Durham E-Theses

The Relationship Between Affectivity, Narrativity, and the Self: A Phenomenological Perspective

BORTOLAN, ANNA

The Relationship Between Affectivity, Narrativity, and the Self: A Phenomenological Perspective

Anna Bortolan

Abstract

In this thesis I explore from a phenomenological perspective the relationship between affectivity and narrativity and its relevance for the understanding of the structure of selfhood. In contemporary phenomenology it is often argued that there are two complementary but distinct forms of selfhood: the "minimal" and "narrative" self. In this context, affectivity is usually associated with pre-reflective forms of bodily and self-experience, thus conceiving of it as a constitutive dimension of minimal selfhood. Some phenomenological accounts, however, also draw attention to the existence of a connection between affectivity and some features of the narrative self. In this work, I extend and refine in various ways the conceptions of affective experience and selfhood defended by these accounts. In the first place, I show how affectivity exerts a cardinal role in the emergence and development of narrativity, thus identifying various dynamics through which minimal self-experience impacts on the structure of narrative understanding. Secondly, I illustrate different ways in which narrativity in turn shapes the structure of affectivity. In so doing I challenge one of the ideas which are central to the distinction between minimal and narrative self, namely that minimal self-experience is impervious to the dynamics which characterise narrative self-understanding. My account indeed shows that emotions are complex phenomena in which minimal and narrative forms of self-awareness are phenomenologically entwined. Finally, I apply these insights to the analysis of depression and borderline personality disorder. I claim that characteristic of depression is the weakening or abandonment of the life stories with which the person identified prior to the illness and the

emergence of new narratives which possess specific features and are shaped by feelings of guilt, hopelessness, and a particular temporal and spatial experience. As far as borderline personality disorder is concerned, I argue that the disturbances of narrative selfhood typical of the illness depend on the frequent alternation of existential feelings of shame and anger and I claim that these disturbances in turn shape the bodily experience associated with affectivity and exacerbate emotional dysregulation.

The Relationship Between Affectivity, Narrativity, and the Self: A Phenomenological Perspective

A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

By

Anna Bortolan

Department of Philosophy

Durham University

2015

Table of Contents

Chapter 6:

Self-Experience in Borderline Personality Disorder 201

Declaration

I confirm that no material contained in this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other institution. All the material is the author's own work, except for quotations and paraphrases which have been suitably indicated.

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

Acknowledgments

I am mostly grateful to Professor Matthew Ratcliffe for the time, attention, and energy he has devoted to the supervision of my work. His guidance and encouragement have been fundamental in providing me with the philosophical skills and confidence necessary to develop this project and to passionately take it to its completion.

Thank you very much to Anna, Holly, and Harry for generously taking time to read various chapters of this work and providing insightful comments. I am also very glad to have had the opportunity to present my work at various meetings of Eidos - the Durham Postgraduate Philosophy Society - and at other academic events in Durham and across Europe.

I am grateful to the Rotary Foundation for funding my first year of study in the UK through their Ambassadorial Scholarship program. Special thanks go to Bill and Nancy, for having been my family in this country.

Thank you to all the friends in the UK, Italy, and many other places all over the world who have shared the last few years with me. These relationships have given me strength, inspiration, balance, and love and have made a real difference in my life.

Finally, I want to thank my parents, Antonio and Maria, for the incredible support they have given me throughout my academic education and for always trying to do everything in their power to help me realise my dreams and to live a free, meaningful, and happy life.

Introduction

The aim of this work is to investigate the relationship between affectivity, narrative understanding, and selfhood from a phenomenological perspective. Although each of these areas has been separately the object of extensive philosophical research, comparatively few contributions have been made to the investigation of how they are connected and in this thesis I engage in a philosophical exploration of the topic which extends existing accounts in various respects.

The contemporary debate on the nature of selfhood is characterised by the presence of a significant number of different notions of what a self is (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008: 197; Strawson, 1999: 100; Zahavi, 2008: 103). The "conceptual", "core", "ecological", "emergent", "embodied", "fictional", "material", and "social" self are just some of the numerous conceptions of selfhood which have been put forward and it has been argued that at least some of these notions can be combined in a view of the self as a complex phenomenon. In particular, those among contemporary scholars who have investigated the self from a phenomenological perspective have recognised "multidimensionality" as a fundamental character of selfhood (Zahavi, 2010). From this perspective, elaborating on the insights provided by classical phenomenology, hermeneutics, and philosophy of cognitive sciences, two specific forms of selfhood have been identified: the "minimal self" and the "narrative self" (Gallagher, 2000; Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008; Zahavi, 2007; 2008; 2010; 2014).

The minimal self is conceived in this context as a sense of self intrinsic to any

phenomenally conscious state. According to this position, it is impossible to undergo any sort of experience without being simultaneously aware that the experience belongs to us, as there is a "sense of mineness", a primitive form of self-reference, inherent to any form of consciousness. The self at issue here is not given as an object, but rather as the subject of experience and the notion of "pre-reflective self-consciousness", through which this experiential structure is usually referred to, aims to highlight this feature. The minimal sense of self is thought to remain the same across the variety of experiences that a subject undergoes and is considered to be essentially embodied and embedded in the environment.

Gallagher and Zahavi, however, draw attention to the fact that the notion of minimal self does not capture all the aspects that we usually associate with selfhood. In particular, they claim that we tend to conceive of the self as possessing an individual "history" (Gallagher, 2000: 18) and a "personal character" or "personality" (Zahavi, 2007: 193). Drawing in particular on the insights provided by the hermeneutic tradition (e.g. Ricoeur, 1988; 1994), they consider this dimension to be developed through the stories that we and others tell about ourselves and refer to it as the "narrative self".

As far as the relationship between the two forms of selfhood is concerned, this account maintains that the minimal and the narrative self are complementary but distinct facets of the self. The presence of a minimal level of self-awareness is considered as a condition of possibility for the emergence of a narrative self. The latter, in other terms, is founded on the former and, although in ordinary experience they are usually integrated, it is implied that in some serious cases of erosion of narrative selfhood – for example in the most advanced stages of Alzheimer's disease – only the minimal self is still present (Zahavi, 2010: 5).

According to this perspective, then, when disturbances of self-awareness are considered, it is possible to distinguish between basic and more superficial alterations, depending on the dimension of selfhood which is affected. These ideas have been widely applied in the field of philosophy of psychiatry, where it has been argued, for instance, that while the disruptions of self-awareness characteristic of schizophrenia occur at the level of pre-reflective self-consciousness (e.g. Parnas and Sass, 2001; Sass and Parnas, 2003), it is the narrative sense of self which is altered in the experience of people with depression (e.g. Stanghellini, 2004) and borderline personality disorder (Fuchs, 2007).

Despite the very influential role of this account in contemporary philosophical debates, the distinction between minimal and narrative self needs to be further investigated. In particular, it is important to clarify how the two notions are related. Zahavi remarks that, in this context, conceiving of the self as a multidimensional concept does not entail that a "multiplicity of co-existing selves" (2010: 6) is present. On the contrary, as previously mentioned, it is claimed that the self is a complex, "multifaceted" phenomenon. The approaches which endorse this claim, however, are not clear as to how the relationship between the various facets of selfhood should be conceived. In particular, although it is maintained that a minimal level of self-experience should be in place in order for a narrative self to develop, no account is given of the dynamics through which the latter could emerge from the former. In addition, it is questionable whether the minimal self is as independent from the narrative self as Gallagher and Zahavi suggest. Various supporters of a narrative account of selfhood indeed maintain that narrative self-understanding can shape our experience in various ways and there seems to be no reason to think that this wouldn't be the case also with pre-reflective self-consciousness.

My work attempts to clarify these issues by examining the relationship between affective experience and the minimal and narrative self. In both classical and contemporary phenomenology affectivity has been associated with pre-reflective forms of bodily and self-experience (e.g. Colombetti, 2011; Slaby, 2008), thus highlighting the existence of a connection between this dimension and minimal selfhood. In addition, the idea that affectivity is crucially involved in basic forms of self-awareness seems to be corroborated also by research conducted in the field of cognitive sciences (e.g. Damasio, 2000; 2012). However, some of the accounts of affective experience which have been developed within the phenomenological tradition suggest also that there is a connection between affectivity and more complex forms of self-consciousness and selfhood (e.g. De Monticelli, 2003; 2006; Scheler, 1973a). While these approaches are not specifically concerned with the notion of narrativity, they draw attention to the centrality of affective experience to dimensions such as "personality" and "personhood" which, as previously mentioned, are considered by authors like Gallagher and Zahavi to be integral to the narrative self.

The conception of the relationship between affectivity and selfhood that emerges from existing phenomenological accounts is thus two-fold. On the one hand, affective experience is associated with pre-reflective forms of self-awareness and thus with the minimal self. On the other, it is suggested that affectivity plays a role also in the dynamics through which forms of self-consciousness akin to narrative self-understanding emerge from the minimal self. Such an approach, I argue, paves the way to the clarification of some aspects of the relationship between minimal and narrative self which are not explored by Gallagher and Zahavi. Yet, as I mentioned before, existing phenomenological accounts of affectivity, in their investigation of the relation between affective experience and the self, do not take narrativity explicitly into

consideration. As such, in order to expand our understanding of both affective experience and the self, in this work I endeavour to provide a cohesive account of the relationship which exists between affectivity and narrative selfhood.

To do so, I first explore the influence that affective experience has on narrative self-understanding, arguing that various kinds of affective states play a constitutive role in the emergence and development of our life stories. This analysis allows me to identify some of the dynamics through which narrative self-awareness emerges from minimal self-experience, thus contributing to the clarification of one of the issues which are not addressed by current accounts of minimal and narrative self. Secondly, I claim that narrativity itself moulds the structure of affective experience in various ways and in so doing I show that, while minimal forms of self-experience predate the appearance of the narrative self and influence its development in various ways, also narrative understanding constitutively shapes the minimal self.

I then apply these insights to the analysis of the disturbances of self-experience characteristic of depression and borderline personality disorder and this leads to two main outcomes. On the one hand, by focusing on the various dynamics through which affectivity and narrativity shape each other, I expand our understanding of these forms of psychiatric illness in various respects. On the other, the phenomenological exploration conducted in this section allows me to put into question the claim that in depression and borderline personality disorder it is the narrative and not the minimal level of self-consciousness that is disrupted. I indeed show that characteristic of these disorders are alterations of self-experience in which minimal and narrative forms of self-awareness are structurally entangled.

By developing a phenomenological account of the relationship between

affectivity and narrativity, this work shows not only that minimal and narrative selfhood are causally interdependent, but also that the structures of these phenomena are so deeply entwined that they are, from a phenomenological perspective, inextricable. This account, however, does not suggest that the distinction between minimal and narrative self should be rejected. For theoretical purposes it might still be useful to distinguish between the dynamics characteristic of each level of self-consciousness, but, in so far as minimal and narrative self in various ways constitute each other, they should be considered as a unified dimension.

Thesis Outline

In Chapter 1 ("Minimal Self and Narrative Self") I introduce and discuss the notions of minimal and narrative self. As far as the former is concerned, I show that this form of selfhood is usually identified with pre-reflective self-consciousness, that is a "non-observational" and "non-objectifying" (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008: 46) awareness of the self considered to be temporally extended and independent of the possession of linguistic and conceptual abilities. I illustrate how the minimal self has been characterised in terms of bodily self-consciousness and examine further notions relevant to the understanding of this concept, such as that of sense of ownership and sense of agency. I then move to the analysis of narrative selfhood, which is characterised as a form of reflective self-awareness dependent on the possession of evaluative position-taking abilities and the capacity to engage in implicit or explicit forms of story-telling. Having clarified what is meant by the terms "minimal" and "narrative self", I illustrate how their relationship is conceived in the current debate and, in this regard, I Identify two main issues which current accounts fail to address.

In Chapter 2 ("Affectivity and the Self in the Phenomenological Tradition") I consider how the relationship between affectivity and selfhood has been conceived within the phenomenological tradition. I start by illustrating the insights into this topic developed by Colombetti (2011) and Slaby (2008). According to these positions, the bodily feelings implicated in the experience of emotions are forms of pre-reflective self-consciousness, an idea which draws attention to the fact that the minimal self is also, essentially, an affective self. I then move to examine the account of affective experience put forward by Scheler (1973a) and De Monticelli (2003; 2006). Central to this account is the idea that affectivity is fundamentally involved in the dynamics through which personhood – a form of selfhood akin to the narrative self – is constituted. Drawing also on the observations regarding the relationship between existential feelings and self-consciousness developed by Slaby and Stephan (2008), I suggest that affectivity is a minimal form of self-experience which both shapes and is shaped by the narrative self.

In Chapter 3 ("The Role of Affectivity in the Constitution of Narratives") I examine the role played by affectivity in the development of autobiographical narrativity. In this regard, it is claimed that affective experience has an impact on the way in which stories are structured, shaping, for example, the way in which narratives are temporally organised (Hogan, 2011). In addition, it is emphasised that emotions are fundamental in allowing us to select which events are to be included in the stories we tell (Hardcastle, 2003; 2008). According to this position, it is because of their possessing a specific affective relevance that some experiences are narrated while others are not. In this chapter I aim to expand these insights by advancing three specific claims. In the first place, I argue that affectivity confers authenticity on our life stories. More specifically, thanks to the existence of a degree of congruence between the contents of our life stories and our affective states, we come to experience these

stories as truly representative of who we are. Secondly, I suggest that affectivity has a significant role in determining the continuity of the narrative self by granting us a particular form of experiential access - which, following Schechtman (1996; 2001; 2007), I call "empathic access" - to our previous experiences. I then claim that affective experience not only influences narrative content and form, but also determines the range of stories that it is possible for us to tell, the scope, so to speak, of our narrative repertoire. This, I suggest, is due in particular to the role played by "existential feelings" (Ratcliffe, 2005; 2008) in determining the range of affective, cognitive, and volitional experiences that we can undergo.

In Chapter 4 ("The Role of Narrativity in the Constitution of Affectivity") I further develop the analysis of the relationship between affectivity and narrativity by examining the role played by story-telling in shaping the structure of emotions. As illustrated in Chapter 3, various accounts recognise that emotions can influence both the form and contents of our narratives. However, while they acknowledge the existence of a relationship between affectivity and narrativity, these approaches consider the structure of emotions as essentially distinct and independent from narrative self-understanding. In Chapter 4 I challenge this view by arguing that narratives are indeed constitutive of emotions. In particular, I claim that narrativity moulds the experiential structure of emotions in various ways. In the first place, drawing on the insights into the relationship between emotions and language developed by Colombetti (2009), I claim that narratives contribute to render affective experience more precise and differentiated. Secondly, endorsing some of the claims central to Goldie's account of affectivity (2002), I maintain that, through their being incorporated in an implicit or explicit narrative, emotions can acquire a higher degree of complexity and be experienced as unitary and meaningful processes. This approach, I argue, constitutes a theoretical

framework capable of accounting for the interpersonal and cultural variability of emotions, as well as for the changes they undergo during development. Finally, I claim that another fundamental way in which narrativity moulds affectivity is by being involved in various dynamics responsible for emotional regulation.

In Chapter 5 ("Self-Experience in Depression") I examine the relationship between affectivity and narrativity in depression. Moving from some of the insights into the structure of the illness developed by Stanghellini (2004), I first draw attention to the fact that, due to the loss of feeling typical of the disorder, the patient's autobiographical narratives are no longer accompanied by congruent affective states and, as a result, the person comes to feel estranged from the narratives which were central to her autobiography prior to the onset of depression. The stories that are stripped of their affective counterparts are no longer experienced as authentic and this in turn can result in the weakening or abandonment of the stories themselves. Given the role played by autobiographical narratives in the constitution of selfhood, I argue that these dynamics can lead also to the experience of "losing oneself" often reported by depressed patients. Depression, however, is characterised not only by the diminishment or disappearance of certain affective reactions, but also by the presence of a number of feelings which in non-pathological conditions are usually absent or possess a different form and I argue that these affective experiences are responsible for the emergence of new stories which tend to replace the ones that no longer mirror the person's feelings. More specifically, I illustrate how the depressed person's pessimistic "explanatory style" (Seligman, 2006) – that is the tendency to explain bad events in personal, pervasive, and permanent terms – is rooted in configurations of affective experience central to which are existential feelings of guilt, hopelessness, and particular forms of temporal and spatial experience. Finally, I argue that the

narratives crafted by the depressed person in turn influence her affective experience by exacerbating feelings of helplessness and lack of control and by making it difficult for the person to evaluate her own emotions.

In Chapter 6 ("Self-Experience in Borderline Personality Disorder") I explore the relationship between affective experience and narrativity in borderline personality disorder (BPD). From various perspectives it has been argued that BPD is characterised by disturbances of narrative understanding and it has been suggested that affectivity is crucially involved in these disturbances (e.g. Fuchs, 2007). Aiming to complement and expand existing accounts of these dynamics, in the first part of the chapter I show how a particular configuration of affective experience is at the origin of the disruption of narrative selfhood typical of the disorder. More specifically, I suggest that characteristic of BPD is a frequent alternation of existential feelings of anger and shame and I argue that the evaluations of self and other integral to these feelings have an opposite structure. I maintain that, due to this predicament, the borderline patient is unable to retain "empathic access" to his past experience and this is what grounds his inability to integrate different aspects of his story in a coherent autobiographical narrative. In the second part of the chapter I analyse how the disruptions of narrative self-understanding characteristic of the syndrome in turn influence the structure of affectivity. In the first place, I suggest that, due to not being narrativised, the emotions of the borderline person are less precise and differentiated and the body plays a predominant role in both their experience and expression. Secondly, I show how the impairments of narrative understanding exacerbate the affective dysregulation characteristic of the disorder.

In summary, my thesis contributes to the current phenomenological debate on the nature of selfhood and the relationship between minimal and narrative self

in various respects. In the first place, by providing an account of the different ways in which affectivity shapes the structure and contents of our autobiographical narratives, I identify some of the dynamics through which minimal selfhood impacts on narrative self-understanding, thus clarifying how the latter can emerge from the former. Secondly, by showing that also narrativity constitutively shapes affectivity, I draw attention to the existence of forms of self-experience where minimal and narrative self-consciousness are deeply entangled and in so doing I challenge the idea that the minimal self is impervious to the dynamics which characterise narrative self-understanding. In addition, by applying these insights to the analysis of depression and borderline personality disorder, I contribute to expand our understanding of some of the central features of these forms of psychiatric illness. Finally, as highlighted in my final chapter, the research conducted in this thesis provides a theoretical framework that could be used to address a number of other issues in phenomenological psychopathology, philosophy of emotions, and the study of intersubjectivity.

CHAPTER 1

Minimal Self and Narrative Self

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an account of how the notions of minimal and narrative selfhood and their relationship are conceived by various phenomenologically oriented authors, in particular Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi. I will start by illustrating that integral to the definition of minimal self is a certain form of self-awareness referred to as "pre-reflective self-consciousness". I will show that, from this perspective, being a self is to be a subject of experience who is aware of himself in a "non-observational" and "non-objectifying manner" (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008: 46). I will also highlight that pre-reflective self-consciousness has been predominantly characterised as a form of bodily experience which is temporally structured and independent of the possession of conceptual and linguistic abilities. I will then move to consider the notion of narrative self. In this regard, I will draw attention to some aspects of the work of Paul Ricoeur (1988; 1994) which have influenced the way in which narrativity and selfhood are conceived by Gallagher and Zahavi and other contemporary scholars. In this context, the narrative self is viewed as a self which possesses an individual history and personal identity and is constituted through various forms of autobiographical story-telling. More specifically, it is claimed that cardinal to the narrative self is the ability to reflectively endorse certain experiences and values and to integrate them in a coherent self-conception. As far as the relationship between minimal and narrative self is concerned, I will highlight that, according to Gallagher and Zahavi, the former is a condition of possibility for the emergence of the latter, that is a minimal form of self-consciousness should already be in

place in order for narrative self-understanding to develop. However, it is suggested that the dynamics characteristic of narrative selfhood do not have a constitutive impact on the structure of minimal self-experience. These dimensions, it is argued, are usually integrated, but when severe disruptions of narrative ability occur, the minimal self might still be intact and encountered in "its purity" (Zahavi, 2010: 5). As such, minimal and narrative self are conceived as complementary but distinct facets of selfhood. In the last part of the chapter I will suggest that, despite its doing justice to a number of our intuitions regarding the nature of the self, this way of conceiving of the "multidimensionality" (Zahavi, 2010) of selfhood leaves some questions unanswered. In the first place, I will claim that, although it is maintained that the development of a narrative self depends on the presence of a minimal level of self-experience, it is unclear how, if at all, the structure of pre-reflective self-consciousness impacts on the structure of narrative self-understanding. Secondly, I will question the plausibility of the idea that the minimal self is impervious to the processes which take place at the level of narrative self-understanding, suggesting on the contrary that narrativity constitutively shapes minimal self-experience.

1. The Minimal Self

1.1. Minimal Self and Pre-Reflective Self-Consciousness

The notion of "minimal self" is essentially connected to the concepts of self-consciousness and conscious experience. Consciousness, in this context, refers to the experiential or qualitative aspect of mental life, to the fact that "it is like something" to be in a particular mental state. Central to both classical (e.g. Henry, 1973; Sartre, 1958) and contemporary phenomenology (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008; Zahavi, 2008) is the idea that every experience which is conscious in this sense is also self-conscious. Sartre, for example, claims that "[e]very

conscious existence exists as consciousness of existing" (1958: xxx) and suggests that it is not possible for consciousness and self-consciousness to be dissociated:

> This self-consciousness we ought to consider not as a new consciousness, but as *the only mode of existence which is possible for a consciousness of something*. Just as an extended object is compelled to exist according to three dimensions, so an intention, a pleasure, a grief can exist only as immediate self-consciousness. (xxx)

More specifically, it is claimed that integral to the phenomenality of consciousness is a "first-personal givenness" (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008: 50), namely that experiences are given immediately as one's own experiences without any inferential process being needed. Characteristic to the "what it is like" of every mental state would then be a "sense of mineness", that is the sense that the mental states belong to oneself. According to Zahavi:

> When I (in non pathological standard cases) am aware of an occurrent pain, perception or thought from the first-person perspective, the experience in question is given immediately, noninferentially and noncriterially as *mine*. If I feel hunger or see a sunrise, I cannot be in doubt or be mistaken about who the subject of that experience is, and it is nonsensical to ask whether I am sure that I am the one who feels the hunger. (Zahavi 2008: 124)

From this perspective, essential to every experience is a basic form of self-referentiality, which can be defined as "primitive" because it is "built in" the experience itself and does not derive from the relation with any other mental state (Zahavi, 2008: 122). Self-consciousness, in Sartre's words, is "not positional", that is "it is one with the consciousness of which it is consciousness" (1958: xxx).

On the other hand, as observed by Gallagher and Zahavi (2008), the idea that self-consciousness should be accounted for in relational terms is at the core of

various other positions known as "higher-order theories of consciousness".[1] According to these approaches, in order for a particular mental state to be conscious, the state should be the object of a higher-order mental state. Although there is a difference in the way in which the higher-order mental state is characterised (Kim, 2006: 216-217) – with some claiming that it should be a perceptual state and others maintaining that it must be some kind of thought – these approaches agree that phenomenal consciousness, rather than being an intrinsic property of experience, depends on the relationship between the conscious mental state and another mental state (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008: 52).

Although metarepresentational theories conceive of phenomenal consciousness as essentially connected to self-consciousness, Gallagher and Zahavi consider their theoretical account problematic for at least two reasons. In the first-place, they claim that the account of consciousness provided by higher-order theories can generate an "infinite regress". If a mental state in order to be conscious needs to be the object of another mental state, the second-order mental state in its turn in order to be conscious should be the object of a third order mental state, and so on *ad infinitum* (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008: 55). The regress however, only takes place if it is maintained that all mental states are conscious. Metarepresentational theorists, on the contrary, admit of the existence of non-conscious mental states and are consequently able to halt the regress by claiming that the second-order mental state which has the first-order one as its object is non-conscious. However, Gallagher and Zahavi believe that this move generates an "explanatory vacuity" in so far as it becomes difficult to explain how the consciousness of the first-order mental state could be generated by the relationship between two non-conscious mental states (i.e. the second-order

---

[1] For a critical exposition of first-order and higher-order accounts of consciousness in relation to the phenomenological approach see Gallagher and Zahavi (2008: 52-57).

mental state and the first-order mental state before it becomes the object of the second-order one) (2008: 55). Therefore, any possible interpretation of the metarepresentational account has theoretical implications which are unacceptable from a phenomenological perspective. In his discussion of ideas akin to the ones defended by higher-order theories, Sartre makes the same point:

> Either we stop at any one term of the series – the known, the knower known, the knower known by the knower, etc. In this case the totality of the phenomenon falls into the unknown; that is, we always bump against a non-self-conscious reflection and a final term. Or else we affirm the necessity of an infinite regress (*idea ideae ideae*, etc.), which is absurd. (Sartre, 1958: xxviii)

The phenomenological account then maintains that there exists a basic form of self-consciousness which is intrinsic to any conscious experience and does not require the presence of mental states of a higher order. Most importantly, this form of self-consciousness is attributed a "pre-reflective" character. The notion of pre-reflectivity adopted by Gallagher and Zahavi has various aspects, however, key to their account is the idea that pre-reflective self-awareness has both a "non-objectifying" and "non-observational" nature (2008: 46). On the one hand, this form of experience is "non-objectifying" because in it the self is not given as an object, but rather as the subject of the conscious state. On the other, it is "non-observational" because it does not depend on any kind of introspective attitude taken by the subject towards his own experiences.

Minimal selfhood is considered to be fundamentally connected with pre-reflective self-consciousness. Indeed, by drawing attention to the self-referentiality characteristic of any form of phenomenal consciousness, Gallagher and Zahavi claim that selfhood is essentially dependent on the structure of experience and, in particular, self-experience:

> More precisely, the claim is that the (minimal or core) self possesses experiential reality, and is in fact identified with the first-personal appearance of the experiential phenomena […]. In short, the self is conceived as the invariant dimension of first-personal givenness in the multitude of changing experiences. (2008: 204)

From this perspective, the notions of pre-reflective self-consciousness and minimal selfhood seem to overlap, as the minimal self is described as "a consciousness of oneself as an immediate subject of experience" (Gallagher, 2000: 15). In other words, the idea is that the first-personal givenness which characterises our experiential life is constitutive of an experiential sense of self with which a basic form of selfhood is identified. Therefore, the self is not seen as something "which stands opposed to the stream of consciousness, but is, rather, immersed in conscious life, it is an integral part of its structure" (Zahavi, 2008: 125).[2]

The minimal self is thus conceived by Gallagher and Zahavi as a self of which we are pre-reflectively aware as the owner of experiences. It is indeed claimed that, due to the "sense of mineness" which accompanies every conscious state, the minimal self is given as the subject to whom the experience belongs and, because of this reason, the "sense of ownership" is a fundamental feature of minimal selfhood (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008: 209; Gallagher, 2000). As I will

---

[2] In phenomenology the connection between selfhood and pre-reflectve self-consciousness has often been referred to through the notion of "ipseity". Michel Henry (1973), for instance, conceives of subjectivity as being characterised by "auto-affection", that is an immediate manifestation of the self to the self which is considered to be the condition of possibility for the manifestation of anything else (1973: 459-461). The notion of ipseity is also frequently employed in phenomenological psychopathology to account for the disturbances of self-consciousness characteristic of certain psychiatric disorders. For example, Sass and Parnas (2003) conceive of schizophrenia as a disturbance of ipseity central to which is a "diminished self-affection", that is "a weakened sense of existing as a vital and self-coinciding source of awareness and action" (2003: 427). According to Sass and Parnas, "complementary" to this disruption of self-awareness is the "hyperriflexivity" typical of schizophrenic experience, namely the tendency to be aware of aspects of the experience that would normally go unnoticed.

highlight later, the minimal self is also attributed other characteristic features and it can be questioned whether Gallagher and Zahavi's account is exhaustive in this respect. Before exploring this point, however, in order to best understand the main claims advanced by this approach and its position within the current theoretical debate, it is necessary to briefly discuss the relationship between minimal self and language.

1.2. Minimal Self and Language

In the contemporary phenomenological literature the term "pre-reflective" is also considered to mean "pre-conceptual" and "pre-linguistic", thus entailing that the primitive self-experience integral to phenomenal consciousness is independent of the possession of a self-concept and the ability to articulate it linguistically (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008: 205). This claim not only clarifies the notion of self-awareness Gallagher and Zahavi operate with, but also highlights one of the main differences between their position and other accounts of self-consciousness.

As observed by Bermúdez (1998: 10-11), within philosophy of mind self-consciousness has often been associated with the ability to think thoughts that are "immune to error through misidentification" and to the related ability to master the semantics of the first-person pronoun. Bermúdez highlights how the origin of these approaches can be traced back to a distinction introduced by Wittgenstein in *The Blue Book* (1958). In the text Wittgenstein distinguishes between two possible uses of the word "I": "the use as subject" and "the use as object". The use of "I" as object is typical of sentences such as "my arm is broken" or "I have grown six inches" (1958: 66), namely propositions which, as observed by Bermúdez, can be analysed in terms of other propositions. In particular, Bermúdez argues that these propositions can be conceived as the

union of a predicative component - "a is φ"- and an identification component - "I am a" (1998: 5). The fundamental characteristic of these uses of "I" is the possibility for the utterer to incur a reference error. In these cases, it is indeed possible to be wrong with regard to the identification element, for example by correctly claiming that "a is φ", while being mistaken as to the fact that "I am a". On the other hand, the uses of "I" as subject, for example in the proposition "I have a toothache", do not involve an identification component and thus in these cases it would not be possible for the utterer to mistakenly refer to himself. As observed by Wittgenstein:

> One can point to the difference between these two categories by saying: The cases of the first category involve the recognition of a particular person, and there is in these cases the possibility of an error, or as I should rather put it: The possibility of an error has been provided for… It is possible that, say in an accident, I should feel a pain in my arm, see a broken arm at my side, and think it is mine when really it is my neighbour's. And I could, looking into a mirror, mistake a bump on his forehead for one on mine. On the other hand, there is no question of recognizing a person when I say I have toothache. To ask "are you sure that it's *you* who have pains?" would be nonsensical. (Wittgenstein, 1958: 67, cited in Bermûdez, 1998: 5)

As remarked by Bermúdez (1998: 6), sentences where "I" is used as subject are consequently considered to be "immune to error through misidentification relative to the first-person pronouns" (Shoemaker, 1968: 556). Following a notation introduced by Castañeda (1966), this use of the first-person pronoun and the corresponding third-person one, is usually marked with an asterisk (*). Drawing on these distinctions, some accounts of self-consciousness claim that mental states are self-conscious if their contents can be expressed directly through the use of the pronoun I* and indirectly through the pronoun He*. In other terms, only the mental states whose contents are intended by the utterer as regarding himself* would be self-conscious.

A clear example of this idea is provided by the definition of "first person

perspective" given by Lynn Baker and by the role that she attributes to this notion in her analysis of self-consciousness (2000). In Baker's opinion, the capacity to think about oneself as oneself*,[3] manifested through the capacity to entertain I* thoughts,[4] not only allows for the attribution to the subject of a first-person perspective, but is also a necessary and sufficient condition for the attribution of self-consciousness. In her words:

> The first-person perspective is a necessary condition for any form of self-consciousness and a sufficient condition for one form of self-consciousness as well. For a conscious being with a first-person perspective can conceive of her thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and sensations as her own*. And the ability to conceive of one's thoughts as one's own* is a form of genuine self-consciousness. Every other form of self-consciousness that I know of presupposes self-consciousness in this basic sense. (Baker, 2000: 69)

Accounts of self-consciousness such as Baker's identify self-consciousness with the capacity to think I* thoughts, namely thoughts whose first-person contents can be expressed through the use of the pronoun "I" immune to error through misidentification. In order to explain this capacity, then, it is necessary to explain how subjects become able to master the semantics of the first person pronoun and it is exactly with reference to this point that a number of theoretical difficulties emerge.

Such an approach, for instance, would deny the possession of self-consciousness to individuals who do not have the linguistic and conceptual abilities necessary to competently use the first-person pronoun. However, evidence from developmental psychology suggests that even at pre-linguistic

---

[3] Baker does not believe that there is such a thing as uses of the first-person pronoun which are *necessarily* immune to error through misidentification. However, she adopts Castañeda's notation to indicate the instances of self-reference in which the utterer refers to himself as himself*.

[4] According to Baker, I* thoughts are thoughts in which the person thinks about herself as herself*, that is without making use of third-person reference tools such as names, demonstratives or descriptions (Baker, 2000: 65).

stages children possess capacities that are difficult to explain without assuming that they are self-conscious. For example, through a series of experiments Meltzoff and Moore (e.g. 1977; 1989; 1994) showed that infants and newborns can imitate a number of facial gestures in a way which, according to Gallagher, excludes the possibility that the imitation is a reflex or release mechanism (2005: 72).[5] In order for the toddler to perform these imitations, he should already be able to grasp the existence of both differences and similarities between himself and others and, as such, he can be considered to be in possession of a primitive, proprioceptive and pre-reflective form of self-consciousness (2005: 74). As infants of this age do not master language and concepts, it is therefore arguable that there is an *experiential s*ense of self which predates the development of the ability to use the first-person pronoun.[6]

By acknowledging the existence of a pre-reflective level of self-experience, the phenomenological account recognises that subjects who are not able to refer to themselves linguistically can be self-aware too. Furthermore, this account provides a theoretical framework which can contribute to explain the origin of the ability to use the first-person pronoun and to form a self-concept. Indeed, it is arguable that those linguistic and conceptual abilities are rooted in the immediate awareness we have of ourselves as subjects of experience.

---

[5] Infants, for instance, are capable of delayed imitation and to improve the accuracy of their performance over time. In addition, Gallagher observes that it is unlikely that there are reflex and release mechanisms specific enough to account for all the different forms of imitation newborns are capable of (2000: 72).

[6] See Bermúdez (1998, chapter one) for the illustration of other theoretical difficulties faced by the accounts which consider the mastery of the semantics of the first-person pronoun necessary for the development of self-consciousness.

1.3. Minimal Self and Bodily Experience

So far I have illustrated how, in Gallagher and Zahavi's account, the notion of minimal self is essentially related to that of pre-reflective self-consciousness and I have provided a characterisation of what is meant in this context by pre-reflectivity. More specifically, I have shown that the minimal self is the subject of experience of which we have a non-observational and non-objectifying awareness in any phenomenally conscious state. This form of self-consciousness, in addition, is considered to be independent of the possession of linguistic and conceptual abilities and, therefore, such an account makes it possible to attribute self-awareness also to subjects who do not master the semantics of the first-person pronoun and do not possess a self-concept.

According to Gallagher and Zahavi, however, minimal selfhood has also other characteristic features. In this regard, for instance, it is argued that the minimal self is both embodied and embedded in the environment (2008: 204), an idea which has its origins in the phenomenological account of intentionality. As remarked by Legrand (2011), characteristic of this account is the acknowledgement that the subject and object of intentional experience are inseparable. From this perspective, Legrand remarks, in order for a world to appear to a conscious subject, the subject itself must be in the world and, because of this reason, it must be embodied (2011: 208-209). This view is best understood by taking into consideration the insights into the nature of conscious and perceptual experience provided by Husserl (1989) and Merleau-Ponty (1962). In particular, central in this context is the claim that the body is not an object like other objects, but rather is that by virtue of which we can have an experience of objects at all (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 92).

According to Husserl, any spatio-temporal object is always given from a certain

perspective, namely it is always located in a coordinate system of which the subject is the origin (Husserl: 1989: 61-62), a claim which is at the core also of Merleau-Ponty's account:

> not only is the perspective of my body not a particular case of that of objects, but furthermore the presentation of objects in perspective cannot be understood except through the resistance of my body to all variation of perspective. If objects may never show me more than one of their facets, this is because I am myself in a certain place from which I see them and which I cannot see. (1962: 92)

As observed by Zahavi, every perspectival appearance "is always an appearance of something for someone", "it always has its *genitive* and *dative*" (Zahavi, 2003: 98). This makes it necessary for the perceiving subject to be located in the spatial framework like its objects, and since being part of this framework requires the possession of a corporeal nature, it is claimed that the subject of perception is necessarily an embodied subject (Zahavi, 2003: 98).[7]

This view draws attention to the subject being the "zero point" of an egocentric space; however, as observed by Zahavi, Husserl's account of the role of embodied subjectivity in perception is not limited to the consideration of the bodily self as the static reference point of a system of spatio-temporal coordinates. On the contrary, Husserl accurately investigates the role of bodily mobility in the constitution of perceptual reality (Zahavi, 2003: 99).

Husserl's analysis of bodily movement aims to explain how it is possible for different perceptual appearances to be recognised as facets of one and the same object (Zahavi, 2003: 99). Bodily mobility is characterised for the subject by a number of kinaesthetic sensations, that is bodily feelings which – with the exception of pathological experience – are always associated with movement.

---

[7] In Husserl's words: "[t]he body is, in the first place, the *medium of all perception*; it is the *organ of perception* and is *necessarily* involved in all perception" (1989: 61).

While any particular perceptual appearance of an object is always given in relation to a specific bodily position, this experience, from a phenomenological point of view, is not given in isolation. The profile of the object that I perceive at any given moment is given in conjunction with the profiles of the object that are not appearing now but that would become apparent if I changed my position relative to the object. In other terms, the absent profiles of the perceptual object are "cointended" (Zahavi, 2003: 100) in perceptual experience thanks to the fact that they could become apparent if a movement or a series of movements were performed. As Husserl states:

> In the essence of the apprehension itself there resides the possibility of letting the perception disperse into "*possible*" series of perceptions, all of which are of the following type: *if* the eye turns in a certain way, *then* so does the "image;" if it turns differently in some definite fashion, then so does the image alter differently, in correspondence". (1989: 63)

Kinaesthetic experience, therefore, is what gives continuity to perceptual experience from the point of view of both the perceiving subject and the perceived object. The unity of the perceptual object is thus dependent on the possibility for its hidden profiles to become apparent through specific bodily movements: this possibility is experienced as an integral part of our perceptual field and is underpinned by the existence of a kinaesthetic system.

A phenomenological analysis of the structure of perceptual experience then shows that the perceiver is necessarily embodied and also provides important information in regards to the characteristics of this embodied subject. As illustrated above, perceptual experience depends on the presence of a dynamic subject, namely a subject who has the ability to move in the environment. From this perspective, therefore, the perceiver is also an agent and perceptual experience and bodily movement are essentially entangled. In order to understand how such an account is relevant to the characterisation of the

structure of the minimal self it is however necessary to further distinguish between various ways in which the body can be experienced.

A key phenomenological distinction in this regard is that between the subjective body (*Leib*) and the objective body (*Körper*), or, in other terms, between the lived, unthematised body and the observed, thematised one (Zahavi, 1999: 104). By drawing attention to the fact that originally the body is not given as one among other perceptual objects, but rather as that by virtue of which other objects can be perceived, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty provide an account of the body as it is subjectively lived. This kind of bodily experience has a non-objectifying and non-observational character and can thus be considered to be a form of pre-reflective self-consciousness.

The experience of the body as a subject, as it is an experience in which the body is not an object of perception, but that through which perception is realised, can be characterised as an experience in which the body is "transparent" (Legrand, 2011). However, as noted by Legrand, the notion of transparency can have different meanings and it is important to ascertain which is the one that is most suited to the phenomenological account. On the one hand, Legrand observes, transparency can be considered a synonym of "invisibility": from this point of view, the transparent body not only would not be the object of thematic attention, but it would also be outside of the experiential realm altogether. As such, rather than being experienced in either reflective or pre-reflective self-consciousness, the body would just be unconscious. On the other hand, transparency can be considered as opposed to invisibility and the term can be used to designate a form of experience which is conscious, but not thematically conscious. From this perspective, as argued by Legrand, the experience of the body as a subject should be defined as transparent, because in it the body is not an object of observation, but is conscious and "not concealed" (2011: 215). As

highlighted before, this is predominantly the case with our perceptual experience of the external world. Although our attention in these circumstances is directed to what we perceive, the body does not disappear from our experiential field and it is present not as an intentional object but rather as the framework through which perception is structured.

The phenomenological analysis here outlined thus shows that the self of which we are pre-reflectively conscious is an embodied perceiver and agent, thus making it possible to understand two other fundamental features of the minimal self. In the first place, the minimal self is not a "pure identity pole" (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008: 200), but is rather a bodily self essentially embedded in the environment. Secondly, along with the "sense of ownership", also the "sense of agency" is an essential attribute of the minimal self. As mentioned above, intrinsic to the pre-reflective experience we have of our body is a felt sense of our ability to act and Gallagher and Zahavi (2008)[8] emphasise how actions that are performed intentionally are normally accompanied by the sense of being the author of those actions, that is "the one who is causing or generating" them (Gallagher, 2000: 15). The sense of agency is considered to be distinct from the sense of ownership, as the latter is defined as the sense that "I am the one who is undergoing an experience", that I am the subject to whom the experience belongs (Gallagher, 2000: 15). In the case of voluntary actions, for example when I decide to open the window to let some air in, the sense of ownership and the sense of agency "coincide and are indistinguishable" (Gallagher, 2000: 16). However, in the case of involuntary movements, for example when someone pushes me or in reflex-like movements, the sense of ownership is present, but the sense of agency is absent. The sense of agency is thus different from the sense of ownership, but it is maintained that they both

---

[8] For an extended discussion of the sense of agency see Gallagher and Zahavi (2008, chapter eight).

operate at the pre-reflective level. This is not to deny that we can be reflectively aware of being an agent or the owner of our experiences and that we are able to express this awareness linguistically. However, as observed by Gallagher and Zahavi (2008: 161), "attributions" of ownership and agency at the reflective level necessarily depend on a prior pre-reflective experience. In other terms, according to this position, it is because I already experience myself as an agent at the pre-reflective level that I can reflectively conceive of myself as the author of my own actions.

Because of its pre-reflective character, the sense of agency is then recognised by various authors as one of the fundamental characteristics of the minimal self. In Fuchs' opinion, for instance:

> Agency as self-movement of the body is the necessary complement to its self-affection; together they form the basic self-awareness or self-referentiality of embodied consciousness. (Fuchs, 2005: 96)

Sense of ownership and sense of agency are thus central aspects of the notion of minimal self. However, in order to get a comprehensive idea of the phenomenological account under consideration, it is important to briefly discuss also the role played by temporality in the definition of minimal selfhood.

1.4. Minimal Self and Time

As discussed earlier, the minimal self is identified with the primitive form of self-consciousness which accompanies every conscious experience and it is argued that this form of self-awareness is independent of the possession of linguistic and conceptual abilities. Zahavi (2003; 2014) also explores the relationship between pre-reflective self-consciousness and time and claims, on

the basis of his analysis of Husserl's account of time consciousness (1991), that the minimal self is to be conceived as temporally extended.

Aiming to explain how it is possible for us to experience objects with a temporal duration, Husserl maintains that integral to the experience of the object is not only the consciousness of its current phase - "primal impression" - but also a consciousness of its previous phase – which he calls "retention" – and an anticipation of its future phase – which he names "protention". As such, an object can be perceived as extended in time because the present awareness we have of it is intertwined with a consciousness of its past and future states. An example discussed by Husserl in this regard concerns the experience we undergo when listening to a melody. It is observed that in this case not only we are conscious of the note that we are currently hearing, but we also retain a certain awareness of the note we have just heard and we anticipate that another note will come next. In Husserl's view, it is because intentional consciousness has this tripartite structure that we are able to experience temporally extended objects. However, as remarked by Zahavi (2014: 64-65), this account explains not only the way in which we experience objects, but also how self-consciousness is structured. Indeed, according to this position, what is retained, given and anticipated through retention, primal impression and protention are the past, present and future phases of my experience of the object. As the awareness of our experiencing we have through temporal consciousness is non-objectifying and non-observational, it can be attributed a pre-reflective character and, as such, minimal selfhood can be considered to be extended in time in this basic sense. In Zahavi's words:

> Husserl's description of the structure of inner time-consciousness (primal impression – retention – protention) might be seen as an analysis of the structure of the pre-reflective self-manifestation of our acts and experiences. (2003: 90)

The phenomenological analysis of the temporal structure of pre-reflective self-consciousness thus shows that the minimal self is temporally extended. According to Gallagher and Zahavi's account, time is central also to the narrative self; however, as it will become clear in the next few sections, the notion of temporality which is most relevant to narrativity has to do not with the micro-structure of consciousness, but rather with the historicity of human experience.

2. The Narrative Self

2.1. Narrative Accounts

In the first part of this chapter I illustrated the essential connection Gallagher and Zahavi establish between minimal selfhood and pre-reflective self-consciousness. From this perspective, I showed, the minimal self is defined as the embodied subject which is experienced in a non-observational and non-objectifying manner in any instance of phenomenal consciousness. The minimal level of self-experience is considered to be temporally extended and independent of the possession of linguistic and conceptual abilities and sense of ownership and sense of agency are seen as fundamental aspects of pre-reflective self-awareness.

Although the minimal self is considered as a primitive form of self-experience, Gallagher and Zahavi recognise that this concept does not exhaust our ideas regarding the nature of selfhood. When we think of a self, they suggest, we think of something more than a mere subject of experience (Gallagher, 2000: 18; Zahavi, 2008: 107). Rather, what we often have in mind is a richer notion, which, in their opinion, is best accounted for through the concept of narrative self.

Various philosophical and psychological accounts have been given of what narrative selfhood amounts to. At the core of many of these approaches is the idea that the emergence of a self depends on the ability to engage in a plurality of personal and interpersonal narrative activities. Moving from the acknowledgement that human life is inherently dynamic and that individual experience is highly heterogeneous, these accounts tend to conceive of narrativity as the means by which a degree of coherence can be given to diverse aspects of one's existence and a unitary self can be constituted. From this perspective then, as argued by MacIntyre, the unity of the self would depend on "the unity of a narrative embodied in a single life" (1984: 218).

