The Affectively Extended Self:
A Pragmatist Approach

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we suggest an understanding of the self within the conceptual framework of situated affectivity, proposing the notion of an affectively extended self and arguing that the construction, diachronic re-shaping and maintenance of the self is mediated first by affective interactions. We initially consider the different variations on the conception of the extended self that have been already proposed in the literature (Clark & Chalmers 1998; Heersmink 2017, 2018; Krueger 2018; Wilson, Lenart 2015). We then propose our alternative, contextualising it within the current debate on situated affectivity. While the idea that we exploit the external environment in order to manage our affective life is now rather widespread among philosophers (e.g. Colombetti & Krueger 2015, Piredda 2019), its potential consequences for and connections with the debate on the self remain underexplored. Drawing on James' intuition of the "material self", which clearly connects the self and the emotions in agency, and broadly envisioning an extension of the self beyond its organismic boundaries, we propose our pragmatist conception of the self: an affectively extended self that relies on affective artifacts and practices to construct its identity extended beyond skin and skull.

1. Introduction

We begin by stating – to paraphrase Aristotle – that the self may be extended in many ways. This paper proposes a particular way of conceiving the extension of the self, based on a situated view of affectivity – thus distinguishing our proposal from other ways in which the self has been considered extended. In the first part of the paper, we examine some of these ways that have been proposed in the

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literature on extended and distributed cognition. In the second part of the paper we propose our own perspective on the extension of the self, establishing a dialogue between some of our previous works on extended and situated affectivity and affective artifacts (Candiotto 2016; Candiotto 2019a; Piredda 2017; Piredda 2019), and comparing our view with some other proposals in the literature on the scaffolded mind (Colombetti & Krueger 2015; Krueger 2018; Sterelny 2010). The ultimate aim of this paper is the proposal of an *Affectively Extended Self (AES)*, with affectivity seen as the means through which the self is extended, and "affectively qualified self-extensions" understood as the ongoing process of self-construction as an affective practice which is inherently interaction. Affectivity is understood in the active dimension of readiness to action, in line with the motivational theory of emotions (Fridja 1986, Scarantino 2014) with the situated perspective on affectivity (Griffiths & Scarantino 2008) and the pragmatist conceptualisation of emotions, especially in its social dimension as expressed by George Herbert Mead (see on this Dreon 2019a). Moreover, affectivity is here analyzed alongside *affective scaffoldings*, *affective artifacts* and *affective practices* (Candiotto 2019a; Colombetti & Krueger 2015; Piredda 2019).

A background inspiration for this paper is provided by the ideas of William James (1890) on the self. When James describes the empirical self (the *Me*), constituted by a material, a social and a spiritual component, he points out two key aspects addressed in the remainder of the paper. First, the connection between self and emotions: we tend to consider the self as part of a system which includes things, environments, practices, etc., that cause emotions and feelings in ourselves. Thus the self is *affectively grounded*. Second, we tend to consider our possessions, or the things that we consider ours, as part of our self.

> The Empirical Self of each of us is all that he is tempted to call by the name of *me*. But it is clear that between what a man calls *me* and what he simply calls *mine* the line is difficult to draw. We feel and act about certain things that are ours very much as we feel and act about ourselves. Our fame, our children, the work of our hands, may be as dear to us as our bodies are, and arouse the same feelings and the same acts of reprisal if attacked. (James 1890, p. 291)

This tendency to integrate "me" and "mine" is also well represented in Russell Belk's studies on "the extended self" (1988, 2013). According to Belk, the extended self is composed of all the objects to which we tend to attribute some part of our selves. This experience has been analyzed and reported empirically

in several studies, showing that various elements, among which possessions, may be incorporated into one's self-concept.

Our proposal of conceiving an affectively extended self may be seen as a way of vindicating some original ideas by William James through theoretical instruments made available by the recent literature on extended and scaffolded cognition and affectivity. Moreover, although we challenge the idea that possession is the fundamental relation at the ground of a possible interpretation of the extension of the self – replacing it with the notion of being related via an "affective practice" –, the connection between our final proposal and James' perspective should not be surprising, provided that our perspective is defined as pragmatist.

2. The extended self and its limits

To start our adventure toward a notion of an affectively extended self, in this section we analyze the arrival on the scene of the very idea of an extended self with Clark and Chalmers (1998), along with the (slightly) different versions of it proposed in the literature. In particular, we consider the work of Wilson and Lenart (2015), and the distributed self view proposed by Heersmink (2017, 2018).[1]

The section concludes with some considerations concerning the limits of the proposals here presented, and in section 3 we develop our original solution.

