society together, need an active subject who is enough of a self to acknowledge her obligation to write her own script to cover the occasion. Similarly, this continuous sense that we are one and the same being over time is equally indispensable to '*Modernity's Man*'. He needs this sense of self if he is consistently to pursue his preference schedule, for he has to know both that they are his preferences and also how he is doing in maximising them over time.

## THE EMERGENCE OF PERSONAL IDENTITY

So far I have dealt with only one property of human subjects, namely their crucial ability to know themselves to be the *same being* over time because they have a continuous sense of self. However, they also become the bearers of further emergent properties and powers which are what make them recognisable as persons who respond differently to the world and act within it to change it. The next step is therefore to account for the emergence of the *personal identity* of agents, derived from their interactions with reality: its natural, practical, social and transcendental orders. However, such a *personal identity* depends upon the prior emergence of a *sense of self* because the latter has to secure the fact that the different orders of reality are all impinging on the same subject – who also knows it.

Fundamentally, *personal identity* is a matter of what we care about. This proposition is examined in exclusively secular terms in the present section. Constituted as we are, and the world being the way it is, humans ineluctably interact with the three different orders of natural reality: (i) nature, (ii) practice and (iii) the social. Humans necessarily have to sustain relationships with the natural world, work relationships and social relationships if they are to survive and thrive. Therefore, none of us can afford to be indifferent to the concerns that are embedded in our relations with all three natural orders.

Our emotional development is part of this interaction because emotions convey the import of different kinds of situations to us. In other words, the natural order, the practical order and the discursive order are the intentional objects to which three different clusters of emotions are related. Because emotions are seen as ‘commentaries upon our concerns’,<sup>12</sup> then emotionality is our reflexive response to the world. A distinct type of concern derives from each of these three orders. The concerns at stake are respectively those of ‘physical well-being’ in relation to the natural order, ‘performative competence’ in relation to the practical order and ‘self-worth’ in relation to the social order.

(i) In nature human beings have the power to *anticipate* what the import of environmental occurrences will be for their *bodily well-being*. Anticipation is the key to affect. We know what the bodily consequences of

<sup>12</sup> Margaret S. Archer, ‘Emotions as Commentaries on Human Concerns’, in Jonathan H. Turner (ed.), *Theory and Research on Human Emotions*, Elsevier, Amsterdam, 2004, p. 327-356.

fire or icy water will be and somatically this is projected as fear; were it not for anticipation, there would be nothing other than the pain of the event itself. It is from the interaction between environmental circumstances and embodied concerns that, because we are conscious beings, we can anticipate their conjunction and furnish ourselves with an emotional commentary. The relationship between properties of the environment and properties of our embodiment are sufficient for the emergence of emotions like fear, anger, disgust and relief.

(ii) In the practical order there is a distinct cluster of emotions which are emergent from our subject/object relations, which concern our *performative achievement*. These are the two strings made up of frustration, boredom and depression, on the one hand, and satisfaction, joy, exhilaration and euphoria, on the other. The task/undertaker relationship is quintessentially that of subject confronting object and what exactly goes on between them is known to the subject alone. Each task makes its own demands upon the undertaker, if a skilled performance is to be produced. It thus carries its own standards which give the undertaker either positive or negative feedback. In other words, the sense of failure and the sense of achievement are reflected emotionally. Positive emotions foster continued practice and negative affect predisposes towards its cessation.

(iii) In the social order we cannot avoid becoming a subject among subjects. With it come 'subject-referring properties' (such as admirable or shameful), which convey the import of social normativity to our own concerns in society. Generically, the most important of our social concerns is our *self-worth* which is vested in certain projects (career, family, community, club or church) whose success or failure we take as vindicating our worth or damaging it. It is because we have invested ourselves in these social projects that we are susceptible of emotionality in relation to society's normative evaluation of our performance in these roles. Our behaviour is regulated by hopes and fears, that is anticipations of social approbation/disapprobation. Simply to be a role incumbent has no such emotional implications – pupils who vest none of their self-worth in their school performance are not downcast by examination failure. Therefore, it is our own definitions of what constitutes our self-worth that determine which of society's normative evaluations matter enough for us to be emotional about them; few people are genuinely distressed about collecting a parking ticket.