According to Dennett (1988; 1991), for instance, the self is to be conceived as a "center of narrative gravity" which is created through our linguistic ability to integrate and make coherent a number of disparate experiences over time. In his words:

> we are all virtuoso novelists, who find ourselves engaged in all sorts of behaviour, and we always try to put the best 'faces' on it we can. We try to make all of our material cohere into a single good story. And that story is our autobiography. The chief fictional character at the centre of that autobiography is one's self. (Dennett, 1988: 1029, cited in Strawson, 2004: 435)

In Dennett's opinion, the notion of self plays a useful role in our cognitive life, but this does not make the self a real entity; on the contrary, the self is to be considered as an invention, a fictional representation.[9] In addition, contrary to

---

[9] As observed by Menary (2008), whilst Dennett considers the self as an abstract construction and denies it any reality, other supporters of the narrative account of selfhood have maintained that the self produced through narrativity is not a fiction, but a real substance possessing causal powers (e.g. Velleman, 2006). Different positions have thus been taken in regards to the ontological status of the narrative self, however, for the purpose of the present work, it is not necessary to discuss these conceptions. What is relevant here is rather to provide an overview of some of the ideas at the basis

Gallagher and Zahavi, Dennett and other supporters of the idea that narrativity and selfhood are essentially related claim that no self is in existence prior to the emergence of the narrative one. According to Bruner for instance:

> there is no such thing as an intuitively obvious and essential self to know, one that just sits there ready to be portrayed in words. Rather, we constantly construct and reconstruct our selves to meet the needs of the situations we encounter and we do so with the guidance of our memories of the past and our hopes and fears for the future. Telling oneself about oneself is like making up a story about who and what we are, what's happened, and why we're doing what we're doing. (Bruner, 2003: 64)

Gallagher and Zahavi's approach differ from the accounts put forward by Dennett and Bruner because it admits of the existence of a minimal self in addition to a narrative self and maintains, as I will show shortly, that a particular relationship holds between the two. Before examining in more detail this position, however, it is important to briefly consider the key issues debated by narrative accounts of selfhood. In this regard, a useful interpretative framework is provided by Schechtman (2007: 159-160), who suggests to distinguish the various narrative accounts on the basis of how they answer the following questions: 1) "What counts as a life-narrative?" 2) "What counts as *having* a narrative?" and 3) "What are the practical implications of having (or failing to have) a narrative?"

As far as the first question is concerned, common to many conceptions of narrativity is the claim that in order for something to count as a narrative a temporal structure should be present. This is indeed the essential feature of what could be considered a "minimal" definition of narrative. According to Lamarque for example "at least two events must be depicted in a narrative and

---

of the claim that narrativity and selfhood are essentially connected and this can be done independently of the consideration of the particular ontological status that the various theories attribute to the narrative self.

there must be some more or less loose, albeit non-logical relation between the events. Crucially, there is a temporal dimension in narrative" (Lamarque, 2004: 394). From this perspective, a narrative can be considered just as a "sequential list of events" and texts such as police reports, reports of medical procedures (Schechtman, 2007: 159-160), annals and historical chronicles would qualify as narratives under this definition.

More demanding approaches maintain that a sequence of events can be considered a narrative when an explanation of how they relate to one another is present. These "explanatory relationships" will show "how the events in one's history lead to other events in that history" (Schechtman, 2007: 160) and such relationships may be given different characterisations. According to Carroll (2001), for instance, the explanatory power of narratives depends on the fact that the narrated events are causally related. However, other scholars suggest that, although causal connections are presupposed by the stories we craft, narrativity conveys a distinct form of understanding or explanation (e.g. Goldie, 2012a; Velleman, 2003).

Goldie, for instance, maintains that narrative accounts have various features in common with causal accounts – for example their "idiographic" nature and the fact that they cannot be about a single event but should regard sequences of events (2012a: 14) – but he rejects the identification of the two forms of explanation. What is distinctive of a narrative, in his opinion, is the fact that the events which are told are held together by virtue of meaningful, and not necessarily causal, relationships. I will provide a more detailed reconstruction of Goldie's conception of narrativity in Chapter 4, but for the purpose of the present section it is important to stress that according to various scholars the events in a narrative are intelligibly connected and intelligibility or meaningfulness in this context are not to be identified with causality.

According to Schechtman, the second aspect in regard to which narrative accounts differ is the characterisation of what it means to be in possession of a narrative. Goldie, for example, defines a narrative as "something that can be told or narrated, or just thought through in narrative thinking" (2012a: 2), thus suggesting that narrativity is dependent upon the presence of someone who recounts the story either implicitly or explicitly.[10] Others, on the contrary, extend the notion of narrative far beyond this definition, claiming that in order for something to possess a narrative structure no implicit or explicit story-telling is needed. From this perspective, narrativity is something that can be possessed also by experience itself (e.g. Carr, 1986; Slors, 1998).

Schechtman claims that the last aspect in relation to which narrative accounts differ concerns the implications of having an autobiographical narrative. On the one hand, some accounts simply claim that narratives have a role in our cognitive and behavioural functioning. This is the case for example of Dennett (1991) who claims that the fictional representation he identifies the self with has the function of helping the organism to keep track of its activities. As observed by Schechtman, other accounts attribute to narrativity a deeper role, by conceiving of it as necessary to perform some activities related to personhood – such as acting as a moral agent – while others advance the even stronger claim that they are fundamental to conduct a meaningful life (2007: 160). This is for example the view of MacIntyre, according to whom the search for what constitutes a good life confers meaningfulness on human existence and is dependent upon narrative understanding. In his words:

> The unity of a human life is the unity of a narrative quest. Quests sometimes

---

[10] In the rest of this work I will use the expressions "explicit" and "implicit" story-telling to indicate the activities in which someone engages when telling a particular story or thinking about it. I will also use "stories" and "narratives" as synonyms.

fail, are frustrated, abandoned or dissipated into distractions; and human lives may in all these ways also fail. But the only criteria for success or failure in a human life as a whole are the criteria of success or failure in a narrated or to-be-narrated quest. (MacIntyre, 1984: 219)

Gallagher and Zahavi's account does not explicitly treat each of the aspects of the debate on narrative selfhood highlighted by Schechtman. However, the work of Ricoeur, which is one of the main sources their account draws upon, addresses some of these topics. Therefore, in order to best understand the origins and main features of the notion of narrative self used in contemporary phenomenology, in the next section I will provide an outline of Ricoeur's conception of narrativity and selfhood.

2.2. Ricoeur's Work and Contemporary Phenomenology

Ricoeur's account of autobiographical narrativity is fundamentally related to how he conceives of the problem of personal identity. This account is based on the distinction between two forms of identity, identity as sameness (*mêmeté*) and identity as selfhood (*ipséité*), and on a specific conception of the relationship which exists between the two when the individual person is considered (Ricoeur, 1994).

According to the notion of *mêmeté*, the identical is that which can be identified as the same over time because it undergoes little or no change. The notion of *ipséité*,[11] on the contrary, indicates a form of identity which is kept through change: the identical, from this perspective, is that which remains the same

---

[11] Ricoeur's notion of ipseity is different from the one which is used by Henry (1973) and by some scholars in the field of phenomenological psychopathology (e.g. Sass and Parnas, 2003). Indeed, while the latter, as previously mentioned, designates a pre-reflective form of self-experience, in Ricoeur's account ipseity indicates a form of personal identity to the constitution of which narrative self-understanding is fundamental.

while mutating. According to Ricoeur, personal identity can only be understood in terms of the interaction between these two concepts.

In his view, identity as sameness is best exemplified by *character*, which he describes as the set of unchanging features whose presence allows for the identification of the subject as one and the same in different circumstances and times. Identity as sameness is thus manifested, according to Ricoeur, as the perspective the subject has on the world, the particular point of view from which he has access to ideas, values and people. Character is not something the subject voluntarily chooses: on the contrary, it is the set of dispositions he finds himself endowed with and which makes him recognisable over time as a certain person (1994: 121).

The notion of character is discussed by Ricoeur in various works, however, in *Oneself as Another* he acknowledges that his view has slightly changed. While he originally argued in favour of the immutability of this dimension, later he comes to recognize that character can undergo a certain evolution. In particular, Ricoeur claims that, due to our character dispositions, we are inclined to evaluate particular things or events in a certain way. In so doing, we develop evaluative preferences which, by becoming habitual, can become part of character itself – what Ricoeur refers to as "acquired identifications" - and add to the number of dispositions which make us recognisable over time. It is through this process of inclusion of new dispositional elements in its pre-existing structure that character can evolve. However, the evolution of character so outlined never entails a radical change, a subversion of our pre-existing nature, and this leads Ricoeur to claim that in this process the two notions of identity – identity as sameness and identity as selfhood – coincide (1994: 121).

Whilst character constitutes a form of permanence in time where immutability

of traits and change seem to be reconciled, Ricoeur argues that there is another model of permanence in time which becomes apparent in the contexts where change overtakes immutability, thus generating a situation in which, rather than being maintained *through change*, identity is maintained *despite change*. This model of permanence in time is named by Ricoeur "self-constancy" and it is exemplified, for instance, by the ability to keep faith to one's promises even when one's circumstances are different from those in which the promises were made. Over time, the desires and opinions which have motivated the person to undertake certain commitments might undergo radical mutations or be no longer in place; however, in those cases, by keeping one's word, stability is conferred on the self and the threat posed to identity by the passage of time is mitigated. This process indeed appears "to stand as a challenge to time, a denial of change […]" (1994: 124). The identity so achieved is thus dependent on an effort made by the individual to guarantee that there will be something about himself that other people will be able to count on no matter how his personal situation or outlook on the world will evolve. By committing to keep one's promises, one aims to not let people down and as such the notion of self-constancy is closely related to that of personal accountability and has ethical relevance.

Therefore, apart from character, Ricoeur acknowledges the existence of a dimension of personal identity which depends on our ability to take a position in regards to the person we want to be. Indeed, he claims that we are not passively determined by character and that we have the possibility, to a certain extent, to determine who we are and to take responsibility for this. According to him, this possibility depends on the dialectic between permanence and change, identity and diversity, which is at the core of our temporal existence and he claims that it is only through the development of a narrative form of self-understanding that these dimensions can be reconciled and the identity of the

person built and maintained over time. In Ricoeur's view, the construction of an autobiographical narrative serves a very important function, namely it is a way to create coherence and meaning across the variety of events and changes experienced in one's life, a way to avoid dispersion and define a stable identity which is recognised as such by both the self and others. According to him:

> Self-sameness, "self-constancy," can escape the dilemma of the Same and the Other to the extent that its identity rests on a temporal structure that conforms to the model of dynamic identity arising from the poetic composition of a narrative text. The self characterised by self-sameness may then be said to be refigured by the reflective application of such narrative configurations. Unlike the abstract identity of the Same, this narrative identity, constitutive of self-constancy, can include change, mutability, within the cohesion of a lifetime. The subject then appears both as a reader and the writer of its own life […]. (1994: 246)

Engaging in narrative self-understanding is thus of extreme importance for the individual, as it is through this activity that the subject can take a position in regard to himself, attributing to his life a meaning and direction which have been and will be maintained through change.

Ricoeur's conception of what it means to have a narrative is very different from that of "minimalist" approaches. Indeed, as far as the structure of a life narrative is concerned, Ricoeur suggests that this structure should combine the characteristics of both historical and literary narratives (1994: 114). Not only the autobiographical narrative should list the sequence of events in our life, it should also present those events as playing a role in the development of a unitary and meaningful story. Constructing a narrative in this context is thus necessarily a personal level activity and a conscious process.

Since in Ricoeur's account, and in the philosophical literature more broadly, narrativity is often related to the notion of personal identity, it is important to

clarify the sense in which the notion is used in this context. As observed by Schechtman (1996), the debate on personal identity in analytic philosophy of mind revolves around the "reidentification question", namely is concerned with the conditions that make it possible to identify someone as the same person over time. However, when personhood is at issue, also another question can be raised and this has to do with the characteristics that make someone the person he or she is. This is defined by Schechtman as the "characterization question" and is described in the following terms:

> Most simply put, this question asks which actions, experiences, beliefs, values, desires, character traits, and so on […] are to be attributed to a given person. Reidentification theorists ask what it means to say that a person at t2 is the same person as a person at t1; characterization theorists ask what it means to say that a particular characteristic is that of a given person. (1996: 73)

According to this perspective, in order for the characterization question to be adequately answered it is not enough to identify the features and events which are part of the person's history. Rather, what is fundamental is the determination of which among these characteristics truly belong to the person or, in other words, make her "who" she is. Therefore, in order to be able to answer the characterization question it is necessary to understand what makes particular aspects of the person's history central to her identity and this is what Schechtman's and other accounts of narrative selfhood are concerned with. In other terms, what the narrative approach seeks to explain, is not, or not primarily, how it is possible for us to recognise that someone is one and the same person at two different points in time, but rather what is essential to someone being that particular person.

The notion of personal identity to which Gallagher and Zahavi refer in their account of narrative selfhood is the one with which the characterization question is concerned. A key feature of the narrative view they put forward,

and one which is consonant with the insights developed by Ricoeur, is the acknowledgement of the historical structure of selfhood, namely the idea that the self is not a static entity, but rather something that is constituted and evolves over time. Gallagher and Zahavi recognise that a fundamental aspect of this development consists in the endorsement of specific values, cares, and beliefs and suggest that this is the process at the origin of the narrative self's "individual identity" (Gallagher, 2000: 18) or "personality" (Zahavi, 2007: 193).

In this context, the narrative self is considered as a self with a "story" and a "personal character"[12], while the minimal self is associated only with a "formal kind of individuation", as it is viewed as unrelated to the decisions, events and ideals which shape an individual life and allow to distinguish the self from others in a more substantial way. This idea is highlighted for instance by Zahavi in the following passage:

> A description of my experiential self will not differ in any significant way from a description of your experiential self, except, of course, in so far as the first is a description of me, the second a description of you. By contrast, a more tangible kind of individuality manifests itself in my personal history, in my convictions and decisions. It is through such acts that I define who I am, thereby distinguishing myself from others; they have a character shaping effect. (Zahavi, 2007: 193)

As they consider the notion of "personal identity" or "personality" as central to the understanding of what a narrative self is, Gallagher and Zahavi suggest that it might be appropriate to use the term "self" to refer to the experiential subject

---

[12] It is important to note that the notion of "personal character" used by Gallagher and Zahavi is different from the one adopted by Ricoeur. While in Ricoeur's account "character" indicates a series of features that the subject has not chosen and that are considered to remain stable throughout his life, Gallagher and Zahavi use the term to designate the identity of the person as it is configured through her position-taking and narrative abilities. As such, while Ricoeur associates character with identity as sameness, the term as it is used by Gallagher and Zahavi is in fact akin to identity as selfhood.

of minimal selfhood, while the individual who is constituted through autobiographical narrativity can be referred to as "person":

> When dealing with the experiential self, one might retain the term 'self', since we are dealing precisely with a primitive form of self-givenness or self-referentiality. By contrast, it may be helpful to speak not of the self, but of the *person* as a narrative construction. After all, what is being addressed by a narrative account is the nature of my personal character or personality; a personality that evolves through time and is shaped by the values I endorse and by my moral and intellectual convictions and decisions. (Zahavi, 2007: 193)

Gallagher and Zahavi, then, associate the narrative self with personhood and, although they do not provide an extensive account of this level of selfhood and self-consciousness, as highlighted above, they suggest that individual history and the endorsement of certain values are fundamental features of this kind of self. This characterisation is adopted also by other phenomenologically oriented approaches which conceive of narrativity and personal identity as closely connected. Rosfort and Stanghellini (2009), for example, emphasise that personhood is essentially dependent on the ability to take an "evaluative stance" in regard to one's own experiences and to make decisions about what kind of person one wants to be. Being a person, in other terms, requires the capacity to exercise one's will in order to give a particular orientation to one's existence and this is explicitly contrasted with the structure of the minimal level of self-experience:

> A person is a contextualised self with intentional attitudes, characterised by ontological ambiguity and capable of position taking, that is, evaluation and deliberation, as opposed to a minimal self […]. (Rosfort and Stanghellini, 2009: 245)

As observed earlier, in Ricoeur's account a central role is attributed to the person's will. In particular, Ricoeur claims that fundamental to the

development and preservation of personal identity is the ability to be faithful to one's commitments and thus to guarantee "self-constancy". Contemporary phenomenological accounts of the narrative self retain this emphasis on position taking, claiming that the capacity to take a stance in regards to what are the experiences and values that are part of one's personal identity is a central aspect of narrative selfhood.

The emphasis posed on the role of evaluative position-taking also draws attention to the fact that narrative self-understanding has a reflective character. In contrast to the primitive, non-observational and non-objectifying nature of pre-reflective self-awareness, reflective self-consciousness is characterised by Gallagher and Zahavi as an explicit and objectifying awareness of the self. Cardinal to the structure of any form of reflection is the distinction between the subject of reflection and the object reflected upon (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008: 61) and any experience where the subject takes itself as an object is thus a form of reflective self-consciousness. The ability to engage in autobiographical story-telling presupposes the capacity to think about oneself and, as observed earlier, to take a stance towards the features of the self that are so conceived. Therefore, it appears that reflectivity is a condition of possibility for narrativity and personhood.

Finally, another characteristic of the narrative self to which Gallagher and Zahavi draw attention is its social embeddedness. In this regard, widely held is the idea that when we construct a narrative, and in particular an autobiographical narrative, we are not the only authors of our stories: on the contrary, the stories that others tell about us and the stories which are part of our cultural heritage have an influence on both the form and the contents of the narratives we produce. As observed by Bruner:

life narratives obviously reflect the prevailing theories about "possible lives" that are part of one's culture. Indeed, one important way of characterising a culture is by the narrative models it makes available for describing the course of a life. And the tool kit of any culture is replete not only with a stock of canonical life narratives […], but with combinable formal constituents from which its members can construct their own life narratives […]. (2004: 694)

Our social and cultural interactions, especially the ones which take place early in our life, inevitably shape, through the examples, rules and information they provide, the way in which we build our autobiographical narratives. In addition, our story-telling never starts in a void as the construction of an autobiography usually begins when we have already listened to a number of stories others have told about ourselves.

The notion of narrative I will make use of in this thesis reflects the way in which narrative self-understanding is characterised in the phenomenological literature (Gallagher, 2000; Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008; Zahavi, 2007) and in 'non-minimalist' accounts such as the one developed by Goldie (2012a) and briefly discussed in this chapter. In the first place, I endorse the idea that in order for something to count as a narrative, an intelligible relationship should hold between the events which are narrated, and I agree with the claim that, while causal explanations are integral to the structure of narratives, in this context intelligibility and causality need not be identified (Goldie, 2012a:14-15). As remarked by Goldie, the various parts of a narrative can indeed be meaningfully connected without being causally related. Secondly, in contrast with the authors who suggest that narrativity can be a feature of experience itself (e.g. Carr, 1986; Slors, 1998) and no story-telling is required in order for a narrative to be produced, I maintain that the production of a narrative is a personal-level activity and that the constitution of a narrative requires the presence of a narrator. From this perspective, in alignment with Goldie's characterisation (2012a:2), I consider a narrative as something that is either

"told" or "thought through" and I use the terms 'explicit' and 'implicit' story-telling to refer to the two processes respectively.

In this thesis I will focus primarily on autobiographical or life narratives, namely narratives which are about one's own story. I distinguish these from literary narratives which have as their subject historical or fictional characters. Although autobiographical narratives themselves can have a literary character and be in the form of published or unpublished accounts, in this work I consider as life narratives also the stories about oneself that, as put by Goldie, are simply "told" or "thought through". As such, the notion of autobiographical or life narrative employed here includes both written autobiographies, verbal reports, and silent accounts of more or less extended parts of one's life. Such narratives can indeed have very different temporal profiles, with some regarding events which take place in just a few minutes or hours, and others spanning years or even an entire life time. I can tell a story about what happened on a particular afternoon at work or about the way in which my life has unfolded over several decades. In addition, independently of the time frame along which its plot develops, the number of events included in a life narrative is highly variable: I can I provide a very detailed account of what happened over the last 24 hours or I can tell the story of my life by referring only to a very few important events. In addition, each of our life stories can also include various sub-plots and these can comprise other sub-narratives and so on in a nested structure whose limits depend only on the type of experience in question and the individual's narrative capacities. For example, someone's life story can contain the narrative of his employment with a particular company, a sub-plot of which could be the narrative of the activities he undertook in his role as a chief executive over the last five years. When affectivity is at issue, analogous dynamics are in play: the story of one's love for a partner can encompass the narrative of the blissful mood experienced for the

49

first few months of the relationship, which in turn can include as sub-plots descriptions of various other emotions undergone during those months.

Central to my conception of narrativity is the idea that autobiographical narratives make it possible for us to conceive of various parts of our life as joined together rather than as separate fragments. By establishing intelligible connections between different aspects of our experience, life stories portray our existence as characterised, at least to a certain extent, by order rather than chaos. Through story-telling life is depicted as having a specific "architecture", a notion which is described by Pugmire in the following terms:

> […] a life will usually have an architecture. To be sure, a chaotic life is imaginable (and to an extent possible). This life would lack pattern. In the limiting case, it would be 'one damn thing after another', episodes arising unbidden and giving way, as opposed to giving rise, to others in a more or less accidental order. Little that happens there happens because of how it is involved by other things that are happening or have happened, leaving it a restless shift of unconnected and senseless events. (Pugmire, 2005: 40)

Narrativity is fundamental to the ability to confer meaningfulness on one's own life, as it is by virtue of engaging in various forms of implicit and explicit story-telling that we can disclose and establish connections between different aspects and events of our history. For instance, telling a story about the frustration I have been experiencing at work over the last few months makes it possible for me to identify certain factors as triggers for this feeling - for example particularly heavy workloads or the fact that I have not yet received the promotion I was hoping for - and other events as consequences - for example my increasing tendency to look at job advertisements when surfing the internet. Constructing such a narrative also enables me to relate the difficult situation I have been experiencing at work to other events, such as the decision I have made to take a holiday during the busiest period of the year for my company, and the fact that recently I have often been irritable or impatient when dealing

50

with family and friends. Telling this story allows me to make better sense of what has been happening in my life, gaining awareness of how deeply my work situation has influenced my thoughts, feelings and behaviours, and this awareness has the potential to influence the way in which I will deal with this or similar situations in the future.

Autobiographical narrativity can thus have a radical impact on our experience and this claim will be the focus of the analysis I will develop in Chapter 4. In particular, I will highlight various ways in which narrative self-understanding shapes the experiential structure of emotions, claiming that by virtue of their being incorporated in our life stories emotions come to be experienced as complex and meaningful processes and that narrativity is involved in multiple ways in our ability to regulate affective experience.

2.3. A Multidimensional Account

In the first section of this chapter I discussed the phenomenological conception of minimal selfhood. According to this position, the minimal self is to be identified with pre-reflective self-consciousness, that is a form of self-awareness which is intrinsic to any phenomenally conscious state. In this context, pre-reflective self-consciousness is conceived as an immediate and primitive experience of the self as an embodied perceiver and agent and is considered to be independent of the possession of a self-concept and linguistic abilities.

I then showed that Gallagher and Zahavi also admit of the existence of a narrative form of selfhood, that is a self whose emergence is dependent on the capacity to construct a coherent life story. The narrative self is a self which possesses an individual history and personal identity, identity which is claimed to be constituted through the reflective endorsement of a series of beliefs,

commitments and values. Furthermore, a cardinal role in the constitution of the narrative self is attributed to the social dimension, as the narratives through which we understand ourselves are intersubjectively and culturally shaped.

Zahavi (2010) remarks that the distinction between minimal and narrative self should be comprised within a multidimensional account of selfhood. In his opinion, minimal and narrative self are aspects of the same phenomenon and not two separate entities and, as such, he suggests that we should speak of a "multifaceted self" rather than "a multiplicity of co-existing selves" (2010: 6). Minimal and narrative self, then, are seen as complementary but distinct dimensions and this becomes particularly clear when their relationship is taken into consideration.

In this regard, it is maintained that in order for a narrative self to emerge, a minimal level of selfhood should already be established. The minimal self, in other terms, is considered to be a condition of possibility for the emergence of a narrative self. Experiential selfhood, according to Gallagher and Zahavi, "must be regarded as a pre-linguistic presupposition for any narrative practices" as "experiences and actions must already be given as mine if I am to worry about how they hang together or make up a coherent life story" (2008: 205).

However, in Gallagher and Zahavi's account the relationship between minimal and narrative self is asymmetrical, as "narrative personhood presupposes experiential selfhood (but not vice versa)" (2008: 205). In line with this idea, it is suggested that disruptions of minimal self-experience would negatively affect the structure of narrative self-understanding, but it is accepted that there might be circumstances in which the latter is disturbed and the former is unaffected, as it would be the case, for example, in the advanced stages of Alzheimer's disease (Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008: 208; Zahavi, 2010: 5).

The approaches which conceive of the self exclusively in narrative terms are bound to claim that significant disruptions of narrativity can result in the destruction of selfhood. This is for example the opinion of Bruner, who endorses the idea that dysnarrativia, namely a severe disturbance of the ability to produce and understand narratives, is "deadly for selfhood" (2003: 86). In contrast to this position, since they claim that there is a minimal form of self-experience which is presupposed by the narrative self, Gallagher and Zahavi suggest that even when narrative abilities are severely disrupted the first person perspective, and thus the primitive level of selfhood, could be intact (2008: 208). It is recognised that these are extreme cases and that "with the possible exception of certain severe pathologies [...] we will never encounter the minimal self in its purity" (Zahavi, 2010: 5). However, the existence of such a possibility,[13] along with the acknowledgment that the relation of "presupposition" or dependency which holds between the minimal and narrative self is one-directional, highlights an important aspect of Gallagher and Zahavi's account and one which has had a significant impact in the field of philosophy of psychiatry.

In accounting for the disturbances of the self characteristic of certain psychiatric disorders, various scholars have differentiated between more and less serious impairments depending on whether the minimal or narrative level of selfhood is thought to be affected. In particular, studies in this area often focus on a comparative phenomenology of schizophrenia and depression and, while the

---

[13] This is explicitly recognised by Gallagher and Zahavi also in the following passage: "although a narrow focus on the experiential core self might be said to involve a certain amount of abstraction, there is no reason to question its reality, it is not a *mere* abstraction [...] there is self-experience in the minimal sense defined above even when one's capacity to weave a narrative of oneself has not yet developed or has been diminished or lost [...]" (2008: 206).

former is usually characterised as involving disruptions of the minimal self,[14] the latter is considered as a disturbance of narrative self-understanding and, as such, a less dramatic alteration of self-consciousness (e.g. Radden, 2013; Sass and Pienkos, 2013a; 2013b).

The multidimensional account of selfhood put forward by Gallagher and Zahavi considers the minimal and narrative self as phenomena that are usually integrated. However, in so far as it admits of the possibility for the minimal self to exist without a narrative self and to be unaffected by disruptions of narrative understanding, this account also conceives of the two dimensions as essentially distinct, an idea which, as I will highlight in the following section and in the rest of this work, is problematic in various respects.

Conclusions

In this chapter I provided a reconstruction of the account of minimal and narrative selfhood developed by Gallagher and Zahavi. I showed that within this perspective the minimal self is identified with pre-reflective self-consciousness, that is a non-objectifying and non-observational experience of the self intrinsic to every conscious mental state. Endorsing some of the ideas advanced by phenomenologists such as Henry (1973) and Sartre (1958), this approach suggests that selfhood, self-awareness, and phenomenal consciousness are fundamentally connected and that the first-personal givenness of our experience amounts to a primitive sense of self independent of the possession of conceptual and linguistic capacities and temporally extended.

---

[14] For an account of schizophrenia that characterises the disorder as involving disturbances of pre-reflective self-consciousness see for example Parnas and Sass (2001); Sass (2000); Sass and Parnas (2003).

I showed that embodiment and embeddedness in the environment are central aspects of the notion of minimal self. On the basis of Husserl's (1989) and Merleau-Ponty's (1962) analyses of the structure of perceptual experience, it is indeed claimed that the self of which we are pre-reflectively aware is a bodily subject of perception and action and that this awareness fundamentally structures our experience of the world. As such, it seems that cardinal to the minimal self is what phenomenologists call an experience of the body as subject, that is an experience of the body not as an object among other objects, but rather as that by means of which any other object can be given.

Gallagher and Zahavi claim that, apart from the minimal self, also another form of selfhood can be identified and, further developing ideas advanced in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and philosophy of the cognitive sciences, they characterise this notion in narrative terms. In the second part of the chapter I discussed this view by first providing an outline of some of the key features of narrative theories of selfhood. I then moved to illustrate in more detail Ricoeur's conception of the relationship between narrativity and the self (1988; 1994), as this is one of the main reference points for Gallagher and Zahavi's account.

I showed that Ricoeur conceives of narrativity as what makes it possible to integrate permanence and change in one's personal identity. Central to this account is the acknowledgment that human life unfolds and develops over time and we undergo a plurality of heterogeneous experiences, always coming in contact with new values, ideas, and situations. Ricoeur draws attention to the power we have to both shape and maintain our identity by taking a position in regards to who we want to be and what is important to us, and argues that this can be achieved by engaging in autobiographical story-telling.

I observed that the conception of narrativity at the core of Ricoeur's position differs from minimalist narrative accounts in various respects. In the first place, according to Ricoeur, the events which appear in a life story should be meaningfully connected and should be depicted as playing a part in the development of a unitary individual. Secondly, autobiographical narratives should possess features of both non-fictional and literary narratives, and are thus conceived as the product of conscious, personal level activities. Finally, in Ricoeur's view narrativity is depicted as having a pivotal role in the subject's life, as it is fundamental to its becoming a person and a moral agent.

In line with Ricoeur's analysis, Gallagher and Zahavi endorse the idea that narrativity and personhood are essentially related. Although they do not engage in an extensive discussion of these notions, their account suggests that it is by endorsing particular values and commitments and by making certain decisions that our "personal character" or "personality" is constituted and autobiographical story-telling is deemed to be central to these dynamics. From this perspective, evaluative position taking, that is the ability to take a stance in regards to what are the features of the person we want to be, is a fundamental characteristic of the narrative self.

Such an account of minimal and narrative selfhood is coherent with a number of intuitions as to what the nature of a self is. In the first place, it establishes a connection between being a self and being a subject of experience, acknowledging that there is a dimension of self-consciousness which is bodily and independent of the possession of language and concepts. Secondly, it recognises that historicity and personality are also important features of our conception of selfhood and attributes to narrativity a fundamental role in the constitution of these aspects. By drawing attention to the multidimensionality of the self, this approach does justice to the complex and dynamic character of

self-experience and provides a theoretical framework which has proved to be helpful in enhancing our understanding of the various forms of self-disturbances characteristic of psychopathological experience.

The account drawn by Gallagher and Zahavi, however, leaves some questions open, in particular in regards to the relationship which exists between minimal and narrative self. More specifically, in this regard two points can be raised. In the first place, while the phenomenological approach here discussed states that a minimal self should be present in order for a narrative self to emerge, it does not take a position as to whether the structure of the former has an impact on the structure of the latter. In other terms, it is possible to ask how, if at all, our pre-reflective bodily self-experience shapes life narratives. Are the stories we tell influenced by the way in which we are aware of ourselves at the minimal level? And if so, which are the mechanisms through which pre-reflective self-consciousness impacts on autobiographical story-telling?

Secondly, by suggesting that disruptions of narrative self-understanding would not necessarily affect minimal self-experience, Gallagher and Zahavi's account assumes that the emergence of narrativity does not generate any significant change at the level of minimal selfhood. The structure of the minimal self is thus conceived to be independent of the dynamics which characterise the narrative level of self-awareness, an assumption which is also reflected in the position taken by some scholars in regards to the disturbances of the self characteristic of certain psychiatric disorders. The idea that the emergence of a narrative self and the dynamics characteristic of this form of self-consciousness would not change the structure of minimal selfhood, however, is controversial, as it might be suggested that by telling a story about ourselves we can also change the structure of our self-experience. Bruner for example observes that:

eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and purpose-build the very "events" of a life. In the end, we become the autobiographical narratives by which we "tell about" our lives. (2004: 694)

The analysis I will develop in the rest of this work will allow me to address the two problematic aspects of Gallagher and Zahavi's account identified in this chapter and to complement and refine their approach in various respects. Zahavi himself recognises that the distinction between minimal and narrative self is "in need of refinement" and his claim is motivated in particular by the acknowledgement that the distinction does not take into consideration some specific aspects of the relationship between selfhood and intersubjectivity (Zahavi, 2010). The minimal self, Zahavi observes, is considered to be a pre-social dimension, while the narrative self is characterised as being embedded in the social world by virtue of the role played by language in its formation. In his view, such an account is incomplete in so far as it neglects the existence of pre-linguistic forms of intersubjectivity that have an influence on the constitution of a specific dimension of selfhood. In particular, Zahavi is concerned with the form of self-consciousness associated with experiencing oneself as the object of another's attention and the ability to take another person's perspective on the self. Drawing on developmental psychology, he suggests that this form of self-awareness predates the development of linguistic capacities and allows for the identification of an "interpersonal self" that cannot be identified with either the minimal or narrative self (2010: 6).

Zahavi is right in claiming that intersubjectivity is central to selfhood in various ways and that, in so far as it does not provide a framework to account for this aspect, the distinction between minimal and narrative self cannot be considered to be satisfactory. Having identified a form of self-consciousness that is different from both minimal self-experience and narrative understanding, he

suggests that the best way to account for such a phenomenon is through the introduction of an additional notion of self, namely the "relational" or "interpersonal" self. In other terms, he suggests that the inadequacy of the account of minimal and narrative self can be made up for by further differentiating between various dimensions of selfhood.

In this work I am not concerned specifically with the investigation of how interpersonal experience shapes our sense of self, but I agree with Zahavi that the distinction between minimal and narrative self is in need of refinement. However, I will maintain that the distinction needs to be refined in a distinct and more radical way than he suggests. Indeed, as it will become clear through the analyses developed in Chapter 3 and 4, it is not enough to complement this account through the introduction of another notion of self, but rather it is necessary to question some of the assumptions on which the distinction between minimal and narrative self is currently based.

I will argue that our understanding of the nature of the minimal and narrative self and of their relationship can be improved by examining the structure of affective experience. In particular, having illustrated in Chapter 2 the insights into this topic which have been put forward in classical and contemporary phenomenology, in Chapter 3 and 4 I will show how a phenomenological analysis of affectivity can be helpful in addressing the questions raised here in regard to Gallagher and Zahavi's account. In particular, endorsing the idea according to which emotions are best characterised as pre-reflective, experiential forms of self-consciousness, in Chapter 3 I will highlight various ways in which affective experience constitutively shapes autobiographical story-telling, thus showing that, not only the minimal self is a condition of possibility for the emergence of the narrative self, but also that the structure of the narrative self essentially depends on the features of minimal self-experience.

On the other hand, by drawing attention in Chapter 4 to how narrativity impacts on the experiential structure of emotions, I will claim that narrative self-understanding can also structure minimal self-experience in a number of ways. What will emerge from this analysis is a finer-grained account of the multidimensionality of selfhood which will show that the minimal and narrative self are mutually constitutive dimensions and, as such, are phenomenologically inextricable.

CHAPTER 2

Affectivity and the Self in the Phenomenological Tradition

Introduction

In this chapter I examine how the relationship between affectivity, self-consciousness, and selfhood has been conceived in classic and contemporary phenomenology, suggesting that in this regard two main claims have emerged. On the one hand, it is argued that the bodily feelings implicated in the structure of both intentional and non-intentional affective states are forms of pre-reflective self-consciousness, a position which emphasises their being involved in the constitution of the minimal self. On the other hand, various phenomenologists maintain that affective experience is fundamentally connected also to more complex forms of selfhood and self-awareness. In particular, according to these positions, by virtue of the role it plays in the constitution of an individual evaluative perspective, affectivity is constitutive of personal identity[15]. In other terms, affective experience is considered to be crucially involved in the formation of the self as a person. The scholars who support this idea are not explicitly concerned with narrativity, however the concept of personhood they refer to is analogous to the one which Gallagher and Zahavi associate with the notion of narrative self. Therefore, I will argue that the conception of the relationship between affectivity and selfhood that can be drawn on the basis of existing phenomenological accounts is two-fold. In the first place, the acknowledgment that affectivity and pre-reflective bodily consciousness are essentially related makes it possible to conceive of affectivity

---

[15] The notion of personal identity which is relevant in this context is the one related to Schechtman's "characterization question" (see Chapter 1, Section 2.2. for the exposition of this notion).

as a dimension of minimal selfhood. Secondly, as it is also claimed that affective experience contributes to the constitution of a form of selfhood akin to narrative self-understanding, it is arguable that affectivity plays a central role also in the dynamics through which the narrative self emerges from the minimal self. In addition, I will show that, by maintaining that what we can be pre-reflectively conscious of is not only the self as an embodied subject of perception and action, but also the self as a person, certain phenomenological approaches point toward the existence of forms of self-experience where minimal self-awareness is shaped by linguistic and conceptual forms of self-consciousness, thus suggesting that the minimal self is not impervious to the dynamics which characterise more complex forms of selfhood. I will conclude by claiming that the accounts of affectivity considered in this chapter have the merit of unearthing some fundamental aspects of the relationship between affective experience and different forms of selfhood, but are incomplete in so far as they do not consider the specific role played in this context by autobiographical story-telling.

1. Emotions and the Minimal Self

Affectivity has been widely researched from a phenomenological perspective (e.g. De Monticelli, 2003; 2006; Heidegger, 1962; Scheler, 1973a; Slaby, 2008; Ratcliffe, 2005; 2008). In this context, both the structure of affective experience and its connection with other dimensions of human experience have been investigated and, despite the variety of their contributions in this area, phenomenological accounts agree in attributing to affectivity a fundamental role in our cognitive and practical life. In the following I will draw attention to some of the insights which have been developed in the phenomenological research on affectivity, with the aim of showing its relevance for the understanding of selfhood and self-consciousness. In order to do so, I will start

by providing an outline of some of the core aspects of a phenomenological theory of affectivity, focusing in particular on the way in which intentionality and feeling are conceived and on the distinction between intentional and background affective states.

1.1. A Phenomenological Account of Affectivity

Central to the philosophical debate on the nature of emotions has been the opposition between feeling and cognitive theories,[16] opposition at the basis of which is the idea that intentionality and affect are radically distinct dimensions. The accounts which emphasise the role of feelings in affective experience attribute to emotions a specific phenomenal character and account for this feature by identifying emotions with bodily feelings (e.g. James, 1884). In doing so, however, supporters of this approach generally consider bodily feelings as objectless sensations and it is difficult for them to explain the fact that at least some affective states are intentional. Cognitive theories (e.g. Nussbaum, 2001; 2004; Solomon, 1973), on the other hand, acknowledge the intentionality of emotions, but identify them with particular thoughts, beliefs, or judgements, thus not being able to do justice to their characteristic phenomenology.

The integration of intentionality and feeling in the account of affective experience is, on the contrary, at the core of various phenomenological positions (e.g. De Monticelli, 2003; Scheler, 1973a; Slaby, 2008) and of other theories in contemporary philosophy of emotions (e.g. Goldie, 2002; Helm, 2001; 2002). According to this position, the felt aspect and the intentionality of affective states are not mutually exclusive and are instead to be conceived as two facets of a unitary phenomenon. In other terms, central to these positions is the acknowledgement of the existence of *intentional feelings*.

---

[16] For a critical discussion of these approaches see Tappolet (2000).

In order to clarify the relationship between the felt aspect and world-directedness of certain forms of affective experience, Ratcliffe suggests to take into consideration the phenomenology of touch, in which, he argues, bodily feelings and the experience of the world are "inextricable" (2005: 47). He considers for instance the experience we undergo when we pick up a glass of cold water or a snow ball. In these cases, the objects we are touching feel cold, but the feelings are localised in our body, they are indeed bodily feelings. In this respect, Ratcliffe emphasises that a feeling can be in the body while at the same time being a feeling of something outside the body: in this case, the body is not an "object of perception" but rather a "vehicle of perception" (2005: 48).

A phenomenological theory of affects, therefore, overcomes the opposition between intentionality and feeling by conceiving of them as inseparable facets of one and the same experience and it can thus be considered an example of what Slaby calls a "unification view" (2008: 431). As he explains:

> The term 'affective intentionality' can, among other things, function to highlight this important fact – the fact that in emotional experience, intentionality and phenomenality stand and fall together. So if a change in the content of an emotion ('what it is about') occurs, this will inevitably also be a change in the way we feel about the corresponding situation – and if the way an emotion feels (its qualitative character) has changed, you can be sure that its intentional content has also changed. (2008: 431)

Characteristic of the phenomenological approach is thus a distinct view of the structure of intentional affective states. It is common to refer to these states with the term "emotion" and this is the terminology which I will adopt in the rest of this work, considering emotions as affective responses which are directed at

particular intentional objects.[17] However, apart from intentional affective responses, other kinds of affective experience have been identified within the phenomenological tradition. In this regard, a cardinal contribution to the understanding of the structure and role of non-intentional affective states has been provided by Martin Heidegger in his analysis of moods.

Heidegger (1962) draws attention to a series of affective states which he considers as the sources of our being "attuned" or "situated" in a world which manifests itself as a realm of practical meanings and values. These states, which he names "moods" (*Stimmungen*), rather than being directed to specific objects, people or states of affairs, modulate our relation with the environment as a whole and make it possible for things to "matter" to us in specific ways. For example, Heidegger observes that in order for us to be able to experience something as "threatening", we need to be in a particular mood, a mood through which the world is given as harbouring the possibility for us to be threatened (1962: 176). From this perspective, moods are not inner or merely phenomenal states. On the contrary, they are attributed a disclosive and structuring function with regards to the context and possibilities that constitute our "Being-in-the-world" and thus they act as the "background orientations" on the basis of which we can encounter things that are salient for us in particular ways.

Similar considerations are present in Strasser's phenomenological account of affectivity (1977). Strasser argues that all our experiential life is grounded on an affective experience which can be defined as "being-in-a-mood" (*Zumutesein*) and which can take different forms but is always present as a background to our intentional acts (Strasser, 1977: 182). In Strasser's view, even the

---

[17] I will also use the terms "affect", "affectivity" and "affective experience" to refer to affective states in general, without differentiating between intentional and non-intentional states, emotions, feelings, and moods.

performance of technical or routine activities which can be considered to be affectively neutral is grounded on a particular feeling, "a quiet and sure being-in-a-mood" (1977: 184). Moods are not intentional states themselves,[18] but they make it possible to experience specific cognitive, conative, and affective intentional states. Strasser considers for example the structure of his experience when attending a performance of Othello. He observes how in this case he has particular feelings directed to the characters or circumstances that are represented, but he claims that these intentional feelings stem from a common background, a particular "tragic 'being-in-a-mood'" (1977: 182).

The intuition that any intentional experience is rooted in a particular background affect has been further developed by Ratcliffe (2005; 2008; 2010) who claims that all intentional states stem from and presuppose a feeling of being situated in a world where things can "matter" to us in specific ways. Ratcliffe maintains that this sense of belonging can take different forms which he calls "existential feelings". These feelings are directed neither to oneself, nor to specific entities or states of affairs. On the contrary, they constitute a background sense of one's relatedness to the world which shapes all our experiences and the perception of the theoretical and practical possibilities which are available to us. Existential feelings are ways "of finding oneself in the world" (2005: 45) and are not to be identified with a perception of our spatial and temporal location, but rather with the experiential framework in virtue of which things can become relevant to us in different ways. As Ratcliffe explains:

> The world can sometimes appear unfamiliar, unreal, distant or close. It can be something that one feels apart from or at one with. One can feel in control of one's situation or overwhelmed by it. One can feel like a participant in the world or like a detached, estranged observer, staring at objects that do not feel quite 'there'. Such relationships structure all experiences. Whenever one has a

---

[18] However, according to certain accounts, moods can be considered to be intentional states of a particular kind (e.g. Goldie, 2002; Solomon, 1973).

specific experience of oneself, another person or an inanimate object being a certain way, the experience has, as a background, a more general sense of one's relationship with the world. (2005: 45)

Ratcliffe attributes to existential feelings the same role that Heidegger and Strasser attribute to moods, emphasizing that they structure experience by determining "what kinds of intentional state it is possible to have" (2010: 604). Existential feelings, in other terms, are not conceived simply as non-intentional states, but rather they are attributed a "pre-intentional" character, that is the ability to shape the range of intentional states that we can entertain.

Whilst in his analysis of moods Heidegger is not concerned with the role played by the body in affectivity (Ratcliffe, 2013a), bodily experience is fundamental to Ratcliffe's account of existential feelings. Ratcliffe indeed claims that existential feelings are bodily feelings and maintains that the experience of the body integral to them has a characteristic structure. More specifically, as previously observed with regards to emotions, it is argued that in existential feelings the body is not given as a perceptual object, but rather as that through which the world and our relationship with it are experienced.

This characterisation of the bodily experience associated with intentional and non-intentional feelings is central to how the relationship between affectivity and self-consciousness is conceived from a phenomenological perspective. In particular, I will show in the next section that by characterising bodily feelings in these terms, various phenomenologically oriented accounts suggest that at least certain feelings are forms of pre-reflective self-consciousness, thus pointing towards the existence of a fundamental connection between affective experience and the minimal self.

1.2. Bodily Feelings and Pre-Reflective Self-Consciousness

Various scholars have investigated the relationship between affectivity and self-consciousness from a phenomenological perspective. In this regard, particular attention has been given to the bodily feelings implicated in the experience of emotions and other affective states. In the following I will illustrate some of the insights into this topic developed by Giovanna Colombetti (2011) and Jan Slaby (2008), claiming that these accounts highlight the existence of a fundamental connection between affectivity and minimal selfhood.

Colombetti observes that sometimes the bodily feelings associated with the experience of emotions have a prominent position in our experiential field and suggests that these are the feelings on which the accounts of the bodily aspect of affectivity usually focus. When we experience these feelings, she notes, the body "comes into relief", it is, so to speak, "in the foreground" (2011: 295):

> in many emotion experiences, one's body somehow "stands out" from the
> field of awareness and engrosses one's mind—as when I perceive my heart
> beating very fast after ducking a viper suddenly spotted in the middle of the
> hiking trail, or when I feel a knot in my throat as I am to report the death of a
> loved one, or when I sense my stomach contracting as I walk by a patch of
> vomit on the pavement. (2011: 294)

In Colombetti's opinion, foreground bodily feelings can be either *localised* or *diffuse* and the linguistic expressions through which they are described mirror the *dynamical* and *kinetic* character of the emotions they are integral to (2011: 295). However, Colombetti emphasises that the bodily feelings implicated in emotion experience can also be at the periphery of our experiential field. These feelings do not "stand out" as foreground bodily feelings do, yet they are not invisible: they are experienced in a more "recessive" way, but still contribute to

the phenomenology of the emotions they are part of. From this perspective, background bodily feelings are conceived as the means by which the contents of affective experience can be given. An illustration of this feature is provided by Colombetti through the analysis of the experience that can be undergone when travelling to the airport on a train that has been delayed. In this case, she argues, our focus is usually on the objects in the external world – for example the train's speed or announcements - but this experience has also an unpleasant feel to it, "a quality of urgency", which in her opinion depends on the presence of certain background bodily feelings (2011: 297).