2.1 From the extended mind to the extended self

The connection between the extended mind and a putative extended self had already been highlighted in one of the last paragraphs in Clark and Chalmers' (1998) seminal paper:

> What, finally, of the self? Does the extended mind imply an extended self? It seems so. Most of us already accept that the self outstrips the boundaries of consciousness; my dispositional beliefs, for example, constitute in some deep sense part of who I am. If so, then these boundaries may also fall beyond the skin. The information in Otto's notebook, for example, is a central part of his identity as a cognitive agent. What this comes to is that Otto *himself* is best regarded as

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[1] A radically different way of extending the self – which will not be considered here – is by extending consciousness (see Clark 2009; Chalmers 2008, 2019; Noë 2004, 2006, 2009; Ward 2012).

an extended system, a coupling of biological organism and external resources. To consistently resist this conclusion, we would have to shrink the self into a mere bundle of occurrent states, severely threatening its deep psychological continuity. (Clark & Chalmers, 1998, p. 18)

Roughly, the argumentative line from the extended mind to the extended self goes as follows: if dispositional states are mental states, and dispositional states can be realized by extra-organismic structures, then mental states can be realized by extra-organismic structures. Thus, the mind is extended. In exactly the same way, if dispositional states are to be considered part of the self, and dispositional states can be realized by extra-organismic structures, then we may conclude that the self is partially realized by extra-organismic structures. Finally, the self is extended, whatever this may mean.

While Clark and Chalmers are very certain and categorical in arguing for this conclusion, they do not, in fact, dedicate to it the discussion it deserves; it is treated more as a side-effect, so to say, of their arguments in favor of the extension of the mind. It should also be noted that by arguing in favor of an extended self, the authors establish a connection between self and consciousness, but without providing any specification as to its meaning.[2]

Clark has touched on the topic of the self in several of his writings, and proposed the idea of a "soft self", according to which "our best tools and technologies literally become us: the human self emerges as a soft self, a constantly negotiable collection of resources easily able to straddle and criss-cross the boundaries between biology and artifact" (Clark 2007, p. 278). Here Clark is not just arguing for the hypothesis of the extended mind, but for the more demanding one of the extended self. The notion of self, in fact, implies the dimension of personal identity, that is the process through which we recognize ourselves as the author of our agency, the recipient of our feelings and preferences, and the ground of our desires. As will be seen in the next section, the notion of personal identity needs to be philosophically reconstructed in externalist terms in order to provide reasons for the role played by the environment in constructing ourselves and our memories.

Moreover, the importance of the connection between extended mind and extended self increases if we consider the possibility that our minds are not only

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[2] In other papers, the position undertaken by Clark is internalist (2009), and the same goes for Chalmers (2008; 2019). However, as several authors have argued (e.g. see Hurley 2010, Hurley and Noë 2003, Ward 2012), this is not the only possible option. Again, as this is not the focus of the present discussion, we will leave the topic for another work.

extended into the physical environment – as the vehicle for some of our mental content – but are even *socially* extended, that is stored in the physical structures of others. The example introduced by Clark and Chalmers themselves – and further developed by Gallagher (2013; Gallagher and Crisafi 2009) – regards cases in which a highly developed and long-lasting relationship between two persons, say a couple, is so intimate that the desires and perhaps even some parts of the self-knowledge of one member could be considered as being stored in the biological structure of the other. This phenomenon becomes tangible when one member of the couple disappears, for whatever reason. The consequences for one's personal identity and sense of self of the loss of a romantic partner or a close friend are easily detected by anyone who has lived through such an experience. Other authors have individuated in developmental psychology, and specifically in primary intersubjectivity (Candiotto 2016; Varga 2016), the best examples of the phenomenon of social extension, stressing that the socially extended dimension is more difficult to achieve in the case of adults (Krueger 2013).

Now, while Clark and Chalmers have the merit of having launched intuitions of the extended self deriving from the extended mind into the philosophical community, their treatment of the topic remains unsatisfying, and we must look for other proposals to achieve a more elaborated version of the topic of the extended self.[3]

2.2 Extended memory and the narrative conception of personal identity

Two alternative proposals concerning the extension of the self are found in the discussion of the consequences of extended cognition and mind for the self and for personal identity, focusing on extended memory and a narrative conception of personal identity.

Expanding a broadly neo-Lockean view on personal identity, Wilson and Lenart (2015) speculate on the role of extended memory and autobiographical narrative in an extended conception of personal identity. The idea – clearly shared by Heersmink (2017, 2018), who refers to Schechtman's narrative perspective on personal identity (1996, 2014) – is that our personal lives are

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[3] The metaphysical interpretation of the extended self by Clark and Chalmers has been extensively criticized by Olson (2011). We will not present his criticisms here as we are more interested in other interpretation of the extended self – both epistemological and phenomenological – as will become clearer in the remainder of the paper.

full of off-loaded or shared memories stored in technological artifacts or other people's minds. These distributed and extended memories play a fundamental role in the process of constructing an autobiographical narrative that in the neo-Lockean view on personal identity is the central process of displaying an identity as a person.