However, a dilemma now confronts all people. It arises because every person receives all three kinds of emotional commentaries on their concerns, originating from each of the orders of natural reality – nature, prac-

tice and the social. Because they have to live and attempt to thrive in the three orders simultaneously, they must necessarily (in some way and to some degree) attend to all three clusters of commentaries. This is their problem. Nothing guarantees that the three sets of first-order emotions dovetail harmoniously. It follows that the concerns to which they relate cannot all be promoted without conflict arising between them. For example, an evasive response to the promptings of physical fear can threaten social self-worth by producing cowardly acts; cessation of an activity in response to boredom in the practical domain can threaten physical well-being; and withdrawal as a response to social shaming may entail a loss of livelihood. In other words, momentary attention to pressing commentaries may literally produce the instant gratification of concerns in one order, but it is a recipe for disaster. This is because we have no alternative but to inhabit the three natural orders simultaneously and none of their concerns can be bracketed-away for long. It is only on rather rare occasions that a particular commentary has semi-automatic priority, as in escaping a fire, undertaking a test or getting married.

Most of the time, each person has to work out their own *modus vivendi* in relation to the three natural orders. What this entails is striking a liveable balance within our trinity of inescapable naturalistic concerns. This *modus vivendi* can prioritise one of the three orders of reality, as with someone who is said to 'live for their art', but what it cannot do is entirely to neglect the other orders. Yet which precise balance we strike between our concerns and what precisely figures amongst an individual's concerns is what gives us our strict identity as *particular persons*. Our emergent *personal identities* are a matter of how we prioritise one concern as our 'ultimate concern' and how we subordinate but yet accommodate others to it, because, constituted as we are, we cannot be unconcerned about how we fare in all three orders of natural reality. Since these concerns can never be exclusively social and since the *modus vivendi* is worked out by an active and reflexive agent, *personal identity* cannot be the gift of society.

That we all have concerns in the natural, practical and social orders is unavoidable, but *which* concerns and in *what* configuration is a matter of human reflexivity. The process of arriving at a configuration, which prioritises our 'ultimate concerns' and accommodates others to them is both cognitive and affective. It entails both judgements of worth and an assessment of whether or not we care enough to be able to live with the costs and trade-offs involved. We are fallible on each count, but our struggle to establish a *modus vivendi* reflecting our commitments is an active process of delibera-

tion that takes place through our reflexive 'internal conversations'. In these we 'test' our potential or ongoing commitments against our emotional commentaries, which tell us whether we are up to living this or that committed life. Because the commentaries will not be unanimous, the inner conversation involves evaluating them, promoting some and subordinating others, such that the combination of concerns we affirm are also those with which we feel we can live. Since the process is corrigible (we may get it wrong or circumstances may change), the conversation is ongoing. I believe that our 'internal conversations' are the most neglected phenomenon in social theory, which has never adequately examined the *process* of reflexivity that makes us the singular subjects we are. I have begun to unpack this process as an interior dialogue through which a *personal identity* is forged by coming to identify one's self as the being-with-this-constellation-of-concerns.<sup>13</sup>

By this act of identity-formation, a new source of imports comes into being. We now interpret and articulate imports in the light of our commitments which define us, and this brings with it a transformation of emotional commentary. In short, our new commitments represent a novel sounding-board for the emotions. For example, if marriage is one of our prime concerns, then an attractive opportunity for infidelity is also felt as a threat of betrayal; its import is that of a *liaison dangereuse*, because we are no longer capable of the simplicity of a purely first-order response. Our reactions to relevant events are emotionally transmuted by our ultimate concerns. This is reinforced because our current commitments also transvalue our pasts; the vegetarian is disgusted at once having enjoyed a rare steak and the 'green' inwardly shudders at once having worn a fur coat. The effect of these retrospective feelings is to provide positive reinforcement for present commitments. The same process also works prospectively, for the simple reason that our lives become organised around them. We consort and concelebrate with those sharing our commitments and 'discomfort' is the transvalued feeling that keeps us apart from those with counter-commitments.