Colombetti claims that although background and foreground bodily feelings are different forms of bodily experience, the body is in both cases experienced as a subject and not as an object. In other terms, the distinction between background and foreground bodily feelings does not correspond to the one between pre-reflective and reflective self-consciousness. On the contrary, according to Colombetti, both types of feeling are forms of pre-reflective bodily experience. In her words:

> background bodily feelings are, indeed, best characterized as pre-reflective. They are not attended, they are not reflected upon; they are experienced, although only insofar as they contribute to the specific feel of an emotion experience. What about foreground bodily feelings however? Importantly, as I want to characterize it, the foreground is not attended as an object—it is not observed or reified in any way. In foreground bodily feelings, my body is clearly subjectively lived. It comes to the front of awareness, it can even be overwhelming in its physical presence, but it does so in a non- mediated and non-reflective way. (2011: 304)

According to Colombetti, the affective body can thus have various degrees of experiential conspicuousness without losing its subjectivity. Both background and foreground bodily feelings are experiences of the body as a subject and they differ in virtue of possessing different degrees of "self- presentation" or "self-intimation" (2011: 305).

As observed by Colombetti, the possibility to distinguish between various forms of pre-reflective bodily self-consciousness is acknowledged also by other phenomenologists (2011: 305-306). For example, comparing the experience of expert dancers to ordinary, everyday bodily experience, Legrand (2007) distinguishes two forms of subjective bodily awareness. She argues that while the body is "at the front" of the dancers' experience, in ordinary situations it recedes into the background and it is the world which is rather more conspicuous. In other terms, while the body is prominent in the experience of expert dancers, "normal people in normal circumstances mostly experience the world in a *bodily* way" (2007: 505-506). Legrand, however, remarks that in both cases the body is experienced as a subject.

The idea that the bodily feelings associated with affective experience are forms of pre-reflective self-consciousness emerges also from other accounts of the relationship between affectivity and the body. Slaby (2008), for example, claims that the experience of the body integral to emotional feelings is to be comprised under the notion of "body schema" and maintains that this should be conceived as a form of pre-reflective awareness.

The concept of body schema which is referred to in Slaby's account is the one developed by Gallagher and Zahavi (e.g. Gallagher, 2005; Gallagher and Cole, 1995; Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008).[19] From this perspective, the body schema is characterised as the set of motor skills and habits which underlie our ability to move and to keep a certain posture. A phenomenological analysis shows that movement and the maintenance of posture are usually realised "automatically", that is without any conscious monitoring being necessary on our part. The body

---

[19] For a critical overview of various conceptions of "body schema" and "body image" see Gallagher (2005, chapter one).

schema is then considered to be what makes such a dynamic functioning of the body in its environment possible and, according to Gallagher, it is constituted by three main sets of functions. The first essential aspect of the body schema is the processing of the proprioceptive information provided by kinetic, muscular, articular, cutaneous and visual sources, as well as the information coming from vestibular and equilibrial functions (2005: 45). The second aspect consists in the innate or learned motor programs which make it possible to perform habitual movements such as those involved in walking or writing without having to pay attention to them (2005: 47-48). Finally, the third component of the body schema is identified with the intermodal abilities which allow for the integration and communication of information supplied by different sources, for example vision and proprioception (2005: 51).

The body image, on the other hand, is defined as the set of intentional states and dispositions whose intentional object is the body. In this regard, Gallagher adopts a distinction common in the literature according to which the body image is constituted by three types of intentional content – "body percept", "body concept" and "body affect" – and argues that the intentional states which constitute the body schema can be perceptual, cognitive, or affective (2005: 25).[20]

What is the relationship between body schema and body image on one side and pre-reflective and reflective self-consciousness on the other? Does the former distinction correspond to the latter, so that the body schema can be said to underpin or constitute pre-reflective self-consciousness while the body image should be associated with reflective self-consciousness? In order for this

---

[20] The distinction between body schema and body image outlined by Gallagher and Zahavi seems to be further supported by the existence of a double neuropsychological dissociation in patients affected by deafferentation and unilateral neglect (Gallagher, 2005: 43). It is indeed argued that while deafferentation involves a disruption of the body schema and an intact body image, in unilateral neglect it is the body image that is compromised while the body schema is unaffected.

correspondence to hold it would be necessary for the body schema to have not only a functional but also a phenomenal character. However, Gallagher explicitly attributes to the body schema a non-experiential nature. In his words:

> In contrast to the body image, a body schema is not a set of perceptions, beliefs or attitudes. Rather it is a system of sensory-motor functions that operate below the level of self-referential intentionality. It involves a set of tacit performances – preconscious, subpersonal processes that play a dynamic role in governing posture and movement. (2005: 26)

Although proprioceptive information is one of the essential components of the body schema and it constitutes the grounds on which a proprioceptive sense of self can be developed, Gallagher claims that proprioceptive information should be distinguished from proprioceptive awareness. Indeed, while the first one is subpersonal, the second one is a form of pre-reflective self-consciounsess. The body schema, according to Gallagher, has a "prenoetic" function (2005: 32), that is it structures our conscious experience without being itself the object of such an experience. As such, the body schema cannot be identified with any form of conscious or self-conscious experience.

As far as the body image is concerned, on the contrary, Gallagher defines it as "a system of perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs pertaining to one's own body" (2005: 24), thus suggesting that it can have an experiential character. In order for the body image to be constituted, a "reflexive" or "self-referential" intentionality should be in place (2005: 25), and, as such, it is possible to claim that with the notion of body image Gallagher refers to a form of reflective self-consciousness. However, given that a functional but not a phenomenal role is attributed to the body schema, this cannot be considered as a form of pre-reflective self-awareness (Legrand, 2007: 508).

This aspect of Gallagher's account is questioned by Slaby (2008). He claims,

contrary to Gallagher, that at least some aspects of the body schema are potentially accessible to introspection and suggests that, when this is the case, the body is experienced not as an object, but rather in a subjective way. On this basis, Slaby argues that the bodily feelings characteristic of affective experience should be accounted for through the notion of body schema. This claim is motivated by the acknowledgement that, as previously observed, intrinsic to the bodily feelings in question is an experience of the body as a subject, namely an experience of the body as that through which the world or other intentional objects can be given.

By characterising the bodily experience associated with affectivity in these terms, Slaby provides an account of emotional feelings which is analogous to the one drawn by Colombetti, conceiving of them as forms of pre-reflective self-consciousness. Such an account, however, is not to be limited to intentional feelings, since, as previously mentioned, also the experience of the body intrinsic to existential feelings can be characterised in similar terms. Indeed, in existential feelings, the body is not experienced as an object, but rather as that through which our relationship with the world is configured in a certain way.

Colombetti and Slaby do not discuss the distinction between minimal and narrative self, however, due to the role played by the notion of pre-reflective self-consciousness in their accounts, the insights they develop can be discussed also in relation to that distinction. As remarked in Chapter 1, Gallagher and Zahavi claim that minimal selfhood and pre-reflective self-awareness are fundamentally connected. More specifically, they argue that the minimal self is the self of which we are pre-reflectively aware in any form of conscious experience, and conceive of sense of ownership, sense of agency, embodiment and temporal extension as fundamental attributes of this basic form of selfhood.

Gallagher and Zahavi do not attribute a specific role to affective experience in their account of minimal selfhood; however, on the basis also of the approaches discussed in this section, it is possible to claim that affectivity is a cardinal aspect of the minimal self. As previously mentioned, an essential feature of the minimal self is that it is a bodily self of which we have a non-observational and non-objectifying awareness and it is exactly this form of self-experience which is shown by Colombetti and Slaby to be integral to emotional feelings. Colombetti and Slaby indeed suggest that the bodily feelings intrinsic to affective experience are forms of pre-reflective self-consciousness. Through these feelings, in other terms, the body is experienced not as an object, but rather in its subjectivity. As such, emotions and existential feelings appear to be a constitutive aspect of the pre-reflective experience we have of ourselves as bodily selves. Therefore, the minimal self is to be conceived not only as an embodied subject of perception and action, but also as an affective self.[21]

The claim that affectivity, bodily experience and self-consciousness are fundamentally related is consonant also with some ideas advanced in the field of cognitive neuroscience. Neurobiologist Antonio Damasio, in particular, provides some insights into the structure of emotions and self-consciousness that have important features in common with the phenomenological account I am presenting. Because of this reason, in the next section I will provide a brief overview of some aspects of his research.

---

[21] As I argued, the phenomenological accounts discussed in this section point towards the existence of a structural connection between affectivity and minimal selfhood, because they show that the feelings intrinsic to emotions and other affects are pre-reflective forms of bodily consciousness. However, also other lines of argument could be pursued in order to defend the claim that the minimal self is an affective self. For instance, as illustrated in Chapter 1, agency is considered to be a cardinal aspect of the minimal self and it is arguable that affectivity is central to the constitution of a subject of experience capable of being active in the environment in various ways. In this regard, of particular relevance from a phenomenological perspective is the work of Patočka (1998) and of various scholars within the enactivist tradition (e.g. Colombetti, 2013; Thompson, 2007).

Before moving to Damasio's account, it is finally important to mention that, although Gallagher and Zahavi do not emphasise the existence of a connection between affectivity and minimal selfhood, this seems to be widely acknowledged in phenomenological psychopathology. By way of example, it is possible to consider the "Examination of Anomalous Self-Experience" (EASE), a symptom checklist devised by Parnas et al. (2005) for the individuation of disturbances of minimal self-awareness. On the basis of a series of interviews with patients affected by schizophrenia spectrum disorders, the EASE provides a list of alterations of subjective experience and groups them in five main domains: "cognition and stream of consciousness", "self-awareness and presence", "bodily experiences", "demarcation/transitivism" and "existential re-orientation". Affectivity does not constitute a separate cluster of symptoms in the EASE; however, a number of disruptions of self-awareness which are listed are affective or, arguably, involve affective experience.[22] As such, in line with some of the claims advanced in this section, also some of the accounts which make use of the notion of minimal self in the analysis of psychopathological experience appear to consider affectivity as a fundamental dimension of minimal selfhood.

1.3. Damasio's Account of Consciousness and Bodily Feelings

Central to Damasio's work is the attempt to provide an account of the neurobiological mechanisms at the basis of conscious and affective experience.

---

[22] For example: "anxiety"; "ontological anxiety"; "diminished initiative"; "hypohedonia"; "diminished vitality"; "passivity mood"; "feeling of centrality"; "feeling as if the subject's experiential field is only extant reality"; "'as if' feelings of extraordinary creative power, extraordinary insight into hidden dimensions of reality, or extraordinary insight into own mind or the mind of others"; "'as if' feeling that the experienced world is not truly real, existing, as if it was only somehow apparent, illusory, or deceptive". (Parnas et al., 2005: 257)

In this regard, Damasio claims that it is possible to distinguish between two forms of consciousness which he associates with two specific forms of selfhood: the "core self" and the "autobiographical self" (2000). Damasio suggests that, although distinguishable in principle, these dimensions are deeply connected, and only their adequate development and integration can guarantee human beings a normal existence. According to this perspective, "core consciousness" is the simplest form of consciousness and is to be identified with a "sense of self" experienced "here" and "now" (2000: 16). In this respect, departing from the theories which consider consciousness and self-consciousness to be separate phenomena, Damasio suggests that the two should be identified, thus emphasising the fact that conscious experiences are always lived by the subject as his own experiences. In his words:

> If 'self-consciousness' is taken to mean 'consciousness with a sense of self', then all human consciousness is necessarily covered by the term – there is just no other kind of consciousness as far as I can see. (2000: 19)

Damasio maintains that the core self is an elementary biological phenomenon, present also in other species, and independent of conventional memory, working memory, reasoning and language (2000: 16). From a neurobiological perspective, the emergence of core consciousness would depend on the presence of what Damasio calls a "proto-self", that is a set of neural patterns which represent the various aspects of the structure of the organisms (2000: 154). In particular, in Damasio's opinion, core consciousness depends on the neurobiological capacity to collect and connect information regarding two specific elements: an external or internal object and the body itself. More specifically, consciousness is viewed as the outcome of the capacity to have a neural representation of how a particular internal or external event has impacted upon one's bodily conditions (2000: 168-171). As recognised by Gallagher and Zahavi (2008: 203), the concept of core consciousness is similar in

important respects to the phenomenological notion of minimal self. Indeed, as it is the case with the minimal self, also the core self is essentially related to a form of self-consciousness that has a bodily character and is independent of the possession of linguistic and conceptual abilities.

The "autobiographical self", on the other hand, is a self which is characterised by a degree of temporal continuity and by a personal history. The autobiographical self depends on the presence of "extended consciousness", a "complex biological phenomenon" which would reach in the human species its highest level of organisation (2000: 16). In Damasio's opinion, when extended consciousness is present, core consciousness is still operating and the experience of the self "here and now" is connected to the past and the predicted future, the dimensions through which our autobiography usually develops. Damasio claims that conventional and working memory are fundamental to the realisation of extended consciousness and claims that in humans this dimension is "also enhanced by language" (2000: 16). Damasio is not explicitly concerned with the role played by story-telling in the constitution of the autobiographical self. However, since it is characterised as a form of awareness of the person's history and is connected to linguistic abilities, the notion of extended consciousness appears to have important aspects in common with the notion of narrative self.[23]

---

[23] This idea emerges clearly in the following passage: "[e]xtended consciousness goes beyond the here and now of core consciousness, both backward and forward. The here and now is still there, but it is flanked by the past, as much past as you may need to illuminate the now effectively, and, just as importantly, it is flanked by the anticipated future. The scope of extended consciousness, at its zenith, may span the entire life of an individual, from the cradle to the future, and it can place the world beside it. On any given day, if only you let it fly, extended consciousness can make you a character in an epic novel, and, if only you use it well, it can open wide the doors to creation" (2000: 195-196).

Damasio's account of consciousness and selfhood is thus consonant with some of the claims advanced within the phenomenological tradition. In particular, it considers conscious experience to be inseparable from self-consciousness and it identifies two main forms of self-awareness which are akin to the minimal and narrative self in various respects. As previously mentioned, however, of particular interest for the purpose of the present study are also some of the insights developed by Damasio in regards to the structure of affective experience and, in particular, his notion of "primordial" and "background feelings".

According to Damasio, emotions and feelings are particular states of the organism dependent upon the relation with the environment. More specifically, affective states are some of the regulatory mechanisms which, with various degrees of complexity, contribute to survival and biological wellbeing (2000: 53-56). From this perspective, a clear distinction is drawn between emotions and feelings. On the one hand, emotions are identified with particular sets of bodily changes and it is suggested that these are not necessarily felt by the subject – emotions, in other terms, can be unconscious. On the other hand, feelings are characterised as the conscious perception of the bodily changes in which emotions consist and it is claimed that they depend on the organism's capacity to construct a neural representation of those changes, representation which, as previously mentioned, Damasio names "proto-self".

Damasio distinguishes between various kinds of emotions and feelings, but in order to highlight the similarities between his account and the phenomenological approach, the notion of "primordial feelings" is particularly relevant (2012). According to him, these are feelings which possess a specific valence – namely they are pleasant or painful to various degrees – and they give us a sense of the existence of the body independently of its interaction with

any object. In his words:

> They provide a direct experience of one's own living body, wordless, unadorned, and connected to nothing but sheer existence. These primordial feelings reflect the current state of the body along varied dimensions, for example, along the scale that ranges from pleasure to pain [...]. (2012: 21)

Damasio claims that primordial feelings are dependent upon the mechanisms which constitute the proto-self and, in particular, on "interoceptive maps", that is the neural representations of the viscera and internal milieu (2012: 190). A particular group of bodily feelings is thus associated by him with the most basic form of selfhood, thus drawing attention to the existence of a primitive connection between affectivity, the body, and the self. As previously mentioned, however, the proto-self with which primordial feelings are associated is constituted prior to the emergence of core consciousness which is in Damasio's account the form of self-consciousness that is most akin to minimal selfhood. Therefore, if a parallel can be drawn between the conception of feelings and self-awareness put forward by phenomenologists and the one advanced by Damasio, it is arguable that the core self, and not just the proto-self, should be involved.

Of particular relevance in this regard is Damasio's concept of "background feelings", namely a series of bodily experiences such as "tension", "relaxation", "fatigue", "energy", "well-being" and "malaise" (2000: 52). According to Damasio, these feelings are the felt affective responses which derive from a plurality of regulatory physiological mechanisms operating simultaneously (2003: 44). In other terms, these states would amount to the perceived global effect of the homeostatic reactions going on in the body at a given time and it is for this reason that they can be considered as the expression of one's overall bodily conditions. In Damasio's opinion, in order for background feelings to be

experienced, core consciousness must be present, but autobiographical consciousness is not necessary. As such, within this account, background feelings are associated with the most basic form of self-awareness.

Damasio's notion of background feelings has much in common with a form of affective experience to which various phenomenological accounts refer with the term of "vital feelings" (De Monticelli, 2006; Scheler, 1973a). Scheler and De Monticelli include within this category feelings of well-being, tiredness, freshness, vigour and illness (De Monticelli, 2006: 70; Scheler, 1973a: 338) and suggest that they are related to the significance that particular events in the body or the outside environment have for the individual's biological wellbeing (Scheler, 1973a: 341). According to this position, vital feelings cannot be located in specific body parts and do not possess a precise extension (1973a: 418). Instead these feelings are conceived as experiences of the organism's global positive or negative state (De Monticelli, 2003: 100).

Scheler and De Monticelli do not explicitly engage in a discussion of whether these feelings have a pre-reflective or reflective character, but, on the basis of some features of their accounts and of a phenomenological analysis of these forms of affective experience, it is arguable that the experience of the body associated with vital feelings has a pre-reflective structure. In order to clarify this point, it is helpful to consider that, as noted by Scheler (1973a), central to vital feelings is not only the experience of particular bodily conditions, but also of specific features of the environment.[24]

Feeling tired, for example, does not amount only to an experience of the body as weary, drowsy or drained, but also to a particular experience of the world

---

[24] For instance Scheler claims: "in a vital feeling we are given the peculiar *value-content of our environment*, for example, the freshness of a forest, the living power of growing trees" (1973a: 340).

and the possibilities it comprises. When tired, the external world does not appear to us as an inviting place any more. Even close things can seem very difficult to reach and they lose part or all of their enticing character: rather than stimulating us to move towards them and to make use of them, they appear as unappealing, opaque objects which it would take a certain degree of effort to interact with. A particular way of experiencing both my body and the environment thus is cardinal to the phenomenology of tiredness, but this does not mean that the body is here given as a perceptual object. Rather than an object among other objects, the tired body is indeed usually experienced as that through which other things can appear as possessing specific characteristics and therefore the bodily consciousness involved in this and other vital feelings appears to have a subjective character.[25]

It should now be clear why Damasio's account of self-consciousness and affectivity is consonant with the phenomenological position in various ways. In the first place, Damasio identifies different forms of selfhood and self-awareness, distinguishing in particular between a basic, core sense of self and a more complex form of autobiographical understanding, a distinction which echoes the one between minimal and narrative selfhood. Secondly, Damasio considers affectivity as a constitutive dimension of the core self and draws

---

[25] In *Being and Nothingness* (1958) Sartre discusses an example that might help to clarify the phenomenology of tiredness. He considers the experience undergone when, reading a book late at night, his eyes start hurting. Sartre remarks that the pain may manifest itself first through an alteration in the way the book and objects in the environment appear, thus drawing attention to the fact that bodily feelings such as those involved in tiredness are the means by which certain aspects of the world are manifested. As he states: "It is with more difficulty that the words are detached from the undifferentiated ground which they constitute; they may tremble, quiver; their meaning may be derived only with effort, the sentences which I have just read twice, three times may be given as "not understood," as "to be re-read" (1958: 332). The idea that the experience of the body associated with tiredness in this example has a subjective character is corroborated also by the claim, advanced by Colombetti, that the pain described by Sartre can be accounted for in terms of background bodily feelings (2011: 300-301).

attention to a form of affective experience, background feelings, which appears to be analogous to the notion of "vital feelings" adopted by Scheler and De Monticelli. A phenomenological analysis of these feelings suggests that the experience of the body integral to them has a pre-reflective character, thus further corroborating the idea that there are important similarities between Damasio's core self and the minimal self and that affectivity is a fundamental dimension of minimal selfhood.

2. Emotions and the Narrative Self

So far I have focused on the relationship between affective bodily feelings and self-consciousness, showing that these feelings are characterised as forms of pre-reflective self-awareness and thus are to be viewed as aspects of the minimal level of self-experience. In the philosophical literature, however, there are also other accounts of how affectivity and selfhood are related. In particular, affective states are often depicted as having a strong connection with the individual history and personality, which would suggest that a relationship of some kind exists also between affectivity and narrative self-understanding. According to De Sousa, for example, affective experiences not only constitute a significant source of information regarding the external environment, but, they also convey a certain knowledge about the subject himself. For this reason, De Sousa characterises emotions as "Janus-faced" phenomena (2007: 323), namely phenomena with two different sides, one related to the world and the other related to the self.

I highlighted in Chapter 1 that the notion of narrative self is closely connected to that of personal identity. More specifically, I showed that the concept of personal identity narrative accounts are concerned with is related to what Schechtman calls the "characterization question" (1996), namely the question

regarding which features make someone the person that she is, or, in other terms, are constitutive of her personality. As such, the idea that there is a relationship between affectivity and personal identity is highly relevant to the investigation of the structure of narrative self-understanding.

The role played by affectivity in the emergence and development of narrative selfhood is not explicitly explored within the phenomenological literature. However, central to the accounts provided by phenomenologists such as Scheler and De Monticelli is the idea that affective experience is fundamental to the constitution of personhood. More specifically, as I will show in the next two sections, these accounts draw attention to the role played by affective experience in the constitution of the individual's evaluative perspective, suggesting that it is with this particular perspective that personality should be identified. Since the notion of personhood and that of narrative self have significant features in common, I will claim in the following that these phenomenological accounts can shed light also on some aspects of the relationship between affectivity and narrative self-understanding.

2.1. Affectivity and Evaluation

Both classical and contemporary phenomenologists have emphasised the existence of a specific relationship between affectivity and personhood and argued that such a relationship depends on the role played by affects in evaluative experience. According to Scheler (1973a) and De Monticelli (2003; 2006),[26] for instance, affective states are felt evaluations through which we

---

[26] In her work De Monticelli (e.g. 2003; 2006) provides an account of the relationship between affectivity, moral experience, and personhood that draws on and further develops various aspects of Scheler's work. The aspects of Scheler's account that are relevant in the context of the present of study, however, are an integral part of De Monticelli's view and, therefore, I will refer to the work of both scholars as representative of a unitary phenomenological position.

appraise people, events, or states of affairs as possessing particular value properties. According to this position, the evaluative domain is accessed primarily through affectivity: thanks to our feelings we experience contents that couldn't be adequately experienced through the exercise of cognitive capacities only (Scheler, 1973a: 255). From this perspective, feelings can be identified with appraisals of a particular kind, they are, in other terms, "feelings of values" (De Monticelli, 2003: 71; De Monticelli, 2006: 59; Scheler, 1973a: 257-259).[27]

A number of contemporary approaches which conceive of intentionality and feeling as inseparable aspects of at least certain forms of affective experience also share the idea that affectivity and the axiological dimension are essentially connected. Goldie, for example, who introduces the notion of "feeling towards" to designate feelings directed to specific objects, claims that these play a fundamental role in our experience of evaluative properties. According to this position, emotions do not simply add a subjective feel to perceptual and cognitive processes, but rather provide us with a distinct kind access to evaluative contents (Goldie, 2002: 36).

Similarly, Helm (2001; 2002) maintains that emotions are not objectless feelings but felt evaluative states which allow us to assess the particular things, people or states of affairs to which they are directed in terms of formal objects, that is evaluative qualities which distinguish various emotion types. For instance, using Helm's example, if I am angry at someone for throwing a baseball at my

---

[27] The existence of a connection between affectivity and values has been stressed by various theories of emotion (for a critical review see Deonna and Teroni, 2012). Cognitive theories (e.g. Solomon, 1973), for example, account for the intentionality and evaluative character of emotions by identifying emotions with evaluative judgements. From this perspective, while it is acknowledged that feelings might be present when an emotion occurs, the appraisal and the felt aspect of the emotion are considered to be distinct. The phenomenological approaches discussed in this chapter, however, conceive of evaluation and feeling as inseparable aspects of the emotion, so that the feeling is seen as that through which certain value properties can be experienced.

Chinese vase, the target of my anger is the other person and the formal object is offensiveness: I am angry because I evaluate this particular action as offensive (2002: 15). The feeling of anger, in this case, is that through which the evaluation is realised.

These approaches also converge in the recognition of the existence of an essential connection between emotion, motivation, and action, an idea which, as I will illustrate in the next section, is also important to understand the relationship between affectivity and personhood. Among contemporary phenomenologists, for instance, De Monticelli emphasises the existence of a relationship between affective and volitional states, claiming that integral to emotions – which she characterises as episodic involuntary states – are also particular conative and action tendencies (2003: 126; 2006).

This view is held also by Slaby, who remarks that despite the existence of some exceptions, the experience of an emotion usually entails the presence of an inclination to act in a certain way. He accounts for this feature by identifying motor components of different kinds as integral to the bodily feelings associated with emotions. He maintains that in some cases these motor components might be "full-blown action tendencies" – for example when we feel the impulse to hit someone in anger – while in other cases they are just tendencies to express the emotion. In addition, Slaby claims that the motor aspects of emotions can also be "'impossible movement' impulses", namely urges that we wouldn't be able to transform in concrete actions (2008: 439).

It is thus widely acknowledged that emotions move or incline us to act in particular ways. However, the phenomenological approach identifies also another sense in which emotions and actions are connected. De Monticelli (2003), for example, remarks that by giving access to values, affective states can

provide us with reasons to act in particular ways. According to this perspective, by virtue of the evaluative knowledge they convey, emotions provide us with information that could serve as evidence in favour of particular courses of action. In other terms, affective experience would not only incline us towards particular behaviours, but would also give us reasons to make certain decisions and undertake certain actions.

Similarly, Goldie draws attention to the connection between emotions, evaluation, and motivation. More specifically, he argues that central to the structure of emotions is what he calls the "recognition-response tie" (2002: 11). He suggests that emotions involve the acknowledgement of something as possessing a particular evaluative property and a number of responses including characteristic facial expressions, bodily changes, motivational responses and actions. From this perspective, both recognition and response are fundamental to the emotion. Indeed, according to Goldie, an evaluative property is not something that we can simply acknowledge, as we do for example with the presence of an object in perceptual experience. Rather, Goldie claims that a particular response is integral to what it means to recognise something as possessing such a property (2002: 30).

Also Helm attributes to emotions a cardinal role in motivation and practical rationality. In his view, through emotions certain objects are perceived as possessing a characteristic import, but this is not considered a matter of mere acknowledgement. On the contrary, he argues that "[t]o have import is to be a worthy object of attention and action" (2002: 17). In other terms, intrinsic to the emotion would be the feeling that we should attend to its object and act in particular ways when needed. Emotions as felt evaluations, in his opinion, commit us to wider patterns of feelings and behaviours.

The acknowledgment of the existence of evaluative feelings which are capable to motivate us in particular ways is thus at the core of a phenomenological account of affectivity and of various contemporary theories of emotion. As previously mentioned, such a conception is closely related to how phenomenologists such as Scheler and De Monticelli conceive of personhood and in the next section I will provide a more extensive description of this idea.

2.2. Affectivity and the Constitution of Personhood

In section 2.1. I showed that, according to various accounts, affective experience and the evaluative dimension are essentially connected. However, when evaluations are involved, there seems to be a high level of variability in people's responses and behaviours and the recognition of this fact plays a fundamental role in Scheler's and De Monticelli's view of the relationship between affectivity and personhood.

While it seems difficult to deny that some circumstances tend to elicit the same emotional reactions in the majority of people who experience them, it is also evident that often people react with different emotions to the same situations. For example, if on the one side the loss of a loved one usually generates feelings of sadness, sorrow, and sometimes anger, on the other, not everybody will react with the same emotions for instance to the news regarding an armed conflict in a third world country. While some people might feel deeply moved by these events, others might be rather indifferent. On a more specific level, people who are affected by the news may be so in different ways - the news might make them feel sad, indignant or angry. The same goes for those who are not touched by the events – they might find the news boring or even annoying because of their repetitiveness, or they might feel interested in their political or economic significance without perceiving them as morally relevant.

Different people can thus have different affective and evaluative responses to the same situation. Furthermore, and this is what is most important to understand Scheler's position – not all people are equally responsive to the same evaluative dimensions; they rather possess distinct "affective sensitivities", namely specific evaluative outlooks on reality. For instance, presumably artists are very sensitive to aesthetic qualities, while scientists are more responsive to qualities belonging to the epistemic dimension and religious people to those pertaining to the spiritual domain. This does not mean that someone who is particularly sensitive to one evaluative domain is insensitive to others or, to continue with the previous example, that an artist is not able to appreciate the value of scientific discoveries or is totally disinterested in matters of religion – this might as well be the case but the point is that it is not necessarily so. What these examples are meant to illustrate is the intuition that, when it comes to the evaluative dimension associated with affective experience, people's attitudes vary a lot and this holds true when both individual values and categories of values are concerned. Scheler and De Monticelli account for this phenomenon by emphasising that not all the values people are sensitive to have for them the same degree of importance: there are things that they care more or less about, "orders of priorities" or "preferences" that confer on their evaluative outlook a specific structure. In other terms, according to this position, different people possess distinct, hierarchically organised, evaluative perspectives in the constitution of which affectivity is crucially involved. But which are exactly the dynamics through which these perspectives emerge?

So far I have drawn attention to the fact that emotions allow us to experience a plurality of value qualities, but it seems that this in itself is not enough to constitute an order of priorities. Individual intentional feelings mark certain objects, people or events as important to us, but they do not tell us how

important these things are compared to others. The feeling of enjoyment I experience when I visit a contemporary art gallery signals to me that I am experiencing something aesthetically valuable and that I appreciate it, but it does not express whether aesthetic values, or the aesthetic value of a particular work of art, is for me more important than other moral, epistemic or religious values. If the intentional evaluative feelings with which emotions are identified are not sufficient by themselves to constitute an order of priorities, there is however another form of affective experience which, according to Scheler, plays a cardinal role in the process: the feelings of "preferring" and "placing after", namely feelings through which a particular evaluative property is experienced as being more or less important than another. As explained by Scheler:

> It is necessary to distinguish emotional functions from the experiences that are based on "*preferring*" and "*placing after*." The latter constitute a *higher* stage in our emotional and intentional life, and *in* them we comprehend the ranks of values, their being higher and lower. (1973a: 260)

According to this position, the constitution of a hierarchically ordered evaluative perspective is in the first place an affective process. Indeed, on the one hand, through the intentional feelings intrinsic to emotions we experience a variety of value properties, while feelings of "preferring" and "placing after" allow us to attribute to these properties a comparative degree of importance. Scheler remarks that the felt experiences by means of which the orders of priorities are constituted are not conative states (1973a: 260), but rather feeling states, thus emphasising that they are not the product of an act of the will, but are rather passive phenomena.

However, the phenomenological perspective I am discussing does not conceive of affectivity as an entirely passive dimension. Although we cannot decide to experience a particular emotion or feeling of preference, we are not powerless

in front of our affective inclinations. On the contrary, we possess the capacity to shape and orientate our emotional life. From a phenomenological perspective, what De Sousa calls the "antinomy of activity and passivity", namely the apparent tension between the involuntary character of affective experience and the fact that an "active self" seems to be involved in this experience (1987: 2), can be resolved by recognising that although we cannot control which emotions and felt preferences we will experience, once these feelings are present we can actively influence the way in which they develop.

As we have seen, emotions can motivate both our cognitive and conative states and can also act as reasons for our actions. However, De Monticelli emphasises that we have the capacity to take a position in regards to whether affective states can act as such motives or not and to accept or reject certain orders of priorities (2003: 113-115). So, in so far as we can have an impact on the extent to which affective states motivate our mental and practical life, we do have the possibility to actively contribute to our affective experience and to the constitution of our own evaluative perspective. In other terms, although particular affective states incline us to entertain specific thoughts, beliefs or judgements, to experience specific desires and to perform particular actions, we always have the possibility to "consent" or "dissent" to them doing so (De Monticelli, 2003; 2006). As De Monticelli states:

> by *which qualities* among the host of situations and things *are we struck* and, once struck, do we *continue to allow ourselves to be touched*? *To what depths* are we touched – and what hold *do we allow* such qualities to have over us? Throughout all of this there is a living set of yesses and nos by means of which we discover for ourselves the order of our value preferences, which activates and modifies itself throughout life. Not directly in the feeling, but in the *granting or withholding of consent relative to this feeling* and to the needs that this feeling presents - and to the degree and manner in which the spontaneity *of a self* and an *order of one's own axiological preferences*, otherwise unknown to us, is manifested and affirmed. (2006: 63)

At the core of Scheler's and De Monticelli's account is then the idea that affective experience is central to the constitution of an individual evaluative perspective and this perspective has the structure of a particular order of preferences which possesses a motivational role. Through affective experience, in other terms, we determine what is more or less important for us in and this process has both a passive and an active side. As a result, affective sensitivity and the evaluative outlook with which this experiential dimension is entangled are not conceived as static phenomena, but are rather thought to be structured over time as our life story unfolds.

Most important for the topic of this chapter is the fact that the affectively laden evaluative perspective Scheler and De Monticelli speak of is at the core of their conception of personhood. The notion of person which is at issue here is the one which I showed in Chapter 1 to be the focus of Ricoeur's analysis and Schechtman's "characterization question". In particular, I highlighted that what is of interest from this perspective is not which criteria allow to identify one individual as the same at two different points in time, but rather what confers on a particular person her individuality, what makes her the person that she is. According to Scheler and De Monticelli, personal identity in this sense is to be identified with the possession of an individual evaluative outlook (De Monticelli, 2003: 81), a dimension which, due to the role played by affectivity in its constitution, they call "*ordo amoris*"[28]. From this perspective, it is emphasised that the person's evaluative order of priorities constitutes the framework which orientates all her cognitive and practical life, determining the kind of things she is sensitive to and the actions she undertakes. In Scheler's words:

> Man is encased, as though in a shell, in the particular ranking of the simplest values and value-qualities which represent the objective side of his *ordo*

---

[28] According to the translator of Scheler (1973b), the Latin "*ordo amoris*" means "the order or ordering of love" (Scheler, 1973b: 98).

amoris, values which have not yet been shaped into things and goods. He carries this shell along with him wherever he goes and cannot escape from it no matter how quickly he runs. He perceives the world and himself through the windows of this shell, and perceives no more of the world, of himself, or of anything else besides what these windows show him, in accordance with their position, size and colour. (1973b: 100)

Our evaluative perspective thus radically shapes the way in which we act and perceive ourselves, others and the world and it is because of this reason that it can be considered to be at the core of personal identity. "*Whoever has the* ordo amoris *of a man*", claims Scheler, "*has the man himself*" (1973b: 100).

How are the ideas discussed in this section relevant to the understanding of the relationship between affective experience and minimal and narrative self? Scheler and De Monticelli are not explicitly concerned with the notion of narrativity, however their account shows that affectivity is central to the constitution of personal identity which, as discussed earlier, is considered by Gallagher and Zahavi to be a fundamental aspect of the narrative self. The form of selfhood which is the focus of the narrative account is indeed one which possesses an "individual identity" (Gallagher, 2000: 18) or "personal character" and central to the emergence of which is the endorsement of certain "values" and "intellectual convictions and decisions" (Zahavi, 2007: 193). As such, Scheler and De Monticelli's position indirectly draws attention to the fact that affective experience is at the core of the dynamics through which the narrative self is constituted and I believe that this idea can pave the way to the clarification of one of the aspects of the distinction between minimal and narrative self which is left unexplored by Gallagher and Zahavi.

As highlighted in Chapter 1, the minimal self is considered by Gallagher and Zahavi to be a condition of possibility for the emergence of the narrative self, thus meaning that the latter can be constituted only if a minimal form of self-awareness is already in place. However, from this perspective, no account is

given of the dynamics through which the narrative self emerges from the minimal one. In other terms, no indication is provided as to how narrative self-understanding can develop from pre-reflective forms of self-consciousness.

At the beginning of this chapter I showed that, according to various phenomenologically oriented accounts, the bodily feelings integral to both intentional and non-intentional affective states can be conceived as forms of pre-reflective self-consciousness, thus making it possible to associate affectivity with minimal selfhood. Since, as argued above, affective experience has also been shown to be essentially involved in the constitution of some fundamental features of personhood, arguably affectivity is key to the dynamics through which narrative self-understanding develops from minimal self-consciousness.

As noted earlier, however, phenomenological accounts of affectivity and personhood are not concerned with the notion of narrativity. As such, while they identify a number of processes through which affective experience shapes personal identity, they do not take into consideration the influence that affectivity can have on story-telling itself. In order to get a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between minimal and narrative self also this point needs to be addressed and I will devote Chapter 3 to the exploration of this topic.

2.3. Affectivity and Consciousness of the Self as a Person

So far I have illustrated in what sense, according to Scheler and De Monticelli's account, affectivity is constitutive of personhood. However, according to these and other phenomenological approaches, affective experience not only constitutes but also discloses personal identity. In other terms, from this perspective, affectivity not only shapes our personality, but is also cardinal to

the consciousness we have of ourselves as persons. This idea has implications for our understanding of the relationship between affectivity and minimal and narrative self and is closely related to the account of evaluative experience previously introduced.

I illustrated earlier in this chapter how various authors identify emotions with intentional feelings through which particular objects, people or states of affairs are experienced as possessing a specific value. However, according to some supporters of this view, emotions not only allow us to experience their intentional objects as significant in particular ways, but they also reveal something about ourselves. As observed by Slaby and Stephan (2008), emotions assess what is going on in the external world from a specific point of view, namely the perspective of the self. In emotional experience, they argue, we feel in a certain way towards something and we have a sense of being positively or negatively affected by it. Intrinsic to affective states, then, is an appraisal of "how things are going for us" (2008: 507), of the impact a particular object, person or state of affairs has on our condition.

Slaby (2008) emphasises that the "outward-directed" and the "self-directed" aspects of emotions should not be considered as separate. On the contrary, the two aspects are inextricable in the structure of affective intentionality: when experiencing an emotion, I perceive something as possessing a particular evaluative quality by feeling myself affected in a particular way. In Slaby's words:

> While afraid, you experience something as dangerous and at the same time 'you' feel vulnerable in the relevant aspect. But your experience of danger is not separate from, but rather consists in your feeling thus vulnerable. […] Your 'minding' and something else's 'mattering' are constitutively interrelated – there cannot be one without the other. (2008: 438)

According to this position, through intentional affective states we experience ourselves as affected in different ways by our relationship with the world and a connection is thus established between affectivity and self-awareness. Slaby and Stephan claim that bodily feelings are central to this form of experience, thus suggesting that what is at issue here is a form of bodily self-consciousness. Indeed, in their opinion: "[t]he felt body is essentially the arena in which affective self-consciousness manifests itself" (Slaby and Stephan, 2008: 509). On the basis of these remarks, it would seem that the form of self-consciousness Slaby and Stephan refer to is nothing more than the subjective experience of the body which I showed in section 1.2. to be associated with various intentional and non-intentional feelings. However, despite it being central to their account, bodily self-awareness does not exhaust the notion of self-consciousness highlighted by Slaby and Stephan and this becomes particularly visible in the way they conceive of existential feelings.

According to Slaby and Stephan, the connection with the evaluative dimension and self-awareness is a fundamental feature not only of intentional feelings, but also of Ratcliffe's "existential feelings". More specifically, they claim that these feelings "can be described as various forms of evaluative awareness of one's existential situation", that is they suggest that while intentional feelings give us a sense of how we are affected by particular people, objects or states of affairs, existential feelings provide a more general "sense of how things are going for oneself" (Slaby and Stephan, 2008: 507).

In addition, in line with some of the claims advanced by Scheler and De Monticelli, Slaby and Stephan also emphasise that existential feelings fundamentally contribute to the constitution of our personality. As previously discussed, these feelings are considered to be the grounds of particular intentional states, behaviours and attitudes, thus radically shaping our relation

with the world, and it is for this reason that they can be considered to express "what we are", our personal identity, at any particular time (2008: 511). As such, Slaby and Stephan conceive of existential feelings as being both constitutive of personhood and forms of self-consciousness:

> These feelings are, besides being candidates for what makes up our identity as persons, peculiar forms of being conscious of ourselves. (2008: 512)

According to this perspective, integral to existential feelings is thus a form of self-awareness which involves bodily experience, but cannot be reduced to consciousness of the body. What Slaby and Stephan draw attention to is indeed the fact that it is the self as a person that is experienced through these feelings.[29]

In Chapter 1 I showed that phenomenological accounts of the self usually associate personhood with reflectivity and, in particular, narrativity. According to Gallagher and Zahavi's account, personal identity is something that we constitute and become aware of by engaging in narrative self-understanding and thus depends on a form of selfhood and self-consciousness more complex than the minimal one.

Slaby and Stephan's account, however, seems to suggest that we can have a pre-reflective awareness of the self as a person. Indeed, the self-directed aspect of existential feelings is depicted as the means by which the experience of one's relationship with the world is realised, thus suggesting that what is in question here is an experience of the self as subject rather than object. As such, it is

---

[29] A similar idea is expressed by Rosfort and Stanghellini in their characterisation of moods: "We can say that whereas affects point forward toward a specific object, moods point inward toward my being the person I am. More precisely, moods contain a bipolar intentionality in the sense that they often materialize in a certain affect owing to an explicit object, but at the same time point to my being the person I am, and thereby awake questions, doubts, considerations, evaluations and finally deliberations about my-being-this-person". (2009: 260)

shown that at least certain affective states are to be conceived as forms of pre-reflective personal consciousness and this is very relevant for the characterisation of the relationship between affectivity and minimal and narrative self.

The form of self-consciousness that Slaby and Stephan associate with affective experience has a pre-reflective, bodily character, and therefore their account corroborates the idea that affectivity is closely connected to minimal selfhood. However, this account also shows that what is experienced through existential feelings is not only a bodily self, but also the self as a person. In other terms, Slaby and Stephan's account appears to suggest that we can have a pre-reflective experience of aspects of the self that the account of selfhood put forward by Gallagher and Zahavi associates with the narrative self and, in so doing, this position draws attention to the fact that narrative understanding has an impact on minimal self-experience.

This idea emerges even more clearly from the way in which Slaby and Stephan characterise the relationship between affectivity and linguistic and conceptual abilities. Calling into question the view according to which felt experiences and higher cognitive processes are separate dimensions, they emphasise that certain existential feelings - such as, for instance, the feeling "of being a true American" or "a moral failure" (2008: 513) – are conceptually shaped:

> the traditional cliché which opposes feelings as low level, non-conceptual, bodily states on the one hand and conceptually sophisticated attitudes as high-level, cognitive, disembodied, and language-based on the other hand, is misleading. Instead, even the most intellectual, most conceptually polished attitudes can enter directly into the way we feel ourselves. Feeling and conceptual thought cannot be viewed as opposites. (2008: 513)

In Chapter 1 I showed that, according to Gallagher and Zahavi, pre-reflective

self-consciousness is a pre-linguistic and pre-conceptual awareness of a bodily self. On the basis of the characterisation of existential feelings provided by Slaby and Stephan, however, it is arguable that the notion of pre-reflective self-consciousness can be extended to include also other features. Indeed, their analysis of existential feelings show that there can be a non-observational and non-objectifying consciousness of the self as a person and such consciousness is in some cases dependent on the possession of specific linguistic and conceptual abilities.

Slaby and Stephan's account thus identifies the existence of affective forms of experience where both minimal and more complex forms of self-consciousness are integrated. This approach is not explicitly concerned with narrativity; however, by taking into consideration the notion of consciousness of the self as a person, it points towards a phenomenon that has been argued to be essentially related to narrative self-understanding. As such, Slaby and Stephan indirectly highlight the existence of experiences where minimal self-awareness and narrative understanding are inseparable.

Conclusions

In this chapter I examined how various phenomenological accounts conceive of the relationship between affectivity, self-consciousness, and selfhood. I started by showing that, according to various approaches, the bodily feelings that are integral to affective experience can be characterised as forms of pre-reflective bodily consciousness (Colombetti, 2011; Slaby, 2008). As such, I claimed, these accounts draw attention to the fact that affectivity is a fundamental dimension of minimal selfhood, an idea which is consonant also with some of the insights developed in the field of cognitive science (e.g. Damasio, 2000; 2012).

I then showed that according to some phenomenological approaches affectivity is crucially involved also in more complex forms of self-consciousness and selfhood. In particular, I highlighted that, due to the role they play in evaluative experience, emotions and existential feelings are considered by some scholars to be constitutive of personal identity. Scheler (1973a) and De Monticelli (2003; 2006), for example, claim that affective experience is essentially involved in the experience of a plurality of evaluative properties and in the dynamics through which one's cares and values are hierarchically structured. As it identifies such an evaluative perspective with the individual's personality, this account considers affectivity as cardinal to the constitution of the self as a person.

The approaches which emphasise the relationship between affectivity and "personality" or "personhood" are not explicitly concerned with the notion of narrativity. However, I remarked that narrativity has been considered by Gallagher and Zahavi to be related to the concept of person. As such, I claimed that the phenomenological accounts which focus on the relationship between affectivity and personhood are relevant also to the understanding of the relationship between affectivity and narrative selfhood. In particular, on the basis of these accounts, it can be argued that some of the dynamics through which the narrative self emerges from the minimal self have an affective character, thus contributing to the clarification of one of the aspects of the distinction between minimal and narrative self that Gallagher and Zahavi leave unexplored.