The focus on our debt to external environments – be they physical or social – in the process of constructing our personal identities also responds to the aim of providing a theory of personal identity that is inclusive of all those cases in which our cognitive capacities are, for whatever reason, limited. Many examples of extended memory or of the co-construction of personal identities come from pathological cases, but the general idea is that, regardless of the status of our cognitive capacities, the process of offloading or complementing our cognitive lives through the environment is relevant, and tells us something important about ourselves.

It is noteworthy that Wilson and Lenart (2015) do not ultimately endorse a proper conception of "extended self" or "extended person". The extension, in their view, does not regard the self or the person, but rather the property of having a personal identity. It is this property of a "regular" person or self that has the feature of having a "wide realization" or – in Wilson's words (2004, 2005) – of being a "socially manifested property". A socially manifested property is a property – but the same could be applied to character traits or to emotions, for example – that emerges only in particular social contexts that, in fact, make it manifest. In other words, the idea is "that individuals engage in some forms of cognition only insofar as they constitute part of a social group" (Wilson 2005, p. 229). Thus, possession of a personal identity is a property that manifests itself in a person only insofar as this person is involved in a social group that supports and influences the process of building the personal identity. This feature is quite clear in Lindemann's work (2009) on how we "hold ourselves" together through other people, as well as through familiar objects and places:

> It's not just other people who hold us in our identities. Familiar places and things, beloved objects, pets, cherished rituals, one's own bed or favorite shirt, can and do help us to maintain our sense of self. And it is no accident that much of this kind of holding goes on in the place where our families are: at home. (Lindemann 2009, pp. 162-163)

A slightly different version of an "extended self" is given in Heersmink's work on the distributed and narrative self (2017, 2018). Like Wilson and Lenart, Heersmink's focus is on memory: connecting the studies on situated memory

and the neo-Lockean view of personal identity, the author concludes that a conception of the extension of the self includes social and artifactual structures (2017). The argument goes as follows: "if memory is often distributed and if the self is partly constituted by our memory, then the self is also distributed" (p. 3135). We use other people and artifacts in order to store and then access memories – as in transactive memory systems (Sutton 2010) and in Otto's case (Clark and Chalmers 1998).

In Heersmink's view, personal identity is defined as an "environmentally-distributed and relational construct", and cannot be reduced to psychological structures instantiated by the brain or by biological structures instantiated by the organism. The upshot of this conception is that "the complex web of cognitive relations we develop and maintain with other people and technological artifacts partly determines our self" (p. 3135), and this has important implications for our concept of self – both theoretically and in the moral and normative domain.

The case of lifelogging technologies – technologies that allow the user to build a "log" of her life, for example by taking pictures automatically every time a change in the environment is perceived – is a good metaphor for the process of "editing" our personal life into a narrative. This process has a social, manipulative and dynamic dimension. In this sense, our past is "edited", and significant pieces of it are to be found outside the biological organism.

Even more interesting for our purpose is Heersmink's use of the notion of evocative objects in the construction of our life narratives. The notion of evocative object – originally introduced by Turkle (2007) – plays a pivotal role in explaining the relation between artifacts and emotion. The self is conceived, essentially, as a narrative construct, following Schechtman (2014). These narratives are not only embodied – in the sense that they imply an embodied experience on our part – but also distributed, insofar as they are based on embodied interactions with artifacts and other persons. Among artifacts, evocative objects are typically connected to certain episodes of our lives, and help us remember them, constituting key points in the construction of our narratives. In Heersmink's view, this distributed network of environmental structures partially constitutes our selves, in accordance with James' intuition.

And now some final considerations on Heersmink's work. First, contrarily to the more cautious conclusion by Wilson and Lenart (2015), Heersmink does speak about a distributed self. Whether this "distributed self" is to be understood as a metaphysical theory of the self – which would leave it vulnerable

to Olson's (2011; see also fn. 3 in this paper) criticisms –, or just as an epistemological attitude emphasizing the role of external resources in the construction of our selves, remains somewhat indeterminate in Heersmink's work. Second, although emotions and affectivity are mentioned in his work – as well as, incidentally, in Wilson and Lenart's – these aspects do not play a fundamental role in the construction of the extended versions of the self or of personal identity. This leads us to consider them as still tied to a "cognitive-informational approach" to the study of the self and of personal identity that, in our view, needs to be integrated if we are to achieve a more satisfactory theory of the extension of the self.

3. The Affectively Extended Self (AES)

Let us summarize the critical points associated with the version of the extended self discussed so far:

(1) Some methodological issues: can the extension of the mind or of some of its processes, such as remembering or believing, immediately imply an extension of the self? Is the step from the former to the latter really so automatic? Is AES something more than functional extension?