The *modus vivendi*, which depends upon a durable and effective transvaluation of our emotional responses, is an achievement – not one which can be accomplished immediately and not one which can necessarily be sustained. For children and young people, who undoubtedly have inner dialogues, the establishment of a stable configuration of commitments is a vir-

<sup>13</sup> See Margaret S. Archer, *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.

tual impossibility because they are still learning about themselves, the world and the relations between them. Nor is its achievement a certainty at maturity. Some remain at the mercy of their first-order emotional pushes and pulls, drifting from job to job, place to place and relationship to relationship. Drift means an absence of *personal identity* and the accumulation of circumstances which make it harder to form one. The downward spiral of homelessness or addiction is downwards precisely because it condemns people to preoccupation with the satisfaction of first-order commentaries – the next night or the next fix. Furthermore, there are destabilised commitments resulting from external changes of circumstances, some of which are predictable (for example, in the life-cycle), whilst others derive from the contingencies of life in an open system (for instance, involuntary redundancy). These are nodal points which prompt a radical re-opening of the ‘internal conversation’. But for all people the dialogue is a continuous reflexive monitoring of our concerns, since our commitments are promissory and provisional – subject to renewal or revision.

#### PERSONAL IDENTITY AND RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

What has been sketched so far is a purely secular argument about our ineluctable embedding in the natural, practical and social orders of reality. It has been maintained that our personal identities derive from our ultimate concerns, from what we care about most, together with our other concerns, which cannot be discarded but are accommodated to our prime commitment. As Frankfurt put the matter, our ultimate concerns are definitive of us in that what our commitments ‘keep us from violating are not our duties or our obligations but ourselves’<sup>14</sup> – that is what I am calling our personal identities. What difference is made if our relations with transcendental reality are introduced?

Those who hold that they have justifiable beliefs in the existence of God also consider that they have good reasons for holding relations between humanity and divinity to be as ineluctable as those pertaining between humankind and the other orders of reality. But what of those who disavow the transcendent and therefore any transcendental concern? I will argue that

<sup>14</sup> Harry G. Frankfurt, *The Importance of What We Care About*, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 91.

this denial has the same damaging consequences for human well-being as ignoring those of our concerns that are vested in natural, practical and social reality. How can this possibly be asserted, since non-believers appear to make out just as well in the world – including making their way through it with as much goodness and generosity as do believers? My argument is based on the belief that God is love – the quintessence of unconditional love. That is what He offers us by His nature. To defend my case, I thus have to adduce some indispensable human concern that hinges upon our relations with transcendental reality, namely one which it is universally damaging for us to ignore and one which is intimately related to our flourishing.

There seems to be every reason to advance love itself as this concern. As an emotional commentary, love also signals the most profound human concern in that our fulfilment depends upon our need to love and to be loved. It has been debated since Antiquity what makes this particular emotion different from others. The answer seems to lie neither in its intentionality nor in its cognitive or evaluative characteristics, but quite simply in its indispensability. As Robert Brown puts it, 'What makes love unusual among the emotions is the human inability to do without it – whether its bestowal or receipt – and the immense amount of satisfaction that love commonly brings to the people concerned ... Only love is both completely indispensable to the functioning of human society and a source of the fullest satisfaction known to human beings'.<sup>15</sup> It follows that the unbeliever does not do without love because she cannot if it is indispensable. She may find it in love of nature, of art or of another person – where only in the last case can it be received as well as given. It remains to try to show that someone who settles for anything less than divine love then damages their potential for fulfilment.<sup>16</sup>

To care about anything sufficiently to make it a matter of ultimate concern, entails two elements. Firstly, there is a cognitive judgement about its inherent worth, which is always fallible. Secondly, there is a deep emotional attachment to it and must be since it would be strange to say that a person was devoted to X if they felt quite indifferent towards it.<sup>17</sup> The affective element is not fallible; we cannot be mistaken that we love but, nevertheless, we can love unwisely by pinning our affections on someone or something of dubious worth – even in our own eyes.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Brown, *Analyzing Love*, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p 126-7.