Therefore, I maintained, the conception of the relationship between affectivity and selfhood that can be drawn on the basis of existing phenomenological accounts is two-fold. On the one hand, by showing that the bodily feelings integral to intentional and non-intentional affective states are forms of pre-reflective bodily-consciousness, it is showed that affectivity is a fundamental

dimension of minimal selfhood. On the other, by claiming that affective states are crucially involved in the dynamics through which personhood is constituted, it is indirectly suggested that affectivity plays a key role in the processes through which the narrative self emerges from the minimal self. In addition, I claimed that Slaby and Stephan's account of existential feelings shows that at least some affective states are at the same time forms of consciousness of the body and the person, thus highlighting the fact that different kinds of self-awareness can be intertwined in affective experience.

In the rest of this work I will build on some of the ideas illustrated in this chapter to provide a more extensive account of the relationship between affectivity and selfhood and to further address some of the questions raised in Chapter 1 in regards to the distinction between minimal and narrative self. In the first place, expanding on the idea that affective experience is fundamental to the constitution of personhood and that narrative understanding is essentially related to this dimension, in Chapter 3 I will provide an account of various dynamics through which affectivity influences autobiographical story-telling. More specifically, I will claim that affectivity shapes both the form and contents of the autobiographical stories we craft, thus identifying various dynamics through which the narrative self emerges from the minimal self. Secondly, I will aim to shed more light on the relationship between minimal and narrative self by examining how narrative self-understanding in turn impacts on the structure of affective experience. In Chapter 4 I will show that there are different ways in which affectivity is constitutively shaped by narrativity and this will allow me to corroborate the claim that minimal and narrative levels of self-experience are inextricably entwined.

CHAPTER 3

The Role of Affectivity in the Constitution of Narratives

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the impact that affective experience has on narrativity, providing various insights in support of the idea that emotions play a constitutive role in the emergence and development of our life stories. Contributions to the analysis of this topic have been made in philosophy, psychology, and narrative theory and I will start by providing an outline of some of the ideas advanced in these debates, focusing in particular on the claim that emotions are fundamental in determining both the form and contents of literary and autobiographical narratives. I will then move to examine other ways in which affectivity impacts on narrativity. First, I will argue that affective experience is at the core of our ability to narrate a self that possesses a degree of continuity and I will identify the dynamics through which this can happen by relying on Schechtman's notion of "empathic access" (1996; 2001; 2007). Secondly, I will suggest that the existence of a level of congruence between the emotions that are experienced and the emotions that are narrated is at the origin of the sense of authenticity that is associated with certain forms of autobiographical story-telling. I will then consider more specifically the role played by existential feelings in the constitution of narrativity. In this regard, I will claim that existential feelings fundamentally mould our narrative repertoire, that is they determine the kinds of stories that it is possible for us to tell.

1.Narrative Form and Content

That affectivity is involved in story-telling in various ways is a fairly uncontroversial claim. Narratives can be motivated by particular affective experiences, are often rich in emotional descriptions, and can generate a variety of emotions in the reader or audience. The acknowledgement of these dynamics amounts to a recognition that affectivity contributes to or influences narrative processes in different manners. However, it is possible to claim that affectivity not only *makes a contribution to*, but is also *constitutive of* narrativity or some of its aspects. In particular, it can be argued that both narrative form and content are shaped by affective experience in this deeper sense and in the following I will examine various theoretical accounts of these dynamics.

The idea that emotions constitutively shape the structure of stories is widely discussed by Patrick Colm Hogan in his book *Affective Narratology* (2011). More specifically, Hogan identifies various mechanisms through which affectivity impacts on the way in which narratives are organised in different parts with distinct temporal profiles. He notes that stories can be segmented in "incidents", "events", and "episodes" and claims that this segmentation is driven by affective processes.

By means of example, Hogan considers some passages from the novel *Anna Karenina* (Tolstoy, 2006).[30] In particular, he examines the section in which one of the characters, Stiva Oblonsky, discovers that his wife Dolly is aware that he has been having an affair. The events that are discussed by Hogan take place at the couple's house upon Stiva's return after an evening spent at the theatre. He is in a good mood and carries a pear as a present for Dolly. However, when the

---

[30] See Hogan (2011: chapter one).

couple meets, the light-heartedness of the initial situation is rapidly replaced by a very different atmosphere. Stiva sees that Dolly is holding a letter that must have revealed to her his adultery and her expression is one of "horror, despair and fury" (Hogan, 2011: 32). Stiva responds to this and his wife's demands for an explanation with what he would later recall as a "silly smile", while Dolly shudders "as though in physical pain" (2011: 29), shouts and subsequently leaves the room.

Considering this passage, Hogan observes that there are various aspects to a temporally extended scene, but only some of them are included in what is recounted. In particular, he claims that the most basic constituents of stories are "incidents", namely emotional responses which are triggered by circumstances that somehow contradict the character's expectations. According to Hogan, incidents are part of broader temporal sequences called "events" which include depictions of the causes and expressive and behavioural outcomes of the emotion. In the passage previously discussed, the causes of Stiva's emotion are identified by focusing on the letter and Dolly's expression, while the "silly smile" is the way in which Stiva, who is the target of his wife's reaction, responds to the emotional incident. Hogan observes that Stiva's response gives rise to another emotional incident which concerns Dolly and is elaborated into a second event: at the sight of her husband's smile, Dolly experiences anger and responds by shouting and leaving the room. In Hogan's opinion, the two events here described constitute an "episode", that is a more extended elaboration of the causes and effects of an emotional incident which is concluded by a temporary restoration of normalcy. With Dolly leaving, Stiva's everyday routine can continue, but it is clear that there will be further developments of the dynamics generated by the initial incident. This is what, according to Hogan, makes it possible to distinguish an episode from a story, as the conclusion of the latter involves a re-establishment of normalcy which has a

longer-term and more stable character. Hogan emphasises that a story is not to be identified with a mere sequence of episodes. In particular, he claims that the "story-like" character of such a sequence depends on the extent to which the constitutive episodes are "causally or emotionally relatable" (2011: 72).

As far as the role of affectivity is concerned, Hogan maintains that emotion systems[31] are central to the formation of stories by virtue of different mechanisms. In this regard, he claims that the 'story-likeness' of sequences of episodes depends on the degree to which they meet the criteria specified by two groups of "preference rules" (2011: 72). In the first place, story-like sequences are usually concerned with a small number of characters who are involved in the pursuit of goals determined by emotion systems. Secondly, as mentioned above, the sequences which are constitutive of stories generally involve a departure from an initial situation of normalcy and its restoration at the end of the narrative and emotions are considered to mark both these transitions (2011: 121-122).

Hogan suggests that also the development and differentiation of narrative genres is to be related to affective dynamics. In particular, he claims that the goals around which story-telling is typically centred are related to the achievement of happiness. In this regard, he identifies three main prototypical structures at the basis of three distinct literary genres.[32] The first happiness prototype is dependent upon the satisfaction of the needs associated with the hunger and thirst system. The goals which are relevant in this context are

---

[31] Hogan conceives of emotions as complex occurrences which involve the presence of particular eliciting conditions, expressive outcomes, physiological and actional responses, and a specific phenomenological quality (2011: pp. 2-3). In this context, no definition is provided of "emotion system". However, Hogan draws upon the use of the notion which is made in affective neuroscience and, as such, it is arguable that in his account "emotion system" designates the distinct set of neurobiological mechanisms which underpin the experience of a particular emotion.

[32] See Hogan (2011: chapter three).

central to stories in which the protagonists have to face various impediments to achieving abundance of food and drink, such as droughts and famines. Hogan suggests that, because of the way in which such natural events might be interpreted, integral to these stories are usually "narratives of sin, communal punishment, sacrifice and restoration" (2011: 182) which constitute what he calls the "sacrificial" genre. The attachment and sexual desire systems are fundamental to the constitution of a second distinct narrative genre, the "romantic" plot, while the emotion system associated with pride and anger contributes to the emergence of the "heroic" genre. Finally, in addition to the sacrificial, romantic and heroic plots, Hogan identifies other four genres whose constitution he considers to be driven by affective mechanisms and which have both a cross-cultural and trans-historical presence, although they do not appear as often as the main ones. These are the "attachment", "sexual desire", "revenge" and "criminal investigation" genres.[33]

Hogan is concerned with the dynamics involved in the production of literary narratives and, as such, what his account draws attention to is the experience of writers of published and unpublished stories. However, the emotion systems and processes which according to him shape the contents of literary narratives and the way in which these are constructed are a fundamental aspect of human experience[34] more in general, and therefore they can be expected to play a role also in the way autobiographical, non-literary, narratives are constructed.

In line with the claims advanced by Hogan, it must indeed be noted that emotions are central to the stories we tell about ourselves in various ways. In the first place, many of the narratives we craft are *about* our affective states,

---

[33] For a more extensive description of these genres see Hogan (2011: chapter four).

[34] As mentioned before, in building his account Hogan draws on research conducted in the field of affective neuroscience. Such research aims to identify the neurobiological underpinnings of specific kinds of emotions, suggesting that at least some of these are experienced universally.

namely they report or describe emotions that we experienced, are currently experiencing, or that we think we would or would not be able to experience if certain events took place. For instance, I can tell a story about the anger I felt upon discovering that a close friend repeatedly lied to me, about the excitement and joy I am feeling for the start of a new relationship, or about the disappointment I would experience if the job application I have submitted was rejected. In these cases, emotions are the focus of my autobiographical narratives or, in other terms, the autobiographical narratives I craft have specific emotional contents. As it is the case with the literary narratives examined by Hogan then, also life stories often revolve around events which have generated emotional responses and further elaborate on the causes and effects of those responses. Furthermore, some of the themes which are central to the literary genres Hogan identifies are fundamental also to autobiographical story-telling: narratives about love, sexual desire, or attachment, for instance, appear to play a significant role in most people's narrative repertoire, as do narratives in which pride, anger, and revenge are fundamentally involved.[35] In addition, even when the stories we tell do not explicitly engage in a description of our emotions, the aspects of our life and experience that they recount usually "matter" to us in specific ways, and such mattering can only be understood by taking affectivity into consideration. Our everyday experience is extremely rich and multifaceted and it would be impossible for our autobiographical narratives to fully reflect such a degree of complexity. Autobiographical story-telling is therefore an inherently selective activity and the experience of particular emotions is what drives our ability to give to our story-telling a particular focus. For instance, it is because *I am proud of* the success achieved in the management of a particular project at work that I tell my family about it, or

---

[35] However, I do not want to suggest that there is a strict correspondence between the narrative genres described by Hogan and the types of autobiographical narratives that we can construct, as the personal, social, and cultural factors involved might be different in the case of literary and non-literary, narratives.

it is because I *feel guilty* about not having joined a friend's birthday party in order to finish writing a report that I keep thinking about how that happened and the consequences it might generate.

The idea that emotions are fundamental to the constitution and selection of narrative content is explored with reference specifically to the autobiographical domain by Valerie Hardcastle (2003; 2008). In particular, Hardcastle remarks that it is because of their affective connotations that some experiences are included in the stories we tell about ourselves while others are excluded. Emotions, in other terms, 'tag' certain events as significant and these are the ones which "make it into our stories" (2003: 354):

> these affective reactions [...] are the things that pick out what in our world is important to us, what we remember, and what we tell our friends and neighbors. They drive our story-telling and then, in conjunction with our primitive need to share our world with our conspecifics, guarantee that we narrate a self. (2008: 89)

Hardcastle observes that, also from a developmental perspective, the way in which we think and talk about the world is centred around our likes and dislikes and these, she suggests, are dependent upon affective experience. In her opinion, the same dynamics are at the core of the way in which we conceive of ourselves and structure our autobiographical narratives. According to her, one of the most fundamental forms of story-telling we engage in involves the expression of our predilections and evaluations and she considers these to be rooted primarily in affectivity, an idea which echoes some of the insights into the relationship between emotions and personhood I previously discussed.

In Chapter 2 I showed that according to various phenomenologists there is a fundamental connection between affectivity and the evaluative dimension. More specifically, authors such as Scheler (1973a) and De Monticelli (2003; 2006)

claim that through intentional feelings we experience a plurality of value qualities which make particular objects, people or states of affairs salient for us in a variety of ways. From this perspective, emotions allow us to appraise things and events as relevant to a plurality of interests and concerns and arguably it is because they possess such relevance that certain things and events are included into our narratives.

In addition, the phenomenological account of emotions I outlined in Chapter 2 can also explain why affective experience is central not only to the ability to construct narratives in general, but, more specifically, to the capacity to produce autobiographical narratives or, in Hardcastle's terms, to "narrate a self" (2008: 89). As I illustrated, authors such as Slaby and Stephan (2008) emphasise that affectivity involves not only an evaluative experience of particular features of the world, but also an experience of the self. In other terms, a particular form of self-consciousness is considered to be integral to any form of affective experience and it is arguable that it is because of this feature that emotions underlie our ability to craft stories about ourselves.

Finally, it is important to note that emotions can shape the contents of our narratives not only by marking certain events as significant or relevant for the purposes of our story-telling, but also by becoming narrative contents themselves. This idea is central for instance to the "dialectical constructivist model" (Angus and Greenberg, 2011), an approach which emphasises, from a psychological perspective, the existence of a fundamental relationship between affectivity, narrativity, and selfhood. Cardinal to this account is the claim that the sense of self is constituted through the construction of coherent narratives the bases and focus of which are essentially affective. According to this position, self-awareness is closely intertwined with the story-telling activities through which our emotions are narrated, an idea which is in deep consonance

with some of the claims advanced in this thesis. In addition, as I will discuss in Chapter 4, this approach recognises that narratives shape affective experience in various ways and can significantly contribute to emotional regulation.

2. Empathic Access and the Continuity of the Narrative Self

A further, distinct aspect of the relationship between affectivity and autobiographical narrativity emerges in the account of narrative selfhood provided by Schechtman (1996; 2001; 2007). Schechtman is concerned with the problem of how personal identity can survive change and she considers this issue to have been unsatisfactorily dealt with by both the advocates of the psychological continuity criterion and the supporters of the narrative approach (2001). On the one hand, Schechtman disagrees with the idea, in her opinion central to psychological continuity theories, that change does not undermine identity if it takes place gradually. On the other hand, she rejects the view put forward by narrative accounts according to which psychological change is not a threat to personal identity as long as it can be incorporated in a coherent autobiographical narrative. In Schechtman's opinion, the ability to tell an intelligible story about how one has changed over time is not enough to guarantee that personal identity is preserved, since, as she remarks, "there can be intelligible stories of how someone loses his or her identity" (2001: 100). Although she acknowledges that both approaches draw attention to aspects which are relevant to the understanding of how identity can be preserved through change, Schechtman maintains that both psychological continuity theories and narrative accounts neglect the factor which is fundamental to the resolution of this problem, namely the dynamics that she identifies through the notion of "empathic access".

In order to illustrate this notion, Schechtman uses the example of a "party-girl"

who is "carefree" and "wild" in her youth and who later radically changes her lifestyle to undertake the responsibilities related to the management of a career and family (2001: 97). In this case, Schechtman suggests, the mature woman can take different attitudes towards her past. On the one hand, it is possible that she feels alienated from the feelings and motivations of her light-hearted days: she remembers those days, but she does not understand how she could find enjoyment and fulfilment in such a way of life. On the other hand, she might still have some access to the emotions and inclinations of those days, but these are now experienced from a broader perspective and are outweighed by other affects, values, and commitments. Schechtman characterises the latter scenario as one in which a form of empathy towards one's past is maintained and she considers this form of connection with one's previous experience as necessary for the preservation of personal identity through change. According to this perspective, in addition to the ability to recollect the emotions and passions that animated her young years, the woman, in order to be the same person she was when she was young, should still have a connection with that time of her life, a connection which is characterised in experiential terms. In particular, Schechtman suggests that there must be some access to the "phenomenology" of the past states and that it should be possible for these states to play a role in the person's decision-making processes in the present. As she explains:

> The relation that the not-so-serious matron has to her past is more than just cognitive recollection; the passions that belonged to the party girl are still there. She experiences them and they are represented in the decisions she makes. It is for this reason that this woman's change seems like ordinary maturation and development rather than loss of identity. The alterations in lifestyle and outlook may be just as pronounced as those in the case of the serious matron, but these alterations are the result of an expansion of beliefs, values, desires and goals rather than a replacement. (2001: 102)

The notion of empathic access thus requires more than the ability to remember one's past mental states. Schechtman rather seems to suggest that empathy for

one's states entails that these are not entirely over, that they are somehow still part of the person's experience, but in a different way than in the past. As shown by the quotation above, she suggests that, in order for empathic access to be present, the person's "beliefs, values, desires and goals" are not to be replaced, but expanded. But what exactly is meant in this context by "expansion"? I think that it is possible to interpret this notion as a change or broadening of one's priorities as a result of which some of the person's cognitive, affective and volitional states become less central or influential in the person's life, but they do not for this reason disappear. Getting back to the example previously discussed, this would amount to saying that the mature woman still has some of the beliefs or emotions that she experienced in her twenties – for example she might think or feel that after-hour parties are exciting and enjoyable – but she now also has other beliefs and emotions – for instance regarding work or family responsibilities – which are more important than her previous attitudes. As such, it seems that integral to empathic access is the presence of a degree of continuity in the person's experience: although the role and relative importance of some of the individual's mental states can change, even radically, over time, the person still has some sort of experiential connection with them.

How can Schechtman's account of empathic access further enhance our understanding of the relationship between affectivity and narrativity? I believe that this account points towards another fundamental way in which affective experience constitutively shapes narrativity, namely its ability to confer on the narrative self a degree of continuity. Schechtman emphasises that in order for personal identity to survive change, it is not enough to be able to tell a coherent story about how that change happened. What is necessary is also the presence of a particular form of experiential connection with one's past mental states. According to Schechtman, the "beliefs, values, desires and goals" to which we

have this sort of access are still somehow part of our experience: we are familiar with their phenomenology and they play a role in our mental and practical life. In Chapter 2 I showed that, according to various phenomenological accounts of affectivity, emotions are cardinal to the constitution of our values and the motivation of our behaviour and, as such, it is arguable that they are also fundamental to the dynamics constitutive of empathic access. Indeed, in order for there to be a level of continuity in the person's experience and evaluative outlook, it is necessary that at least some of her emotions persist over time and are not replaced by different affective states. As suggested by Schechtman's account, the centrality of these emotions to the person's life can change, but at least some of them need to have a long-term character if empathic access to the person's cognitive and in particular evaluative states is to be maintained.

The idea which emerges from these observations is not that it is impossible to tell stories which include only or mostly short-term affective experiences, but rather that, in order for autobiographical narratives to be constitutive of a self it is necessary that some of the emotions included in them have a long-lasting nature. However, the intuition can be pushed a bit further to suggest that if one's affective life radically lacked experiential continuity, that is if it amounted merely to a series of transitory affects, also the ability to construct life-narratives would be disrupted. I will provide further support to this idea through the analysis of some aspects of borderline personality disorder in Chapter 6.

3. The Authenticity of Autobiographical Narratives

So far I have focused on various dynamics through which emotions shape autobiographical story-telling. The insights I discussed and developed support the idea that the narrative self is constituted through a variety of processes to which affective experience is fundamental. However, although affectivity is

constitutive of autobiographical narrativity in various ways, it is not always the case that the stories we craft are fully reflective of our emotions. We can be inaccurate or mistaken in describing our feelings and I wish to maintain that the presence of an alignment or misalignment between the affects we live and the affects we narrate gives rise to distinct experiences. In particular, I will claim that the sense we have of certain narratives as being more or less authentic depends on their congruence with our affective states.

The notion of authenticity is often related to that of selfhood. However, the way in which this relationship is characterised depends on the particular concept of self that is adopted. For example, as highlighted by Guignon (2006) in his account of the emergence and evolution of the notion of authenticity in Western culture, if the self is conceived as something of which it is possible to have some form of introspective awareness, authenticity can be characterised as the ability to live in a way that is consonant with the features of that inner self. From this perspective, being authentic might involve engaging in a process of self-discovery that requires the ability to distance oneself from the conventions imposed by society[36] and authenticity can ultimately be characterised as the ability to be faithful to what one really is.

As observed by Guignon, authenticity must be conceived in a different way by narrative accounts of selfhood. As highlighted in Chapter 1, according to various approaches within this framework, selfhood is the result of a variety of story-telling processes in which the individual and others engage and there is no self prior to the development of autobiographical narrativity. It might seem that in this context the notion of authenticity is no longer relevant, as there is no "true self" to which the stories need to conform, that is no form of selfhood

---

[36] As highlighted by Guignon (2006), this is the case, for example, for the idea of authenticity that emerges with Romanticism.

which precedes the emergence of the narrative one. Guignon, however, suggests that authenticity can play a role also in the approaches that consider selfhood as essentially dependent on autobiographical narrativity. Drawing on the work of Nietzsche, he maintains that a narrative approach can account for the notion of authenticity by connecting it to the idea that one's life story should be given a particular form. According to such a position, authentic narratives would be the ones which possess a certain structure, for example those which provide a coherent and unitary depiction of the subject's features and experiences. Authenticity would then be a matter of shaping one's life stories in accordance with "such aesthetic ideals as coherence, unity, cohesiveness and style" (Guignon, 2006: 133).

According to Guignon, narrative accounts of selfhood can explain authenticity also in other ways. In particular, in his opinion, this is possible for the approaches which consider the identification with particular ideals, values and commitments as an essential aspect of autobiographical story-telling. As highlighted in Chapter 1, accounts such as the one put forward by Ricoeur (1994) conceive of evaluative position-taking as cardinal to narrative self-understanding. According to these positions, in order to be a self it is necessary to be able to take a stance in regard to the person one wants to be and narrativity plays a fundamental role in this process. Guignon suggests that these approaches can identify authenticity with the ability to be faithful to and act in accordance with the self-conception that one has endorsed. In his words:

> To be authentic, on this account, is to take a wholehearted stand on what is of crucial importance for you, to understand yourself as defined by the unconditional commitments you undertake, and, as much as possible, to steadfastly express those commitments in your actions throughout the course of your life. (2006: 138)

Although he recognises that narrative accounts of selfhood can make sense of

authenticity in the ways here illustrated, Guignon suggests that in so doing these accounts cannot do justice to one of the main ideas originally associated with the notion. Being authentic, he observes, was initially thought to depend on the possibility to access a part of oneself which would provide the person with guidance as to how she should live. However, if there is no 'real' or 'true' self that we can get in touch with and the self is just a narrative construction, it is no longer possible to discover within ourselves the way in which "we ought to live" (2006: 140). Therefore, according to Guignon, if the self is just the product of autobiographical narrativity, there are no criteria, except for the aesthetic ones previously mentioned, to guide our story-telling. As such, we can craft a plurality of different, but equally acceptable stories about ourselves and which one we choose to tell is, to a certain extent, arbitrary:

> The narrativist conception of authentic existence we have been exploring can leave us with a sense of the absolute contingency of all life stories. For if any story can be mine, then no story is really mine. When we recognize the multiplicity of stories we can tell and the ultimate arbitrariness of every choice of storyline, we can begin to sense the utter groundlessness of any attempt at self-formation. (2006: 143)

I agree with Guignon that the adoption of a narrative conception of selfhood can lead to a weakening of the notion of authenticity and fail to provide the individual with criteria that would motivate the choice of a life story over another. However, this is not a necessary consequence of adopting a narrative view of the self and Guignon's reading relies on an understanding of authenticity that does not take into consideration an important aspect of its phenomenology.

As far as narrative self-understanding is concerned, the notion of authenticity can be given also an experiential connotation. Some of the stories we tell about ourselves are experienced as being authentic or more or less authentic than

others, but this does not seem to be dependent upon the stories' formal characteristics such as coherence. Indeed, equally coherent narratives can significantly differ from the point of view of the sense of authenticity associated with them.

The phenomenological account of selfhood on which I focus in this work, by arguing in favour of the existence not only of a narrative, but also of an experiential or minimal self, provides an alternative framework for the explanation of why some life stories are accompanied by a sense of authenticity while others are not. More specifically, it is arguable that authenticity depends on the existence of a specific relationship between the narrative and minimal self and I wish to claim that affectivity is crucially involved in such relationship.

In order to clarify this idea, I will start by considering some observations put forward by Rosfort and Stanghellini (2009) in their analysis of the relationship between affectivity and personhood. Key to the issue I want to discuss is the distinction they make between experiencing an emotion at the pre-reflective level and reflecting on one's affective experience. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Rosfort and Stanghellini emphasise that characteristic of personhood is the ability to take an evaluative position in regard to one's own experience and to endorse certain features as part of one's personal identity. As this is the case also in the domain of affectivity, Rosfort and Stanghellini draw attention to the fact that while all emotions are experienced pre-reflectively as belonging to the self, not all of them are actively endorsed as aspects of the kind of person one wants to be. In their words:

> Feeling that it is indeed me who is now having an emotion while performing a certain action is not at all the same as acknowledging that action or this particular emotion is an essential part of my identity (as one of my *characteristics*). […] There are feelings that are egodystonic, as in the case of phobias, that is, they are prereflectively felt as one's own by the person (the

sense of ownership is there), but reflectively they are not acknowledged as part of one's personal identity. (2009: 253)

For the purpose of the present chapter, what is of particular interest in Rosfort and Stanghellini's position is the suggestion they make that there can be a discrepancy between emotions as they are experienced at the pre-reflective level and the way they are dealt with at the narrative level. Rosfort and Stanghellini are interested in particular in a specific form of activity performed by the narrative self, namely the endorsement of some affective states as integral to one's personality. In this context, as shown by the passage above, emotions that are experienced but are not reflectively endorsed are defined as "egodystonic".

I agree with Rosfort and Stanghellini that one of the characteristics of the narrative self is the ability to engage in evaluative position-taking and that the consideration of these dynamics with regards specifically to affectivity is of particular interest. However, I believe that it is possible to extend the notion of "egodystonic" emotions in order to take into account other forms of dissonance between affective states at the pre-reflective and narrative level. While the kind of narrative endorsement described earlier is certainly one of the actions which can be performed through the construction of one's life-story, not every instance of autobiographical story-telling involves it. In other terms, it is possible to tell stories about our emotions without taking any position as to whether they are the emotions of the person we want to be. For example, in a number of circumstances we might simply be interested in reporting or describing the emotions we experience without taking any stance as to whether they are emotions that we would like to undergo. Also in these cases however, there might be a lack of correspondence between the experienced emotions and the emotions that we narrate, as we can, for instance, misdescribe our feelings or fail to include them in our narratives.

It is arguable that there is a phenomenological difference between life-stories which contain emotions that are egodystonic in one of the two senses highlighted here and life-stories that are fully or for the most part congruent with the experienced affects. If the emotions we feel are generally different from or in conflict with the emotions that we associate with the person we want to be, our life narratives are likely to be experienced as inauthentic. An example can be helpful to clarify this point. I consider arts and culture to play a central role in my life and in the definition of my personality. I conceive of every form of artistic and cultural expression as highly valuable and I approve of myself experiencing emotions associated with the appreciation of works of art, music, literature and other forms of creative activity. These are aspects of the way in which I think of myself and describe myself to others, they are, in other terms, integral features of my narrative self-conception. In order to illustrate the impact of affective experience on the phenomenology of autobiographical story-telling, let's now compare two possible situations. In the first one, the emotions I experience are most of the time congruent with the emotions of the person I conceive myself to be. For instance, I almost always feel interested and excited when I hear that a good art exhibition or musical performance has been organised in the town where I live and I deeply enjoy attending these events. In the other scenario, on the contrary, I rarely experience emotions that are consonant with my narrative self-understanding.[37] The idea of attending cultural and artistic events leaves me rather indifferent and when I have the chance to spend some time reading literary works or learning about fine arts I do not really feel enthusiastic or curious. Arguably, the autobiographical story-telling through which I conceive of myself as someone who cares about arts and

---

[37] In this scenario, it is not the case that I am deliberately lying and describing myself as a different person than I really am. I believe that if I was voluntarily being deceitful, the phenomenology of autobiographical story-telling would differ from the one that characterises the two case scenarios I am discussing.

culture would have a very different phenomenology in the two case scenarios. When there is a correspondence between the emotions I experience and the affectivity of the person I conceive myself to be, the stories I craft feel true to myself, they feel authentic. On the contrary, when I do not experience the emotions that the person I think I am should experience, the narratives through which those aspects of myself are conceived feel different, they do not seem quite right or, in other terms, I have a sense that they are not authentic.[38]

The example considered so far regards only one of the two senses in which emotions can be egodystonic, namely the one identified by Rosfort and Stanghellini. As I previously argued, although evaluative position-taking is central to the narrative self, we do not take a stance in regard to every aspect of our affective experience: not all our emotions are either rejected or endorsed as features of the person we want to be. However, I suggested that also in cases that do not involve this particular form of narrative activity there can be a discrepancy between affective experience and the experience that is narrated. For instance, we might have experienced a certain emotion on a particular occasion, but when narrating that event we do not make any reference to its affective aspects, or we can describe it as involving an emotion different from the one that we experienced. The phenomenology of our self-narratives would not be impacted by isolated episodes of this kind. However, if the misalignment between the experienced and narrated emotions is widespread, that is if extensive parts of our affective experience are not included in our life stories or

---

[38] The role played by affectivity in signalling that a particular autobiographical narrative is not reflective of our experience is recognised also by Rosfort and Stanghellini. In their words: "I can tell a wrong story about myself and therefore live according to this story, but my mood (and its expression in certain affects) may disclose, through its bipolar intentionality, that something is wrong about this story" (2009: 263).

are misdescribed, the sense of authenticity associated with the stories themselves would be weakened.[39]

4.Existential Feelings and Narrative Repertoire

In Chapter 2 I illustrated how, on phenomenological grounds, it is possible to distinguish between different kinds of affective experience. I discussed various accounts which argue in favour of the existence not only of intentional feelings, but also of particular kinds of non-intentional, background affective states and I focused in particular on Ratcliffe's notion of existential feelings (2005; 2008). These are conceived as bodily feelings which are not directed to specific objects, people or states of affairs and ground our sense of being situated in a world which is significant in particular ways and harbours certain possibilities.

Ratcliffe (forthcoming) maintains that our ability to engage in narrative activities presupposes existential feelings and suggests that these can influence both the form and contents of the stories we craft. More specifically, considering certain aspects of the affective experience characteristic of depression, he draws attention to how the sense of possibilities implicated in existential feelings impacts on the way in which the narrative is structured. In his opinion, typical of depression is the experienced loss of certain kinds of possibilities and, in particular, the sense that things could never be different. As a result of this, he suggests, the depressed person is unable to conceive of alternative self-interpretations and her autobiographical stories lack "narrative

---

[39] There are various dynamics which could be responsible for the weakening of the sense of authenticity in these cases. Most importantly, it is arguable that, given the role played by emotions in our cognitive and practical life, if autobiographical narratives extensively failed to adequately portray our affective experience, also their explanatory power and coherence would be diminished. Narratives that are not aligned with our affective dynamics would be less effective in making sense of our beliefs, decisions and actions and would more likely be inconsistent with the other stories that we and others tell about ourselves.

openness". In addition, on the basis of an examination of first-person accounts of grief, Ratcliffe maintains that certain alterations of existential feelings - involving for example disruptions of the way in which temporality is experienced - can even make it impossible to engage in the construction of autobiographical narratives.

Further elaborating on Ratcliffe's observations, it is possible to suggest that existential feelings play a distinct role in the constitution of autobiographical narrativity and this depends on their "pre-intentional" character (Ratcliffe, 2010), namely the fact that they determine the kinds of intentional states that it is possible for us to experience. At a very general level, this idea can be fleshed out by observing that depending on what cognitive, affective, and volitional states existential feelings allow us to undergo, the stories we craft will have different contents and different structures. However, as I will show in the following, when the pre-intentionality of existential feelings is taken into account also a stronger claim can be made, namely that these feelings determine the *range* of stories that we have the ability to conceive, thus fundamentally shaping our narrative repertoire.

There are various ways in which existential feelings can exert such an influence on narrativity and one of these becomes apparent when taking into consideration the way in which we attribute agentive abilities to characters and external forces and events in our life stories. An important part of our story-telling consists indeed in explaining events by making causal attributions and in many cases central to these explanations is the recognition that someone has performed a certain action or originated a particular state of affairs. Agency and narrativity are thus closely connected and I want to suggest that the way in which we conceive of actions and the ability to act in our life stories is deeply influenced by existential feelings.

It is arguable that some of the background orientations that shape our experience are related to what I shall term a "sense of effectiveness", that is a sense of oneself as more or less capable of affecting the external world through one's actions, a sense of being able to bring about effects and influence events. This sense of effectiveness comes in degrees and its two extremes can be characterised, on the one hand, as the feeling of not having any possibility at all to have an impact on the external world and, on the other, as the sense of possessing unlimited power to influence the course of events.[40]

Can the sense of effectiveness be identified with the sense of agency? I believe that this is not the case. As discussed in Chapter 1, from a phenomenological perspective the sense of agency is characterised as the sense of being the initiator or source of one's own actions and this experiential structure is attributed a pre-reflective character. According to the phenomenological account, the sense of agency is something that is experienced upon performing a particular action, while the sense of effectiveness can be experienced independently of whether one is acting or not. While the former can be characterised as the feeling of being the author of one's own actions, the latter is best conceived as an experiential sense of our capacity to reach or of having reached our desired outcomes and, as such, it can be suggested that it is presupposed by our ability to engage in purposeful action.

The notion of sense of effectiveness is more akin to what Slaby calls "sense of ability" (2012). This is a bodily feeling "of one's capacity to act or to come to grips and cope with what affects one", an "embodied sense of capability", that grounds and orientates our interactions with the world (2012: 152). The sense of

---

[40] Arguably these extremes are only experienced in psychopathological conditions and our everyday predicament is somewhere in-between the two.

ability is thus conceived by Slaby as possessing both a bodily character and the power to structure our experience of the world and, as such, is considered to be related to the notion of existential feelings. In his words:

> the conception of existential feelings resonates well with the basic idea developed here: A person's felt relatedness to the world is nothing other than the fundamental sense of ability at the base of his or her perspective on the world - a sense of ability that is at any time bound up with aspects of one's concrete situation. This embodied, modifiable sense of "*I can*" and "*I cannot*" shapes the way the world, others, and oneself are apprehended. (2012: 153)

I believe that the sense of effectiveness significantly influences the way in which we characterise ourselves and others as agents in our stories. If we feel powerless and unable to have an impact on the outside world or we don't have any felt sense of having had such an impact, we will be more inclined to tell stories in which we exhibit only a limited degree of agency and rather suffer the consequences of the actions of others or external forces and events. On the other hand, a strong sense of effectiveness will motivate narratives in which central to the characterisation of the self is its being the initiator of actions and these will be depicted as one of the key drivers of the plot.

Another aspect of the role played by existential feelings in influencing our narrative repertoire has to do with the impact they have on our evaluative perspective. I illustrated in Chapter 2 how central to a phenomenological as well as other theories of affects is the idea that emotions are intentional evaluative feelings, that is feelings through which we come to experience a plurality of value properties. The connection between affectivity and the evaluative dimension, however, is not limited to affective states that have an intentional character. As previously mentioned, Slaby and Stephan (2008) have argued that evaluations can be considered to be integral also to existential feelings. While in the case of emotions the appraisals are directed to particular things, people, or states of affairs, it is claimed that what is appraised through

existential feelings is, more generally, one's relationship with the world. For example, central to an existential feeling of fear is an assessment of one's situation as entailing the possibility of being damaged or harmed in some way. However, it is arguable that, due to their pre-intentional character (Ratcliffe, 2010), these background orientations not only include an evaluation of one's standing in the world, but they also constrain the kinds of evaluative states that one is capable of entertaining. When fear acquires an existential character, for example, it becomes very difficult for the individual to appraise particular circumstances as safe or other people as trustworthy. From this perspective, existential feelings can be considered to impact on autobiographical story-telling also by way of their determining the range of evaluations that the person can make. In this regard, the evaluative judgements which appear in one's life-stories are rooted in affectivity in two senses. On the one hand, they might be motivated by the experience of particular emotions, as it is the case, for instance, when I judge a dog to be dangerous on the basis of the fear its violent barking has triggered. On the other, these evaluations can only be made because I already find myself in a world where feeling fearful is a possibility and such a possibility depends on the presence of a particular background orientation.

In order to best understand the influence that existential feelings can have on narrative self-understanding, it is important to note that the evaluations which are integral to them can also have a focus on the self. As I will show through the analysis of some forms of psychopathological experience in Chapter 5 and 6, self-evaluative emotions such as guilt and shame can sometimes lose their directionality and become pervasive, all-encompassing orientations that globally structure one's standing in the world. When this happens, it becomes difficult for the person to entertain cognitive and affective states incompatible with the evaluations integral to the existential feeling. For example, an

existential feeling of shame, intrinsic to which is an appraisal of the self as inadequate or unable to live up to certain standards, would negatively affect the individual's ability to feel pride and to think of himself as someone who is capable of accomplishing something of value. Because of this feature, self-evaluative existential feelings can affect autobiographical narrativity in various ways. In the first place, they can impact on the contents the subject chooses to narrate. It is arguable that someone whose background affective orientations involve negative self-evaluations will be more inclined to tell stories of failure rather than stories of success or to interpret the narrated events in these terms. Conversely, someone whose background mood is one of pride, will be more likely to narrate achievements rather than defeats. Secondly, self-evaluative existential feelings have an impact on the causal attributions through which the person explains the events in the stories. For instance, as I will show in more detail in Chapter 5 with regard to the experience of depressed patients, people who experience existential forms of guilt tend to account for bad events by attributing responsibility to themselves instead of others or external causes.

Conclusions

In this chapter I examined various ways in which affectivity is involved in the constitution of narratives and, in particular, of autobiographical narratives. I started with an exploration of the role played by affective experience in shaping the form and contents of the stories we craft. Drawing on Hogan's account (2011), I started by suggesting that emotions are central to the dynamics through which both literary and autobiographical narratives are temporally structured and revolve around specific themes. With regards to narrative content, following Hardcastle (2003; 2008), I also suggested that, due to their evaluative character, emotions allow us to select the events and experiences which are to be included in our life stories. In addition, I maintained that it is

because of the connection which exists between affective experience and self-awareness that we engage in story-telling activities that have a specific autobiographical character.

Drawing on Schechtman's notion of empathic access (1996; 2001; 2007), I then suggested that emotions are key to guarantee the continuity of the narrative self. Schechtman challenges the way in which personal identity has been accounted for by other narrative approaches, claiming that in order for someone's identity to be preserved through change, it is not enough for the person to be able to tell a coherent story about her life. What is necessary, in her opinion, is also that the individual can still experience some of her past "beliefs, values, desires and goals" (2001: 102) and that these play a role in her decision making processes. Given the centrality of affectivity to the constitution of the person's evaluative perspective and its motivational character, I suggested that it is particularly important for the individual to retain empathic access to his past emotions and, as such, that a degree of continuity in the person's affective experience is fundamental to the continuity of the narrative self.

I then moved to consider the relationship between affective experience and the sense of authenticity associated with some of our narratives. I claimed that our life stories can be experienced as being more or less authentic and I suggested that this depends on the degree of correspondence between the emotions that are felt and the emotions that are narrated. More specifically, further elaborating on the conception of "egodystonic" emotions put forward by Rosfort and Stanghellini (2009), I drew attention to the existence of two possible forms of misalignment between emotions at the experiential and narrative level. On the one hand, the emotions we experience might differ from the emotions that have been endorsed through evaluative position taking as features of the person we conceive ourselves to be. On the other, there can be a lack of

correspondence between narrative self-understanding and affective experience when we do not include in our stories the emotional aspects of the narrated events or we misdescribe them. On this basis, I argued that stories which extensively omit, misidentify or are in contrast with the person's affective states are more likely to be experienced as inauthentic.

Finally, I claimed that existential feelings play a distinct role in the emergence and development of autobiographical narratives. As illustrated in Chapter 2, Ratcliffe argues that existential feelings have a "pre-intentional" character (2010), namely they determine which kinds of intentional states it is possible for us to entertain. I argued that because of this feature existential feelings have a fundamental influence on the constitution of our life stories, determining the range of narratives that we have the capacity to produce. In particular, I suggested that the way in which we attribute agentive abilities to the characters in our stories depends on the felt sense we have of our capacity to have an impact on the external world through our own actions. I suggested that this "sense of effectiveness" is different from what Gallagher and Zahavi (Gallagher, 2000; Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008) designate with the notion of "sense of agency" and is rather akin to Slaby's "sense of ability" (2012), namely a particular bodily feeling which is considered to play an existential role in shaping our relationship with the world. I then claimed that another way in which existential feelings shape our narrative repertoire is by determining the sets of evaluative states that we can entertain. As discussed in Chapter 1, evaluations are integral not only to emotions, but also to existential feelings (Slaby and Stephan, 2008). As such, when one of these feelings is experienced, it is very difficult for the subject to entertain evaluative states that are in conflict with the appraisal intrinsic to it and thus the way in which we evaluate people, events, and states of affairs in our autobiographical narratives is fundamentally constrained by these forms of affective experience.

By identifying various mechanisms through which affectivity shapes the form and contents of life narratives, in this chapter I have started to clarify some aspects of the relationship between minimal and narrative self. More specifically, by drawing attention to the fact that affective experience moulds autobiographical narrativity in multiple ways, I showed that the structure of narrative self-understanding is heavily dependent upon pre-reflective forms of self-experience and that affectivity plays a central role in the dynamics through which a narrative self emerges from a minimal self. In Chapter 4 I will continue my exploration of the relationship between affectivity and narrativity by examining how the former is impacted upon by the emergence of the latter. This analysis will allow me to claim that not only the minimal self structures the narrative self, but also that narrative self-understanding constitutively shapes minimal selfhood, so that, from a phenomenological perspective, the two dimensions are inextricable.

CHAPTER 4

The Role of Narrativity in the Constitution of Affectivity

Introduction

Having examined in Chapter 3 the role played by affective experience in the emergence of autobiographical narrativity, in this chapter I aim to provide an account of how narratives impact on the experiential structure of emotions. As previously illustrated, various scholars claim that emotions contribute to determine both the form and contents of the stories we tell. Some of these accounts also recognise that narratives can have an impact on affective experience itself, for example by generating certain emotions in the story-teller or in the audience.[41] Although this is certainly an important aspect of the relationship between narrativity and affectivity, in this chapter I will argue that there is also another, more radical, sense in which narrativity influences affectivity. In particular, I will claim that the structure of emotions is not independent of narrative self-understanding, but is rather shaped by autobiographical story-telling in various ways. Narratives, in other terms, not only express and trigger emotions, but can also be *constitutive* of them.[42] I will start to illustrate this idea by drawing on the insights into the relationship between emotions and language advanced by Colombetti (2009) and other

---

[41] Hogan (2011: 237-251), for example, identifies two main ways in which narratives can influence affective experience. In the first place, he claims that stories can cause emotion episodes and suggests that these episodes in turn, by becoming emotional memories, can further influence the person's affective responses. Secondly, he maintains that narratives, by virtue of the particular way in which they depict fictional characters, can also enhance or restrain our ability to empathise with other people.

[42] My focus in this work is specifically on the way in which narrativity structurally shapes affective experience. However, narratives have been argued to be integral also to other processes at the core of our mental and practical life. For instance, it has been suggested that they "scaffold" intelligent behaviour in various ways (Herman, 2013) and ground interpersonal forms of understanding such as folk psychology (Hutto, 2009).

scholars. I will then move to consider the view put forward by Goldie (2002; 2012a) according to which it is by virtue of their being incorporated in specific narratives that emotions can be organised and experienced as complex and meaningful processes. I will suggest that this is another fundamental way in which narrativity constitutively shapes affectivity and I will argue that Goldie's conception provides a theoretical framework capable of accounting for the interpersonal and cultural variability of emotions, as well as for the changes that they undergo during development. Finally, I will maintain that narrativity moulds affectivity also by virtue of its being involved in various mechanisms through which affective experience is regulated at the personal and interpersonal level.

1. Affective Experience and Language

We can talk about our emotions and this is indeed a very significant part of all the story-telling we engage in. Many of the stories we routinely tell, especially to the people we are closest to, concern the emotional experiences we undergo. For example, when meeting one's partner or a friend for dinner after a full day at work many of the episodes we recount are likely to have an affective content: we were *annoyed* at the traffic on our way to work, *angry* at our colleague for not having completed the presentation in time for the client meeting, *stressed* when discussing the new project with the boss, but *excited* and *proud* when the possibility of a promotion was hinted at. Eventually, we were *relieved* when we left work and finally *relaxed* on our way to the restaurant. This example draws attention to the fact that often language is used to communicate or describe our affective experience and reporting is indeed recognised as one of the main functions played by language in the expression of emotions (Colombetti, 2009). However, various scholars maintain that language can also have a more profound impact on our experience and, in particular, on our affective states.

From this perspective, it is suggested that often by naming or describing our feelings, we do not just report what we are experiencing, but we rather contribute to structure the experience itself. Therefore, there is a sense in which my affective experience wouldn't be the particular experience it is if it wasn't given a linguistic expression and language in these cases can be seen not as a mere accompaniment to the emotion but rather as integral to it.

The idea that language can play a constitutive role in our experience is defended also by Merleau-Ponty in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962). In this work, Merleau-Ponty rejects both empiricist and intellectualist conceptions of language and, in particular, the way in which these approaches account for the relationship between speech and thought. According to him, while empiricism conceives of words as possessing causes – as they are produced by particular stimuli – but characterises them as deprived of meaning, intellectualism views words as the vehicle for the communication of meanings which are already constituted. Merleau-Ponty disagrees with both positions, arguing that speech and thought should not be considered as independent from one another, as if the former simply transmitted or signalled the presence of the latter like "smoke betrays fire" (Merleay-Ponty, 1962: 182). On the contrary, he claims that speech is that through which thought is accomplished: language, from this perspective, can be said to constitute, rather than simply manifest, meaning.[43] In this context, Merleau-Ponty likens the relationship between linguistic gesture and meaning to the one which exists between an angry or threatening gesture and the corresponding feeling, as, in his opinion, the

---

[43] In addition, since thoughts cannot be considered to be fully formed prior to their expression, Merleau-Ponty claims that the subject only becomes aware of them once they are given a formulation: "the thinking subject himself is in a kind of ignorance of his thoughts so long as he has not formulated them for himself, or even spoken and written them, as is shown by the example of many writers who begin a book without knowing exactly what they are going to put into it" (1962: 177). It is thus argued that through linguistic expression the subject achieves a different form of awareness of the affective experience he is undergoing.

gesture is not distinct from the feeling, but rather is the feeling itself (1962: 164). The role played by language in the constitution of affectivity is not explicitly discussed by Merleau-Ponty; however, his insights are consistent with the observations previously made in regard to the relationship between feeling and language and it is arguable that also linguistic "gestures" do not simply manifest but rather constitute our emotions.