(2) Thus far, the extended self has been understood only in its cognitive dimension, as an informational notion. This is not necessarily bad *per se*, but it is a limited notion which misses the phenomenological dimension of the extension, and lacks an affective characterization. We maintain that even the functionalist accounts of extended emotions are not doing the right job, because in those accounts extension is understood as neutral, and affectivity – if affectively charged – is seen as merely supervenient to extended mental states (e.g. Carter *et al.* 2016).[4] These approaches – in our view – have been surpassed by proposals such as situated affectivity (Griffiths & Scarantino 2008), affective scaffoldings (Colombetti & Krueger 2015) and mind invasion (Slaby 2016), to which we will refer.

(3) The conceptualization of the extended self does not always rely on a robust theory of the self.[5]

[4] On the different conceptualisations of extended emotions currently available see Candiotto 2016 and Krueger & Szanto 2016.
[5] This is true of Clark and Chalmers (1998) but not of Heersmink (2017) and Wilson & Lenart (2015), who rely on a neo-Lockean view of personal identity, inspired by Schechtman (1996;

(4) The accounts provided thus far depict a largely "passive" characterization of the extension.

In the following sections we will develop our answers to (2) and (4), and partially to (1). We believe that the result may also have important implications for (3), but these will be left for another work.

Our main intuition is that, when considering the role of affectivity in building personal identity, we are pushed to move beyond a merely cognitive-informational account of the self. This means that a functionalist approach to self-extension is not enough: we believe that the path to follow is that which integrates the phenomenology of the self-extension and thus discloses the function played by affectivity in extending the self. In this sense, our use of the term "extension" departs from the mere functionalist interpretation intended by Clark and Chalmers and comprises the phenomenological and subjective dimensions.[6]

3.1 A transition into the world of affective scaffoldings and scaffolded selves

Moving towards our positive proposal, we need to look at the important contribution to the debate provided by affective scaffoldings. In fact, the scaffolded view of the mind (Sterelny 2010) moves in the direction we are arguing for but, as will be momentarily seen, needs to be further developed in terms of the very role of affectivity in self construction. This is precisely the main contribution that AES must bring to the debate.

The key question to which affective scaffoldings reply concerns the function played by external resources in regulating the affective experience. The answer is relevant to our conception of the extended self because it highlights how important affective regulation is for self-awareness. The crucial point is thus to argue for an externalist account of affective regulation.

Affective scaffolds are whatever resources – be they material culture or other people – that regularly contribute to affective regulation. Colombetti and Krueger (2015) describe the various ways in which we manipulate both the material and the interpersonal world to regulate our affective conditions.

2014). But the point here is that their view of the self needs to be strengthened with regard to the role played by affectivity.

[6] A critical attitude toward the mere functionalist interpretation of the "extension" is also present in Colombetti & Roberts (2015), who endorse the more integrationist view proposed, among others, by Wilson e Clark (2010).

Emotion-regulation is a fundamental process that we undertake in order to shape and manage our mental life. The externalist approach to emotion-regulation claims that external resources are employed to regulate moods and emotions – as in the case of listening to classical music when stressed (trying to relax), or going for a good run when we are angry (trying to placate an intense feeling of hostility). The idea is not that a given external resource affects our mental states, but that certain resources, if integrated into structured and repeated practices of interaction, can regulate our affective life.

A possible objection connected to the role of external resources in emotion-regulation concerns the risk of mind-invasion (Slaby 2016). By "mind invasion" Slaby means the invasion of the normative dimension of a social domain into individuals' modes of affective interaction, often by way of habituation to affective styles. The crucial point here is to recognize that affective scaffoldings are not mere objects over which we have absolute power, but that in certain cases they are structured as "affective arrangements" (Slaby 2018) which determine our ways of feeling and are beyond our control.

If emotion-regulation is understood as an acquired self-mastery (Debus 2016) made possible by the conscious choice of employing certain resources to help us feel better, then the risk of mind invasion is partially minimized. But this *if* is quite a big one, and requires a level of self-control and autonomous choice that cannot be unconditionally guaranteed. However, setting this issue aside for the moment, we can state that the notion of affective scaffoldings is well anchored within the situated view of the mind, and adequately explains why and how we employ external resources as tools for emotion regulation.

Affective scaffoldings may be of different kinds, and Krueger (2018) distinguishes among three types: embodied, social and material. In the embodied case, the affective experience is scaffolded by a range of physical processes distributed throughout our body; in the social case, a socially distributed feedback loop regulates the affective dynamics of individuals and groups; in the material case, affectivity is regulated by the material culture made up of objects and environments.