<sup>16</sup> This is basically St Augustine's argument: 'Fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te'.

<sup>17</sup> See Justin Oakley, *Morality and the Emotions*, Routledge, London, 1992, p. 65.

If the religious believer's belief is justifiable, then he or she cannot be wrong in their cognitive judgement that God is, by his nature, inherently worthy of the highest loving concern. This is how they have experienced Him to be and it is these experiences which constitute the justification for their religious belief.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, unbelievers would probably concur that were there a God whose nature is that of pure unconditional love, whose intentions towards humankind were that we should participate in it to the fullest, their judgement about his supreme goodness would not be in doubt. What they doubt is not his putative worth but his existence. However, were they to become convinced through experience that he does exist, they themselves would admit that they had previously invested their loving in something inherently less worthy and which failed fully to satisfy.

We need to go one step further than this to show that human fulfilment depends upon perfect love and that only lesser degrees of satisfaction derive from imperfect loves. This is possible because in the long running Aristotelian debate about whether we love someone or the qualities that they personify, it seems that on either side we settle for the imperfectly worthy. If we love a (human) person 'for themselves', as is often said, then the qualities that they do instantiate may well leave out some of those which we value highly - it is improbable that this would not be the case. Conversely, if we love someone because they (very nearly) embody all the qualities that we value most highly, we will also have to put up with unrelated characteristics to which we are not wholly indifferent: as with the intelligent, virtuous and handsome man who also dominates every conversation. Only a being whose person and nature are identical, one that consists of love itself, is inherently and unreservedly worthy of our highest loving concern. Only God fulfils these desiderata. To be love is to love unconditionally, because there is nothing else upon which such a nature can set store without contradicting that very nature. To be love is also to love unchangeably, since to love less or more would be a contradiction in terms. Of course, consequentiality, conditionality and changeability are the very rocks upon which human loving most frequently breaks up. Human love does indeed tend to alter when it alteration finds.

<sup>18</sup> Note that this is an argument *from* religious experience. Those who come to believe in other ways, such as through tradition alone or from natural theology, will not have personal knowledge of God's nature, in the first case, and may not even ascribe a nature to him, in the second case, where he may simply be accepted as a (mechanistic) 'first cause'.

However, to return to the believer, what difference does the love of God make to their personal identities? In their acknowledgement of transcendence they find an ultimate concern that is cognitively of supreme worth, if they are justified in their beliefs. If so, then one new item of information that they will have gained from their religious experience, as opposed to the teaching tradition in which the experience of transcendence is contextualised, is that they are personally loved. It was argued earlier that deeming anything to be one's ultimate concern entailed both cognition and affect. Hence, what is now being asked is *how much we care* about that to which we have cognitively assented, for it is how we respond by loving back (with all our heart, soul, strength and mind...) which determines its effect upon our identities.

We humans respond by loving God back with a feeble lack of proportionality. The reason why is partly because our transcendental experiences are discontinuous and partly because other (naturalistic) concerns do not go away and we let them get in the way: 'Martha, you worry and fret about so many things and yet few are needed' (Luke. 10.41). Mostly, we do not have that kind of trust; our other concerns are indeed inescapable and generally we act as if only our care for them can ensure our well-being in the other orders of reality. Believers are as familiar with compromise and trade-off as is anyone else about their purely secular concerns. The rich young man from Mark's gospel has often suffered a rough re-telling. It was not that he chose a love of Mammon over that of God, because Jesus loved him for the service he already gave, but rather that he would not do that one thing more which would have shown that God was his ultimate concern. Most of us are guilty of wrong ranking rather than rank wrongdoing.