A position which is congruent with Merleau-Ponty's approach and has a specific focus on emotions is advanced by Susan Campbell in *Interpreting the Personal* (1997). Central to this work is the rejection of what Campbell considers to be a predominant assumption in theory of emotion and a core tenet of cognitive and perceptual approaches, namely the idea that feelings are completely individuated before they are expressed. From this perspective, individuation is the process through which feelings are constituted as "the particulars they are" so as to allow for their recognition and identification (Campbell, 1997: 49) and expression is considered to be essential to such a process. In other terms, expression, rather than simply manifesting a feeling that was fully formed before its manifestation, is fundamental to the constitution of the feeling itself. As such, expression is central to the very articulation of affective experience and to our ability to entertain a variety of sometimes highly distinctive feelings[44]. In Campbell's words: "[t]he richer and more discriminating our ways of expression, the richer and more nuanced our affective lives" (1997: 50). Campbell's account admits of the existence of different forms of expression or "expressive resources", including language, action or involuntary but controllable behaviour. However, she does not specifically discuss the distinct roles that the linguistic expression of feelings

---

[44] Endorsing some of the key claims of the expressionist theories of art, Campbell argues that there are a number of feelings which, due to their level of specificity, cannot be accounted for through the most widespread emotion categories.

can play. In order to best understand the relationship between narrativity and affective experience it is thus useful to further explore the different kinds of impact that language can have on emotions.

Colombetti (2009) identifies various ways in which language and feelings are connected. In the first place, as previously mentioned, she recognises that language is often used to report the emotions that we are experiencing. In these cases, linguistic expression has a communicative function and does not change the nature of the affective experience that is undergone (Colombetti, 2009: 6). However, Colombetti claims that there are a number of dynamics through which language, rather than merely communicating emotions, can have the effect of modifying their structure. For example, she suggests that by being verbalised affective experience can become more precise and fully articulate. According to her, what prior to linguistic expression is a pre-reflective and rather vague bodily feeling, through verbalisation can become a more definite experience and acquire a "sense of fulfilment" (Colombetti, 2009: 10). In addition, Colombetti maintains that, due to the increased emotional awareness we can reach through linguistic expression, we might allow ourselves to fully experience the emotion and to "indulge" in it, thus suggesting that language can have not only a clarifying, but also an enhancing effect on affectivity. In this regard, she claims that language can enhance affectivity also by inducing new and unexpected affective experiences, as it is the case, in her opinion, with the various techniques involving the association of words adopted by Surrealist writers (2009: 11-13).

It seems that the various aspects of the relationship between language and emotions described by Colombetti do not necessarily require the presence of a narrative. The form of linguistic expression at issue in these cases can indeed be as simple as the formulation of a statement through which we name the

emotion and no implicit or explicit story-telling seems to be needed in order to do so. However, it must be noted that often we express and communicate emotions by positioning them within broader life stories and in this sense it is arguable that narrativity is involved in the processes through which language moulds affective experience. In addition, as I will show shortly, narrativity can be considered to be involved also in other two aspects of the relationship between emotions and language discussed by Colombetti. One of these is connected to the development and diffusion of emotion labels and classifications. In regard to this point, building in particular on the work of the philosopher Ian Hacking, Colombetti argues that the categorisations of affective experience which language makes possible have "looping effects" on the experience itself.

The notion of "looping effects" is discussed by Hacking in the context of his analysis of the structure and effects of classifications, and, in particular, of the notion of "interactive kind" (1996; 1999). In his opinion, while certain objects, for instance in the field of natural sciences, are unaffected by the way in which they are classified - that is they are, in Hacking's terms "indifferent kinds" - others have a dynamic relationship with the classification systems within which they are comprised. More specifically, according to Hacking, certain forms of classification can interact with the way in which the classified objects behave and this, in turn, can modify the classification itself. Among these kinds, which he qualifies as "interactive", Hacking includes kinds of people and their behaviours (1999: 104), which he refers to as "human kinds" (1996: 351). An example which he discusses at length in order to illustrate his position is that of child abuse (1991; 1996; 1999). Hacking explores the emergence and evolution of this concept and argues that the constitution of this notion not only had a strong influence on social, political, and moral practices, but also had an impact on the very structure of people's experience. As he states:

> Events in a life can now be seen as events of a new kind, a kind that may not have been conceptualized when the event was experienced or the act performed. What we experience becomes recollected anew, and thought in terms that could not have been thought at the time. Experiences are not only redescribed; they are re-felt. (1999: 130)

Interactive kinds such as child abuse, in other terms, can change the way in which people think and feel about themselves as new experiential possibilities come to be described and a number of related "explanations" and "expectations" emerge. In addition, according to Hacking, one of the reasons why classifications can shape people's behaviours is that they often possess an evaluative character. Drawing attention for example to the fact that central to a number of classifications in the social sciences is the notion of deviant behaviour, Hacking claims that the evaluations associated with certain kinds can change people's sense of self-worth, potentially generating rebellious or passive behaviours as a result (1999). These observations highlight another central feature of Hacking's concept of interactive kind: not only certain forms of classification can influence the configuration of people's experience, but, as a result, people can start to behave differently, thus leading to an evolution of the classification itself. In addition, even if the person is not aware of the classification or does not care about it, knowing that she is classified in a certain way will have an effect on how other people behave towards her, thus potentially influencing the person's behaviour by generating a change in her social environment (1996: 368). In sum, interactive kinds are characterised by the presence of multiple looping effects: on the one hand, the classification has an impact on the individual's self-conception and self-experience and, on the other, due to his or others' awareness of the classification, the individual can modify his behaviour and effect a change in the classification itself.

As previously highlighted, Colombetti suggests that the consideration of the

notion of looping effect can enhance our understanding of the relationship between emotions and language. More specifically, she suggests that looping effects can be generated by the emergence and diffusion of emotion "labels" and related "descriptions" (2009: 13), thus generating changes in people's self-experience and behaviour which in turn can modify the labels and descriptions themselves. Although Colombetti is not concerned specifically with narrativity, it is arguable that story-telling plays an important role in at least some of the dynamics she identifies. More specifically, narratives seem to be central not only to the expression and communication of emotions, but also to the way in which emotion classifications are constituted.

Culture and interpersonal relationships, as it will be discussed in more details in the next few sections, play a fundamental role in determining our understanding of emotions. Social interactions, especially the ones which take place early in our life, inevitably shape, through the examples, evaluations, rules and information they provide, our affective experience. De Sousa (1987), for instance, emphasising the role of education in the constitution of our emotional repertoire, draws attention to how family and the broader social and cultural dimension provide children with an understanding of the type of circumstances – which he calls "paradigm scenarios" – in which a particular emotion is usually experienced. These are examples of what an emotion of a certain type would typically look like in light of which the child will interpret and organise his own experience. From a developmental perspective, a cardinal role in this process is played by the conversations children have with their parents and caregivers (e.g. Fivush, 1994) and arguably story-telling is a very important way in which this affective vocabulary is constituted. It is by listening to narratives regarding how certain emotions are triggered in others, what kind of experiences they entail and what kind of consequences they bring about, that we become able to name emotions and to conceive of them as

involving certain characteristic elements. As such, narrativity is at the core of the processes through which we gradually become able to identify emotions on the basis of how they are conceived in our social and cultural environment. In addition, emotion labels and descriptions are disseminated also through various mediums such as literary works, songs and films and this further proves the centrality of narrativity to the dynamics which are at the origin of looping effects in the affective domain.

Finally, the impact that labelling can have on people's affective experience is further illustrated by another aspect of the relationship between language and emotions identified by Colombetti. She observes that through language we can "condense" complex experiences in relatively simple expressions. By being so labelled, she argues, certain affects are made "accessible" to people, who thus become more aware of the existence of particular experiential possibilities and more likely to undergo certain emotions (2009: 17-20).

The insights developed by Colombetti and the other scholars discussed in this section show that, although language is often used to report our feelings, linguistic expression can also shape the structure of emotions in various ways. Language, in other terms, plays not only an expressive, but also a constitutive role in affective experience. A similar idea emerges also from Ratcliffe's account of the relationship between existential feelings and narrative (forthcoming). Ratcliffe recognises that, at least in certain cases, existential feelings cannot be "separated" from the way in which they are expressed linguistically and, in particular, from the self-narratives in which they are incorporated. As such, in his opinion, existential feelings are, at least sometimes, "inextricable" aspects of the narrated experiences. Ratcliffe's and the other accounts discussed in this section thus suggest that affectivity and narrativity are, from a phenomenological perspective, deeply entangled. In the rest of this chapter I

will further develop this idea by illustrating other two fundamental ways in which story-telling moulds the structure of affective experience.

2. Narrativity and the Process Structure of Emotions

The idea that narrativity structures and confers meaningfulness on affective experience is at the core of Goldie's account of emotions. This approach moves from the acknowledgment that the theories which conceive of emotions as single mental states or events do not do justice to some fundamental intuitions we have about the nature of affective experience (Goldie, 2011). By identifying emotions with individual affective, cognitive or volitional states, these theories would provide a static characterisation of emotions which ignores their intrinsically "dynamic" and "complex" nature (Goldie, 2002: 12). An example which Goldie uses to clarify his view is the emotion of grief (2011). He observes that while grieving certainly involves a specific feeling, this is not all there is to this experience. Grief, he suggests, involves a plurality of other elements unfolding over time and thus should be seen as a complex and temporally extended experience. We have the intuition that grief is not reducible to a momentary sensation, but it is something more structured intrinsic to which is also a particular duration: it does not seem possible to us that grief could be experienced just for a few seconds (Goldie, 2011: 120). According to Goldie, and in line with some of the accounts outlined in Chapter 2, grief – but also other emotions - are best conceived as "processes" or "patterns" which develop over time and include a plurality of different elements.

Although he recognises that feelings play an important role in our experience of emotions, Goldie emphasises that cardinal to that experience are also other mental and bodily states. In particular, as mentioned in Chapter 2, he argues that central to the structure of emotions is what he names the "recognition-

response tie" (2002: 11). According to him, each emotion involves the recognition of something as possessing a particular evaluative property and a number of responses including characteristic expressions, bodily changes, motivational responses and actions (2002: 33). For instance, the fear experienced when facing a ferocious animal would be characterised by the acknowledgement of the animal as dangerous and by a number of reactions to that danger, such as the feeling of fear, a specific profile of bodily activation, and action tendencies such as the impulse to run away.

Why is the relationship between recognition and response considered a tie? Why in order for there to be an emotion we need both recognition and response? To answer this question it is necessary to consider in more detail the structure of the evaluative properties involved in the emotional process. According to Goldie, an evaluative property is not something that we can simply acknowledge, as we do for example with the presence of an object in perceptual experience. Rather, Goldie conceives of an evaluative property as "a property whose recognition *merits* a certain sort of response" (2002: 30). From this perspective, the response does not simply follow the recognition, but is rather integral to what it means to recognise something as possessing a particular evaluative property.

In Goldie's opinion, the structure of the recognition-response tie is paradigmatic because it indicates the components that emotions of a particular kind typically have. However, Goldie also draws attention to the fact that not all the components of a particular emotion should be in place in order for the experience to count as an instance of that emotion. As long as other elements of the process are unfolding, the experience can still be considered as an instance of a specific emotion even if a certain element at one time is missing. If, for example, particular feelings of attachment or tenderness are considered to be

paradigmatic to the emotion of love, failing to experience them on certain occasions wouldn't necessarily mean that the emotion is no longer present. However, if these failures were consistently experienced over a long period of time, it would be legitimate to doubt that the emotion is still in place.

What is the specific role played by narrativity in this account? Goldie suggests that the narrative is what holds together the various components of the emotion (2002: 11), namely that by virtue of which the various feelings, thoughts, perceptions and bodily changes which make up the recognition-response tie can be seen not as isolated events or mental states but rather as parts of one and the same process. The tie, in other terms, is established through a narrative. In Goldie's words:

> it is the notion of narrative structure which ties together and makes sense of the individual elements of emotional experience – thought, feeling, bodily change, expression, and so forth – as part of a structured episode […]. (2002: 4-5)

> the parts of the process "can be seen to 'hang together into a coherent whole' […] through the coherence of a narrative of the process. (2011: 124)

According to this perspective, the narrative is what connects the different elements in a meaningful whole. However, in order to get a comprehensive understanding of these claims it is important to further clarify what Goldie means by "narrative", a notion which he returns to throughout his work. In *The Emotions* (2002), for instance, he emphasises that affective experience is embedded in one's life story and that it is only in light of this story that emotions are intelligible:

> To make sense of one's emotional life, including its surprises, it is thus necessary to see it as part of a larger unfolding narrative, not merely as a series of discrete episodes taken out of, and considered in abstraction from, the narrative in which they are embedded. A true narrative, as I understand it,

is not simply an interpretive framework, placed, so to speak, over a person's life; it is, rather, what that life is. (2002: 5)

On the basis of these claims, we might be inclined to think that Goldie conceives of emotions as some of the events which can be included in our autobiographical narratives. This interpretation is certainly correct, but Goldie's account seems to involve also a stronger claim. In various other passages he indeed suggests that emotions not only are part of one's life stories, but are also narrative in their own right: apart from their constituting significant aspects of one's autobiography, emotions are thus attributed a specific "narrative structure".

Goldie provides various characterisations of the notion of narrative structure. Central to the way he conceives of it in his early work is the "recognition-response tie". For example he claims:

> For each sort of emotional experience there will be a paradigmatic narrative structure - paradigmatic recognitional thoughts, and paradigmatic responses involving motivational thoughts and feelings, as well as bodily changes, expressive activity, action, and so forth […]. (2002: 33)

However, a more extensive analysis of the notion of narrative structure is developed in Goldie's latest work, where he provides the following characterisation:

> A narrative or story is something that can be told or narrated, or just thought through in narrative thinking. It's more than just a bare annal or chronicle or list of a sequence of events, but a representation of those events which is shaped, organized, and coloured, presenting those events and the people involved in them, from a certain perspective or perspectives, and thereby giving narrative structure – coherence, meaningfulness, and evaluative and emotional import – to what is related. (2012a: 2)

Is the more recent account of the notion of narrative structure different from the

one given by Goldie in his previous work? Are the two in potential contradiction? I do not think that this is the case. By initially conceiving of the notion of "narrative structure" in terms of "recognition-response tie", Goldie draws attention to what he considers to be the contents of the emotional narrative, that is the various components which are related to one another in the emotional process. In this context, by making use of the concept of "tie" he emphasises that the various components are related to one another, but he does not provide a detailed characterisation of this relationship. On the other hand, the account put forward in Goldie's most recent work focuses on the features that the connection between these components should possess in order for them to be attributed a narrative structure. These features, as stated in the passage quoted above, are coherence, meaningfulness, and evaluative and emotional import. In order to understand the implications that this notion of narrative structure has for the characterisation of emotions as processes, it is necessary to at least briefly examine these key notions.

The idea of coherence refers to the fact that the narrated events should "hold together in some way" (2012a: 14), that is they should not be merely juxtaposed, as it is the case in annals and chronicles[45], but should rather be connected to one another. The second defining feature of narrative structure is meaningfulness, which refers to the type of relationship which holds between the events in the story. What does it mean exactly for the events in the story to be meaningfully related? Does it mean that a causal explanation of the various events is provided? This is not necessarily the case. Although it is often emphasised that causal and narrative accounts have various characteristics in common - for example their being concerned with particular events - and it is claimed that causal explanations often have a central role in narrative accounts (Goldie,

---

[45] Goldie, however, argues that chronicles are closer to a narrative structure than annals.

2012a: 14-15) - the latter are considered to be distinct from the former. From this perspective, narrative explanations allow us to see the events in a story as intelligibly related even if they are not bound to one another by causal relationships. In order to clarify these claims, we can consider an example of a narrative of grief discussed by Goldie. The passage is taken from C.S. Lewis' *A Grief Observed*, and describes some aspects of the experience of grief undergone by the narrator following the death of "H"[46]:

> It's not true that I'm always thinking of H. Work and conversation make that impossible. But the times when I'm not are perhaps my worst. For then, though I have forgotten the reason, there is spread over everything a vague sense of wrongness, of something amiss. Like in those dreams where nothing terrible occurs – nothing that would sound even remarkable if you told it at breakfast-time – but the atmosphere, the taste, of the whole thing is deadly. So with this. I see the rowan berries reddening and don't know for a moment why they, of all things, should be depressing. I hear a clock strike and some quality it always had before has gone out of the sound. What's wrong with the world to make it so flat, shabby, worn-out looking? Then I remember" (Lewis, 1961: 50, cited in Goldie, 2011: 136).

What does this narrative tell us about the narrator's experience? In the first place, the text characterises grieving not as a single mental state or event, but rather as a process, something which takes place over a period of time. Secondly, a number of different experiences are reported: the rowan berries are depressing, the clock's sound has lost its usual quality and the world, more generally, has acquired a deadly look. What do all these experiences have in common? How are they related to one another? The various experiences described in the passage are understood to be meaningfully related, but this relationship does not have a causal character: there is indeed no connection in terms of cause and effect between the way the narrator perceives the berries and the strange way in which the clock sounds to him. Rather, a meaningful relation is established by virtue of both events being depicted as parts of the

---

[46] The book, originally published under a pseudonym, was written by Lewis after the death of his wife.

process of grieving. They are all aspects of the story of the particular loss experienced by the narrator, they are all characterised as connected to his current situation as one in which something valuable is forever missing. The narrative ties together the events in the emotional process, so that they no longer appear as isolated, but rather as aspects of a unitary affective experience. This idea is related to the third characteristic of a narrative structure discussed by Goldie, namely that the events which are narrated must have *evaluative and emotional import*. This feature refers to the fact that a fundamental way to make sense of the events in a story is by appealing to how "[t]hings matter to people" (Goldie, 2012a: 23) and this is achieved by referring to their emotions and evaluations. In this context, Goldie is concerned with the analysis of the structure of narratives in general and not specifically with affective narratives. However, it is easy to see how his insights apply also to the sphere of affectivity: an emotional narrative, as previously illustrated, presents a number of events as integral to the process through which we both acknowledge and respond to something as possessing a certain import (i.e. something being a loss, an offence, a stroke of luck, etc.). Finally, according to Goldie a narrative can be meaningful in two different ways which are nevertheless related. On the one hand, a narrative is meaningful from an internal perspective when it reveals how the mental states and actions of the characters made sense from their point of view at the time of the narrated events. On the other hand, a narrative is meaningful from an external perspective when it reveals how it made sense from the point of view of the external narrator to construct the narrative in the way he did.

Although, as previously mentioned, there is a substantial continuity in the way the narrative structure of emotions is characterised throughout Goldie's work, in the more recent accounts more emphasis is posed on story-telling activities. Goldie explicitly claims that what gives coherence, meaningfulness and

evaluative and emotional import to a sequence of events, thereby conferring on them a narrative structure, is a story which is either told or thought through. As such, it is made clear that it is by virtue of their being part of an implicit or explicit narrative that the various emotion components are connected to one another and experienced as a whole. From this perspective, grief is not an emotion that is first experienced and then reported, but is rather fully constituted through narration. An implication of this account is that if there was no narrative, there would be no emotion as a complex and structured process, but just isolated mental states and events. In other terms, given that this approach conceives of narratives as what hold together the various emotional constituents by conferring on them meaningfulness, coherence, and evaluative and emotional import, the absence of implicit or explicit story-telling regarding the various components would make it difficult to see them as parts of the same emotion. If there wasn't a narrative, it wouldn't be possible to grieve in a certain way or, more precisely, to experience the various elements which are associated with grieving as belonging together, as making up a unitary experience. As such, narrativity is constitutive of at least certain emotions in the sense that it is what confers on them their process structure and allows us to experience them as unitary phenomena. Such a view not only does justice to our intuitions regarding the complexity and temporality of emotions, but, as I will illustrate in the next two sections, also provides a framework capable of accounting for the cultural and developmental variability of emotions.

2.1. Cultural Differences

Goldie claims that the notion of paradigmatic narrative structure makes it possible to account for the similarities and differences in the way emotions are conceived, expressed, and experienced across different cultures (2002: 84). According to this position, there is a level of variability in the narratives

associated with a particular emotion which reflects the specificity and interests of the individual, group, or society in which the story is crafted. Different cultures, in other terms, can have different conceptions of which are the constituents of a specific emotional process and of how these unfold over time.

In this regard, much attention has been given, for instance, to the existence of a number of cultural variations in the experience of shame and guilt. In a study which examines an extensive body of anthropological and psychological contributions to the subject, Wong and Tsai (2007) suggest that the elicitors and the behavioural consequences[47] of shame are different in Western and Eastern cultures. These differences, according to the research they draw upon, are due to the distinct ways in which selfhood is conceived in the two cultures. More specifically, the western "individualistic" conception of the self which stresses its autonomy and agency is contrasted with the eastern "collectivistic" view according to which the self is essentially defined by its interpersonal relationships and its belonging to a particular community. It is argued that these different conceptions are at the origin of the fact that in western cultures shame is usually induced by a transgression committed by the individual, while in eastern cultures shame can be triggered also by actions performed by others (2007: 216). Furthermore, people with a "collectivistic" conception of the self are more likely to experience shame in public than in private, while the opposite tendency would be typical of people with a "western" view (2007: 216). Wong and Tsai also emphasise how these cultural models have an impact on the behaviours that are associated with the experience of shame, which, for instance, seems to enhance pro-social behaviour in eastern but not in western countries. For example, Wong and Tsai draw attention to a study conducted by Bagozzi et al. (2003) which examined the behaviours displayed by Dutch and

---

[47] They also highlight that shame and guilt are evaluated differently in the two cultures.

Philippino salespeople when experiencing shame and identified some striking differences. In particular, it was observed that while in the Netherlands salespeople who feel shame tend to detach themselves from the situation and to pay less attention to the customers and their tasks, the experience of shame would prompt salespeople in the Philippines to focus more on building the relationship with their customers and to improve the quality of the service provided.

As shown by these examples, certain feelings, thoughts, expressions or behaviours can be considered typical of a particular emotion in one culture but not in another: the constituents of the "recognition-response tie" and the way in which they unfold – in other terms, the narrative structures of emotions - are subject to variation at the cross-cultural level.

However, if this is the case, what makes it possible to consider emotions with a different narrative structure as instances of the same affective experience? If their components are different, how can we consider two emotional processes as variants of the same emotion and not as distinct emotions? The answer to this question provided by Goldie (2002) relies on the acknowledgement that similarity and difference in this context are not a matter of "all or nothing", but rather a question of degrees. While some of the components of the emotional process will vary across cultures, others will be the same and it is by virtue of their sharing a number of significant aspects that two different stories can be conceived as narratives of the same emotion. In Goldie's words:

> there is a significant amount in common between different cultures' conceptions of certain emotions (that is, in their paradigmatic narrative structure), and […] there is much in common between certain elements of emotional experience and expression. Taking for example anger and its close 'relations' across other cultures, the precise paradigmatic narrative structure may vary across cultures, depending on precisely how the emotion is conceived of, but underlying that diversity will be a notable commonality in

the elements which comprise the narrative structure. (2002: 94)

Despite their differences, some stories are then similar enough to be considered as narratives of the same emotion. Goldie stresses how the attempt to understand the origin of the commonalities between different emotional narratives can benefit from the insights provided by evolutionary explanations. Certain aspects of the emotional process, he suggests, have remained the same over time and on a cross-cultural level because of their adaptive value. However, despite the existence of a solid body of research documenting the universality of certain bodily, and, in particular, expressive aspects of emotional experience, Goldie claims that it would be wrong to consider emotions as possessing an invariable biological "core" and a "surface" which is open to cultural influence. This idea, which he names the "avocado pear misconception" (2002: 85), is in his opinion incorrect because it does not take into consideration the "plasticity" or "developmental openness" of our biological and psychological capabilities (2002: 98). These capabilities, he claims, are not static and can be deeply influenced by the environment and culture. By defending this idea, however, Goldie is not advocating a social constructionist approach to emotional experience (2002: 92). Indeed, he acknowledges the constraints posed by biology and evolution on the variability of emotions, but he maintains that affective experience is more plastic and open to cultural influences than usually claimed by the approaches which emphasise the universality of facial expressions of emotions and their neurobiological underpinnings.

These observations are thus related to the critical assessment of an idea widely spread in the field of affective science, namely that while some emotions are culturally variable, others are universal (Goldie, 2002: 99-100). From this perspective, it could be suggested that the claims regarding the variability of

the narrative structure of emotions across cultures cannot be generalised to all emotions, and, in particular, to "basic" emotions such as anger, fear, happiness, surprise, disgust and sadness. Emotions such as shame, pride and guilt, for example, are frequently characterised as self-evaluative emotions which are thought to be dependent on the possession of specific cognitive abilities (e.g. Lewis, 1992) and would be more easily shaped by social and cultural influences. Basic emotions, on the other hand, as it is the case for example in Damasio's account (e.g. 2000), are seen as innate affective responses which are independent of the possession of higher cognitive abilities and are universally characterised by the same physical manifestations. However, a number of anthropological and cross-cultural studies document the existence of differences also in the way in which basic emotions are experienced in different cultures. Catherine Lutz (1988), for instance, in her famous analysis of the emotions experienced by the inhabitants of the Micronesian atoll of Ifaluk, provides some insights into how the experience of fear can be culturally shaped. Lutz notices that the elicitors of the emotion, what is recognised as deserving a reaction of fear, are very different in Ifaluk and in the Western world. While among Europeans traffic situations, interactions with strangers and the possibility of failure are the most common triggers of fear (Scherer et al., 1986), people on Ifaluk associate fear with circumstances such as the appearance of something unexpected, the perceived presence of spirits and the prospect of others experiencing justifiable anger against the self.

A brief examination of the connection between fear and justifiable anger can help to clarify the structure of this emotion and the role it plays in the life of people on the island, as well as highlighting its distinctive narrative structure. Lutz (1988) explains that in this context being fearful is often associated with the recognition that an action with the potential of causing anger in another person has been committed and this has to do in particular with the violation of

taboos, hierarchy, and norms regarding interactions with people of the opposite sex (Lutz, 1988: 201). In these cases, people identify fear with the recognition of the illegitimacy of particular actions and for this reason the experience of fear is seen as the grounds for the attribution of a positive moral attribute. By being fearful, the individual acknowledges as dangerous the behaviours which break the customs and norms on which the society on Ifaluk is based and thus displays commitment to its preservation.

In terms of the behaviours which are associated with fear, Lutz (1988) observers that for people on Ifaluk the most typical reaction is flight. While this behaviour is certainly characteristic also of Western experiences of fear, it seems that in the Western world the scope of possible actions deriving from this emotion is wider. Here, danger is not necessarily seen as something which must be escaped, but could also be viewed as a situation which must be faced with courage. In addition, danger is not always conceived as something to be avoided, but can rather be seen as a challenge that can be actively pursued (think for example of the popularity of extreme sports).

Cross-cultural differences in the narrative structure of fear are also manifest in the different scenarios through which children are familiarised with these emotions. The education of children in the Western countries usually involves the experience of "vicarious" fear through the identification with characters of fairy tales and other stories and is aimed at providing children with tools to overcome the emotion. This is very different from the approach which is taken by the people living on Ifaluk: on the atoll the children are put in situations where real fear is induced and approval is shown by the other members of the community for these reactions. Lutz describes the process as follows:

> The rehearsal of the scenario of danger begins in parent-child interactions in which a special spirit, the *tarita* (Lutz, 1983), is called to frighten children. It is

particularly when a child has misbehaved that a woman of the household will slip away and return to the edge of the yard area disguised in cloths in impersonation of this bush-dwelling spirit. There she will motion the child toward her, all the while making eating gestures, thereby evoking the image of the *tarita* as an eater of children. At this, the child usually leaps in panic into the arms of the nearest adult who, after calling the *tarita* to "come to get this child who has misbehaved", often ends up holding the child in amused approval of its reaction. (1988: 206)

Conceiving of emotions in terms of narrative structure makes it possible to account for the fact that also within the same culture there might be different forms of the same emotion. Wong and Tsai (2007), for instance, report that the Chinese language possesses over 100 terms for shame, but various cultures also distinguish different forms of basic emotions. In the Ifaluk language, for instance, there are two terms to indicate fear: *rus* and *metagu*. While the former is typically used to designate a panic-like reaction which is experienced when faced with an unexpected physical threat, the latter refers to the feeling which arises when faced with an unusual situation or the "justifiable anger" of others (Lutz, 1988: 186). The difference in the narrative structure of the two forms of fear regards also the motivations and actions which are associated with the two emotions. *Rus* immobilises people and makes them unable to talk or to walk. In addition, it is often described as being characterised by specific bodily feelings, such as "shaking in the region just under the breastbone" as if something was coming up "from one's gut into the chest, stopping there suddenly". *Metagu*, on the other hand, is less physical in character and associated more with anxious rumination over the danger and its consequences (1988: 187).

Goldie accounts for the fact that one culture can distinguish between different forms of the same emotion by maintaining that emotional narratives can have different degrees of specificity: the more detailed the narratives associated with affective experience, the more numerous the emotional categories present in a particular culture. He considers for instance the case of the Pintupi Aboriginal

group whose language includes at least 15 terms for fear, among which the word "nginyiwarrarringu" indicates a sudden fear which leads the person to stand up to determine what provoked it (Goldie, 2002: 91). In Goldie's words:

> the fifteen different sorts of fear picked out in the Pintupi language will each have a distinct paradigmatic narrative structure which is considerably more specific than our narrative structure for fear: 'nginyiwarrarringu', presumably, will involve something like 'standing up to see what caused it' as paradigmatic action out of the emotion […]. And, within our own culture, there will be distinct paradigmatic narrative structures for our distinct sorts of fear: dread, terror, alarm, and so forth. (2002: 94)

Goldie's insights into the role played by narrativity in structuring affective experience can thus explain not only how the same emotion can take different forms in different cultures, but also how there can be various forms of the same emotion within one culture. I will suggest in the next section that this approach can also account for the fact that the structure of emotions can change during development.

2.2. Development

The affective experience of children is different from that of adults in various respects. For example, emotions in childhood seem to be relatively short-lived: it is noticeable how rapidly children can shift between different, and sometimes opposite, emotions. Does this mean that contrary to the affective experience of adults, the emotions experienced during childhood are not narrative processes? In order to answer this question it is helpful to think of narrativity as a matter of degrees. From this perspective, children's emotions, at least from a certain stage onwards, could still involve a number of meaningfully related components, but the stories which hold them together could be shorter and less complex than in adulthood.

Narrativity, as highlighted in Chapter 1, is a reflective activity which requires the possession of linguistic and conceptual abilities that might emerge gradually and not be present at all stages of childhood. For example, it has been claimed that the capacity to construct stories where events are organised around the emergence of a problem and its subsequent resolution usually appears at five years of age, but a performance comparable to that of adults is reached only between the age of nine and eleven (Habermas and Bluck, 2000). It is arguable that through the various phases of development, the child acquires a number of abilities that make it possible for the narrative skills to become more complex and this determines a change in the structure of emotions. This idea, which is compatible with the framework delineated by Goldie in so far as he conceives of narratives as dynamic rather than static phenomena, is also consonant with the insights provided by developmental psychology. An interesting example in this regard is provided by the work of Mascolo and Fisher (1995).

Similar to Goldie's account, Mascolo and Fisher move from the assumption that emotions such as pride, shame, and guilt are constituted by a number of characteristic elements – appraisals, bodily experiences, and action tendencies – which unfold in typical ways. These emotions, in other terms, are characterised by specific sequences of events or "scripts". Let's consider for example the emotion of pride. According to Mascolo and Fisher, central to this emotion is an appraisal of the self as responsible for generating an outcome or for being a person that is socially valued. With regard to physiological reactions and bodily feelings, pride would be marked by an increased heart rate and skin conductance and by an experience of the body as "taller, stronger or bigger". Finally, pride is considered to be distinguished by specific action tendencies such as the inclination to call attention to oneself, the adoption of a particular posture and the display of specific gestures and expressions such as a broad

smile (1995: 57). According to Mascolo and Fischer, however, this script is characteristic only of "mature" forms of pride and is the result of a developmental process during which increasingly complex instances of the emotion are experienced by the child.

They claim that the first occurrences of a pride-like reaction appear between 18 and 24 months of age when the child becomes able to perform goal-related actions and to attribute the results to himself. This would be for instance the case of a child who throws a ball and indicates to his mum that it is him who did the throwing by using expressions such as " 'I throw,' 'Me throw,' or 'Robin [child's name] throw'" (1995: 75). According to this account, the experience of pride becomes more complex at 2-3 years of age when the child not only attributes the outcome of a particular action to himself but also evaluates this outcome as good. For instance, in the scenario previously discussed, the child would express satisfaction not only for the action, but also for its positive result, displaying excitement and using expressions such as "Throw ball far" or "I throw good" (1995: 75). Mascolo and Fischer suggest that a further stage in the development of pride takes place around 4-5 years of age when the child becomes able to judge his performance as being better than others' and acquires the ability to attribute to himself a valued trait following an assessment of how he has performed across a number of situations. Through the subsequent stages of pride development the child widens the scope of his positive evaluations and eventually becomes able to be proud of himself because of his possession of some particular personality characteristics. The last stage of this developmental trajectory consists in the ability to experience pride in relation to the characteristics of another person whose identity the subject considers to be related to his own.

According to Mascolo and Fischer, similar stages can be identified in the

154

development of shame and guilt and it is arguable that also the structure of other emotions undergoes significant changes as the child's cognitive abilities develop. But what exactly does change in the experience of pride through the various steps highlighted above? In the first place, while the appraisals associated with the emotion are focused in the beginning on very specific and circumscribed events or actions, as the child grows up the evaluations become more abstract and general. A related element which seems to change through development is the role played by intersubjectivity in the emotion. While the first occurrences of pride do not presuppose the acknowledgement of any other individual or standard against which the child assesses his own performance, gradually his evaluations acquire a stronger comparative nature. In addition, at the more mature stages of development, another person or some of her characteristics can become the object of pride. All these features are related to the recognitional aspects of pride. What the analysis conducted by Mascolo and Fischer shows then is that the type of situations, actions, and traits which are recognised as potential objects of pride and the evaluations associated with it are not set once and for all, but gradually develop over the years. In other terms, this analysis shows that throughout development the processes with which emotions are identified become more articulate and the complexity of the cognitive states which are embedded in the process increases.

Although the analysis discussed so far is only concerned with how the appraisals characteristic of a particular emotion develop over time, it is arguable that also other components of the emotional process are subject to change. Let's consider for example the behaviours typical of pride. While the action tendencies which are experienced when feeling proud might not be very different in childhood and adulthood, the behaviours which are displayed may vary a lot. While it might be common for a child to explicitly show his pride, for example by screaming joyfully or jumping around, and to insistently try to

draw other people's attention to his achievements, adults who are feeling proud do not usually behave in this way. Although the emotion can still have buoyant manifestations (think for example of winners' reactions at sport competitions), pride in adulthood is generally characterised by quieter and more composed forms of expression. This feature - which may depend also on social and cultural factors, as in certain groups overt displays of pride can be considered negatively - shows that not only the "recognitional", but also the "response" aspects of the narrative structure of emotions can change over time. As such, the narrative structure of the emotion experienced by an adult can be quite different from the one experienced by a child. This is exemplified for example by the following account given by Todd Duncan of the experience he underwent when attending a performance of Marian Anderson, an African-American soprano:

> Well, my feelings were so deep that I have never forgotten it, and I don't think that until I leave this earth I will ever forget. It was the same feeling I had in "I Have a Dream" – when we heard that "I Have a Dream" speech. It was the same feeling. Number one, I have never been so proud to be an American. Number two, I've never been so proud to be an American Negro. Number three, I've never had such pride in seeing this Negro woman stand up there with this great royal dignity and sing. (*Marian Anderson* 1991, cited in Mascolo and Fischer, 1995: 64)

As observed by Mascolo and Fischer, the experience of pride described by Duncan in this passage differs significantly from the pride that could be experienced by a toddler when praised by his parents because he has accomplished a particular task. In the first place, the emotion undergone by Duncan cannot be understood independently of a certain sense of belonging to a particular nation and to a particular ethnic group. It would be difficult to experience the same pride if there wasn't at least a minimal understanding of what it means to be American and an African-American. The narrative of this form of pride is conceptually rich and culturally embedded. This is indeed an

instance of pride which is likely to be deeply interwoven with the knowledge of the history of the American nation and of the ethnic group Duncan belongs to, as well as being rooted in a number of personal experiences undergone over the years. Arguably, the cognitive and experiential repertoire of a child are not developed enough to allow him to experience such an emotion.

A conception of emotions as narrative processes is compatible with the observation that in the course of development the same emotion can undergo a number of changes and acquire an increasingly complex structure. However, if the components of the emotional process change over time, how is it possible to claim that what we encounter at different stages of the developmental trajectory are not different kinds of emotions, but rather different forms of the same emotion (i.e. more or less mature forms of pride)? In other terms, why should we conceive of processes whose constituents are different as instances of the same emotion? This question can be answered by making use of the insights developed by Goldie in his analysis of cultural differences and similarities in the experience of emotions. As previously outlined, Goldie claims that the narrative structure of a particular emotion can be different in different cultures: the components of the recognition-response tie, the way they typically unfold and the degree of specificity of the narrative are not fixed and can vary quite significantly across different times and places. However, Goldie's approach suggests that, despite the variations, it is thanks to the persistence of some commonalities between the various narratives that we could recognise two different processes as occurrences of the same emotion. The developmental problem can be approached in the same way by arguing that while the narrative structure of emotions undergoes a number of changes over the years, the existence of a number of similarities between the emotional processes at different stages of development is what makes it possible for us to identify these as variants of the same emotion.

3. Narratives and the Regulation of Emotions

So far I have highlighted various aspects of the role played by narrativity in the constitution of affectivity. More specifically, I have illustrated various dynamics through which language influences affective experience and I have claimed that narratives are fundamental to configure emotions as unitary and meaningful processes. I now want to explore another way in which story-telling can shape affective experience, namely its influence on emotional regulation.

Narratives are involved in the regulation of affective experience in various ways. In the first place, narrativity can enhance our ability to regulate emotions by virtue of the role it plays in the communication of experience. As previously highlighted, story-telling is a fundamental form of emotional expression and it is key to make our experience accessible to others, thus making it possible for people to benefit from interpersonal support when they are facing distressing emotions (Greenberg and Angus, 2004). However, there are also other dynamics through which narratives can foster our ability to manage affective experience.

By thinking or telling a story about our emotions we take a reflective stance towards our experience and, as highlighted in Chapter 2, reflectivity makes it possible to engage in different forms of position-taking. Through emotional narratives not only we can conceive of various events as belonging to the same experiential structure, but we can also take an evaluative position towards this experience. We can attribute a value to the emotion we are undergoing and this will have an impact on the way in which the emotion develops. Emotions that we are happy about or that we approve of are more likely to be indulged in, while those which are disapproved of can be contrasted or mitigated in a

number of ways. Thanks to affective story-telling not only I can acknowledge my experiencing a particular emotion, but I can also evaluate that experience as good, bad, appropriate, inappropriate, well-timed, inopportune etc.[48] These evaluations can then be grounds to a plurality of actions which are potentially relevant to affective regulation. For example, by considering a particular emotion as exaggerated or unwarranted, I can dispose myself to take measures to moderate and control that emotion.

Story-telling can contribute to emotional regulation also because it allows us to see emotions not as isolated experiences but rather as part of a broader life-story. As noted earlier, Goldie emphasises how emotions are best understood in light of the plurality of narratives which constitute our autobiography and it is arguable that positioning the emotional process within this broader framework not only helps us to make better sense of the emotions, but also enhances our regulation abilities. Why is this possible? Why would an isolated emotion be more difficult to regulate than an emotion which is conceived of as part of an autobiographical narrative?

A number of relevant insights in this regard are provided by the therapeutic approach known as Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) which I introduced in Chapter 3. This approach remarks that through story-telling emotions can be contextualised, that is they can be situated in a particular space and time. As such, narrativity makes it possible to circumscribe emotional reactions whose boundaries at the experiential level might be blurred and to give the person the sense that distressing emotions are episodes that could eventually be overcome. By attributing to an emotion a "clear beginning" and organising the events along an "unfolding plotline" (Angus and Greenberg, 2011: 70), we make the

---

[48] As highlighted in Chapter 2, the ability to take an evaluative stance towards one's own affective experience and thus influence its development is discussed also by De Monticelli (2003; 2006).

emotion itself not only more intelligible, but also more manageable. Commenting on the experience of a client, Angus and Greenberg describe these dynamics as follows:

> like any well-formed narrative, the specification of an experiential beginning point also means that an ending point cannot be too far off, offering the hope of escaping the feeling of being stuck in her negative emotional experience. For the client, there is now a reason for her feelings that convey important information about herself and her ex-husband, which enhances a sense of control and personal agency that undercuts the experiential stuckness of an undifferentiated emotional state. (2011: 71)

By providing a narrative of emotions we can thus delimit the experience itself and increase our sense of having a degree of control over the affective states we undergo. However, it is important to note that only narratives of a particular kind can have such an impact on affectivity. More specifically, in order for it to exert the regulative function discussed above, the emotional narrative should circumscribe the affective experience, situating it in a particular space and time. As I will illustrate with regard to the case of depression in Chapter 5, narratives which do not provide such spatial and temporal boundaries and which, on the contrary, depict emotions as inescapable or endless predicaments are likely to exacerbate affective experience and to confer on it an overwhelming character.

Story-telling of a certain kind can thus have a positive influence on our ability to regulate emotional processes because it enhances our sense of control. Another reason why this is the case has to do with the fact that emotions are usually perceived as passive phenomena, something by which we are affected rather than experiences in which we voluntarily engage. Even when we actively pursue the experience of a particular emotion, when we strive to be happy, cheerful, or light-hearted, the emergence of the emotion is experienced in itself as being independent of our voluntary control. I can put myself in a situation which is likely to trigger the emotion I am seeking – for instance I can have a

drink, call a friend, or watch a comedy – but the affective experience remains somehow independent of my decision and I can still fail to experience the emotion despite my attempts to trigger it. Because of passivity being intrinsic to the experiential structure of affectivity, especially when emotions are particularly intense, we might feel unable to control them. Due to a sense of powerlessness we might engage in fewer attempts to regulate the emotions, which can then acquire greater intensity and, in a circular way, further increase our feelings of passivity. Through this mechanism affective experience can become rapidly overwhelming, that is something we feel we have no power whatsoever to control. Story-telling can contrast these dynamics also by virtue of its being an active process: thinking or narrating a story is an activity we engage in and not an experience we passively undergo and, as such, it enhances our sense of having a degree of control over the events. This increased sense of control, in its turn, inclines us to be more proactive in regulating our affective experience, which results in less overwhelming emotions and in an increased sense of empowerment.

These dynamics seem to be central to the process through which people affected by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) come to master the traumatic experiences they have undergone. Characteristic of the disorder is the presence of intrusive memories of the distressing events and it is reported that by constructing narratives of these events, also the ability to control one's memories is enhanced. These dynamics are described by Susan Brison in her memoir of the illness in the following terms:

> Whereas traumatic memories (especially perceptual and emotional flashbacks) feel as though they are passively endured, narratives are the result of certain obvious choices (e.g., how much to tell to whom, in what order, etc.). […] [O]ne can control certain aspects of the narrative and that control, repeatedly exercised, leads to greater control over the memories themselves, making them less intrusive and giving them the kind of meaning that enables them to be integrated into the rest of life. (2003: 54)

In Brison's opinion, thanks to narrativity, the individual who has been objectified (2003: 73) due to the violence perpetrated by others, can restore his sense of empowerment and find a way to re-establish interpersonal connection (2003: 68). Brison's account, therefore, corroborates the idea that it is because it is an activity in which we engage voluntarily that story-telling contributes to counteract the sense of passivity which is associated with certain events and affective experiences.

Conclusions

In this chapter I examined the impact that narrativity has on affectivity, claiming that narratives can not only express or trigger certain emotions, but also shape their experiential structure in various ways. Drawing on Colombetti's account of the relationship between emotions and language (2009), I started by highlighting different dynamics through which linguistic and narrative expression can be constitutive of affective experience. I then moved to illustrate Goldie's account of emotions as narrative processes (2002; 2012a), suggesting that the account identifies another fundamental way in which story-telling structures our emotions. More specifically, Goldie maintains that emotions are constituted by a number of different components which unfold over time in characteristic ways and suggests that what holds the various components of the process together and makes it possible to experience them as a unitary and meaningful whole is the presence of an implicit or explicit emotional narrative. In other terms, according to Goldie, emotions are "complex" and "dynamic" occurrences the very structure of which is narratively shaped. Following Goldie, I remarked that such an account can explain both the commonalities and differences in the experience and conception of emotions across cultures. In addition, I argued that this position

also provides a framework to explain some of the transformations undergone by emotions during development. Finally, I maintained that narratives shape emotions also because they are central to various affective regulation dynamics. In the first place, by narrating our emotions we can communicate them to others, thus making it possible to ask for and receive support when needed. Secondly, by engaging in narrative forms of self-understanding, we can take an evaluative stance towards our affective experience, thus exerting a degree of control on the way in which it develops. Finally, by making it possible to conceive of emotions as circumscribed in space and time, certain affective narratives allow us to experience emotions as more manageable and enhance our sense of being in control. Furthermore, the act of narrating itself, in so far as it has a voluntary character - as opposed to the passive nature of affective states - contributes to strengthen our sense of being able to cope with the situations we face.

The analysis conducted in this chapter is relevant to the understanding of an important aspect of the relationship between minimal and narrative self. In Chapter 1 I claimed that integral to the account of selfhood put forward by Gallagher and Zahavi is the claim that minimal self-experience is impervious to the dynamics which take place at the narrative level, so that it is argued that disruptions of narrative self-understanding could leave the minimal self intact. However, the account I provided of the role played by narrativity in shaping the experiential structure of emotions shows that there are at least certain forms of minimal self-experience to the constitution of which narrative activities are cardinal. Since affectivity is a fundamental dimension of minimal selfhood and narrativity structurally shapes it in various ways, it seems that, from a phenomenological perspective, minimal self-consciousness cannot be considered to be independent of narrative self-understanding, but the two are rather to be seen as inextricable phenomena.