Piredda (2019) has recently added the notion of affective artifacts – meaning those material and non-material objects that have the capacity to alter

the affective condition of an agent – as a subcategory of affective scaffoldings.[7] In addition to affect regulation and management, affective artifacts typically exert another particular effect connected to our sense of self. Some objects of this kind have the power of "enhancing" our sense of self, as when we gaze at our bookshelf after a rewarding day of work. The experience of recognizing oneself in those objects and feeling a "resonance" effect when we engage in interaction with them has been empirically researched under the already mentioned hypothesis of the extended self (Belk 1988). Apparently, there are certain objects – and places – that trigger these kinds of feelings. It may be the city where one grew up, a house, a sofa. In the digital era, the example could concern an agent's profile on Facebook, Instagram or other social networks. It is not only that they are familiar objects or places – of course they are. But there is also something more, something we could at times describe as "enhancing the sense of self" or "recognizing one's self in that object or place", and which has been described as an extension, or a projection, of the self upon those objects (Belk 1988, p. 139).

A comparison with the conception of "scaffolded self", proposed by Krueger (2018) in the domain of the phenomenological reflection on psychopathology, is due here. For Krueger, who follows the phenomenological and existentialist tradition, the self is established and regulated via its ongoing engagement with the world and with others, and the feeling of being embedded in the world is a crucial component of a healthy self. The scaffolded self is a more liberal and less demanding notion than that of the extended self since, as Sterelny (2010) and later Colombetti & Krueger (2015) have highlighted regarding the difference between the scaffolded and the extended mind, the former does not require highly entrenched and trusted resources, and is thus open to more casual ways of manipulating the environment.

We cannot engage here with the wide debate about the extended/scaffolded mind and the many alternatives that have been proposed through the years. Furthermore, we do not intend to make it an issue of word-choice. On the contrary, we want to highlight a perspective. We believe that in order to reply to certain questions in this debate (for example: How does the self emerge in relation to the

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[7] The notion of "affective artifact" is construed on an analogy with that of "cognitive artifact", which has been defined as "physical objects that have been created or modified in order to functionally contribute to a cognitive task" (Fasoli 2018, p. 672). A lively debate on the topic of cognitive artifacts has developed in recent years with regard to their metaphysics and classification (e.g. Brey 2005; Casati 2017; Heersmink 2013, 2016; Hutchins 1999; Norman 1991).

environment – especially the affectively charged environment? What is the role of worldly experience in building personal identity, such as the broader experience of recognising oneself through time?) we must refine our conception of "self-extension" in the direction of the affective interactionist position we are arguing for. The point for us is not only that of analysing the degree to which scaffoldings regulate affectivity, but of recognizing affectivity as a fundamental vehicle for the extension of the self. In saying this we are not taking affectivity as merely supervenient to the extended states; rather, in line with our analysis of situated affectivity, we assume affectivity as the very quality of the relationship. To further develop our perspective, we will introduce and elaborate upon the notion of affective practice.

4. An alternative perspective: a pragmatist approach to the Affectively Extended Self (AES)

Starting from Piredda's understanding of the implication of affective artifacts for personal identity, the current proposal conceptualizes the very interaction with the environment as an *affective practice*. The reference to pragmatism is here explicit, since the word "pragma" means "action", from which the word "practice" derives. This is not merely a new addition to the rich framework of affective scaffoldings. This notion, in fact, suggests shifting the perspective from objects to interactions. We are not implying that interactions have not been considered by the affective scaffoldings literature – above all by Colombetti and Krueger (2015) who have significantly discussed the construction of the affective niche, and conceive of "active manipulation" as "often just part of our repertoire of habitual dealings with the world" (p. 4) , as well as by Piredda (2019), who has individuated in the interaction with artifacts the most significant feature in the ongoing classification of affective artifacts, for example.[8] What we propose here is to focus *primarily* on interactions, to be understood in pragmatist terms, in order to (1) avoid some possibly troublesome

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[8] Niche construction comes in several varieties, but it is mostly understood within a naturalist-evolutionary framework in which an agent manipulates and transforms the environment to adaptation. We think that an interpretation of affectivity in these terms is promising, and in line with the motivational account of situated emotion here undertaken. At the same time, however, we feel the need to enhance the social dimension of this affective coupling with the environment, and the pragmatist approach appears to be a good way of doing so.

implications and (2) to better grasp the role of affective interactions in constructing the self.

Regarding (1), we may notice the residue of a dualistic user-object relationship in the conceptualisation of affective scaffolding, made explicit in the customer paradigm employed by Belk (1988; 2013). The idea is that I, as an already made self, employ an external resource – in our case an affective scaffold – to regulate my affective experience. To put it brutally, the paradigm is the accumulation and employment of goods for own-profit proper to materialism, and the extended self would thus appear as the extension of power through possession. Assuming a critical attitude, we thus need to highlight it, without denying that in many societies such relationships are indeed objectifying. Even if this is so, we would challenge the idea that this kind of relationship should be the paradigm for understanding how the self emerges in affective interactions with an object or another person.