#### THEOSIS AND BEING-IN-THE-WORLD

Nevertheless, those who have experienced anything of the unconditional love of God cannot fail to care about it at all if, as has been maintained, such love is indispensable to human fulfilment. The response may be unworthy, but that does not mean it is non-existent. *Theosis*, or progressive divinisation, is a process that remains incomplete for the vast majority of believers during their lifetimes. However, given fidelity, it is in process and is increasingly formative of ourselves as persons. The main *inward* effect of endorsing *any* ultimate concern is that it transvalues our feelings. Such a commitment acts as a new sounding board against which old concerns

reverberate; the emotional echo is transformed. Consider something as simple as once having enjoyed eating sausages. In the natural order, the newly committed vegetarian may now feel positive revulsion; in the practical order, Olympic competitors may see these as salivating temptation; in the social order, the new executive may consider them beneath his status. In other words, any serious commitment acts as a prism on the world that refracts our first-order emotions *by* transmuting them into second-order feelings – for affectivity is always a commentary upon our concerns.

Finally, what I want to argue is that a religious commitment is constitutive of new transvalued emotions, distinctive of this concern, that differentiate its adherents from those dedicated to any form of secular concern. This affectual transformation is the substantive justification of how transcendental relations are at least as important in forming us, in our concrete singularity, as are our naturalistic experiences and secular commitments.

The first feeling which is discrete to those who have experienced God as unconditional love is sinfulness: of having fundamentally missed the mark, of representing a different order of 'fallen' being, or of our unworthiness to raise our eyes. Sinfulness is qualitatively different from the emotions attending dedication to secular ultimate concerns. However high or deep these latter may be, when we fall short of them the corresponding feelings are self-reproach, remorse, regret or self-contempt. Even the lucky lover who declares himself unworthy of his beloved protests something different, namely that he has hit the mark undeservedly. Conversely, disconsolate swains merely feel disconsolate rather than sinful. In their turn, these secular feelings are different again from the unemotional state of those without any commitment and whose only question is can they get away with whatever they seek to do – which is precisely where cost-benefit analysis rules. Sinfulness is regarded as an emotional commentary which is emergent from relations between humanity and divinity – one expressing the quintessential disparity felt between them.

It grows out of those human emotions such as remorsefulness and unworthiness, but only through their transmutation. This entails a penitential revaluation of our lives, which develops only as the transcendental commitment and thus the contrast, deepens. Graham Greene's whisky priest in *The Power and the Glory* progressively embraces his loss of social self-worth and endorses service of God as his ultimate concern, which leads to his martyrdom. At the start of this transvaluation, he treasures an old photograph showing himself as a well-fed and well-respected priest with his immaculate flock at a time when his vocation had seemed to involve little sacrificial sub-

ordination of his physical and social well-being. As his ultimate concern becomes ultimately demanding, his emotions towards the photo are transformed and its eventual loss is simply irrelevant. The more his divinisation proceeds, the deeper is his sense of his sinful nothingness. In Newman's words, 'the truest penitence no more comes at first, than perfect conformity to any other part of God's law. It is gained by long practice – it will come at length. The dying Christian will fulfil the part of the returning prodigal more exactly than he ever did in his former years'.<sup>19</sup> The sense of being a sinner intensifies, whereas the protests of unworthy but lucky lovers fade away as they make good their vows to 'prove themselves'. Growing proofs of divine love may indeed rectify a life but they simultaneously deepen the feeling of disparity; that whatever we do, we have all fallen short of the glory of God. There seems to be no human equivalent to the affect associated with sinfulness; that the closer we become to our ultimate concern, the further apart and more different in kind we feel ourselves to be.

Secondly, let us consider the growth of detachment. There are always costs to commitment because to promote one concern is to demote others, yet the concerns in question are inescapable. Generically, our three secular concerns were not acquired at will, they emerged from the necessary interplay between the way we are constituted and the way the world is. Consequently, it takes a considerable act of will to prioritise an ultimate concern because this means the subordination (not the repudiation) of other concerns – by producing an alignment between them with which the subject believes he or she can live. Struggle is therefore generic to human commitment to *any* ultimate concern, because subordinate concerns do have naturalistic legitimacy. They are about different aspects of our well-being and the emotional commentaries emanating from them signal the costs entailed to the person by the priorities that they have reflexively determined.