I will continue my analysis in Chapter 5 and 6 by examining the relationship between affectivity and narrativity in depression and borderline personality disorder. Drawing on the insights developed so far in this work, I will provide an account of some aspects of these illnesses which extends our understanding of their phenomenology in various respects. As I will show, many of the dynamics discussed in Chapter 3 and 4 are exemplified by the alteration of self-consciousness experienced by people affected by depression and BPD and the exploration of the experiential structures characteristic of these disorders will further corroborate and refine the account of the relationship between affective experience and narrative understanding I have drawn.

CHAPTER 5

Self-Experience in Depression

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a phenomenological analysis of some features of depression by taking into account the insights developed in Chapter 3 and 4. More specifically, I will focus on the structure of affectivity and narrativity and on the dynamics through which they influence each other in the disorder. Considering in particular the position developed by Stanghellini and Englebert (Englebert and Stanghellini, forthcoming; Stanghellini, 2004), I will start by observing that contemporary phenomenological accounts of depression tend to conceive of the disorder as a disturbance of narrative selfhood. I will argue that while these approaches correctly identify some of the disruptions of narrativity typical of depression and their connection with the person's emotions and moods, they do not do justice to various other aspects of the relationship between affectivity and narrative understanding in the illness. I will then move to develop a more extended account of this relationship. First, I will claim that, due to the loss of feeling characteristic of the disorder, the autobiographical narratives with which the patients used to identify before the onset of depression become deprived of emotional resonance. As such, the sense of authenticity previously associated with these life stories is disrupted, a process that results in the weakening or abandonment of the narratives themselves. I will then move to show that these autobiographical narratives are replaced by new stories which possess a specific structure and I will argue that this is dependent upon the particular configuration of affective experience typical of the disorder. In particular, I will take into consideration the specific "explanatory style" (Seligman, 2006) often adopted by depressed patients and I

will argue that it originates in the existential feelings of guilt, hopelessness, and isolation often associated with the illness and in particular forms of temporal and spatial experience. Finally, I will briefly consider how the narratives constructed by the depressed person influence her affective experience, showing in particular that they exacerbate feelings of helplessness and lack of control and inhibit the person's ability to appraise her own emotions.

1. Depression as a Disturbance of Narrative Identity

The phenomenology of depression has been researched by a number of authors in both philosophy and psychiatry. Common to various accounts is the idea that depression involves disturbances of selfhood and self-consciousness, but it is also maintained that these disturbances are not as severe as those which are present in other disorders such as schizophrenia (e.g. Sass and Pienkos, 2013a; 2013b). In this context, it is often claimed that depression is characterised by disturbances of the narrative self.

This is for example the opinion of Stanghellini (2004) who provides an account of the disruptions of selfhood typical of depression by drawing on Ricoeur's account of narrative identity. As illustrated in Chapter 1, this account is centred on the notions of *mêmeté* and *ipséité*, with the former conceived as a form of identity that consists in permanence and immutability over time, and the latter seen as a form of identity which incorporates change. From this perspective, it is argued that the emergence of a narrative self involves a dialectic between *idem* and *ipse*, between remaining the same and becoming different and the construction of a coherent autobiographical narrative is viewed as the means by which this process takes place.

According to Stanghellini, it is the dialectic between *idem* and *ipse* that is

166

disrupted in the experience of the depressed person (2004: 146-147). More specifically, he suggests that depression is characterised by the inability to integrate change in one's own identity, so that patients are stuck with a conception of themselves that is inflexible and unable to evolve. Englebert and Stanghellini (forthcoming) remark that autobiographical narrativity involves two fundamental aspects: on the one hand, the ability to report one's story and, on the other, to develop this story in a creative way. According to them, it is the creative aspect of narrative identity that is altered in depression.[49]

In order to best understand this view it is helpful to mention that according to Stanghellini there is a series of features that determines a person's vulnerability to depression. In particular, relying on various insights provided within European and Japanese psychopathology, he maintains that people who are affected by the disorder often possess specific personality traits – constitutive of the so-called "*typus melancholicus*" (Stanghellini, 2004: 103-109; Stanghellini et al., 2006) – and it is through the analysis of these traits that the dynamics associated with the disruption of narrative identity become clear.

Stanghellini (2004) suggests that a mark of vulnerability to depression is the tendency to strongly identify with one's social roles and to avoid any experience or conflict which could challenge this identification. According to this position, because of a fragile sense of personal identity, the *typus melancholicus* would be inclined to endorse a self-conception centred on particular social, cultural or professional values and to significantly strive to conform to them.

---

[49] Englebert and Stanghellini (forthcoming) consider this experiential structure to be characteristic of melancholia and contrast it with the one which in their opinion is typical of mania. According to them, while the melancholic person is unable to renew her narrative identity, in manic experience the creative dimension is predominant and what is lost is the ability to retain a stable sense of one's history.

Depression, in Stanghellini's view, is characterised by a disruption of the person's ability to continue to identify with the roles she previously endorsed: the depressed person experiences an estrangement from the values she used to identify with and comes to doubt her commitment to those values and her ability to live up to them (2004: 142). The depressed patient, however, is unable to evolve her past self-conception by integrating new elements into it and is thus stuck with an old view of herself from which she feels increasingly detached. Stanghellini emphasises that involved in this predicament is also a particular alteration of affective experience, namely the loss of feeling or anhedonia often conceived as a central feature of the syndrome (APA, 2013).[50] In depression the experience not only of pleasure, but also of a range of other emotions is significantly diminished and arguably this negatively impacts on the person's ability to feel truly committed to the ideals, people, and values at the core of her self-image (2004: 137).

In addition, Englebert and Stanghellini (forthcoming) also draw attention to another way in which the loss of feeling experienced by depressed patients can affect narrative self-understanding. Affectivity is closely connected to motivation and they suggest that it is because of the flattening of affective experience that the depressed person is unable to renew her self-conception. Affectivity, in other terms, is conceived as what motivates the person to be creative in constructing her life story and therefore losing the ability to experience emotions is seen as detrimental to the capacity to integrate change in one's own self-narrative.

---

[50] Stanghellini remarks that the affective flattening which is typical of depression has a characteristic phenomenology, as the loss of feeling is experienced as rather unpleasant or painful by the depressed person. As such, he suggests that this aspect of the depressive experience is best accounted for through the notion of "*feeling of the loss of feelings*" (2004: 135).

I will provide a more extensive analysis of the depressive loss of feeling and of its influence on narrative self-understanding in the next section. What is important to highlight here is the particular alteration of narrative selfhood that, in Stanghellini's view, is typical of depression. According to him, people who are vulnerable to the disorder usually have a very rigid conception of themselves, showing the tendency to over-identify with particular roles and to avoid any challenge to those identifications. With the onset of the illness, however, the person becomes indifferent to the commitments in which her self-image consisted and, rather than taking this as an opportunity to further develop and change certain aspects of her self-understanding, she considers herself culpable for no longer being able to be the person she once was.

Englebert and Stanghellini (forthcoming; Stanghellini, 2004) provide an accurate account of some fundamental features of narrative self-understanding in depression. In particular, as I will further illustrate later, the idea that in depression there is a disruption in the continuity of one's self-conception and that this is dependent on a particular alteration of affective experience is consonant with some of the insights into the relationship between affectivity and narrativity that I developed in previous chapters. However, there are at least two aspects of this position which can be challenged. In the first place, the notion of *typus melancholicus* on which the account relies seems to be problematic. While the personality traits comprised by this notion might play a role in the emergence of some forms of depression, the idea that over-identification with social roles and a fragile personal identity are features common to most depressed people appears as an unjustified generalisation. First-person accounts (e.g. Brampton, 2009; Plath, 2005; Solomon, 2002; Styron, 2001; Thompson, 1996) suggest that, although some of the self-conceptions held by patients before the onset of the illness might be influenced by social models and norms to various degrees, it is not necessarily the case that people who will

develop depression rigidly identify with particular social, cultural, or professional roles. In other terms, while it is true that depression makes it difficult for the individual to recognise himself as the same person he thought himself to be, the self-image from which he is detached is not always a highly conventional or impersonal one.

The other reason why Stanghellini's account is problematic is that it does ignore other important features of the structure of narrative self-understanding in depression. While it is accurate in claiming that central to the experience of the depressed person is an estrangement from the conception of herself held before the illness, this account does not devote much attention to the fact that depression is characterised by the emergence of new self-narratives, the form and content of which possess specific characteristics. In the rest of this chapter, my aim will be not only to provide a more detailed account of the mechanisms through which patients become detached from the view of themselves they endorsed prior to the illness, but also to show how this is accompanied by the emergence of new forms of narrative understanding whose features are constitutively shaped by some of the affective dynamics at the core of the disorder.

2. "Unemotional" Narratives

In Chapter 4 I argued that it is by virtue of their being congruent with a specific set of the subject's affective states that narratives can be experienced as authentic. In the following, further developing Stanghellini's intuitions regarding the relationship between loss of feeling and narrative disruptions in depression (2004), I will claim that typical of the disorder is the loss of congruence between some of the subject's life stories and his affective experience, which results in the weakening or even abandonment of some of

the stories central to the subject's autobiographical accounts prior to the illness.

According to the DSM-5 (APA, 2013), a decreased ability to feel pleasure and interest in all or almost all the activities the person normally engages in constitutes one of the diagnostic criteria for a major depressive episode. Integral to depression is thus not only the presence of affective states which in ordinary experience would be absent or have a different form, but also the loss of feelings which are ordinarily present. A description of this condition is offered for instance by Solomon in the following passage:

> a loss of feeling, a numbness, had infected all my human relations. I didn't care about love; about my work; about family; about friends. My writing slowed, then stopped. […] I felt none of my habitual yearning for physical/emotional intimacy and was not attracted either to people in the streets or to those I knew and had loved; in erotic circumstances, my mind kept drifting off to shopping lists and work I needed to do. This gave me a feeling that I was losing my self, and that scared me. (Solomon, 2002: 45)

What the first-person reports of depressed patients highlight is a diminished affective responsiveness to the external world: people and situations that used to elicit emotional reactions no longer do so and the diminished ability to feel becomes noticeable to the patients. In addition, as it is the case in Solomon's description, in first-person accounts of the illness the loss of feeling is often related to the experience of losing oneself. This is described also by Brampton in the following terms:

> I was lost and that loss was catastrophic. Who are you when you are no longer who you are? What do you do with a self that is no longer your self? (Brampton, 2009: 94)

But what exactly does a loss of self entail? And how is it related to the patient's loss of feeling? In order to answer these questions it is useful to consider some of the observations put forward by Goldie in regard to the relationship between

the loss of affect and intellectual activity (2012b), as although Goldie's focus is not on selfhood, some of his ideas could be employed to account for the effect that a decreased ability to feel has on the narrative self.

The affects that Goldie considers in this context are emotional dispositions. He claims that these dispositions can have a general or more specific focus, but common to them is the fact that they "involve *caring* about whatever the particular matter of the intellect might be" (2012b: 123). According to him, when these affects are present, we are "disposed" to experience also a series of other emotions in particular circumstances. For example, if I care about being an active and successful member of the academic community, I will most likely experience disappointment or sadness when I do not get the opportunity to give a presentation at the most important annual conference in my field. If invited to give a lecture or to speak at a workshop, I would be glad and excited, and would feel proud if my presentation went well or ashamed if it weren't satisfactory. Goldie draws attention to the fact that sometimes the responses which would normally be engendered by the disposition fail to take place and he explores what are the implications of this condition for our caring attitudes. Despite the value I attribute to giving a significant contribution to my research area, for instance, it might happen that I fail to feel any negative emotion when my grant proposal is rejected or to experience positive feelings when one of my papers is published. Does this mean that I no longer care about being an academic? Goldie observes that in these cases we might find it difficult to determine whether the disposition is no longer present or its "expression" is just "temporarily blocked" (2012b: 123). For example, it might be that it is because I have other serious concerns on my mind that I do not experience the emotions that my disposition would normally give rise to, while the disposition is, so to speak, still intact. However, Goldie emphasises that the loss of affect can also lead us to change our commitments and values. He considers in this

regard an example taken from the autobiography of John Stuart Mill (1873). Mill, who up until that point in his life had convincingly endorsed Bentham's and his father's doctrines, reports to be experiencing a crisis, which he describes in terms of a loss of feeling related to the pursuit of specific philosophical ideas and of intellectual activity more generally. Although, as previously observed, sometimes the loss of affect is not related to the loss of the underlying dispositions, Goldie remarks that in Mill's case the loss of feeling is overcome not by a revival of the forms of caring which were in place previously, but rather through the adoption of a new set of values (2012b: 124). As noted in Chapter 2, Goldie's analysis of emotions is driven by the idea that feelings, or at least certain feelings, do not simply add a subjective coloration to our beliefs and evaluations, but rather are constitutive of a particular way of believing and evaluating. As such, a loss of affect would also necessarily have an effect on our cognitive and evaluative processes and this explains why the disappearance of certain emotional dispositions can impact on the set of beliefs and values held by the person.

Goldie's account focuses on the effects that a disruption of affect can have on intellectual life. However, some of the dynamics he highlights are also typical of the way in which autobiographical narrativity is affected by the loss of feeling in depression. I argued earlier that affectivity confers authenticity on our life stories. More specifically, I claimed that, in order to be perceived as truly representative of who we are, the stories we tell must be congruent with our affective states. If such correspondence between the contents of an autobiographical narrative and affective experience is consistently lacking, the fact that the narrative really tells something about ourselves can be put into question. The loss of affect in depression entails that the feelings which would normally be present are no longer experienced and therefore the narratives are left without their usual affective counterparts. Stripped of the range of feelings

which would normally motivate and support them, the narratives are no longer perceived as authentic expressions of the self and, given the role played by these stories in the constitution of selfhood, the loss of feeling can lead to the experience of losing oneself. Yet, despite the fact that they are not accompanied by congruent affects, these stories are still accessible to the individual and they are still part of his narrative repertoire. The person, in other terms, still recognises those stories as his own, but also experiences a misalignment between the self which is associated with affectivity and narrative activity. In other terms, in these cases the depressed person is aware of the lack of correspondence between the experience of the self as it is narrated and her own feelings. Consider for example the following passage from Thompson's memoir:

> I knew I was not happy. But I *had* to be happy: here was this wonderful person who said he loved me, who wanted to give me everything in his life, including his children, who asked only that I share my life with him. How could I not be happy? (Thompson, 1996: 126)

In this passage, Thompson shows awareness of her story: she is a person who is wholeheartedly loved by someone and who should find this situation fulfilling and enjoyable. She can still grasp this narrative as pertaining to her condition, but she also notices that her emotions are not the ones that should be associated with that particular narrative. Another example of this dynamic is provided by Sylvia Plath in *The Bell Jar*:

> I was supposed to be having the time of my life.
> I was supposed to be the envy of thousands of other college girls just like me all over America […].
> And when my picture came out in the magazine the twelve of us were working on […] everybody would think I must be having a real whirl. Look at what can happen in this country, they'd say. A girl lives in some out-of-the-way town for nineteen years, so poor she can't afford a magazine, and then she gets a scholarship to college and wins a prize here and a prize there and ends up steering New York like her own private car.

Only I wasn't steering anything, not even myself. (2005: 2)

As shown by this passage, the narratives which are affected by the loss of feeling in depression are not necessarily crafted by the patient. It is indeed possible to experience a loss of feeling not only in relation to the stories that we have been telling about ourselves, but also in regard to the ones that we think others would identify us with. In any case, the distinction between the two types of stories is not always neat, since, as I stressed previously, our personal narratives are deeply intertwined from the very beginning with the scripts that are provided by the social and cultural environment. In addition, it may be the case that it is exactly by virtue of their being socially and culturally shared that the life stories of the depressed patient can persist for a certain period of time despite the fact that they are no longer supported by a congruent affective experience. From this perspective, the fact that one's stories are intersubjectively negotiated confers on them a degree of resistance to change, so that we might go on telling them even when they no longer feel authentic because they are the stories that people we are more or less close to take to be true of ourselves. However, if the lack of affective resonance is persistent, it ultimately affects the ability of the person to identity with and uphold her life narratives.

The loss of feeling can have such a radical impact on the person's narrative self-understanding because it affects not only the person's current experience, but also her ability to empathically access her previous mental states. I illustrated in Chapter 3 how Schechtman's notion of "empathic access" (1996; 2001; 2007) can be interpreted as designating a level of continuity in the person's experience. Emphatic access is indeed conceived as a phenomenological connection to one's previous mental states, a connection that presupposes that these are still part of one's mental life, although their role and degree of importance can be quite

different from what it was in the past. Due to the role it plays in the constitution of the person's evaluative perspective and in the motivation of her behaviour, I claimed that affectivity is key in this context and I maintained that at least certain emotions should persist over time in order for the person to retain empathic access to her past. As such, it is arguable that the loss of feeling negatively impacts on the depressed person's ability to retain such an experiential connection to her previous mental states, thus further weakening the continuity of her narrative self.

It should now be clearer why depressed people who perceive a lack of congruence between their narratives and affects often report an alteration of self-experience which can be described as a "loss of self". Once they are no longer sustained by an adequate range of feelings, the authenticity of one's autobiographical narratives can be put into question and the depressed patient then wonders whether she is really the person depicted by those narratives. In addition, since the possibility to have empathic access to one's past ensures that the self we narrate has a degree of continuity, the inability of the depressed patient to retain this form of access to her previous mental states makes it difficult for her to identify her current self with the one associated with her previous narratives.

This does not mean that the patient is no longer sure to be numerically the same individual who underwent the experiences and performed the actions described in his life stories – his sense of physical continuity is indeed intact. Rather, his questioning concerns the type of person he is and, in particular, whether he really has the values and personality depicted in his autobiographical narratives. This form of doubting is expressed for example in the following excerpt from Brampton's memoir:

> I have been getting on and off aeroplanes on my own since I was ten years old. I am fiercely independent. I am fierce. Or so people tell me. Used to tell me. I never used to be so afraid. When I was one of his editors, I used to stand up against Rupert Murdoch, arguing with him. I used to be so brave. I used to be somebody.
> I am still somebody.
> Aren't I?
> But who?
> I am somebody who can't leave her bedroom, somebody who can't walk across a road to buy a newspaper. (Brampton, 2009: 34-35)

The loss of feeling characteristic of depression has a significant impact on the structure of narrative self-experience; however, this is not the only aspect of the relationship between affectivity and narrativity in the illness. Apart from the diminishment or disappearance of certain affective reactions, the depressed person also experiences a number of feelings which in non-pathological conditions are usually absent or possess a different form. In this regard, central to depression are for example feelings of guilt, hopelessness, and isolation and I will show in the next section how they give rise to narratives that possess specific characteristics.

3. The Emergence of New Narratives

3.1. Cognitive Disturbances and Pessimistic Explanatory Style

It has been observed that the autobiographical narratives constructed by depressed people have specific features. Angus and Greenberg, for example, claim that depressive story-telling is characterised by the presence of the "same old stories", namely "overgeneral descriptions" regarding interpersonal dynamics and emotional states that are considered to be maladaptive (2011: 62).

The recurrence of certain narratives in the depressed person's story-telling can be related to the repetition of the same thought patterns which is often described as a central feature of the disorder – what is usually known as

"rumination".[51] This aspect of the illness is illustrated by Brampton in her memoir as follows:

> the depressive's perspective may become shrouded with an excess of intensity and negativity or what we depressives know as 'stinking thinking'. That's the sort of thought process that keeps us dwelling on old emotions or hurts and, literally, playing the same track over and over again. It has little to do with reality but is simply a malfunction of thinking. It is that sort of thinking that therapy seeks to correct. (2009: 293)

A similar experience is described by Thompson:

> I worked, or tried to – but like a machine whose circuits are slowly winking out, my brain each day found a smaller and smaller focus. I thought the same thoughts over and over again; on Tuesday, I re-created the work I had done on Monday. (1996: 132)

Repetitiveness thus appears to be an important characteristic of depressive thinking and story-telling. In order to best understand the structure of autobiographical narrativity in the illness, however, it is not enough to highlight that certain narratives are often repeated. What is important is indeed the fact that, even when the patient is not telling exactly the same stories, his narratives have significant similarities from the point of view of both form and content.

A deeper understanding of the structure of the narratives that recur in depression can be achieved by considering in more detail some of the cognitive dynamics typical of the syndrome. It has indeed been widely claimed that the illness is characterised by the presence of specific alterations of thought and judgement. This idea is at the core of cognitive theories of depression (e.g. Beck, 1972), which emphasise the role played by cognition in the generation of affective experience. Beck, for instance, draws attention to the fact that the

---

[51] Rumination has been claimed to be predictive of both depressive symptoms and depressive disorders (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000).

cognitive processes of the depressed person focus on particular contents and display a particular formal structure (1972). As far as contents are concerned, he observes that depressive thoughts often revolve around low self-evaluations, which are characterised as unrealistic ratings of the person's abilities in areas that she considers to be very important. In addition to low self-evaluations, a significant role in the thoughts of some depressed patients is played by "self-criticism" and "self-blame" in regard to the person's alleged failures (1972: 232). Other common depressive thoughts focus on "ideas of deprivation" such as being "alone, unwanted and unlovable", problems and responsibilities that are considered to be unmanageable, "self commands and injunctions", and the desire to find some form of escape from one's problems or to commit suicide (1972: 232-233). Beck suggests that depressive cognitions are characterised by a distortion of reality achieved through various mechanisms. In this regard, depressed patients show a tendency to draw conclusions without possessing adequate evidence to support them ("arbitrary inference") (1972: 234), interpret events by focusing on details which are taken out of context ("selective abstraction") (1972: 234), underestimate or exaggerate the importance of certain events ("magnification and minimization") (1972: 235) and inaccurately label the events that they experience ("inexact labelling") (1972: 235). To these features Beck adds a series of formal characteristics that in his opinion are typical of depressive thinking. According to him, the depressed person experiences the thoughts described above as arising automatically, that is as disconnected from any previous thought process. In addition, the thoughts appear to occur involuntarily, namely despite the patient's resolution not to entertain them. Other formal characteristics of depressive thinking identified by Beck are the "plausibility" that the patients perceive them to have and their tendency to recur across a wide range of situations ("perseveration") (1972: 238).

Considering the way in which the depressed person thinks, as regards both contents and form, can enhance our understanding of the distinctive character of autobiographical story-telling in the disorder. Particularly relevant in this context is the centrality to depression of what Seligman (2006) considers to be a specific "explanatory style", that is a way of understanding the causes and implications of events which comprises three dimensions: permanence, pervasiveness, and personalisation. Seligman suggests that assessing people's explanations along these dimensions makes it possible to distinguish between "optimistic" and "pessimistic" explanatory styles and shows that the latter is typical of the way in which people with depression interpret events. More specifically, people who have a pessimistic explanatory style tend to consider the causes of bad events as *permanent* rather than *temporary*. For example, they might attribute the cause of an unpleasant interaction with their boss at work to the fact that "the boss is a bastard" rather than thinking that "the boss is in a bad mood" (Seligman, 2006: 44). The pervasiveness dimension is related to the extent to which the explanation of a bad event is connected to other dimensions of a person's life. In particular, according to Seligman, bad events can be given *specific* or *universal* explanations: for example, it is possible to explain a romantic rejection by thinking of oneself as being repulsive to that particular person (specific) or as being repulsive in general (universal) (2006: 47). When bad events are given universal explanations the negative feelings associated with them can spread to other aspects of the person's life. In contrast, specific explanations help to circumscribe one's affective reactions. The difference between optimistic and pessimistic explanatory styles in this regard is described by Seligman as follows:

> Some people can put their troubles neatly into a box and go about their lives even when one important aspect of it – their job, for example, or their love life – is suffering. Others bleed all over everything. They catastrophize. When one thread of their lives snaps, the whole fabric unravels. (2006: 46)

Finally, the personalisation dimension has to do with the factors that are identified as responsible for the occurrence of particular events. According to Seligman, when something bad happens, people who have a pessimistic explanatory style tend to blame themselves, while optimistic people in these circumstances are more inclined to attribute responsibility to others or to external factors. For example, upon losing a game of poker, the pessimist might think that it is because he has "no talent" at that game, while the optimist would tend to ascribe the failure to other, non-personal, elements such as bad luck (2006: 50).

Although Seligman is not concerned with story-telling, his observations can enhance our understanding of narrativity in depression because they regard the way in which people interpret and connect various events in their life. According to the characterisation I have adopted in this work, the events which are presented in a narrative are not merely juxtaposed to one another, but are rather related through a number of causal and meaningful connections. As such, the three aspects which are integral to the notion of explanatory style appear to be very relevant to story-telling in so far as they concern the way in which people relate particular events to certain causes and other dimensions of their life.

3.2. The Affective Roots of Depressive Story-Telling

How could the consideration of affectivity be helpful in explaining the characteristics of depressive cognition and narrativity here outlined? In the following I will argue that the recurrence of the same stories in the narrative repertoire of depressed people and their tendency to conceive of negative events as personally caused, permanent, and possessing pervasive implications is due to a specific transformation of affective experience. In particular, I will

highlight the role played in the emergence of depressive narratives not only by the presence of specific emotions – characterised as intentional affective states – but also of particular background affective orientations.

The element of personalisation in the explanatory style of people affected by depression can be connected to the role played in the illness by feelings of guilt, shame, unworthiness, hopelessness and helplessness. Among these, however, the experience of a particular form of guilt is arguably fundamental in determining the tendency of certain patients to explain bad events by making personal rather than external causal attributions.

Guilt is a self-evaluative emotion, and, in particular, it is often characterised as an emotion which involves moral blameworthiness (e.g. Prinz, 2010; Roberts, 2003). It is frequently claimed that guilt, in contrast for example to shame, involves an appraisal of particular acts and behaviours and not an evaluation of the self as a whole. In addition, guilt is also considered to be at the origin of reparative or pro-social behaviours, while shame is associated with concealment tendencies (e.g. Lewis, 1971; Lewis, 1992; Tangney et al., 2007).[52]

Ratcliffe (2010) draws attention to the fact that sometimes, rather than being experienced in connection with more or less specific deeds, guilt is experienced as a feature of the self: this is the difference between *feeling guilty about* something and simply *feeling guilty*. In addition, he also distinguishes between "contingent" and "irrevocable" forms of guilt and further remarks that the latter is usually associated with feelings of guilt that are not about something specific (2010: 607). In his opinion, while the experience of contingent guilt is characterised by the sense that things could be different and that guilt is not

---

[52] See Teroni and Deonna (2008) for a critical discussion of various accounts of the difference between shame and guilt.

one's only possible condition, irrevocable guilt is experienced as absolute, irreversible and irredeemable. Ratcliffe suggests that the latter form of guilt is sometimes present in severe depression: in these cases, guilt has a pre-intentional character and radically constrains the range of possibilities that the individual can experience. Indeed, when guilt is experienced as characterised by irrevocability, any particular opportunity of reparation is ruled out and all alternative existential conditions appear as no longer attainable by the subject. In Ratcliffe's words:

> When one feels that one has become guilty due to some deed, the recognition that things could have been otherwise remains and a sense of contingency thus attaches to the guilt. Similarly one might feel that one's existence is contingently flawed, that there is hope of redemption. Irrevocable guilt, in contrast, involves the sense that being guilty is part of one's essence; one could not have been otherwise and could therefore never be otherwise. (2010: 607)

In addition, Ratcliffe suggests that existential forms of guilt also restrict the set of affective states that can be undergone, making it difficult for the subject to experience certain types of emotion. As existential guilt can be identified with an evaluation of the self as morally blameworthy, it is arguable that affects which are in conflict with such an evaluation, such as pride or a sense of self-worth and self-esteem, will no longer be accessible to the person. When guilt acquires an existential form, particularly when it is felt as irrevocable, the individual can only experience and conceive of himself as culpable. Because of this predicament, when she has to provide an explanation of bad events, the person who feels absolutely and irredeemably guilty is more inclined to attribute responsibility to herself than someone who is not in the grip of such a feeling.

On a more general level, the tendency of the depressed person to account for the causes of bad events in personal terms can be further explained by taking

into consideration another phenomenon typical of the illness, namely "self-absorption" (Brampton, 2009: 43). This can be described as the tendency to be preoccupied almost exclusively with the self and its experiences, so that the affects and thoughts of the patients become predominantly self-directed. This feature of depression can be related to various other aspects of the disorder. On the one hand, due to the diminishment or loss of feeling, the external world is no longer perceived by depressed patients as enticing, but is rather experienced as "flat", as if it was looked at from behind glass, and this arguably can exacerbate the patients' tendency to become absorbed in their own mental lives. On the other hand, typical of depression are also disturbances of intersubjective experience which foster the feeling of being detached from the external world and can result in a sense of isolation, "segregation" and "expulsion" from the social dimension (Fuchs, 2013: 226), thus further drawing the person's attention 'inward'. The fact of being primarily concerned with themselves rather than being engaged in various interactions with others and the external world arguably makes it easier for depressed people to focus on the self when looking for the causes of bad events.

The tendency of depressed patients to provide permanent as opposed to temporary explanations can also be understood in relation to the existential transformations they undergo. In particular, feelings of hopelessness can play a central role in this regard. As exemplified by the following passage of Brampton's memoir, characteristic of depression is indeed the loss of hope that things could ever be different:

> For two years I had seen nothing, no chink of light, no sense of possibility that I would ever be well again. I was not interested in the future, I was interested (if that's a word that could possibly be applied to my furious, nihilistic despair) in the present, in the unendurable pain I felt, which was a pain that seemed to me then to be endless. (2009: 242)

The loss of hope and the structure that this experience has in depression have been investigated from a phenomenological perspective by Ratcliffe too (2013b). At the core of his account is the distinction between intentional and pre-intentional forms of hope, where the former is characterised as a kind of hope with a more or less specific content and the latter is conceived as an existential feeling that makes intentional forms of hope possible. According to Ratcliffe, this distinction is reflected in the different forms of hopelessness that we can experience. It is indeed possible to distinguish between losing some or all of one's intentional hopes and losing the "possibility of hoping" itself, which, in Ratcliffe's opinion, would be the loss of hope characteristic of at least certain cases of severe depression. In these cases, the loss of hope does not regard a specific possibility or range of possibilities, but is rather to be identified with the "absence of the capacity to hope for anything" (2013b: 605), an existential change that amounts to a radical alteration of the person's experience.

The loss of hope characteristic of depression, as well as the tendency to interpret events in permanent terms associated with it, is also related to the way in which time is experienced in the disorder. Depression is characterised by significant alterations of temporal experience and these have been extensively investigated by a number of phenomenological accounts (e.g. Binswanger, 2006; Fuchs, 2013; Ratcliffe, 2012). Providing a complete overview of the different features of temporal experience in depression would exceed the scope of this chapter. For the purpose of my analysis, however, I want to consider an aspect on the recognition of which various accounts seem to converge. It is often claimed that the way in which the depressed person experiences the future is deeply altered. In particular, in depression the ability to conceive of the future as comprising a number of different possibilities is lost and the person's painful condition acquires a seemingly eternal character (Ratcliffe, 2010). For the depressed person, the future does not harbour any opportunity for change and

is thus perceived as an endless repetition of the present. In addition, this condition has implications for the way in which the past is experienced. If nothing new can happen in the future, the meaning of one's past is fixed and it can no longer be undone. As such, it is possible to claim that in depression past, present, and future become static dimensions and no possibility to escape from the person's painful condition is given. This dynamic is described by Wyllie in the following terms:

> Here "now" and "yet-to-come" are no longer moving apart from each other as is their being because they are bound to one another in suffering. With the future "closed," the sufferer's experience of the past also becomes disordered because the past can no longer be experienced as a horizon onto the open future. The past itself becomes fixed once and for all because it cannot be abolished by any future living, because the suffering present displaces the past and future and deprives the lived present of its value. (2005: 182-183)

Arguably it is because of such a disruption of temporal experience that depressed people tend to explain bad events in permanent terms. Indeed, the inability to perceive their current situation as temporally circumscribed, along with the sense that the past cannot be given any new meaning and the future will just be a replica of their present condition, lead depressed people to attribute a permanent character to the negative circumstances they face. Such an account is also consonant with the some of the insights into the relationship between existential feelings and narrative developed by Ratcliffe (forthcoming) and, in particular, his view of the form taken by this relationship in depression. As discussed in Chapter 3, Ratcliffe suggests that the loss of certain kinds of possibilities and the sense that things could never be different negatively affect the ability of the depressed person to construct narratives where alternative conceptions of the self and its circumstances are entertained. It seems that the tendency of depressed patients to interpret bad events in permanent terms is a particular aspect of the lack of "narrative openness" which, according to Ratcliffe, often marks depressive story-telling. In other terms, due to the radical

loss of hope and alteration of temporal experience they undergo, depressed patients become unable to conceive of their situation as transient and thus produce rigid, unchanging self-narratives where their predicament is depicted as eternal.

Further insights into the tendency of depressed people to provide not only permanent but also pervasive explanations can be gained through the examination of the way in which they experience space. It has been argued that depression is characterised by an alteration not only of temporal, but also of spatial experience. As far as the experience of objects is concerned, it is claimed that, due to feelings of powerlessness and the loss of emotional saliences, the depressed person tends to experience things as being far away and difficult to reach (Sass and Pienkos, 2013b). At the same time, however, characteristic of depression is often also a sense of oppression, of being confined or trapped, so that the experiential space of the depressed person appears to be both restricted and overwhelming (Taylor-Aiken, 2011). Apart from these features, it seems that spatial experience in depression undergoes also another transformation relative to the way in which boundaries are perceived and I believe that the tendency to attribute to bad events a pervasive character is at least partly rooted in such a transformation.

Within the field of phenomenological psychopathology, the notion of space has been given particular attention by Binswanger in the context of his analysis of schizophrenic experience (2001). Although depression and schizophrenia differ in a number of fundamental ways, I would like to suggest that some of the observations put forward by Binswanger can be helpful in accounting for the experience of depressed patients too.

Considering the structure of delusional experience with reference to the case of

Suzanne Urban, Binswanger (2001) suggests that the schizophrenic patient has the sense that everything is in contact with the self and everything is in contact with everything else, that is his experience of causality is deeply altered. In particular, it is claimed that in the world as it is experienced in schizophrenia causal connections are ubiquitous and random events are totally absent. These connections can be either physical (optical, acoustic, tactile) or concern cognitive dynamics (Binswanger, 2001: 113): for the schizophrenic person even thoughts acquire a spatial character (Sass, 2000), being seen as something which can be inserted into someone's head by an external force, exactly like material objects can be put in or taken out of a container. It thus seems that in schizophrenia the experience of the demarcation between self, others, and the external world is radically altered: from this perspective, everything is seen as potentially impacting on the self, because boundaries are perceived to be extremely loose or even absent.

In his account Binswanger is concerned with the experience of space in schizophrenia. However, by focusing on how boundaries between self, others, and the world are perceived in the illness, he draws attention to an experiential dimension that is crucial to the understanding also of the depressive condition. While, unlike the schizophrenic person, the depressed patient retains a sense of there being a clear separation between herself and external people and objects, arguably she has an altered perception of the boundaries which exist between various dimensions of her life. Although there is a fundamental connection between the different domains in which our everyday existence develops, we ordinarily experience them as being, at least to a certain degree, separated and impermeable to each other. For instance, it is possible to be unhappy about one's current professional situation while being completely satisfied about the status of one's interpersonal relationships, or being frustrated about a perceived lack of cultural stimuli while feeling perfectly balanced and healthy from a

physical perspective. In other words, although there can be a reciprocal influence between the various dimensions of our life, the positive or negative feelings associated with one of them do not automatically give rise to similar attitudes in the others. This experiential feature seems to be deeply altered in depression. For the depressed person there is little separation between the various domains of her existence: these domains are, so-to-speak, highly permeable to each other, and the feelings which are experienced in one of them rapidly come to colour all the others. As a result of this predicament, people affected by depression tend to interpret negative events in pervasive terms and the effects that a setback concerning a particular situation or sphere of the person's life can have are much more extensive than in ordinary experience. This seems to be the condition described by Thompson in the following passage:

> The trouble was, facts had no boundaries; they unfolded like paper accordions in my head, offering vistas of a catastrophic future. My parents were getting old; that meant someday they would get sick and die. I had made a C on my English paper; that meant I was stupid and would not get a decent job after college. I didn't have a date for Saturday night; that meant I would be alone forever. (1996: 42)

As observed by Thompson, in the depressed person's experience the sense of there being "boundaries" between the situations she experiences and other events or dimensions of her life is weakened and this is what grounds the person's tendency to give "pervasive" explanations and to "catastrophise".

I have highlighted so far how a characteristic aspect of depressive experience is the recurrence of particular cognitive processes and, more broadly, of specific autobiographical narratives. The depressed person, I argued, has the tendency to construct life stories that possess specific structural and experiential features and these originate in particular configurations of affective experience.

Depressive story-telling is thus characterised not only by the repetition of the "same old stories" (Angus and Greenberg, 2011), but also by a certain fungibility of their contents, a phenomenon described by Binswanger as "'interchangeability of melancholic contents'" (2006: 33).[53] One of the examples Binswanger provides in this regard concerns the accounts given by patients of the causes of their depression. Relevant in this context is the case of David Bürge, a merchant who had given a financial guarantee of 40,000 francs and had come to believe that he wouldn't be able to get his money back. Binswanger reports that David was convinced that his depression depended on the financial loss he expected to incur, and, as such, was persuaded that he would have never been able to recover. However, when the money was unexpectedly returned to David, no improvement was experienced. On the contrary, the patient minimised the importance of the guarantee and found other reasons to be depressed. As suggested by Binswanger, depression is thus related more to a particular way of experiencing things, rather than to the particular circumstances the depressed person finds herself in. As such, there is a sense in which depression can be considered to be independent of what the person is depressed about and should rather be identified with a particular experiential structure that is compatible with different contents. Therefore, as far as narrativity is concerned, a characteristic of depression is not only that there are some stories which recur in the individual narrative repertoire, but also that there are different stories which can all be traced back to the same narrative "script" or "schema". One of these frameworks has to do with what Binswanger calls "melancholic self-accusation" (2006: 32), that is the tendency of people affected by the disturbance to blame themselves for something that they have done or failed to do. Binswanger observes that the melancholic person manifests this tendency for example through the use of expressions such as "I

---

[53] My translation.

should have" or "I shouldn't have"[54] (2006: 33) and remarks that these expressions usually concern something that the patient feels guilty about. The melancholic person, he notes, often blames herself for some deed that she would be responsible for towards others, society or in the religious sphere (Binswanger, 2006: 38). However, despite the intensity with which the depressed person can focus on what she considers the reason of her guilt, once that motive is no longer present, the guilt does not recede and the person can start accusing herself of other deeds with equal fervour. As such, it seems that typical of at least certain forms of depression is a "guilt script", which can take from time to time the form of different plots, but which remains a fairly constant aspect of the depressive narrative repertoire. As previously discussed, it is arguable that it is because guilt sometimes acquires in depression an existential form that narrative scripts of self-accusation are formed.

The account provided by Binswanger (2006) is consonant with the idea that affectivity drives narrativity and, more specifically, with the claim that existential feelings determine the range of stories that it is possible for the individual to tell. These forms of affective experience provide us with the lenses through which events are interpreted, the framework on the basis of which our understanding of self and world is structured. The background feelings I have been describing, in other terms, radically constrain the way in which we understand and explain what happens to us, so that we can only give of events interpretations that are compatible with this framework.

The idea that affective experience fundamentally shapes the way the depressed person thinks of herself is central also to Radden's account of the disorder (2013). In particular, Radden emphasizes that depression is characterised by the presence of dysfunctional moods and claims that these moods negatively affect

---

[54] My translation.

the person's reflective abilities and her capacity to engage in activities that are central to narrative selfhood. Radden's analysis of these dynamics is centred on the notion of "epistemic agency", which she conceives as the ability to evaluate one's beliefs and either reject or include them in one's narrative self-conception.

According to Radden, moods are pervasive affects whose objects are very general and are usually experienced as passive affections. In addition, she claims that the moods characteristic of depression differ from the moods of non-pathological experience in various respects: they are intense, revolve around a narrow range of topics, and are resistant to change. She maintains that, contrary to what happens in schizophrenia, the cognitive states of the depressed person are congruent with her moods and this guarantees that a certain level of self-integration is achieved. However, Radden argues that there is also a sense in which moods in depression, due to their particular features, make it difficult to maintain an integrated self. This has to do with the fact that it is very difficult for people affected by the disorder to critically assess the thoughts and attitudes that are congruent with their moods. In Radden's words:

> If my prevailing moods are intense, obdurate, and unremittingly gloomy, pessimistic and fearful, then adopting a perspective detached enough for me to assess their effects on my judgements and responses will be diminished. And similarly, if my moods are unwarrantedly optimistic, they will colour attempts at a more realistic assessment of myself and the world around me. Inasmuch as my agency is thus reduced then so is the integrity and wholeness of my self. (2013: 98)[55]

Radden's account draws attention to the constraining role played by affectivity in the experience of the depressed person and is thus consonant with the idea

---

[55] In so far as it can impair the person's ability to adequately assess her situation and features of the external world, the role played by affectivity in depression has also ethical relevance. This is for example the opinion of Biegler (2011) who claims that depression can constitute a threat to the autonomy of the person, that is her capacity for self-determination and intentional action.

that in order to best understand the depressive predicament it is fundamental to consider the feelings which pre-intentionally structure her experiential field. In addition, as I will discuss in the next section, this account identifies some of the dynamics which make it difficult for the depressed person to regulate her affective experience.

It has now become clear that the relationship between affects and autobiographical story-telling in depression undergoes two distinct alterations. On the one hand, the life stories with which the person identified before the illness become devoid of affective resonance and, as a result, their authenticity is put into question. On the other, due to a number of emotional and existential transformations, new stories emerge. As the new stories are congruent with the emotions and background feelings that dominate the depressed person's experience, they tend to be perceived by the individual as authentic and to replace the ones that are no longer sustained by the person's feelings. These narratives convey a very negative conception of the self, but, due to their being rooted in the person's affective experience, are difficult to shake and modify. Through the creation of new life stories, a level of coherence between the individual affective and narrative experience is restored and, as suggested by Thompson, this could also be a way for the depressed person to confer a degree of organisation on his mental life and to avoid more profound disturbances:

> This is one of the least understood aspects of depression, this tenacity with which severely depressed people cling to the very perceptions that are most distorted. Doctors can attempt to reason with their depressed patients; people who have never been depressed can simply dismiss this behaviour as "crazy." To the person who is depressed, it seems just the opposite: it is a way to *keep* from going crazy. Perceptions and emotions simply have to match, at least in some rough way; there is something in the human brain that categorically rejects the preposterous idea that it might be home to emotions that simply erupt, divorced from external stimulus. (1996: 145-146)

In line with the observations I developed earlier, this passage draws attention to

the importance of the existence of a degree of congruence between one's affective experience and self-conception, congruence which in depression is regained by constructing autobiographical narratives that reflect the negative feelings which mark the illness.

4. How Narratives Impact on the Structure of Emotions

So far I have focused on various alterations of narrative self-understanding characteristic of depression, showing how they originate in specific forms of affective experience. I have argued that depression is characterised by both the weakening or abandonment of the life stories endorsed before the illness and the emergence of new autobiographical narratives, suggesting that these phenomena are caused respectively by a loss of emotional resonance and the development of particular background affective orientations. However, in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between affectivity and narrativity in depression, it is necessary to take into consideration also how the modifications of autobiographical story-telling previously considered impact on the person's affective states.

In Chapter 4 I discussed the role played by narrativity in affect regulation. I illustrated how one of the ways in which story-telling can positively impact on affective experience is by enhancing our sense of being in control of our emotions. This claim is related to the idea that by narrating our feelings we can give them boundaries, so that by being positioned in a story which has a beginning, middle, and end, they are delimited and come to be experienced as more manageable. I noted that, while this account identifies a fundamental way in which narrative activities shape affectivity, it is important to recognise that not all the stories we can tell about our affective experience have this effect and I remarked that in order to play a regulative function a narrative must possess

some specific characteristics. In particular, relying on Angus and Greenberg's analysis (2011), I maintained that the story should circumscribe out emotions, situating them in a particular space and time. Stories that do not contextualise emotions, but rather generalise them - as, according to Angus and Greenberg, is the case in depression - are unlikely to be able to contribute to the regulation of the patient's experience. On the contrary, these stories negatively affect the person's capacity to regulate her emotions. By producing narratives of her condition which stress its inescapability or by depicting her life story as one in which certain things have "always" or "never" been a certain way,[56] rather than delimiting negative emotions, the depressed person expands their scope, increasing her feelings of lack of control and helplessness. This condition is exemplified in the following excerpt from Thompson's memoir:

> My emotions – my life – seemed out of my control. Slowly, in ways invisible to me at the time, the depression was altering my personality, as if a slight deformity in my spine were giving me a permanent limp. […] I had always been anxious to win others' approval, but now that need became insatiable; I had always been capable of charm, but now charm became a naked willingness to manipulate others to get what I wanted. (1996: 58-59)

The narratives produced by depressed patients can thus exacerbate some of the negative feelings they experience and their sense of being unable to cope with the circumstances they face. In addition, the alterations of autobiographical narrativity experienced by the depressed person hinder her capacity to regulate her emotions also in another way.

As previously discussed, the life stories which emerge after the onset of depression are fundamentally shaped by the background affective orientations characteristic of the illness. Due to these feelings' pre-intentional character, it is

---

[56] "Never" and "always" are some of the linguistic expressions which, according to Angus and Greenberg, are used to introduce the depressed person's "old stories" (2011: 62).

difficult for the depressed person to conceive of different narratives and therefore, as suggested by Radden (2013), to take an evaluative stance in regard to her own affective experience. I argued in Chapter 3 that evaluative position-taking plays an important role in the regulation of affective experience, because by appraising our emotions as more or less appropriate, justified, pleasant, moral, etc., we might be able to influence the way in which they develop. However, in so far as they are unable to conceive of narratives alternative to the ones which are rooted in their existential feelings, it is arguable that depressed patients are less likely to be able to evaluate their emotions and thus to control their development.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have provided an analysis of the relationship which exists between affectivity and narrativity in depression. Various contemporary accounts conceive of the disorder as a disturbance of narrative selfhood and, among these, I have considered in particular the account put forward by Stanghellini and Englebert (Englebert and Stanghellini, forthcoming; Stanghellini, 2004). In accordance with the core tenets of Ricoeur's view, this position is based on the acknowledgement that there are two essential components to narrative self-understanding: on the one hand, the ability to report one's history and, on the other, the capacity to be creative in doing so, that is to be able to integrate stability and change in one's self-conception. According to Stanghellini (2004), people who are vulnerable to depression are not able to evolve the way in which they conceive of themselves and this condition is usually characterised by a rigid over-identification with particular social and professional roles and by the attempt to avoid any challenge to such identifications. Due to the loss of feeling typical of the illness, the depressed person is no longer emotionally drawn to the ideals, values, and commitments

with which she used to identify and comes to consider herself culpable for this condition. In addition, it is claimed that her impoverished emotional experience also prevents the depressed person from engaging in the construction of new life stories (Englebert and Stanghellini, forthcoming). The depressive self is thus characterised as one which clings to one version of its story without admitting of any possibility to creatively modify it even when a crisis is experienced.