Regarding (2), we place the function of affectivity as extended and its role in the process of self-construction under scrutiny. In the affective scaffolding framework, affective regulation is mostly seen as a result of the integration with external resources. In order to further develop the implication of situated affectivity for the theory of the self, we suggest that the role of affectivity be viewed in the very same structural coupling with the environment, namely as the vehicle that, in certain cases, extends the self.

We therefore conceptualize the "Affectively Extended Self" (AES) in pragmatist terms: the adverb "affectively" is meant to represent the mode of extension understood as *practice*. We maintain the notion of "extended self", instead of adopting the more liberal one of "scaffolded self", as it allows a better understanding of affectivity in the very structural coupling with the environment as the vehicle of extension. Although the point cannot be developed here, we are confident that our conceptualisation can be fruitfully employed within the "scaffolded self" account as well, especially regarding the intersubjective dimension of sharing a resource among agents, which the scaffolded mind literature has the merit of having pointed to.

We will fine-grain these two points in relation to AES in the following section.

4.1 The focus on affective practices

What we suggest is thus a change of perspective from objects to the interactions in themselves. This is not a new model – as a general framework we employ that of situated affectivity – but rather an alternative focus to better understand the extension of the self *via* affectivity as a vehicle of interaction. Our proposal is definitely compatible with the affective scaffoldings perspective – although it has the ambition of nurturing a fruitful and recently initiated dialogue between situated affectivity and self-construction (see Krueger 2018; Piredda 2019).

By considering affective practices, which focus first on the affective interactions, we can achieve a more fluid and dynamical conceptualisation of the extended self and its (non-brain-bound) relationship with the environment. By *affective practices* we mean individual, shared or collective activities, in both informal and structured environments, in which affectivity plays a fundamental role. We can thus think about whatever practice is affectively charged – from individual affective interactions with an object (say the relationship a young girl establishes with her favourite doll) to such shared affective practices as eating and drinking together in celebration, as well as collective ones like listening to a concert or making a protest – in which affectivity is what qualifies the very interaction, and is thus at the ground of the effects of these interactions with the self.

The effects of these affective practices upon the self are stronger if the affective interactions are formally structured, as in the case of the affective relationship between psychotherapist and client in the therapeutic setting, the motivation to learn in the classroom setting, and various types of religious worships and rites, including the repentance of sin in the confessional in Christianity, the loving devotion of the *bhaktas* to Krishna, or the enthusiastic faith in God enhanced by participation in gospel choirs.

Although the interactional dimension can be more easily perceived with regard to affective practices – especially in its bidirectional terms –, affective artifacts are likewise not so by virtue of some particular features of their nature, but rather of the interaction with the agent (Piredda 2019, §4). The point is that what affects me is not, for example, merely the music, but listen*ing* to the music, which means affectively interacting with music in specific ways in specific

environments:[9] being alone in the darkness of my room with the stereo on, riding the underground to the University wearing my earphones, sitting comfortably in the seat at a chamber concert, enjoying a jam session in a crowded street of Rio de Janeiro (on music as affective scaffolding, see Krueger 2019). Affectivity is thus understood as a quality of the structural coupling, of the interactions, and not of the object (Candiotto 2019a). These affective interactions are what allow self-extensions, and can thus be considered as "affectively qualified self-extensions" which contribute to the ongoing process of self-construction.

In this way, we move from a dualistic I-object relationship to a dynamical interaction with affectivity at its centre. The focus is thus on the affective interactions as vehicles of extension (Candiotto 2016) and on the emergent self as result of these affective interactions (Varga 2016). We thereby also overcome the issue – recognizable within the affective scaffolding literature – of understanding other human beings as functional objects/tools for the regulation of our emotions (on this see Piredda 2019, §7). In fact, placing affective interactions at the centre allows us to move beyond the dualistic I-object relationship and enables us to include cases of affective practices involving other human beings which do not reduce them to tools. The point is not that the psychotherapist is a tool I employ for the regulation of my emotions, but rather that our affective relationship (referring here to the phenomenon of transference is quite obvious) is what allows a process of transformation of myself. This means that, thanks to these regulated and recursive affective interactions, I can build new meanings for self-awareness and self-understanding.[10] Finally, the process of self-transformation is mediated by the affective relationship which is the vehicle of the extended self.[11]

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[9] This point resonates with the emphasis that Maiese (2019) place on embodied actions for understanding affectivity. For example, discussing Colombetti & Roberts (2015), Maiese (2019: 64) says "it is the embodied action involved in the writing process, and not necessarily the diary itself, which plays a constitutive role in appraisal". We cannot discuss here the fundamental role played by the body in the affective practices, but see on this Colombetti (2016) regarding "affective incorporation" and Fuchs & De Jaegher (2009) on "mutual incorporation".