Although such struggle is endemic to the crystallisation and confirmation of what we care about most and thus to our personal identities themselves, the battlefield is very different for the believer and the unbeliever. Secular struggles are basically about sustaining dedication to an ultimate concern *within* the triad naturalistic concerns. They involve preventing these three from slipping out of the alignment that has been determined between them. Poignant regrets and powerful temptations often recur after

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Owen Chadwick, *The Mind of the Oxford Movement*, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1960, p. 153.

an ultimate commitment has been made; costs are recurrent and the bill is frequently re-presented. In a purely mundane sense, religious commitment is even more expensive. This is because the struggle of those who have put their transcendental commitment first is that they thereby seek to subordinate *all three* of their naturalistic concerns to it: their physical well-being, performative achievement and social self-worth. Those who try to respond more and more freely to God's unconditional love feel drawn to live in conformity with this supreme good, which explicitly means *not* being conformed to the world.

Their struggle has always been well understood in the Christian tradition and has been represented as the battle between the two Kingdoms of heaven and earth or, by extension of the military metaphor, as the battle-lines between the 'two standards' in St Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*. In our own terms, it is the antinomy between transfiguring *theosis* and both the *anthropocentrism* of 'Modernity's Man' and the *sociocentrism* of 'Society's Being'. This struggle is constitutive of a new transvalued emotion, detachment. Such detachment, by definition, is without secular counterpart – precisely because it constitutes a new view of natural reality and a different way of being-in-the-world with its three concerns. Since it is a transvaluation, its secular precursors are emotions such as resignation towards what has been subordinated: for example, the careerist, resigned to the loss of his sporting life, or the mother who reconciles herself to putting her career on hold. However, these secular responses of resignation to the consequences of having made an ultimate commitment are negative emotions, tinged with nostalgia, at best, and bitter regret, at worst. It is the absence of such negativity that distinguishes the growth of religious detachment.

Detachment does not mean that the battle is over, for it never is. Compromise, concession and betrayal are life-long possibilities and assailants. Yet, in the lulls, detachment is a new and positive commentary upon being in the world but not of it. Detachment is a real inner rejoicing in the freedom of unwanting; it is a carefree trusting that all manner of things will be well; it is the ultimate celebration of being over having or not-having. It is the feeling that we are *sub specie aeternitatis* and have been unbound from the wheel; freed from those constraining determinations of body, labour and self-worth. It is to have glimpsed human autonomy in the form of sharing in divine autarky. Under the prompting of this emotional commentary, our orientation towards the world is transformed; since our identity is not primarily vested in it, we are enabled to serve it. In disinterested involvement, true detached concern is possible: for the planet, for the

good use of material culture, and for the intrinsic value of every human being and encounter. Thus, comportment towards the three natural orders of reality is itself transfigured. If seeking to be conformed to unconditional love is the ultimate concern, then it will be more formative of our way of being-in-the-world than any naturalistic commitment can be. This is where the argument comes full circle. Deriving from the response of humans to divine reality, there are certain ways of being-in-the-world that remain incomprehensible without the admission of transcendence

#### THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL IDENTITY

This exploration of what makes us persons has emphasised our voluntarism, because every version of the 'oversocialised' view (*Society's Being*) or the pre-programmed view (*Modernity's Man*) traduces our personal powers to live meaningful lives; they dismiss the power of *personal identity* to shape our lives around what we care about most and to which we commit ourselves. Nevertheless, we do not make our personal identities under the circumstances of our choosing, since our embeddedness in society is indeed part of what being human means. Thus, when we come to examine the emergence of our *social identities* we have to deal with our involuntary placement as *social agents* and how this affects the *social actors* which some of us can voluntarily become.