I argued that, while Stanghellini and Englebert are correct in claiming that disturbances of narrative self-understanding are central to depression, and in suggesting that these are connected to particular alterations of affective experience, their account is incomplete because it ignores one fundamental feature of narrativity in the disorder. What Stanghellini and Englebert fail to take into consideration is the fact that depression is characterised not only by a disruption of the life stories with which patients identify before the onset of the illness, but also by the emergence of new narratives and that these narratives, in turn, have an impact on the structure of the person's affective experience.

In the rest of the chapter I aimed to extend Stanghellini and Englebert's account by developing three distinct sets of observations. In the first place, I claimed that, due to the loss of feeling, the patient's life narratives are no longer accompanied by congruent affective states and thus come to be experienced as inauthentic. Because of this reason, the role played by the narratives in the person's story-telling becomes weaker, which can ultimately lead to their abandonment. I then drew attention to the fact that cardinal to depression is also the appearance of new narratives and that these share some fundamental features. Relying on the insights provided by cognitive accounts of the disorder, I considered in particular the way in which depressed people explain the occurrence of bad events. I argued that what Seligman (2006) has described as a pessimistic explanatory style – that is the tendency to conceive of negative

events in personal, pervasive and permanent terms – originates in particular configurations of affective experience. More specifically, I maintained that existential feelings of guilt, isolation, and hopelessness, along with a particular way of experiencing time and space, are at the origin of the depressive explanatory attitudes. In so doing, I also challenged Englebert and Stanghellini's account of the relationship between affectivity and narrativity in an important respect.

Englebert and Stanghellini (forthcoming) argue not only that depression is characterised by the inability to renew one's narrative self-conception, but also that this is due to the loss of feeling characteristic of the illness. Because of her impoverished emotional experience, it is claimed, the depressed person lacks the motivation to engage in creative forms of story-telling. My analysis, however, focused also on other aspects of affective experience in depression, illustrating the role they play in the generation of new autobiographical narratives. As such, my account shows that affectivity does not arrest, but rather drives the development of the person's narrative understanding in the disorder.

I then moved to consider the impact that the narratives crafted by the depressed patients have on their affective experience. I suggested that, because of their over-general character, these narratives fail to contextualise the patients negative experiences, thus exacerbating the sense that they are uncontrollable and are going to last forever. In addition, I maintained that, due to the way in which existential feelings constrain their narrative repertoire, it is difficult for depressed patients to take an evaluative stance in regard to their emotions and to control their development accordingly.

The account I developed in this chapter has various implications. In the first

place, by drawing attention to the existence of various dynamics through which affectivity and story-telling influence each other in depression, I showed that the disorder is best characterised as involving disruptions of both the experiential and narrative level of self-awareness and that these are inextricably related. Therefore, the idea that, in contrast to other psychiatric illnesses such as schizophrenia, depression involves disruptions of narrative self-understanding that do not affect the integrity of minimal selfhood can be challenged. As discussed in Chapter 2, affectivity is a fundamental dimension of minimal self-experience, intrinsic to which are pre-reflective forms of bodily and evaluative self-consciousness. The analysis carried out in the present chapter illustrated how affective self-awareness shapes and in turn is shaped by narrative self-understanding, thus providing an example of how the two dimensions are phenomenologically entangled.

My account thus puts into question the idea that one of the aspects which differentiates depression from other disturbances of the self such as those characteristic of schizophrenia is the fact that depression does not involve alterations of minimal selfhood. Does this entail also that the disturbances of self-experience typical of depression are as severe as the ones which characterise schizophrenia? I do not think that this is the case. The account I develop in this thesis shows that disruptions of minimal and narrative self-consciousness are inextricable, but is compatible with the idea that these disruptions can have various degrees of severity. Therefore, schizophrenia could still be conceived as a more serious alteration of self-awareness than depression, but this conception should not be based on the claim that only schizophrenia, and not depression, involves a disturbance of the minimal self.

In addition, my account of the relationship between affectivity and narrativity in depression calls into question some of the claims made by cognitive accounts

of the disorder. The scholars who endorse this theoretical perspective recognise that disturbances of affectivity are central to depression, but they argue that the origins of these disturbances are to be identified with particular alterations of cognition. In other terms, the cognitive approach suggests that the depressed person experiences affective symptoms which originate in specific thought processes, thus attributing to the cognitive dimension a primacy over affectivity in the generation of the illness.

The analysis I developed is consistent with the idea that the way we think significantly influences they way we feel, as I have highlighted various ways in which the thoughts that make up the depressed person's self-narratives impact on her emotions. However, by showing how both the form and content of these autobiographical stories are shaped by the person's affective experience, and in particular existential feelings, I suggested that cognition itself is moulded by affectivity. As such, while my account supports the claim that there are various processes through which thoughts forge feelings, it challenges the idea that in the dynamics that characterise depression cognitive processes have a primary role. On the contrary, I suggest that it is because of disturbances of affective experience that the depressed person's thinking undergoes various alterations.

CHAPTER 6

Self-Experience in Borderline Personality Disorder

Introduction

By focusing on the phenomenology of depression, in Chapter 5 I provided an illustration of some of the dynamics through which affectivity and narrativity constitutively shape each other and are at the origin of specific disturbances of self-experience. In this chapter I extend my analysis of the relationship between affective experience and narrative self-understanding in psychiatric illness by providing a phenomenological account of some aspects of borderline personality disorder (BPD). It has been argued from various perspectives that disturbances of narrative self-understanding are central to the illness. Fuchs (2007), for instance, has suggested that people affected by BPD are unable to integrate in a coherent view different and sometimes contradictory aspects of self and other, claiming that the disorder is best conceived as a "fragmentation" of narrative selfhood. I will suggest that, while Fuchs' approach has the merit of drawing attention to some of the dynamics which are central to the structure of BPD, his account can be expanded in various respects. In the first place, I will claim that the fragmentation of narrative self-understanding characteristic of the disorder is best understood as depending on a specific configuration of affective experience, namely the frequent alternation of existential feelings of shame and anger. I will maintain that, because of this particular experiential structure, the borderline person is unable to retain "empathic access" to her previous emotions and evaluations and this is what hinders her capacity to construct coherent narratives. I will then move to consider the impact that this predicament has on affectivity. I will start by claiming that the emotions of borderline patients have primarily an episodic character and that the body

plays a predominant role in both their experience and expression. I will then show various ways in which the disruptions of narrativity interfere with the patients' ability to regulate their emotions. Extending existing accounts of the illness in various respects, the analysis developed in this chapter will focus on different ways in which disruptions of affectivity and narrativity in the disorder are deeply entangled, thus providing an additional and distinct example of the inextricability of minimal and narrative forms of self-experience.

1. Disturbances of the Narrative Self

Borderline personality disorder is a complex and highly debated nosological construct. The DSM-5 defines BPD as a "pervasive pattern of instability of interpersonal relationships, self-image, and affects, and marked impulsivity, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts" (APA, 2013: 663). According to the DSM, the presence of at least five out of nine symptoms is necessary in order for BPD to be diagnosed.[57]

As far as the aetiology of the disturbance is concerned, various biological, psychological and sociocultural aspects have been identified as potential risk factors (Kravitz and Jackson, 2008). In particular, the experience of traumas,

---

[57] The symptoms listed by the DSM are:
"1) Frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment […]
2) A pattern of unstable and intense interpersonal relationships characterized by alternating between extremes of idealization and devaluation.
3) Identity disturbance: markedly and persistently unstable self-image or sense of self .
4) Impulsivity in at least two areas that are potentially self-damaging (e.g., spending, sex, substance abuse, reckless driving, binge eating). […]
5) Recurrent suicidal behavior, gestures, or threats, or self-mutilating behavior.
6) Affective instability due to a marked reactivity of mood (e.g., intense episodic dysphoria, irritability, or anxiety usually lasting a few hours and only rarely more than a few days).
7) Chronic feelings of emptiness.
8) Inappropriate, intense anger or difficulty controlling anger (e.g., frequent displays of temper, constant anger, recurrent physical fights).
9) Transient, stress-related paranoid ideation or severe dissociative symptoms" (APA, 2013: 663).

sexual abuse, and adverse interpersonal circumstances in childhood are very common among people affected by BPD. The importance of early social relations for the development of the syndrome has been particularly stressed by authors in the field of Attachment Theory (e.g. Fonagy et al., 2002; Gunderson, 1996). From this perspective, it is claimed that, because of the inadequate styles of parenting and caregiving they are exposed to, borderline patients do not experience an appropriate level of emotional attunement and interiorise distorted models of self and others. Having often experienced traumatic events and abusive relationships, it is maintained that borderline patients develop a deeply devaluating image of the self as someone whose needs and desires are not worth any attention and are instead sources of intense shame (Cozolino, 2006). Some scholars have also argued that the problematic interpersonal experiences undergone by borderline patients during childhood result in an impairment of their mentalisation ability, that is the capacity to understand and predict people's behaviours through the attribution of mental states (e.g. Fonagy and Bateman, 2007). In particular, as remarked by Fuchs, it is argued that due also to the sometimes contradictory relation between their parents' verbal expressions and behaviours, people affected by BPD did not learn to correctly label and understand mental states and the lack of adequate emotional mirroring and responses on the part of their parents negatively influenced their affect regulation capacities (2007: 383-384).

The centrality to the disorder of disturbances of narrative self-understanding has been stressed by various scholars. In particular, attention has been drawn to the fact that the stories constructed by borderline patients are anomalous from the point of view of both their form and content. As far as the former is concerned, it is claimed that people affected by BPD have difficulties constructing coherent life stories (Jørgensen, 2006). In order to best understand this point it is helpful to consider what the notion of coherence amounts to. In a

study of patients' narratives conducted by Adler et al. (2012), for example, the notion is characterised as comprising four dimensions: orientation, structure, affect, and integration (2012: 506). Orientation regards the extent to which the story provides the reader with enough background information to understand the context of the narrative and structure is considered to depend on the existence of logical connections between the various parts of the story. The affect criterion refers to the degree to which affective language is used in the narrative to convey an evaluative point of view, while integration depends on whether the episodes are related to a broader sense of self or the reason for engaging in story-telling is expressed. Having assessed the patients' stories along these four dimensions Adler et al. found that borderline patients have lower narrative coherence than control participants. As far as the contents of the narratives are concerned, the study also reported the existence of anomalies in regards to the themes of "agency" and "communion fulfilment". The former refers to the degree of impact and control that the characters have on their own lives, while the latter regards the extent to which the individual's desire to establish connection and intimacy is met. In the study people affected by BPD obtained lower scores than controls in both areas.

In order to best illustrate the disruptions of narrative understanding characteristic of the disorder, it is important to take into consideration the particular way in which self and others are evaluated by the patients. As far as their interpersonal relationships are concerned, borderline patients tend to oscillate between idealisation and devaluation of the people they interact with (APA, 2013: 663). Typical of the disorder is the attitude to perceive others as totally "good" or "bad" and the tendency to shift between these two views. In order to adequately describe this feature, often referred to as "splitting", it is important to consider the recurrent nature of this experience for people affected by the disorder. Indeed, this is not simply a matter of having an overly

optimistic view of another person which is subsequently discovered to be very different from reality, as it might be the case in a number of our ordinary interpersonal interactions. The dynamic typical of BPD is different for two reasons. In the first place, borderline patients exaggerate not only the positive but also the negative characteristics of the people they interact with: they see others as completely good or bad, "as either a wicked witch or fairy grandmother, a saint or a demon" (Mason and Kreger, 2010: 26-27). Secondly, they shift back and forth between these two extremes within the same relationship, generating deep frustration and distress in the people who interact with them. Splitting seems indeed to be a fairly constant aspect of the borderline person's interpersonal attitudes and the emotional rollercoaster experienced by others as a consequence might eventually drive them away, thus making the interpersonal world of the borderline patient even more unstable. Characteristic of BPD is then a "black and white" attitude in the evaluation of other people and the inability to integrate in one view their positive and negative features. In this regard, it has been observed that it is as if the borderline person had no memory of the traits of others emerged through his previous experience (Kreisman and Straus, 2010). On the contrary, people seem to be evaluated only on the basis of the most recent interaction that the borderline individual has had with them. In Kreisman and Straus' words:

> The borderline lacks "object constancy", the ability to understand others as complex human beings who nonetheless can relate in consistent ways. The borderline experiences another on the basis of his most recent encounter, rather than on a broader-based, consistent series of interactions. Therefore, a constant, predictable perception of another person never emerges – the borderline, as if affected with a kind of targeted amnesia, continues to respond to that person as someone new on each occasion. (Kreisman and Straus, 2010: 38)

A high level of instability, which often takes the form of a polarisation between two extremes, is typical also of the evaluative attitude the borderline person has

towards himself. His self-image changes very quickly over time and is highly dependent on the present moment, so that if he has done something good, a very positive self-image is elaborated, but as soon as something considered less positive happens, the self-evaluative attitude is reversed and the borderline person's conception of himself shifts to the negative extreme. BPD is thus characterised by the lack of a stable view of self and others as multifaceted individuals who possess both good and bad traits. It is as if the borderline person continuously had to prove his value and to test other people's and any mistake or failure automatically cancelled the awareness of previous successes (Kreisman and Straus, 2010: 40-41).

The inability to form a coherent conception of self and others is the focus of the account of the disorder provided by Fuchs (2007). In his opinion, central to BPD is a disruption of the capacity to integrate different and sometimes contradictory aspects of one's personality and experience in a unique and coherent view and the disorder is characterised as a "fragmentation" of narrative selfhood (2007: 381). Endorsing Ricoeur's account (1994) and Frankfurt's conception of the person as an individual who is capable of holding second-order desires which have first-order volitions as their object (1971), Fuchs considers the ability to reflect on one's own mental states and to take a position towards them as a fundamental feature of the narrative self. In his opinion, borderline people have an impaired capacity to represent and evaluate their mental states and this is what leads to the disruption of narrative selfhood characteristic of the syndrome. In addition, Fuchs identifies various connections between the disturbances of the narrative self and the alterations of affective experience in BPD. In the first place, he argues that the impulsivity typical of the syndrome originates in the fact that the patients are not able to form second-order volitions with regard to their first-order affective states. Borderline people, in Fuchs' opinion, are not able to accord or deny their affects the power

to influence other mental processes and actions (2007: 381). As a result, emotions unfold uncontrollably and the patients do not play an active role in the development of this experience. Fuchs argues that the inability to take a higher order position with regard to one's affective states is central also to another feature of the syndrome, namely the volatility and polarisation of evaluative attitudes. According to him, this is due to the patients' incapacity to monitor the "coherence" and "accuracy" of their mental states, so that their evaluations are shaped only by their present state of affect (2007: 382).

Fuchs' account of BPD is consonant with some of the claims advanced in this thesis. Indeed, while he characterises the disorder as a disruption of narrative self-understanding, Fuchs also claims that disturbances of affectivity and narrativity are closely related. In particular, as highlighted above, he suggests that the inability to take a position towards one's affective experience plays a role in the fragmentation of narrative selfhood. Fuchs' analysis, however, does not take into consideration some fundamental aspects of the relationship between affectivity and narrativity in the illness and in so doing leaves some of the dynamics which are key to the structure of the disorder unexplained. In the following I will extend Fuchs' account by providing a finer-grained analysis of the various ways in which the fragmentation of narrative selfhood shapes and is shaped by affective experience.

2. The Affective Origins of Narrative Fragmentation

2.1. The Disruption of Empathic Access

Fuchs draws attention to the oscillating emotional experience typical of BPD and conceives of it as an integral aspect of the fragmentation of narrative understanding characteristic of the disorder. However, in order to best understand the relationship between affectivity and autobiographical

narrativity in the illness, it is not enough to focus on the fact that borderline patients experience rapidly alternating emotional states. These frequent emotional shifts can certainly influence the person's narrative ability in various ways. Emotional instability, for example, can negatively impact on the patient's capacity to focus or to take a reflective stance towards his experiences. However, these changes cannot by themselves explain the fact that patients are unable to integrate different evaluations of self and other in a coherent narrative. Indeed, even if one was to move very quickly from an emotion integral to which is a positive self-evaluation to another which involves a negative self-evaluation, this would not entail that the individual becomes unable to consider the previous positive self-evaluation once the shift has taken place. The specificity of the borderline person's predicament in this regard can be best understood by comparing it with the structure of ordinary experience. With reference to this point, it is helpful to consider for instance what happens when, having known a certain person for a long time, we are surprised in hearing a particular statement or witnessing a behaviour that appears to be somehow out of character given what we know and believe about that person.

Let's consider an example. I am walking along the street and I suddenly notice a car coming from the opposite direction and running well beyond the speed limit. I realise that my best friend Victoria is driving. When approaching the zebra crossing, she does not slow down, neglecting a number of pedestrians waiting there to cross the road. Subsequently, she takes an abrupt turn to the right without signalling her intentions with the appropriate arrow flash lights. This episode generates in me a very strong reaction involving a significant emotional component. Apart from an intense feeling of surprise which seizes me when I realise that it is my friend who is driving recklessly, other feelings such as dislike, disapproval or even contempt can be experienced as I observe her disrespectful and dangerous behaviour. The evaluations intrinsic to these

feelings are in deep contradiction with my idea of Victoria as a very considerate, kind and careful person and with the admiration that I have for these qualities of hers, but I cannot avoid experiencing very negative emotions when I witness the scene. Despite their intensity, however, these emotions and related evaluations do not have the power to completely subvert how I felt previously about Victoria. In this sense, my previous feelings, despite their clashing with my present emotions, show a certain "resistance to change" or inertia which pushes me to look for an interpretation of the circumstances compatible with them. In other terms, I do not easily let go of my positive feelings and consideration of my friend. After the initial puzzlement, my reaction is indeed to try to find a reason which could explain my friend's behaviour without clashing with the idea I have of her. For instance, as Victoria is a physician, I can hypothesise that she had been called for an emergency and that she was driving very fast in order to try to reach a patient as soon as possible. Such an explanation might mitigate my feelings of puzzlement and disappointment and is, at least to a certain extent, compatible with how I felt about Victoria before this episode.

What I have described in this example is what often happens when we experience an emotion which contradicts our previous emotions: we perceive the existence of a conflict and rather than solving it by immediately embracing the evaluation associated with the most recent feelings, we look for alternative interpretations of the events so that they are not in contradiction with our prior beliefs and feelings. This does not mean that an emotional conflict of this kind is always resolved by re-establishing the emotions and evaluations that preceded it. Witnessing my friend reckless driving could well be an experience that radically changes my attitudes towards her, to the point of damaging our relationship forever. This could happen, for example, if I do not find any plausible explanation for Victoria's behaviour and I am led to question the

authenticity of the kind and considerate attitudes she displayed in the past. In this case the conflict would be solved in favour of the most recent emotions and evaluations which would thus have the power to discard what I previously felt and thought about my friend. Finally, it is also important to note that this situation has another possible outcome which consists neither in reconfirming the positive conception I had of my friend nor in substituting it with a negative one, but rather in integrating the two, so that, for example, I can think of Victoria as a generally considerate person, who, however, sometimes can behave disrespectfully if put under a lot of pressure. However, no matter what the conflict ultimately results in, in these circumstances we ordinarily retain awareness of our previous experiences, thus meaning that no matter whether we re-confirm, mitigate, or discard our initial emotions and evaluations, we are still able to conceive of them as parts of a unitary story.

The way in which the borderline person handles these situations is very different. As previously highlighted, people affected by the disorder very readily get rid of their evaluations when conflicting evidence arises. When someone they previously had an excellent consideration of disappoints them, borderline patients tend to immediately embrace the opposite emotions and judgements, to the point that it is questionable whether they experience any conflict at all. Indeed, in order for conflict to arise it is necessary for the person to be at least to a certain degree simultaneously aware of both the previous and current appraisals, but it seems that borderline patients are unable to retain thoughts and feelings which are in contradiction with the present ones. But what is the origin of this inability?

I believe that this question can be answered and further light be shed on the structure of evaluative conflict in ordinary and pathological experience by making use of some of the ideas advanced by Schechtman in her account of

narrative selfhood and, in particular, of the notion of "empathic access" (1996; 2001; 2007). As illustrated in Chapter 3, Schechtman claims that fundamental to the preservation of personal identity over time is a level of phenomenological continuity between one's present and past and, in this regard, I argued that the ability to retain experiential access to some of the affective and evaluative states previously entertained is of particular importance. As discussed earlier, in order for someone's beliefs and emotions to be accessed in this way it must be the case that they are not completely over, but rather still play a certain, albeit different, role in the person's mental and practical life.

The dynamics which are associated with the notion of empathic access are key to understand the ability to experience emotional conflicts of the type discussed above. In the example previously considered, for instance, it is because I still have access to emotions of respect and admiration for my friend that I do not immediately switch to a negative opinion of her upon witnessing her reckless driving. Certainly I experience new emotions involving disapproval and moral condemnation, but in order for me to be able to engage in a process where I try to understand her behaviour and consider various possible explanations for it, I need to at least temporarily retain some of the positive feelings I previously had for her. If that was not the case, if none of my emotions regarding Victoria's good nature, reliability, and altruism were still present and somehow accessible to me, I would instantly embrace the affects and judgements triggered by the driving episode and would not be puzzled by the sudden shift in my evaluative attitude towards her. It is arguable that, what is lost in BPD is exactly this ability to access one's previous emotions in an empathic way and this is what determines the tendency of the borderline person to quickly oscillate between radically different views of self and other. As such it can be maintained that it is not the ability to remember past emotions that is disrupted in the illness, but rather their experiential continuity, as if there was no inertia in the affective life

211

of the patients and new emotions always completely replaced the previous ones.

Having identified a disruption of empathic access as central to BPD, it is now important to understand how this is brought about and how this condition differs from analogous alterations undergone in ordinary experience. It can be observed that not all cases of lack of empathic access to one's past are accompanied by a fragmentation of autobiographical story-telling. The inability to empathise with one's past emotions, beliefs, values or choices can indeed be relatively common also in ordinary, non-pathological experience. Like the mature woman in one of the scenarios discussed by Schechtman[58], we are sometimes unable to understand how we were able to feel, think, or act in certain ways in the past and this, according to the model I have endorsed, is due to the fact that the past experiences in question have now been completely replaced by new affects, beliefs, and desires. In these cases, however, although these experiences are somehow less familiar to us than when empathic access is present and it might be difficult to include them in our autobiographical narratives, the overall coherence of the narrative self is not affected. I believe that what is different in the case of BPD is not the structure of this process – the borderline person too lacks empathic access to some of her past states – but the extent of the past experience which is so inaccessible to her. In this regard, the difference between ordinary and pathological experience depends on how extensive is the range of states that are experientially inaccessible to the individual. In particular, I will suggest in the next section that, due to the rapid and frequent alternation of existential forms of anger and shame, borderline patients become unable to access a wide set of self- and other-directed emotions, and I will claim that it is this condition that ultimately generates the fragmentation of narrative selfhood typical of the disorder.

---

[58] See Chapter 3, Section 2 for the discussion of this example.

2.2. The Role of Existential Anger and Shame

Anger, often in the form of intense outbursts which are difficult to control, is considered as one of the key features of BPD and is one of the diagnostic criteria adopted by the DSM-5 (APA, 2013: 663). In the following, I will argue that in BPD anger becomes an existential feeling, radically influencing the patients' moral evaluations and deeply constraining the range of mental states that they can experience.

Anger can be conceived as an emotion that arises when we feel offended by a particular event or behaviour and this is related specifically to the moral sphere (Roberts, 2003). As observed by Prinz (2010), this emotion is usually experienced when a person, either the self or another, is harmed by another person, in particular when the act is performed intentionally or depends on negligence. Prinz argues that the harm in question can be physical or symbolic, direct or indirect, but all forms are to be seen as responses to something perceived as a transgression against the person.

What is typically associated with the borderline syndrome, then, is a painful evaluation of others as acting against the rights or value of the self or something he cares about without any acceptable reason. Anger arises when the subject, people, things, or ideas that are important to him are perceived as being inappropriately treated in a variety of possible ways. However, it seems that anger in BPD can lose its directionality and become a general attitude (Pazzagli and Rossi Monti, 2000). Rather than being a transient and circumscribed affective experience, it is recognised that in the experience of the borderline person anger acquires a pervasive character. In this regard, it seems that people affected by BPD are not simply angry at someone or because of something, but, on the contrary, they already experience anger before finding any particular

reason for it. In this sense, in some phases of the borderline patient's experience, anger appears more as an existential feeling than a simple emotion: the person's whole relationship with the world is enveloped by this feeling and this is why it is difficult to both predict and regulate the outbursts of rage characteristic of the disorder. According to the reports of people who are in close relationships with borderline patients, it is indeed very difficult to understand what will be the trigger of the next explosion of anger: for the borderline person, any reason could be a good reason to get angry and once the emotion is elicited, it seems that nothing can counteract it. As observed by Kreisman and Straus:

> The borderline's outbursts of rage are as unpredictable as they are frightening. Violent scenes are disproportionate to the frustrations that trigger them. Domestic fracases that may involve chases with butcher knives and thrown dishes are typical of borderline rage. The anger may be sparked by a particular (and often trivial) offence, but underneath the spark lies an arsenal of fear from the threat of disappointment and abandonment. (2010: 51)

Rather than a circumscribed emotional response, anger is sometimes the predominant way in which the borderline patient finds himself in the world. As the moral emotion of guilt can acquire in depression an existential character and radically alter the individual evaluative perspective, so in BPD anger acts in some cases as a background orientation which deeply constrains the range of intentional states that can be experienced by the person. In particular, when anger in its existential form is present, the individual experiences a narrowing of his evaluative perspective, as he can no longer have cognitive and affective states which are incompatible with the appraisal integral to the feeling of anger. Since, as previously mentioned, existential anger amounts to an experience of the self as unfairly treated, offended or harmed, the individual who experiences this feeling is no longer able to conceive of himself as potentially wrong, unjust, or harmful to other people and is less likely to feel emotions such as guilt, remorse, or self-doubt.

It seems that in BPD not only anger, but also feelings of shame often acquire an existential character and first person accounts of the illness show that often borderline patients oscillate between the two affects (e.g. Reiland, 2004). Shame involves a sense of oneself as being defective or inadequate and is connected to a failure to live up to one's ideals, goals, or values, although this is not necessarily dependent upon a moral transgression as in guilt. It is argued that central to the experience of shame is the real or imagined presence of an observer and that typical of this emotion is the feeling of being exposed to the gaze of others, of being an object of others' awareness (e.g. Sartre, 1958). Existing philosophical and psychological accounts of shame differ in many respects; however, some influential approaches agree that a fundamental characteristic of shame is the fact that it is a global evaluation of the self, that is an evaluation of the self as a whole rather than an assessment of any particular trait or behaviour (e.g. Lewis, 1971; Lewis, 1992; Taylor, 1985). In addition, as far as action tendencies are concerned, shame is often associated with the desire to hide or disappear.

It seems that in BPD shame is not just a circumscribed and transient emotion – feeling ashamed in relation to particular things in particular circumstances – but rather a more pervasive aspect of one's stance towards the world. The feeling of being exposed to the judgement of others and of being inadequate not because of a particular reason but inherently is characteristic of borderline subjects and a wide variety of situations seem to be lived in light of this experience. The centrality of the experience of shame to the disorder is such that it has been hypothesised that all its characteristic symptoms could be considered as different but closely related aspects of a "chronic shame response" (Crowe, 2004: 327). Arguably the all-encompassing character of shame in the disorder is the reason why patients often feel under the threat of

215

being abandoned by the people they love and engage in "frantic efforts" to avoid this possibility (APA, 2013: 663). This feeling of intrinsic inadequacy is also what makes encounters with others stressful and it is connected with the patients' strongly devaluating self-image. In the words of a patient:

> I don't like getting too close to people… I get very threatened. I like to keep a distance. I think that if they got up too close and found out what I was like behind the facade… I don't even know what's behind the facade. I know that they'll think I'm not good enough… That I'll never be good enough. (Crowe, 2004: 331)

As it is the case with anger, also when shame acquires an existential form the person's evaluative and experiential perspective is significantly constrained. In particular, as intrinsic to shame is an appraisal of the self as defective, inadequate, or "never good enough", when this affect takes the form of a background orientation it is very difficult for the person to experience states, such as feelings of pride or self-worth, that are incompatible with that self-appraisal.

Prima facie existential feelings of shame and anger appear to have very different structures. While in the disorder the former is predominantly self-focused and consists in an evaluation of the self as defective, the latter is usually directed to other people and consists in a perception of them as responsible for some sort of misdeed or offence. However, this is not yet an exhaustive account of the structure of the two affects. As far as shame is concerned, integral to its structure is not only a particular self-evaluation, but also a specific way of appraising the other. I previously mentioned that the presence of a real or imagined observer or audience is recognised from various perspectives to be cardinal to this feeling. However, attention is not usually drawn to the fact that the audience or observer in these circumstances is not perceived as neutral, but is rather appraised as someone who does not have the same weaknesses and

deficiencies of the person he observes. For similar reasons, also the account of anger that I have provided previously is incomplete. I emphasised that constitutive of anger is an evaluation of the other as unjustifiably offending, threatening or harming the self or something he cares about. From this perspective, anger might appear to be an other-focused emotion, but such a view does not do justice to the fact that others are so evaluated from the perspective of a self which does not share their faults and is appraised as righteous instead. As such, also forms of anger which are directed to others include self-evaluations.

As a result, it is arguable that shame and anger have important structural similarities. Indeed, essential to the configuration of both feelings is the existence of a relationship, either real or imagined, between self and other and there appears to be a level of symmetry in how this relationship is structured in the two emotions. While in shame the self is appraised as defective in the eyes of adequate others, in anger others are seen as defective from the point of view of an adequate self. As such, as far as the configuration of the relationship between self and other is concerned, anger can be seen as the reverse of shame.

I previously observed that, when shame and anger acquire an existential character it is very difficult for the person to entertain affective, cognitive or volitional states that are in contrast with the evaluations intrinsic to the feeling he is experiencing. When in the grip of shame, for instance, the individual will have difficulties experiencing positive forms of self-appraisal such as those integral to pride. However, in light of what I claimed in regard to the evaluation of others in shame, it is arguable that, when this is experienced as an existential feeling, also a range of other-directed emotions will not be accessible. In particular, it will be problematic for the person to experience emotions which are incompatible with an evaluation of the other as non-defective, for example

contempt, suspicion and, most importantly for the present analysis, anger. Similarly, when experiencing existential anger, the individual will find it difficult to access not only a particular set of other-directed emotions, but also a specific range of self-focused affects, since, as outlined above, intrinsic to anger are not only evaluations of others, but also appraisals of the self. In particular, given that integral to anger is an evaluation of the self as righteous, when experienced as an existential feeling, this affect will hinder the person's ability to experience emotions through which the self is appraised as culpable or defective, for example guilt, feelings of unworthiness, and shame.

I started this analysis of the structure of shame and anger in BPD with the aim of explaining why the lack of empathic access to their previous experiences has in patients affected by the disorder more disruptive effects, to the point that it leads to a fragmentation of narrative understanding. I suggested that, as far as the lack of empathic access is concerned, the difference between normal and pathological cases lies in the range of experiences that are inaccessible to the person and I hypothesised that in BPD this is a very broad range. Having examined how existential feelings of shame and anger shape the experience of the borderline person, it is now possible to understand why in the disorder the lack of empathic access concerns an extensive set of experiences.

Constitutive of shame and anger, I claimed, are appraisals of self and other that have an opposite structure. As such, when the borderline patient is in the grip of one of the two feelings, he is unable to experience the emotions, thoughts and desires which are compatible with the opposite feeling. Consequently, as a result of the frequent oscillation of existential forms of shame and anger, many of the person's states become alternatively inaccessible and lack continuity, thus making it impossible to be empathised with at different moments in time. This predicament significantly differs from what happens in ordinary, non-

218

pathological experience. Let's consider an example in order to clarify this point. During a social gathering I tell a joke which I consider to be funny, but nobody laughs. Immediately I feel ashamed and this feeling has a more or less specific focus: I can be ashamed at the idea of having made a fool of myself, having appeared awkward or not having been able to understand in advance that the audience probably does not share my sense of humour. In any case, usually my shame would be fairly closely related to the dynamics of the episode and would not concern other aspects of myself. As such, it would be difficult for me to experience emotions which are in contrast with the circumscribed evaluations regarding my making a fool of myself or appearing awkward, but there would still be a wide range of positive self-appraisals which would be accessible to me and are perfectly compatible with my infelicitous performance. For instance, I could still be proud of my work as a researcher or of the assertiveness I demonstrated when I recently had a difficult conversation with my boss. More broadly, I could still be able to think of myself as someone who, despite a number of imperfections, possesses also various positive characteristics. This is not what happens in the borderline case, where, due to anger and shame acquiring an existential character, the felt evaluations of self and other come to be decoupled from specific circumstances and characteristics - although, as I argued previously, specific circumstances and characteristics become "pretexts" thanks to which the background orientations are expressed as particular emotions. As such, due to their generality, the range of states that become inaccessible when one of these existential feelings is present is wider than the range of states which are inaccessible when a more focused, intentional feeling is in place. In addition, while the feelings that alternate in ordinary experience are not mutually exclusive, the borderline person oscillates between existential orientations that are the opposite of one another and, as such, make it very difficult for the patient to retain a degree of continuity with his previous experience.

2.3. Manipulation and No-Win Situations

The account here provided of the narrative fragmentation characteristic of BPD can be helpful also in enhancing our understanding of other aspects of the disorder, such as the tendency of borderline patients to adopt manipulative behaviours and to put people in "no-win" situations. The notion of manipulation can be given various characterisations and there are some differences in the way in which it is conceived in clinical and non-clinical contexts (Nyquist Potter, 2006). However, without engaging with the various aspects of this debate, I will here adopt a general definition, considering manipulation as a deceitful attempt to reach a certain goal through the adoption of particular attitudes and behaviours. The notion of deceit is integral to that of manipulation in that the goals of the person who seeks to manipulate others usually remain hidden in the interaction, namely there is no explicit or implicit understanding of them on the part of the manipulated person. In this regard, it could be argued that it is exactly because the aims of the manipulator remain unknown to the people he manipulates that the process can be successful and he can reach his objectives. In order to clarify these aspects, let's consider the following example provided by Rachel Reiland and reported by Mason and Kreger (2010):

> Often I realize my motivation only after the incident is over. Once, I was so upset that my husband was ignoring me at Christmas that, right in front of him, I began destroying all the gifts he had just given me. My husband stopped me as I was about to rip apart the gift I loved most: a book of love poetry. When I saw the book, it dawned on me that I never would have ruined it. I was more interested in seeing my husband try to stop me. […] why did I do it? The answer was ugly and harsh, shameful and disgusting. Manipulation. I felt deeply ashamed. (2010: 44)

The behaviour of Reiland in this episode is deceitful for two reasons. In the first

place, because she pretends to be willing to do something (i.e. tearing apart her favourite present) which she has indeed no intention to do. In this sense at least, pretending is akin to a form of lying. There is also another way in which deceit is central to the episode though and this has to do with Reiland's goals and her husband's understanding of them. In describing this sequence, Reiland does not explicitly state what is the goal she wishes to achieve through her behaviour, but it is arguable that her aim is either to attract her husband's attention – as the dynamic is triggered by the perception of him ignoring her – or to punish him by making him feel sorry. The manipulative character of the episode lies in the fact that the actions she performs in order to achieve her goal cannot easily be understood by her husband as being related to those goals.

Manipulation can be conceived as the attempt to control other people's behaviour so that it conforms to a particular "scenario" or "script" the manipulator is willing to enact. In these cases, it is as if the person had already a story in mind which, in order to be played out, requires the people he interacts with to behave in a particular way. The manipulative behaviours then serve to ensure that others act in accordance with the role that the manipulator wants them to play. By manipulating them, the borderline person is thus trying to force others to behave like the characters of a narrative he has crafted beforehand, a narrative which is not susceptible to be changed on the basis of people's actual responses. I showed in Chapter 3 that the structure of autobiographical narratives is not only the outcome of a plurality of cognitive processes, but is rather fundamentally shaped by affective dynamics and, in particular, by existential feelings. I argued that, because of their pre-intentional character, existential feelings can constrain the person's narrative repertoire, making it possible for her to conceive only of stories which have particular features. On this basis, it is arguable that the existential feelings of shame and anger experienced by the borderline person make it difficult for her to pay

attention and potentially endorse views of the situation that are incompatible with these feelings. When existential shame or anger is in place, all emotions, beliefs and desires which are incompatible with it are unlikely to be accessible and the narratives that would be centred on these states unlikely to be produced. The existential feeling drives the construction of a particular story and makes the narrator unable to integrate within this story the voice of others. Manipulation can thus be conceived as the inability to shape and adjust one's narrative by taking into account interpretations of the events which would clash with the story-telling that is driven by the person's background feelings.

These dynamics are further exemplified by another feature often associated with the behaviour of borderline patients. People who are close to individuals affected by BPD often complain that the borderline person puts them in "no-win situations", that is situations in which, any behaviour they might adopt inevitably lead to a negative reaction (Mason and Kreger, 2010). In these cases, it is as if the person affected by BPD wanted to criticise or start a fight with the person he is interacting with and was just looking for an excuse to do so. As such, it is almost impossible to escape the criticism or anger of the borderline patient, as this is not motivated by any particular behaviour or event, but is rather dependent on the attitude of the patient himself. This is exemplified by the following description provided by a family member of a borderline patient:

> If I asked her about her unhappiness, she told me I was too sensitive and paranoid. If I ignored the unhappiness, she said I didn't care about her. If I praised her, she thought I was up to something. If I criticized her, I was trying to hurt her. If I spent time talking with her four-year-old, she wanted to know what I was asking him. If I played a simple game with him, she criticized me if I won. If I wanted to have sex, she wanted it to be her idea – later. If I didn't want to have sex, I was a homosexual. If I spent time alone, I was up to something. If I spent too much time with her, I was needy. If I wasn't thirty minutes early, I was late. If she wasn't ready and I sat down to read, I was rushing her. (Mason and Kreger, 2010: 61)

As previously argued, when the existential feeling of anger takes over, the person affected by BPD experiences herself as unjustly threatened, harmed or offended and, since this is the orientation that structures her way of finding herself in the world, all her interpersonal interactions are shaped by this experiential framework. As such, the borderline patient is not receptive to the behaviour and the motivations of the people around her, but rather "projects" on to them the image of the other as harmful, threatening or offensive which originates in her existential feelings. Every interaction is thus forced within a narrative scheme that, because of its generality and the intensity of the feelings that accompany it, is very difficult to shake or escape.

3. The Impact of Narrative Fragmentation on Affective Experience

In Chapter 4 I described various ways in which narrativity can shape the experiential structure of affectivity. I claimed that by virtue of their being included in particular autobiographical narratives emotions can acquire not only a more definite character, but also be experienced as complex processes whose components are meaningfully connected. In addition, I suggested that story-telling is fundamental to the regulation of emotions. Narrativity can thus be considered to play a fundamental role in shaping various experiential dimensions of affectivity and when disruptions of narrative understanding occur, also these dimensions are negatively affected. I will show in the following that these dynamics are central to BPD, as the fragmentation of narrativity typical of the disorder generates various alterations in the process-structure of emotions and in the patients' ability to regulate their affective experience.

By drawing on Colombetti's work (2009), I previously drew attention to how language can confer on our affective experience a more precise character. By

virtue of their being labelled or described, emotions can acquire a higher degree of distinctiveness and thus be more clearly differentiated from other affects and bodily experiences. Arguably the disruptions of narrative abilities experienced by borderline patients hinder these processes, so that affective states in the disorder tend to be less clearly individuated. In order to best highlight this point, it is helpful to take into consideration the bodily experience associated with affectivity.

In borderline personality disorder the experience of the body is altered in various respects. Some borderline patients, for example, report the presence of anomalous physical sensations, such as unpleasant feelings of excitement, energy, or arousal:

> I had this energy in all my body, not a pleasant energy, rather an uncomfortable feeling of excess. A sort of sexual excitement, but not exactly so. Something electric moving in my flesh. A current or heat! (Stanghellini and Rosfort, 2013: 155)

Stanghellini and Rosfort (2013) emphasise the centrality of these feelings to the experience of people affected by BPD. More specifically, they claim that the affectivity of the borderline person is dominated by the presence of a bodily "vitality" or "force", namely a set of feelings with no intentional content and irreducible to discrete emotions that the subject is unable to control. In this regard, from a psychological perspective attention has been drawn to the notion of tension, characterised as the "subjective perception of aversive, high arousal" (Stiglmayr et al., 2001: 111) not associated by the patient with the experience of any specific emotion. According to Stiglmayr et al., people affected by BPD experience states of aversive tension more intensely and for longer periods than people without the disorder.

It is arguable that these generic experiences of excitement or tension are related to the difficulty to identify emotions that characterises the disorder. In an experimental setting, for instance, Levine et al. (1997) showed that compared to healthy controls borderline patients have lower levels of emotional awareness and are less accurate in the identification of facial expressions of emotions.[59] In line with these observations, it might be possible to account for some of the symptoms typical of BPD through the notion of alexithymia (Bagby and Taylor, 1997b: 164). This notion was originally introduced with regard to the analysis of psychosomatic diseases and it has then been associated with various psychiatric conditions (Bagby and Taylor, 1997a). It is claimed that one of the key features of alexithymia is the difficulty to identify emotions and distinguish them from the bodily experience associated with emotional arousal (1997a: 299)[60] and, as illustrated so far, this seems to be a core aspect of the affective experience of borderline patients.

This feature is related to the disturbances of narrative abilities that characterise the disorder. As previously mentioned, labelling or describing emotions has the effect of clarifying our experience, conferring on it a higher degree of distinctiveness. As the ability to identify and narrate emotions is impaired in BPD, the patients' feelings are blurred and their experience is that of an indefinite sense of arousal rather than of distinct affective states.

These dynamics are related also to another feature of affective experience in BPD, namely the fact that the expression of emotions seems to have primarily a bodily character. As due to the disturbances of narrative self-understanding the

---

[59] The study also showed that in BPD the ability to coordinate feelings with different valence is impaired and the responses to negative emotions have higher intensity.

[60] According to Bagby and Taylor (1997a: 29) other features of alexithymia are: "(ii) difficulty describing feelings to other people; (iii) constricted imaginal processes, as evidenced by a paucity of fantasies; and (iv) a stimulus-bound, externally orientated cognitive style".

verbalization of emotions is often problematic for borderline patients, the body becomes a very powerful tool of affective expression. Fonagy (Fonagy et al., 2002) draws attention to this aspect in his discussion of the case of Emma, a young patient he supervised during a six-year period of psychoanalytic treatment. Emma suffered from diabetes, but admittedly often manipulated her dose of insulin to keep her weight under control, to the point that, during the year before the beginning of her treatment with Fonagy, she was hospitalised eight times due to ketoacidosis[61]. Based on his observations throughout the therapeutic process, Fonagy suggests that, while Emma's ability to identify and discuss her mental states was impaired, her bodily conditions played a significant role in the manifestation of her affective experience. As he explains:

> Emma would communicate anxiety by becoming ketotic. Her bodily states of "highs" and "lows" conveyed her mood far better than did her verbalizations. […] [S]he enacted with her body in the session, created real anxiety, real anger and real confusion, rather than being able to describe these as current internal states. […] Many of the feelings and ideas that Emma was unable to represent as thoughts and feelings were experienced in relation to her body. (Fonagy et al., 2002: 404)

Closely related to these observations is the idea that in BPD emotions are often "acted-out", that is they are impulsively expressed through behaviours and actions. In order to exemplify this aspect, it is helpful to consider the structure of anger in the disorder. As previously mentioned, the angry reactions of borderline patients usually take the form of intense outbursts which are difficult to predict and can develop very quickly without a real or serious enough reason to justify them. In the disorder anger often takes the form of sudden explosions followed by extreme gestures and actions and arguably this is the case also because, rather than being experienced as a process which involves a plurality of affective, cognitive, and volitional components, anger in BPD involves primarily a series of bodily feelings and action tendencies.

---

[61] A diabetic complication caused by the lack of insulin.

Although particularly visible in the case of anger, this is not a characteristic of this emotion alone, but rather a general feature of the affectivity of borderline patients and one that can be accounted for in light of some of the dynamics I discussed in Chapter 4.

Apart from drawing attention to the role played by narratives in the individuation and differentiation of emotions, I have also argued that thanks to narrativity affective experience can acquire various degrees of complexity. Relying in particular on Goldie's work, I claimed that it is by virtue of their being narrated that emotions can be constituted and experienced as unitary and meaningful processes comprising a plurality of different components. While from this perspective bodily feelings are seen as one of the constituents of emotional experience, it is also emphasised that other elements – such as specific thoughts, perceptions and action tendencies – are integral to the structure of affective experience. As the narratives are the means by which these constituents are meaningfully held together, it is to be expected that disruptions of narrativity will be detrimental to our ability to constitute and experience emotions as complex processes. I believe that the centrality of bodily experience to the affectivity of the borderline person can be understood as at least in part determined by these dynamics. Indeed, if it is not possible to constitute emotions as comprising a plurality of different elements that unfold over time, all that is left to affective experience are its characteristic bodily manifestations.