[10] On the meaning of cognitive transformation in relation to cognitive extension, see Menary & Kirchhoff 2014 and Candiotto 2019b.

[11] An important reference here is the so-called third wave of extended cognition theory for which social interactions can be understood as extended vehicles of cognition (Gallagher 2013; Kirchhoff 2012). Drawing from it, we are saying here that this extension is made possible not by *neutral* interactions, but rather by affective ones.

Looking at affective practices not only softens the objectifying assumption implied by affective scaffoldings; it also takes fully into consideration the extension in common goods (such as works of art, science, etc.). This is made possible by the transition from the perspective of *possess* to that of *be in relation to.* What counts for the development of my personal identity is not possession of the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*, but the chance to return repeatedly to the *Louvre* to see and relate to it, perhaps having been struck the first time I saw it in my art history book in college. Moreover, looking at affective practices can also explain – although this is not the focus of this paper – how a "group-self" may emerge via affective interactions among the members of a group, or around a common object or leader, as when the citizens of India constructed a national identity through the complex processes involved in the creation of the Indian national flag (Virmani 2008).

A final point about the benefit of shifting to the perspective of affective practices: affectivity is also at the ground of the trust required for the feeling of familiarity with an environment, which is for Krueger (2018, p.9) a fundamental component of affective scaffoldings, since they can function as trustworthy "affective stabilizers". When considering affective practices, we can view trust as a fundamental requirement for every successful relationship. Regarding this point we can thus highlight the degree to which trust is mediated by the affective quality of relationships (on this see Candiotto 2017 and 2019a), and how affective interactions ground the extended self.

5. A pragmatist approach to self-construction

Lastly, we want to show that our conception of AES is well-suited to account for the process of self-construction. This is a point that requires extensive development, and for now we will offer just a few hints. What is crucial in AES is an understanding of self-construction as an affective practice which is inherently interaction – as described in the previous section. This means that affective practices contribute to the construction of the self, as affectivity is one of the most fundamental vehicles of those interactions at the ground of the processes of self-building. This thesis states not only that the environment helps us to scaffold our affective processes and thus see how they build the self, but also that it is the very affective interaction that creates the self. Thus, extension is not just something that "happens" to a passive subject; the subject is an active, environmentally embedded and affectively situated agent. The main feature of

AES is thus that of a dynamical and temporally located extension grounded in agency. Methodologically speaking, extended cognition here meets two of its "siblings", namely the enactivist and pragmatist traditions (see on this Dreon 2019a; Dreon 2019b; Gallagher 2014).

But let us proceed step by step. For phenomenology, the self should be found in *the how* of the experiencing, and can be conceptualised as the first-person perspective on the world (Zahavi 2005, 2014, 2015). This self can be labelled as a "narrative self", as it emerges from the numerous different processes of self-understanding disclosed by the symbolic mediation of narratives, as will be seen in the next section. For some authors within the same phenomenological tradition, "below" this narrative self there is a pre-reflexive "minimal self" which provides pre-narrative fodder for subsequent narratives (see Krueger 2006; Menary 2008; Zahavi 2005, 2014). For Krueger (2010), this 'how' of the experiencing does not necessarily point back to a 'who', meaning that we need not move from a phenomenological recognition to an ontological foundation. Employing Krueger's intuition, and in line with the pragmatist agenda, we do not engage here with the important challenges about the ontological status of this "who"; rather, by studying the *how* of the self, we aim to further the understanding of the places and modes through which the subjective feeling of being a self emerges as personal identity via affective practices. In the continuity among experiences, often mediated by affective memory and expectations about the future, we thus find the phenomenal unity of personal identity as built into the affective engagement with the world. Being an agent is what provides the phenomenal character of the experience of the self with its unity and social situatedness.[12] We are therefore suggesting here not only a phenomenological understanding of AES, but also a pragmatist one. And it is the very notions of affective scaffoldings and affective practices that drive us to do so. The affective scaffoldings and practices are in fact put into action in the experiential dimension of the self in its interaction with the world. AES appeals to the actual affective engagement, and suggests looking at *the how of the active engagement*, affectively charged and mediated by scaffoldings and practices, in

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[12] The phenomenological and then existentialist reflection on sharing emotions is crucial here, although we cannot develop an argument from it in this paper. We do however wish to express our gratitude to one of the reviewers who highlighted this point, especially regarding the intentional dimension of the affective experience which as such is *per se* affectively interactive and, in Scheler's account, directed at the formal object through valueception (*Wertnehmung*). On this see Cutting (2016), Cusinato (2018), and De Monticelli (2018).