Social identity is the capacity to express what we care about in social roles that are appropriate for doing this. *Social identity* comes from adopting a role and personifying it in a singular manner, rather than simply animating it.<sup>20</sup> But here we meet a dilemma. It seems as though we have to call upon *personal identity* to account for who does the active personification. Yet, it also appears that we cannot make such an appeal because on this account it looks as though *personal identity* cannot be attained before *social identity* is achieved. Otherwise, how can people evaluate their social concerns against other kinds of concerns when ordering their ultimate concerns? Conversely, it also seems as if the achievement of *social identity* is dependent upon someone having sufficient *personal identity* to personify any role in their unique manner. This is the dilemma.

<sup>20</sup> Martin Hollis, *Models of Man: Philosophical Thoughts on Social Action*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.

The only way out of it is to accept the existence of a dialectical relationship between *personal* and *social identities*. Yet if this is to be more than fudging, it is necessary to venture three 'moments' of the interplay (P.I. < — —> S.I.) which culminate in *a synthesis such that both personal and social identities are emergent and distinct, although they contributed to one another's emergence and distinctiveness*.

The first moment is held to be one in which nascent *personal identity holds sway over nascent social identity* (P.I. -> S.I.). Confronted with a choice, let us say the decision to be made about someone's first occupation, what resources do they have to draw upon? The answer has to be their experience of the four orders of reality – nature, practice, the social and the transcendental – even though as minors they can only make 'dry-runs' at their internal conversations about them. Some of these experiences are limited by the natal context into which people are born and their associated life-chances. Nevertheless, everyone has some access to all. Firstly, their experience in the natural realm is not negligible. Through play, sport, travel and outdoor activities it is at least extensive enough to perform a regulatory function over what is sought or shunned when considering the array of occupational roles. My older son, a frustrated explorer, calls it 'life in a fleece'; the younger one, who hated riding, will never be found applying for stable management.

Secondly and similarly, constant interaction in the practical order has supplied positive and negative feedback about the kinds of activities from which satisfaction is derived through exposure to a host of common activities: painting, drawing, music, construction, sewing, mechanics, gardening, computing, childcare, cooking and household maintenance. Thirdly, in their involuntary social roles children are reflexive beings and it is they who determine which of the arenas they have experienced might become the locus of their own self-worth. The child, and especially the teenager, basically asks, 'do I want to be like that?', or, more searchingly, they interrogate themselves about which aspects of a role are worth having and which they would want to be different for themselves. In other words, they inspect not only their own involuntary roles but also the lifestyles of those who have put them there. These are sifted into elements worthy of replication versus others meriting rejection. 'I like studying x, but I don't want to teach' is a frequent verdict of many undergraduates. Finally, experience of transcendental reality may arise through church attendance, compulsory acts of daily worship or wordless experiences of divine pres-

ence.<sup>21</sup> The key point is that there would be no process at all unless the nascent personal identity brought something to the task of role selection. Otherwise we would be dealing with an entirely passive procedure of role assignment through socialisation.

Of course their preliminary choices are fallible because the crucial missing piece of information is the experience of having made the choice itself. Yet, without taking the plunge there is no other way in which it can be acquired; but in its acquisition, the individual herself undergoes change. This is why it is legitimate to disengage a *second 'moment'*, where the nascent social identity impacts upon the nascent personal identity (S.I. -> P.I.). All 'first choices' are experiments, guided by the nascent personal identity. But through experimentation the 'terms and conditions' of investing oneself in the role, and choosing to identify with it, also become manifest. What appointees have to ask (internally) is whether or not they wish to invest anything of their future selves in their present experimental enterprise. Reflexively, their answer can be 'no' to endorsing this social identity, in which case their choice is corrigible; they can search for an alternative source for their social identity. However, in the process of experimentation they will have undergone certain subjective and objective changes. Subjectively, they have acquired some new self-knowledge which will impact upon their personal identity. They are now people who *know* that they are bored by x, disillusioned by y and uneasy with z. Yet, they have also changed objectively and consequently the opportunity costs for their revised 'second choices' have altered in such a way that it may be harder to come by corrected positions.

(c) Once subjects have found a satisfying social role, whether on the first or subsequent corrected attempts, they have a decision to make, namely, 'how much of myself am I prepared to invest in it?' *This is the moment of synthesis between personal and social identity, which takes the P.I. < — > S.I. form.* Those who have experienced enough of a role to wish to make some of its associated interests their own have also changed, to the extent that they now *know* that they do indeed find such activities worthwhile. Quite literally they have lost their disinterested stance because they now see their self-worth as being constituted by occupying a particular role. However, most roles are greedy consumers; there are never enough hours in the day

<sup>21</sup> See Margaret S. Archer, Andrew Collier and Douglas V. Porpora, *Transcendence: Critical Realism and God*, Routledge/Taylor and Francis, London, 2004.

to be the 'good' academic, billing lawyer, or company executive, and a 'good' parent can be on the go around the clock. Does this mean that this crystallising social identity swamps personal identity?

This cannot be the case for three reasons. To begin with, most of us hold several social roles simultaneously. If all of them are 'greedy', who or what moderates between their demands? Were this a matter which is simply settled by the strength of these competing role demands, then we would again have reconciled ourselves to the 'passive agent'. Secondly, if it is assumed that subjects themselves conduct the arbitration, then we have to ask who exactly is doing this? *The answer can only be a person*. Yet, if it is indeed the person who has these abilities, then it has to be granted that if subjects can 'weigh' one role against another they can also evaluate their social concerns against their other commitments. This is precisely what it was argued that the 'adult' internal conversation was about. Certainly, a recent role incumbent brings new and socially derived information into the inner dialogue but *in relation* to the claims of other ongoing concerns. Only dialogically can their prioritisation and accommodation be worked out.

The resultant is a personal identity *within which* the social identity has been assigned its place in the life of an individual. That place may be large ('she lives for her work') or small ('he's only in it for the money'), but there is nothing that ensures social concerns have top priority. It is the person who prioritises. Even if conditions are such that good reason is found for devoting many hours to, say, monotonous employment, nothing insists that subjects do it wholeheartedly. Thirdly, in determining *how much* of themselves anyone will put into their various ultimate concerns, they are simultaneously deciding *what* they will put in. It has to be the person who does this, acting as he or she does in the role precisely because they are the particular person that they have become. By allowing that we need a person to do the active personifying, it finally has to be conceded that our personal identities are not reducible to being gifts of society. *Unless* personal identity is indeed allowed on these terms, then there is no way in which strict social identity can be achieved. Personification needs a person: without personification no social identity derives from any role. *In the process, our social identity also becomes defined, but necessarily as a sub-set of personal identity.*

#### CONCLUSION

The foregoing argument aimed to secure a concept of the person who is active and reflexive; someone who has the properties and powers to moni-

tor his or her own life, to mediate structural and cultural properties of society and thus to contribute to societal reproduction or transformation. However, the process of being a person is ongoing because throughout life we continue our reflexive work. The internal conversation is never suspended, it rarely sleeps, and what it is doing throughout the endless contingent circumstances encountered is continuously monitoring the subject's concerns. Inwardly, the subject is living a rich unseen life that is evaluative (rather than calculative, as is the case for *Modernity's Man*) and that is meditative (rather than appropriative, as is the lot of *Society's Being*). What these subjects are doing is conducting an endless assessment of whether or not what they once devoted themselves to as their ultimate concern(s) is still worthy of this devotion (or calls for yet more) and if the price which was once paid for subordinating and accommodating other concerns is still one with which the subject can live (or ought to live still more wholeheartedly).

In a nutshell, the person, as presented here in his or her concrete singularity, has powers of reflexive monitoring of both self and society. These are far outside the register of *'Modernity's Man'*, who remains shackled to his own individualistic preference schedule. In parallel, this person is also capable of authentic *creativity* which can transform 'society's conversation' in a radical way – one that is foreign to *'Society's Being'* who is condemned to making conventionally acceptable permutations upon it. Ultimately, it is this transformative creativity, deriving from the response of human persons to unconditional love that forever holds open the door to the two Kingdoms becoming one.