discovering the self. Finally, the *pragmata* are the affective artifacts we act with or through, and the *actions* are those of the agential self who continuously reconstructs itself as *affectively extended.*

Krueger has argued that who we are is a matter of where we are (2018, p.11). Here we would add that where we are is not only a matter of location, but also of *what we do* in building ourselves in the affective interactions with the world. Worldliness is thus a matter of affective engagement – with objects (as affective artifacts) and practices.[13] But focusing on actions should not be read as mere behaviourism: in fact, the self constantly builds itself in its active engagement with the world, dynamically reshaping its identity in recognising itself through memory and expectations. The extended self is thus a *maker*, and this is related to the awareness of being (entirely or partially) the initiator of a chains of actions. This is what constitutes self-autonomy, a crucial notion to be preserved within AES, and one which arises in thinking of ourselves as dynamic narrative selves.

The last step we want to sketch regards an affective and pragmatist interpretation of the narrative self. As has been highlighted by the phenomenological tradition, there is a crucial link between recognising oneself as a person and the narrative self, since personal identity arises as this feeling of unity within the stream of experience made possible by narratives.

What we propose is an endorsement of the narrativist theory of the extended self, discussed in section 2, amending it with two "corrective" lenses. The first lens is an affective one, to highlight the degree to which the construction of a narrative is governed by the affective practices which build the self. The second is pragmatist: while in Heersmink's view the narrative is built by appealing to cognitive-informational processes of collecting, above all, representational resources that allow us to construe – via extended memory – an extended autobiographical identity, in our view extension is primarily affective, and regards not only a collection of objects but also the way in which we interact dynamically with the world, building affective and cognitive practices. In this way, it is possible to integrate within our view of personal identity not only our memories but also the way in which we behave, according to our character traits and fundamental moods. The activity of constructing a narrative will thus be

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[13] We cannot argue here for the primacy thesis about affectivity according to which affectivity is the most fundamental way through which organisms constitute themselves in a specific environment (for the enactivist argument in favour of this thesis, see Colombetti 2014). Our position takes a humbler stance, and is anchored in the phenomenology of situated affectivity.

interpreted as both a cognitive and an affective activity, which engages both kinds of competences. If we accept that answers to the diachronic question on personal identity are – in accordance with the neo-Lockean tradition – based on the role of memory and narratives, then an "affectively-coloured" theory of the self should recognize the primary role of affectivity in such processes. On this view, narratives are articulated structures that we produce, and use to provide an order and an explanation to what happens in our lives. The construction of these narratives is an active process that is profoundly influenced by our affective world – an important point that has rarely been acknowledged in the narrativist tradition (see Goldie 2012 for an exception). Our work as "our own historian" (La Branche 1973, cit. in Belk 1988, p. 159) is then guided by our affective component, and the features of the narrative we construct are probably influenced by our actual affective status.

Importantly, the diachronic dimension does not concern only the past (as in the case of evocative objects, see Heersmink 2018). The self is also a structure that projects itself into the future, through individual and collective projects and plans that we constantly build and revise. Thus, it is important to highlight the role of affectivity in extending the self toward the future dimension. These narratives should then comprise an open final, a semi-structured continuation that is ready to be written or lived. Examples of this future projection of the self could include wearing an engagement ring – leading us to a future marriage –, or a talisman, in order to have the strength to overcome difficulties. These are proactive elements that testify to the active role of the agent in determining her own future.

This does not diminish the importance of synchronic regulation, but extends the temporal spectrum of the function of affective scaffolding in building the self. The self constantly builds itself throughout its structural entanglement with the world, and affectivity plays an important role in building the meaning of who we are in our situated experience of the world.

6. Conclusion

In this paper we argue that the diachronic re-shaping and re-modelling of the self is mediated first by affective interactions. In a renewed pragmatist vein we then focus on the practice of interaction as vehicle of self-extension, and not just on the effect of the object for affective regulation, as does the majority of the affective scaffolding literature. Affective practices are thus, in our amended

narrativist account, the most fundamental ways through which the self constructs itself. What is essential here is the relationship with the objects, persons, environments, etc. in a given activity, as emotions are in-between elements that fundamentally guide our actions.

Regarding the issues on the notion of the extended self we propose:

- abandoning the notion of the extended self understood only in its functionalist and cognitive dimension, as an informational notion, and integrating the perspective with the active interpretation of affectivity as a primary motivation that drives the self toward the environment, and toward social and cultural relationships that contribute to its extension;

- underlining the active and agential component of this self-extension, as well as the interactive nature of affectivity, which is to be conceived as the vehicle of the structural coupling at the base of interesting interactions for self-construction.

In doing so, we have tried to appreciate and renovate the existing debate on the extended self, providing it with an "affective and pragmatist curve", which we consider a promising way of vindicating some illuminating ideas by William James in the contemporary debate about affectivity and the self.

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