Another aspect of the particular role played by the body in the affectivity of the borderline patient regards the centrality of self-harm to the syndrome. About 75% of people affected by BPD engage in self-injurious behaviours (Gunderson, 2001: 22), with cutting being the most frequent (80%), followed by bruising (24%), burning, (20%), head banging (15%) and biting (7%) (Shearer, 1994, cited

in Gunderson, 2001: 22). When the reasons for self-harm are investigated, it appears that often these behaviours are undertaken to express feelings that the subject perceives he does not have other resources to communicate. The expressive role of self-injurious behaviours is highlighted for instance in the following first-person reports:

> I want to cut. I want to see pain, for it is the most physical thing to show. You cannot show pain inside. I want to cut, cut, show, show. Get it out. What out? Just pain. (Gunderson, 2001: 22)

> When I cut, I don't have to try to explain how bad I am feeling. I can show it. (Mason and Kreger, 2010: 35)

Kreisman and Straus observe that, although over time self-harm can become a planned procedure, in the beginning it often has the form of an impulsive action (2010: 46). As such, it is arguable that, at least initially, self-mutilative behaviours could be the effect of the action tendencies generated by specific negative emotions such as anger, disgust, or shame. However, borderline patients often engage in self-harm intentionally and for a variety of reasons. Self-harm can be not only a way to communicate emotions, but also to generate them and thus overcome the sense of emptiness (APA, 2013: 663) and numbness that often characterise their experience. In addition, self-injurious behaviours are frequently undertaken in the attempt to regulate one's affective experience. A study conducted by Kleindiest et al. (2008), for instance, showed that 95% of patients experienced a decrease in aversive tension following non-suicidal forms of self-injury and feelings of relief and even "calm euphoria" are sometimes reported after these episodes (Kreisman and Straus, 2010: 48-49). In this regard, it is arguable that self-injurious behaviours can enhance the individual sense of self-control also by virtue of their being activities in which

the subject can voluntarily engage.

The difficulty to regulate emotions is a central aspect of BPD and the disturbances of narrativity are cardinal to its generation. I argued in Chapter 4 that by narrating emotions we can give them specific temporal and spatial boundaries, thus characterising them as circumscribed events which possess a beginning, middle, and end. As a result, the affects which are narrated are experienced as more manageable and the act of narrating itself enhances the person's sense of being able to control his own experience. The inability to construct coherent affective narratives in BPD negatively affects these dynamics in various ways.

As illustrated earlier in this chapter, due to alternating existential feelings of shame and anger, it is very difficult for borderline patients to connect in a coherent narrative their past and present experiences. As a result, characteristic of the disorder is an almost exclusive focus on the "here" and "now", as if the person lived each moment in isolation from what preceded it. As such, when undergoing a particular emotion, it is difficult for the borderline patient to understand and even recall that he might have felt different, and sometimes opposite emotions at different times. This is exemplified by the description provided by Reiland of the feelings she experienced for her therapist:

> I loved him so much at that moment I couldn't believe how I could have harboured the hateful thoughts that had prompted the note. At times like this I could not imagine how I could have hated him – ever. In times of hatred I sometimes wished I could summon these warm feelings of love. But they always seemed to elude me. (2004: 135)

Affectivity in BPD is exclusively present-focused and impermeable to the influence of past events, beliefs, desires, and emotions. Due to their being so isolated, emotions lose their boundaries and are experienced as if they were

never-ending. This feature is apparent in another passage from Reiland's account:

> Every strong feeling was not only absolute, but eternal. It didn't matter if a person close to me had occupied the pedestal ten minutes ago and been the object of my abundant love. When the emotions changed, it was as if that love had never existed and the hatred I felt today would be the way I felt forever. (Reiland, 2004: 88-89)

The narrative disturbances experienced by borderline patients and, in particular, the difficulty to label and describe emotions, influence affect regulation also in other ways. Bagby and Taylor (1997a) have drawn attention to various mechanisms through which alexithymia can lead to or exacerbate emotional dysregulation. As previously mentioned, the difficulties to identify and describe emotions experienced by the borderline person are connected to the disruption of her narrative abilities. As such, examining the impact that alexithymia has on the patients' capacity to regulate their affective experience is relevant to the understanding of how narrativity shapes affectivity in the disorder. According to Bagby and Taylor, for instance, alexithymia negatively affects the person's ability to communicate her affects to others who, therefore, cannot be sources of help and comfort in distressing situations. Secondly, due to the poor imaginative capacities that are usually associated with this condition, people with high levels of alexithymia have fewer resources to modulate their negative emotions. In addition, Bagby and Taylor suggest that the lack of emotional awareness makes it difficult for the borderline person to empathise with others and thus to contribute to the regulation of their affective experience (1997a: 30). Arguably this makes it difficult to establish balanced and mutually caring interpersonal relationships from which the borderline person can get support when needed.

An important aspect of emotional dysregulation is affective instability and this

too is strongly related to the narrative impairments previously discussed. Affective instability is one of the diagnostic criteria for BPD identified by the DSM-5 (APA, 2013) and, according to various accounts, is a core aspect of the syndrome. The classification adopted by the WHO (1992), for example, includes BPD within the group of emotionally unstable personality disorders (Ebner-Priemer et al., 2007a).

There are various facets to the notion of affective instability. On the one hand, this concept refers to the frequency with which affective states change. On the other, the concept is also related to the "amplitude" of the changes which are experienced, namely whether these changes involve large or small valence variations (Ebner-Priemer et al., 2007a; Larsen, 1987). It is argued that BPD is characterised by alterations along both dimensions, with people reporting both more frequent and larger changes in affective experience. As far as frequency is concerned, it is claimed that typical of the disorder is a higher variability of both positive and negative moods (Nica and Links, 2009) and it has been shown that borderline patients overall report more emotions than controls (Ebner-Priemer et al., 2007b), thus suggesting that in the disorder affective states alternate more often than it is the case with people who are not affected by BPD. With reference to the amplitude of affective changes, the disorder is characterised by large oscillations. In this regard, for example, it is argued that borderline patients often shift from positive to negative moods and that the latter are usually more intense than in healthy controls (Nica and Links, 2009).

The account of the relationship between affectivity and narrativity I have been developing provides a theoretical framework which can explain the aspects of affective instability just outlined. The frequent and large changes of moods and emotions can be accounted for by referring to the fact that affective states in the syndrome are not embedded in an unfolding autobiographical story. As I have

previously shown, characteristic of BPD is an exclusive focus on the present and the inability to conceive of one's mental states within a broader temporal framework. As such, what is experienced in the "here" and "now" is perceived as absolute, but it can also be swept away very easily when other events take place. As they are not anchored within an unfolding narrative, emotions are experienced as absolute and "eternal" by the borderline person. However, when the perceptions, thoughts or impressions that sustain them change, emotions can fade away almost immediately.

As highlighted also by Fuchs (2007), reflective and position-taking abilities are central to narrative self-understanding and the disruption of these abilities significantly contributes to the affective instability characteristic of the syndrome. Borderline patients have difficulties to take an observational and evaluative stance towards their own mental states and, as such, it is problematic for them to orientate and control the course of their affective experience. Because of these dynamics, people affected by BPD are not only dominated by their impulses, but also unable to undertake long-term commitments. In Chapter 1 I showed that it is by virtue of being reflectively endorsed that the values, ideals, and goals which are associated with our affective experience can become an integral part of our personal identity and acquire a long-lasting character. As in the syndrome these dynamics are impaired, the commitments of borderline patients' are very volatile, as demonstrated for example by the frequency with which they change jobs, ideas, and friends. In addition, people affected by BPD tend to show different characteristics according to the person they interact with and to excessively rely on the social context in defining their identity (Jørgensen, 2006), as well as over-identifying with particular groups or roles (Wilkinson-Ryan and Westen, 2000). An example of this is provided by one of the first-person accounts discussed by Mason and Kreger:

> I have a chameleon-like ability to take on the coloring of the individual I am with. But the act is done more to fool me than to fool them. For the time being, I have become who I'd like to be. I am not some kind of Machiavellian manipulator with nothing better to do than ruin lives. The process isn't really conscious. It's being going on for so long now that I don't even know who I really am. I feel unreal – like a phony. If I had any true control over it, I would simply revert back to "myself" whenever I felt threatened. But I don't know who that is. (2010: 32)

The difficulty to construct coherent narratives characteristic of BPD impacts on the structure of affective experience also in other ways. Through autobiographical story-telling we can establish connections between emotions and other mental states and events, thus enhancing the intelligibility of affective experience. When narrativity is impaired, the ability to establish meaningful relations between various affective states and other aspects of the person's life is also disrupted, thus resulting in emotions becoming less intelligible to both self and others. People affected by BPD, for example, struggle to identify the causes of their emotions and to understand the role they play in their life. The remarks of a patient of Stanghellini reported below highlight this aspect:

> You ask me what I feel when I feel like this…I want to be polite with you…I don't know, I can't say. I hope you are not like the other doc…She saw something 'metaphysical' in my mood. Why the fuck she thought so, I don't know! She said it was 'ineffable' and 'undefinable'. She may be right. But it doesn't help. I told her 'I just feel bad and I can't tell you why', but she wanted me to tell her 'the story' of this feeling. What an asshole! To insist like this! It made me feel even worse, it made me feel stupid. I got angry at her and at myself too, because I couldn't figure out 'why'… (Stanghellini and Rosfort, 2013: 154-155)

The disruptions of autobiographical narrativity experienced by the borderline patient thus have a negative impact on his ability to comprehend his own emotions, a feature which further contributes to the impairment of the person's ability to communicate and establish relationships with others.

Conclusions

From various perspectives it has been argued that borderline personality disorder is characterised by disturbances of narrative identity. Considering in particular the inability of borderline patients to form a coherent view of self and others in which different and sometimes contradictory aspects are included, Fuchs (2007) has suggested that the disorder is best understood as a "fragmentation" of narrative selfhood. In addition, according to him, disturbances of affective experience are central to the disorder and are connected in various ways to the disruptions of narrativity.

In line with some of the intuitions at the core of Fuchs' approach, in this chapter I provided an account of the various dynamics through which affectivity and narrativity influence each other in BPD. In the first place, I claimed that the unstable and polarised way in which the borderline person evaluates both self and others originates in a particular configuration of affective experience. I maintained that borderline patients frequently oscillate between existential feelings of shame and anger and that intrinsic to these feelings are self- and other-evaluations which possess an opposite structure. More specifically, while in shame the self is experienced as defective in front of a righteous other, in anger the other is perceived as defective in the eyes of a righteous self. Due to the fact that in the disorder shame and anger have the form of background orientations, when the person is in the grip of one of them, it becomes very difficult for her to experience the affective and evaluative states that are associated with the opposite affective state. This predicament, I suggested, hinders the continuity of the person's experience, making her unable to empathically access her previous states and to coherently connect them with her present emotions and evaluations.

I subsequently moved to consider how the disruptions of self-understanding characteristic of BPD impact on the structure of affectivity. I maintained that due to the disturbances of the ability to identify and describe the affective states they undergo, borderline patients tend to experience feelings of tension or excitement rather than specific emotions. When narrativity is impaired, the body acquires a more central role in affectivity, and I argued that this is an important feature of BPD, where both the experience and expression of affective states have predominantly a bodily character. In addition, I suggested that also the tendency of borderline patients to engage in self-injurious behaviours can be related to the "corporealization"[62] of affective experience which marks the illness.

I argued in Chapter 4 that narrativity shapes affectivity also by virtue of the role it plays in various emotional regulation mechanisms. Disruptions of narrative understanding can hinder the person's capacity to regulate her emotions in different ways and I showed in this chapter that this is a cardinal feature of BPD. For example, due to the impaired ability to identify affective states, it is more difficult for bordeline patients to communicate their emotions and to get adequate support from others. In addition, the fact that emotions are not integrated in coherent autobiographical narratives increases affective instability

---

[62] The notion of corporealization is used by Fuchs (2013) to describe the structure of bodily experience characteristic of depression, but in my account of the role of the body in the affective experience of borderline patients I use the term with a different meaning. Fuchs' analysis moves from the phenomenological distinction between the "lived body" and the "corporeal body". As highlighted in Chapter 1, the former notion refers to a pre-reflective experience of the body as the affective and volitional medium through which we access and engage with the world, while the latter designates an experiential structure where the body appears as an object of observation or manipulation. In Fuchs' opinion, in depression the body is corporealized in the sense that, rather than being experienced as the vehicle through which various forms of world-directed intentionality are realised, it becomes a heavy and static object which acts as an obstacle to the subject's activities. In the conclusions of this chapter, however, I use the term corporealization to refer to the role played by the body in the experience and expression of emotions in BPD, without taking a position as to whether this also entails a change of the type identified by Fuchs as central to depression.

for various reasons. On the one hand, as they are not connected to past and future experiences, the subject's affective states are completely determined by what happens "here" and "now" and can thus rapidly disappear when the circumstances change. On the other, as previously shown, central to narrative self-understanding are reflective and position-taking abilities which allow us to exert a level of control over the experiences we undergo and, as such, when the ability to narrate emotions is disrupted also the capacity to control them is reduced.

The account of BPD I developed has implications for the understanding of the relationship between minimal and narrative self. By showing that in the disorder affectivity constitutively shapes and is shaped by narrativity, I indeed provided an illustration of the inextricability of the two dimensions. In the experience of the borderline person, disruptions of the minimal and narrative levels of self-awareness are deeply entangled and conceiving of either dimension in isolation from the other would lead to an abstract understanding of the core features of the illness.

In addition, the idea that the impairment of narrative self-understanding has an impact on minimal self-experience seems to be further corroborated by the fact that borderline patients can experience significant alterations of their sense of reality, unity, and continuity, dimensions which, as detailed also by the EASE (Parnas et al., 2005) are at the core of minimal self-awareness. People affected by BPD can show psychotic symptoms similar to those experienced by schizophrenic and depressed patients, with depersonalisation occurring with an incidence of 30-85%, derealization of 30-92% and paranoid experiences of 32-100% (Gunderson, 2001: 15). A radical alteration of the patient's pre-reflective self-experience is evident for example in the following account:

> I was walking along the mall one day and I hadn't been feeling good. I was thinking all dismal things. The thoughts were spiralling me down. I started to feel as though I wasn't in my body. I was just watching it walking along. It was really crazy… I didn't know what to do or how to get back to normal. I just kept walking but I wasn't really there. I really freaked out… I ended up cutting myself really bad not like the cuts I had always done… I was bleeding everywhere. That's the first time I ended up in hospital. (Crowe, 2004: 332)

Both BPD and depression are thus best understood as disturbances of selfhood in which minimal and narrative aspects are inseparable. However, it is important to note that the structure of the two disorders is significantly different. As argued in Chapter 5, depression is characterised by the weakening or abandonment of some of the narratives with which the person identified prior to the illness and by the emergence of a new set of narratives congruent with the person's affective experience. On the other hand, as argued by Fuchs, central to BPD is a fragmentation of narrative self-understanding, that is a disrupted ability to create coherent narratives which is both the consequence and the origin of particular affective disturbances. As a result, the relationship between affectivity and narrativity in the two disorders is characterised by different dynamics. However, as I suggested, both exemplify the constitutive interconnectedness of minimal and narrative forms of self-awareness.

Conclusions

In this thesis I explored from a phenomenological perspective the relationship between affectivity and narrativity and its implications for our understanding of the nature of selfhood. A number of phenomenologically oriented approaches endorse the idea that it is possible to distinguish between two forms of selfhood: the "minimal" and "narrative" self. This work challenged some of the claims which are central to this account, namely the idea that the minimal and narrative sense of self complement each other but are fundamentally distinct dimensions and that, while the presence of a minimal self is a condition of possibility for the emergence of a narrative self, the dynamics which characterise narrative self-understanding do not have a structuring effect on minimal self-experience. I have done so by showing that at least certain forms of affective experience are complex phenomena in which minimal and narrative forms of self-awareness are deeply entwined. More specifically, I have claimed that while affectivity is to be considered as a fundamental dimension of minimal selfhood, there are various dynamics through which affective experience both shapes and is shaped by narrative self-understanding, so that the two are phenomenologically inextricable.

As highlighted in Chapter 1, the notion of pre-reflective self-consciousness is at the core of Gallagher and Zahavi's conception of minimal selfhood (e.g. Gallagher, 2000; Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008; Zahavi, 2007; 2008; 2010). In this context, pre-reflective self-consciousness is characterised as a pre-linguistic and pre-conceptual awareness of the self as the subject of experience and it is claimed that this form of self-awareness is intrinsic to any phenomenally conscious state. The sense of ownership and the sense of agency are considered to be fundamental features of minimal self-experience, but it is also maintained

that the minimal self is embodied, embedded, and temporally extended. The notion of narrative selfhood, on the other hand, refers to a self which possesses an individual history and personality and is constituted primarily through the stories that we and others tell about ourselves. While the minimal self is identified with pre-reflective self-experience, reflectivity and, in particular, evaluative position-taking are fundamental characteristics of narrative self-understanding.

According to the phenomenological approach, the minimal and narrative self are usually integrated but separable facets of selfhood. More specifically, it is suggested that the minimal self is impervious to the dynamics which operate at the level of narrative self-understanding. This conception is particularly visible in the way in which the distinction between minimal and narrative self has been applied in the field of philosophy of psychiatry. From this perspective, the distinction has been employed to account for the disturbances of self-awareness characteristic of different forms of psychopathological experience. In particular, it has been claimed that while schizophrenia involves disturbances of the pre-reflective level of self-experience (e.g. Parnas and Sass, 2001; Sass and Parnas, 2003) - thus amounting to a radical alteration of the structure of selfhood - the disruptions of self-consciousness typical of depression (e.g. Stanghellini, 2004) and borderline personality disorder (Fuchs, 2007) occur at the level of narrative understanding and are therefore less profound.

I claimed that this account is problematic for two main reasons. In the first place, while it is argued that, in order for a narrative self to develop, a minimal form of self-experience should already be in place, no explanation is given of how such form of self-experience impacts on narrative self-understanding. In other terms, it is not explained which are the pre-reflective dimensions and dynamics in which autobiographical narrativity originates. Secondly, it is

questionable whether the minimal self is as independent from the narrative self as this position claims. The idea that disturbances of narrative selfhood leave the experiential sense of self unaffected indeed suggests that the two dimensions are not structurally entangled. However, various supporters of the narrative account of selfhood maintain that narrative understanding has the power to shape our experience and it is arguable that this is the case also with regard to pre-reflective self-consciousness.

Moving from the idea that more clarity in regard to the questions raised in Chapter 1 could be achieved by taking into consideration the structure of affective experience, in Chapter 2 I examined how existing phenomenological accounts conceive of the relationship between affectivity, selfhood, and self-consciousness. Affectivity has been an important research topic in both classical and contemporary phenomenology, but comparatively few contributions have been made to the analysis of how affective experience is related to the minimal and narrative self. In this regard, I showed, affectivity is often associated with pre-reflective forms of bodily and self-experience (e.g. Colombetti, 2011; Slaby, 2008), thus suggesting that it can be conceived as a fundamental dimension of minimal selfhood, an idea that is consonant with some of the insights developed in phenomenological psychopathology (e.g. Parnas et al., 2005) and in the field of cognitive science (e.g. Damasio, 2000; 2012).

Some phenomenological approaches, however, claim that affectivity is connected also to more complex forms of self-consciousness and selfhood (e.g. De Monticelli, 2003; 2006; Scheler, 1973a). In particular, these approaches emphasise that affective experience, by virtue of the role it plays in the development of an individual evaluative perspective, is fundamental to the constitution of "personality" or "personhood". In so doing, these accounts, despite not being explicitly concerned with the notion of narrativity,

acknowledge the existence of a relationship between affectivity and some of the features that phenomenologists such as Gallagher and Zahavi consider to be essential to the notion of narrative self-understanding.

Therefore, the conception of the relationship between affectivity and selfhood that can be drawn on the basis of existing phenomenological accounts is two-fold. On the one hand it is recognised that the feelings which are implicated in affective experience are forms of pre-reflective self-consciousness, thus associating affectivity with minimal selfhood. On the other, it is claimed that affectivity is essentially involved in the constitution of a form of selfhood akin to the narrative self. I claimed that such a conception correctly identifies some aspects of the relationship between affectivity and selfhood, but is incomplete in so far as it overlooks the fact that narrativity is indeed a fundamental dimension of personhood. Therefore, endorsing the intuition that affectivity is cardinal also to the constitution of a form of selfhood that cannot be identified with the minimal self, but accepting the claim that narrativity is integral to this form of selfhood, in the rest of my thesis I aimed to provide a cohesive account of the relationship between affectivity and narrativity. In so doing, I extended the phenomenological view of the relationship between affectivity and the self presented in Chapter 2 and expanded and refined the account of minimal and narrative selfhood discussed in Chapter 1.

In Chapter 3 I argued that affectivity plays a constitutive role in the emergence and development of narrative self-understanding. In particular, I highlighted various dynamics through which affective experience shapes the form and contents of our life stories, thus providing an account of how minimal forms of self-awareness can impact on the structure of the narrative self.

Drawing on the work of Hogan (2011), I started by suggesting that emotions

fundamentally shape the temporal organisation of stories. I then claimed that, because of their evaluative character, emotions fundamentally influence the selection of narrative contents. From this perspective, relying on Hardcastle's work (2003; 2008) and on some of the phenomenological insights illustrated in Chapter 2, I suggested that by marking certain events and experiences as salient in specific ways, emotions allow us to choose what to include in our life narratives. In addition, I maintained that, due to their being forms of self-consciousness, emotions fundamentally contribute to our motivation to tell a story about ourselves.

Drawing on Schechtman's notion of "empathic access" (1996; 2001; 2007) I then suggested that affective experience fundamentally contributes to the continuity of the narrative self. Schechtman claims that in order for personal identity to be preserved despite the various changes we can undergo, it is not enough to be able to tell a coherent story about those changes. What is necessary is rather the ability to retain a particular form of experiential access to one's past mental states, access which depends on the fact that those states are not completely over and still have a role in the person's life. I claimed that, due to the role they play in the constitution of the person's evaluative perspective and in the motivation of her behaviour, affective states are central to the dynamics identified by Schechtman. More specifically, I argued that in order for the person to retain emphatic access to her past experience at least some of her affective states must persist over time. As such, I suggested, the continuity of the narrative self fundamentally depends on the continuity of its affective experience.

Another way in which affectivity shapes narrativity has to do with a specific phenomenological feature of narrative self-understanding. In this regard, I drew attention to the fact that not all the autobiographical stories we craft are

perceived as possessing the same degree of authenticity: some stories, indeed, are felt as being more "true to ourselves" than others. I suggested that the sense of authenticity associated with some life narratives depends on the level of congruence which exists between the emotions that are experienced and the emotions that are narrated. When there is a degree of correspondence between the two dimensions, that is when the contents of the person's autobiographical narratives are consonant with her affective experience, the narratives themselves are perceived as being authentic.

I then claimed that, because of their "pre-intentional" character (Ratcliffe, 2010), existential feelings play a distinct role in the structuring of narrative self-understanding. More specifically, I suggested that, in virtue of the fact that they constrain the range of mental states that we can entertain, these feelings also constrain the range of stories that we are able to conceive - our "narrative repertoire" - in various ways. In this regard, I first drew attention to the "sense of effectiveness", namely a felt sense of our capacity to have an impact on the external world and to deal with the circumstances we face. This experiential structure, which is akin to what Slaby calls "sense of ability" (2012), can be characterised as an existential feeling and I argued that it influences the way in which we attribute agency to ourselves and others in the stories we craft. I then claimed that, due to being fundamentally connected to the evaluative dimension (Slaby and Stephan, 2008), existential feelings determine which kinds of evaluative positions it is possible for us to take in the narrative self-understanding process.

Having identified in Chapter 3 various dynamics through which affectivity impacts on narrativity, in Chapter 4 I explored how autobiographical narrativity shapes affective experience. In this regard, some scholars have drawn attention to the fact that, although language is often used simply to

report our feelings, linguistic expression can also have a deeper impact on affective experience. Colombetti (2009), for example, suggests that language can clarify and enhance emotions, as well as being central to the dynamics through which affective labels and classifications impact on the person's experience and are in turn impacted upon by her behaviour. From this perspective, linguistic expression is *constitutive* of affective experience and I suggested that narrative forms of understanding are also central to these dynamics.

Drawing on Goldie's account (2002; 2011; 2012a), I then argued that, by virtue of their being incorporated in implicit or explicit forms of story-telling, emotions are organised and experienced as unitary and meaningful processes which comprise various components and unfold over time in characteristic ways. Narrativity is what makes it possible for us to conceive of the various emotion constituents as intelligibly related, thus allowing for a complexification of the structure of affective experience. I claimed that such a theoretical framework is also capable of accounting for the cultural differences and similarities in the experience and conceptualisation of emotions and for the way in which they change during development.

I then argued that narrativity influences the experiential structure of affectivity also by being involved in a variety of affective regulation processes. Drawing on some of the insights advanced in the field of Emotion Focused Therapy (Angus and Greenberg, 2011), I suggested that narratives make it possible to contextualise emotions by giving them specific temporal and spatial boundaries, allowing us to experience these emotions as circumscribed events which we are, to a certain extent, capable of managing. In addition, I claimed that the act of narrating itself, by virtue of its being an active process, can counteract the feelings of passivity associated with affective experience, thus enhancing our sense of being in control of our emotions. Finally, I maintained

that the evaluative position-taking abilities which are integral to narrative understanding also contribute to the regulation of affective experience, since, by taking a stance towards our emotions, we can, to a certain extent, control their development.

In the last part of the thesis I moved to apply the insights previously developed to the analysis of some features of depression and borderline personality disorder. Doing so allowed me to extend the phenomenological accounts of these disorders in various respects, while at the same time providing further examples of the dynamics discussed in Chapter 3 and 4 and corroborating the claim that minimal and narrative forms of self-experience are deeply entangled.

Various scholars have recognised that depression is characterised by disturbances of narrative selfhood. Further developing some of the intuitions at the core of Stanghellini and Englebert's account (Stanghellini, 2004; Englebert and Stanghellini, forthcoming), I argued that the life stories with which the depressed person identified prior to the illness, due to being no longer congruent with the patient's emotions, come to be experienced as inauthentic, a process which leads to a weakening or abandonment of the narratives themselves. Depression, however, is also characterised by the emergence of new narratives which possess specific characteristics and I claimed that these are rooted in particular configurations of affective experience. More specifically, I focused on the tendency shown by depressed patients to explain bad events in personal, permanent, and pervasive terms, namely their pessimistic "explanatory style" (Seligman, 2006), showing how this stems from particular existential feelings.

In the first place, I suggested that it is because of the experience of particular feelings of guilt that depressed people tend to hold themselves responsible for

the occurrence of negative events. According to Ratcliffe (2010), in certain cases of severe depression guilt acquires an existential character and is experienced as an irrevocable condition that radically constrains the range of intentional states the person is capable of undergoing. In these cases, guilt becomes an all-encompassing experience and it is very difficult for the patient not to conceive of himself as inherently culpable. I suggested that it is because of this predicament that when depressed patients have to explain the causes of bad events they are inclined to attribute responsibility to themselves rather than others or external factors. In addition, I maintained that this feature depends also on the high level of self-absorption that characterises depression.

I claimed that also the tendency of the depressed person to explain bad events in permanent terms stems from a specific form of affective experience. According to Ratcliffe (2013b), at least in certain cases of severe depression, what is experienced is not the loss of some intentional hopes, but rather a more radical loss of the "possibility of hoping", an existential transformation that significantly alters the way in which the person experiences herself and the world. I suggested that such feelings of hopelessness negatively impact on the patients' ability to conceive of negative events as transient. In addition, I claimed that these transformations are also related to the alterations of temporal experience typical of the disorder.

I then suggested that at the origin of the depressed person's tendency to give pervasive interpretations of negative events is a particular way of experiencing space. Further developing some insights put forward by Binswanger in his analysis of schizophrenia (2001), I argued that people affected by depression experience little or no separation between the various dimensions of their life, so that a negative event in one domain easily reflects on the others.

Finally, drawing on the insights into the relationship between narrativity and affect regulation presented in Chapter 4, I drew attention to how the narratives constructed by the depressed person negatively influence his ability to regulate his emotions by exacerbating feelings of helplessness and lack of control and by inhibiting the person's capacity to take an evaluative stance towards his affective states.

Disturbances of narrativity have been argued to be central also to borderline personality disorder (BPD). Fuchs (2007), in particular, has claimed that cardinal to the illness is a "fragmentation" of narrative selfhood, namely the inability to form a conception of self and others where both positive and negative aspects are coherently integrated. In this study I developed Fuchs' account in various directions. In the first place, I suggested that the instability and polarisation characteristic of the way in which the borderline person evaluates himself and others originate in a particular configuration of existential feelings. More specifically, I claimed that central to BPD is the alternation of existential forms of shame and anger. I suggested that the evaluations of self and other intrinsic to these affects have an opposite structure: while in shame the self is evaluated as defective in the eyes of a righteous other, integral to anger is an appraisal of the other as defective in the eyes of a righteous self. Due to the fact that shame and anger in the disorder have a pre-intentional character, when the person is experiencing one of the two feelings, it becomes very difficult to access the cognitive and affective states that are associated with the other. As a result, the continuity of affective experience is disrupted and the person lacks empathic access to a wide range of her previous mental states, thus generating the fragmentation of narrative understanding at the core of the illness.

I then illustrated how the disruptions of narrativity in turn impact on the

borderline person's affective experience. I suggested that the narrative disturbances negatively influence the patients' ability to identify and describe their emotions and that, as a result of this, they experience vague states of arousal rather than clearly differentiated affective states. In addition, I claimed that when narrativity is impaired, affectivity tends to have predominantly a bodily character and that this is exemplified by the way in which borderline patients both experience and express emotions. I maintained that also the self-injurious behaviours characteristic of the disorder can be understood in relation to this feature, as patients reportedly engage in self-harm to communicate, trigger, or manage certain feelings.

I subsequently moved to consider how the narrative disturbances influence the borderline person's ability to regulate her emotions. I stressed that, since they are not included in stories that connect past, present, and future events, emotions in the disorder are fully focused on the subject's current circumstances and, when these change, also the emotions rapidly change. On the other hand, due to her impaired narrative abilities, it is difficult for the borderline person to take an evaluative stance in regard to her affective experience and thus exert a level of control over its development. In addition, emotions which are not narrativised lack meaningfulness and this hinders the borderline person's capacity to understand and communicate them.

The accounts of depression and borderline personality disorder I developed in Chapter 5 and 6 provided various examples of the dynamics through which affectivity and narrativity constitutively shape each other, thus further corroborating the idea that minimal and narrative levels of self-experience are phenomenologically inextricable. As such, my analysis challenged the claim that these disorders are best understood as disturbances of narrative selfhood. Indeed, while I acknowledged that alterations of narrativity are crucial to both

forms of psychiatric illness, by identifying the affective underpinnings and implications of these alterations, I showed that disturbances of minimal selfhood are equally central to these disorders.

My thesis thus contributes to the debate on the nature of selfhood by arguing, on the basis of a phenomenological analysis of the relationship between affectivity and narrativity, that minimal and narrative forms of self-consciousness are deeply entwined. This account, however, does not suggest that the distinction between minimal and narrative self should be abandoned, but rather illustrates a particular way in which it could be refined. I have indeed shown that the structure of affective experience, and thus the pre-reflective level of awareness to which it is integral, is shaped by narrative self-understanding in various ways, but I have acknowledged that this is the outcome of a process that requires the development of certain cognitive abilities and that affective forms of self-consciousness predate, and drive, the emergence of autobiographical narrativity.

The research developed in this thesis could be extended in various directions. As far as the field of phenomenological psychopathology is concerned, the present work has focused on various aspects of the relationship between affectivity, narrativity, and selfhood in depression and borderline personality disorder. It would thus be interesting to expand this account by taking into consideration other forms of psychiatric or neurological illness, especially the ones which are considered to involve significant disturbances of affective experience or narrative abilities. It has been claimed for example that dysnarrativia is typical of pathologies such as Alzheimer's disease and Korsakov's syndrome (Bruner, 2003: 86), but the relation that these narrative impairments have with affective experience and self-awareness is still to be explored. The theoretical framework developed in this thesis could be a fruitful

starting point for the investigation of this topic and it could itself be further clarified and extended through the analysis of the experiential structures characteristic of these disorders.

The insights advanced in this work have implications not only for the way in which we conceive of selfhood and its pathologies, but also for our understanding of the structure of affective experience. In this thesis I have shown that narrativity constitutively shapes affectivity in various ways and this account could be expanded by considering how it could help to refine existing affective taxonomies. Some scholars differentiate between primary or basic emotions and more complex kinds of affective experience which, in their opinion, can only be undergone once relatively complex forms of self-consciousness have emerged (e.g. Lewis, 1992). It would be interesting to explore whether the analysis of the relationship between affectivity and narrativity supports this view, for example by trying to understand if some emotions only exist in a narrative form or all emotions can have both narrative and non-narrative variants.

Finally, the research conducted in this thesis could be expanded by considering how intersubjectivity is involved in the relationship between affectivity and narrativity. The scholars who support narrative accounts of selfhood often emphasise the role played by social interactions in shaping our life stories, thus establishing a close connection between narrative understanding and the social dimension. However, others have claimed that an excessive reliance on social models when crafting one's autobiographical narratives can be at the origin of disturbances of selfhood such as those present in depression (e.g. Stanghellini, 2004). In this regard, it would be valuable to investigate the dynamics through which the individual becomes able to confer on the stories he authors a certain degree of originality and independence from the social scripts available to him

and to explore how affectivity can support or hinder these processes.

References

Adler, J.M., Chin, E.D., Kolisetty, A.P. and Oltmanns, T.F. 2012. The Distinguishing Characteristics of Narrative Identity in Adults with Features of Borderline Personality Disorder: An Empirical Investigation. *Journal of Personality Disorders* 26(4): 498-512.

American Psychiatric Association. 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. DSM-5. Fifth Edition. Arlington (VA): American Psychiatric Association.

Angus, L.E. and Greenberg, L.S. 2011. *Working with Narrative in Emotion-Focused Therapy. Changing Stories, Healing Lives*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

Bagby, M. and Taylor, G. 1997a. Affect Dysregulation and Alexithymia. In Taylor, G.L., Bagby, R.M. and Parker, J.D.A. *Disorders of Affect Regulation. Alexithymia in Medical and Psychiatric Illness.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 26-45.

Bagby, M. and Taylor, G. 1997b. Anxiety and Depressive Disorders and a Note on Personality Disorders. In Taylor, G.L., Bagby, R.M. and Parker, J.D.A. *Disorders of Affect Regulation. Alexithymia in Medical and Psychiatric Illness.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 138-165.

Bagozzi, R.P., Verbeke, W. and Gavino, J.C. Jr. 2003. Culture Moderates the Self-Regulation of Shame and Its Effects on Performance: The Case of Salespersons in the Netherlands and the Philippines. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 88(2): 219-233.

Baker, L. 2000. *Persons and Bodies. A Constitution View*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Beck, A.T. 1972. *Depression: Causes and Treatment*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bermúdez, J. 1998. *The Paradox of Self-Consciousness*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.

Biegler, P. 2011. *The Ethical Treatment of Depression. Autonomy Through Psychotherapy*. Cambrige (MA): MIT Press.

Binswanger, L. 2001 [1952-1953]. *Il Caso Suzanne Urban. Storia di una Schizofrenia.* Second Edition. Translated by G. Giacometti. Venezia: Marsilio Editori.

Binswanger, L. 2006 [1960]. *Malinconia e mania. Studi Fenomenologici.* Second Edition. Translated by M. Marzotto. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.

Brampton, S. 2009 [2008]. *Shoot the Damn Dog. A Memoir of Depression.* London: Bloomsbury.

Brison, S. 2003 [2002]. *Aftermath. Violence and the Remaking of a Self.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bruner, J.S. 2003 [2002]. *Making Stories. Law, Literature, Life.* Cambridge (MA) and London: Harvard University Press.

Bruner, J.S. 2004. Life as Narrative. *Social Research* 71(3): 691-710.

Campbell, S. 1997. *Interpreting the Personal. Expression and the Formation of Feelings.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Carr, D. 1986. *Time, Narrative, and History.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Carroll, N. 2001. On the Narrative Connection. In Carroll, N. *Beyond Aesthetics. Philosophical Essays.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 118-133.

Castañeda, H.N. 1966. 'He': A Study in the Logic of Self-Consciousness. *Ratio* 8: 130-157.

Colombetti, G. 2009. What Language Does to Feelings. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 16(9): 4-26.

Colombetti, G. 2011. Varieties of Pre-Reflective Self-Awareness: Foreground and Background Bodily Feelings in Emotion Experience. *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 54(3): 293–313.

Colombetti, G. 2013. *The Feeling Body. Affective Science Meets the Enactive Mind.* Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.

Cozolino, L. 2006. *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships. Attachment and the Developing Social Brain.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Crowe, M. 2004. Never Good Enough – part. 1: Shame or Borderline Personality Disorder? *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing* 11(3): 327 – 334.

Damasio, A. 2000 [1999]. *The Feeling of What Happens. Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness.* London: Vintage.

Damasio, A. 2003. *Looking for Spinoza. Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*. William Heinemann: London.

Damasio, A. 2012 [2010]. *Self Comes to Mind. Constructing the Conscious Brain*. Vintage: London.

De Monticelli, R. 2003. *L'Ordine del Cuore*. Milano: Garzanti.

De Monticelli, R. 2006. The Feeling of Values. For a Phenomenological Theory of Affectivity. In Bagnara, S. and Crampton Smith, G. (Eds.). *Theories and Practice in Interaction Design*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: 57-75.

Dennett, D. 1988. Why Everyone is a Novelist. *Times Literary Supplement* September 16-22.

Dennett, D. 1991. *Consciousness Explained*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Deonna, J.A. and Teroni, F. 2012. [2008]. *The Emotions. A Philosophical Introduction*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

De Sousa, R. 1987. *The Rationality of Emotion*. Cambridge (MA) and London: MIT Press.

De Sousa, R. 2007. Truth, Authenticity, and Rationality. *Dialectica* 61(3): 323-345.

Ebner-Priemer, U.W., Kuo, J., Kleindienst, N., Welch, S.S., Reisch, T., Reinhard, I., Lieb, K., Linehan, M.M. and Bohus, M. 2007a. State Affective Instability in Borderline Personality Disorder Assessed by Ambulatory Monitoring. *Psychological Medicine* 37(7): 961-970.

Ebner-Priemer, U.W., Welch, S.S., Grossman, P., Reisch, T., Linehan, M.M. and Bohus, M. 2007b. Psychophysiological Ambulatory Assessment of Affective Dysregulation in Borderline Personality Disorder. *Psychiatry Research* 150(3): 265-275.

Englebert, J. and Stanghellini, G. Forthcoming. La Manie et la Mélancolie Comme Crises de l'Identité Narrative et de l'Intentionnalité. *L'Évolution Psychiatrique*.

Fivush, R. 1994. Constructing Narrative, Emotion, and Self in Parent-Child Conversations About the Past. In Neisser, U., Fivush, R. (Eds). *The Remembering Self. Construction and Accuracy in the Self-Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 136-157.

Fonagy, P. and Bateman, A.W. 2007. Mentalizing and Borderline Personality Disorder. *Journal of Mental Health* 16(1): 83-101.

Fonagy, P., Gergely, G., Jurist, E.L. and Target, M. 2002. *Affect Regulation, Mentalization and the Development of the Self*. New York: Other Press.

Frankfurt, H.G. 1971. Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person. *Journal of Philosophy* 68(1): 5–20.

Fuchs, T. 2005. Corporealized and Disembodied Minds. A Phenomenological View of the Body in Melancholia and Schizophrenia. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 12(2): 95-107.

Fuchs, T. 2007. Fragmented Selves: Temporality and Identity in Borderline Personality Disorder. *Psychopathology* 40: 379-387.

Fuchs, T. 2013. Depression, Intercorporeality and Interaffectivity. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 20(7-8): 219-238.

Gallagher, S. 2000. Philosophical Conceptions of the Self: Implications for Cognitive Science. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 4(1): 14-21.

Gallagher, S. 2005. *How the Body Shapes the Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gallagher, S. and Cole, J. 1995. Body Schema and Body Image in a Deafferented Subject. *Journal of Mind and Behavior* 16: 369-390; reprinted in Welton, D. (Ed.) 1998. *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader*. Cambridge (MA) and Oxford: Blackwell: 131- 147.

Gallagher, S. and Zahavi, D. 2008. *The Phenomenological Mind. An Introduction to Philosophy of mind and Cognitive Science*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Goldie, P. 2002 [2000]. *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Goldie, P. 2011. Grief: A Narrative Account. *Ratio* 24(2): 119-137.

Goldie, P. 2012a. *The Mess Inside. Narrative, Emotion, & The Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Goldie, P. 2012b. Loss of Affect in Intellectual Activity. *Emotion Review* 4(2): 122-126.

Greenberg, L.S. and Angus, L.E. 2004. The Contribution of Emotion Processes to

Narrative Change in Psychotherapy. A Dialectical Constructivist Approach. In Angus, L.E. and McLeod, J. (Eds.). *The Handbook of Narrative and Psychotherapy. Practice, Theory and Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications: 331 – 350.

Guignon, C. 2006 [2004]. *On Being Authentic*. London: Routledge.

Gunderson, J.G. 1996. The Borderline Patient's Intolerance of Aloneness: Insecure Attachments and Therapist Availability. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 153(6): 752-758.

Gunderson, J.G. 2001. *Borderline Personality Disorder. A clinical guide*. Washington DC: American Psychiatric Press.

Habermas, T. and Bluck, S. 2000. Getting a Life: The Emergence of the Life Story in Adolescence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126(5): 748-769.

Hacking, I. 1991. The Making and Molding of Child Abuse. *Critical Inquiry* 17(2): 253-288.

Hacking, I. 1996 [1995]. The Looping Effects of Human Kinds. In Sperber, D., Premack, D. and Premack, A.J. (Eds.). *Causal Cognition. A Multidisciplinary Debate*. Oxford: Clarendon Press: 351-383.

Hacking, I. 1999. *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge (MA) and London: Harvard University Press.

Hardcastle, V. G. 2003. Emotions and Narrative Selves. *Philosophy, Psychiatry & Psychology* 10(4): 353-355.

Hardcastle, V. G. 2008. *Constructing the Self*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamin Publishing Company.

Heidegger, M. 1962 [1927]. *Being and Time*. Translated by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson. Oxford and Malden (MA): Basil Blackwell.

Helm, B.W. 2001. *Emotional Reason: Deliberation, Motivation, and the Nature of Value*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Helm, B.W. 2002. Felt Evaluations: A Theory of Pleasure and Pain. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 39(1): 13-30.

Henry, M. 1973. [1963]. *The Essence of Manifestation*. Translated by G. Etzkorn. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoof.

Herman, D. 2013. *Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.

Hogan, P.H. 2011. *Affective Narratology. The Emotional Structure of Stories*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.

Husserl, E. 1989 [1952]. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Second Book. Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*. Translated by R. Roicewizy and A. Schuwer. Dordrecht and London: Kluwer Academic.

Husserl, E. 1991 [1966]. *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893 -1917).* Translated by J. Barnett Brough. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.

Hutto, D.D. 2009. Folk Psychology as Narrative Practice. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 16(6-8): 9-39.

James, W. 1884. What is an Emotion? *Mind* 9(34): 188 – 205.

Jørgensen, C.R. 2006. Disturbed Sense of Identity in Borderline Personality Disorder. *Journal of Personality Disorders* 20(6): 618-644.

Kim, J. 2006. *Philosophy of Mind*. Second Edition. Cambridge (MA): Westview Press.

Kleindienst, N., Bohus, M., Ludäscher, P., Limberger, M.F., Kuenkele, K., Ebner-Priemer, U.W., Chapman, A.L., Reicherzer, M., Stieglitz, R-D. and Schmahl, C. 2008. Motives for Nonsuicidal Self-Injury Among Women with Borderline Personality Disorder. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 196(3): 230-236.

Kravitz, R. and Jackson, W. 2008. *Borderline Personality Disorder*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kreisman, J.J. and Straus, H. 2010. *I Hate You – Don't Leave Me. Understanding the Borderline Personality*. New York: Perigee.

Lamarque, P. 2004. On not Expecting Too Much From Narrative. *Mind & Language* 19(4): 393–408.

Larsen, R. 1987. The Stability of Mood Variability: A Spectral Analytic Approach to Daily Mood Assessments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 52(6): 1195–1204.

Legrand, D. 2007. Pre-Reflective Self-Consciousness: On Being Bodily in the World. *Janus Head* 9(2): 493-519.

Legrand, D. 2011. Phenomenological Dimensions of Bodily Self-Consciousness. In Gallagher, S. (Ed.) *Oxford Handbook of the Self*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 204-227.

Levine, D., Marziali, E. and Hood, J. 1997. Emotion Processing in Borderline Personality Disorders. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 185(4): 240-246.

Lewis, C.S. 1961. *A Grief Observed*. London: Faber and Faber.

Lewis, H.B. 1971. *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*. New York: International Universities Press.

Lewis, M. 1992. *Shame: The Exposed Self.* New York: Free Press.

Lutz, C. 1983. Parental Goals, Ethnopsychology, and the Development of Emotional Meaning. *Ethos* 11(4): 246-262.

Lutz, C. 1988. *Unnatural Emotions. Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll & Their Challenge to Western Theory*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

MacIntyre, A. 1984. *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory*. Second Edition. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Marian Anderson 1991. Produced by D. James [Film]. Washington, DC: WETA Public Television.

Mascolo, M.F. and Fischer, K.W. 1995. Developmental Transformations in Appraisals for Pride, Shame and Guilt. In Tangney, J.P. and Fischer, K.W. (Eds.). *Self-Conscious Emotions: The Psychology of Shame, Guilt, Embarassment and Pride*. New York: Guildford Press: 64-113.

Mason, P.T. and Kreger, R. 2010. *Stop Walking on Eggshells. Taking Your Life Back When Someone You Care About Has Borderline Personality Disorder*. Second Edition. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications.

Meltzoff, A.N. and Moore, M.K. 1977. Imitation of Facial and Manual Gestures by Human Neonates. *Science* 198(4312): 75-78.

Meltzoff, A.N. and Moore, M.K. 1989. Imitation in Newborn Infants: Exploring the Range of Gestures Imitated and the Underlying Mechanisms. *Developmental Psychology* 25(6): 954–62.

Meltzoff, A.N. and Moore, M.K. 1994. Imitation, Memory, and the Representation of Persons. *Infant Behavior and Development* 17(1): 83-99.

Menary, R. 2008. Embodied Narratives. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 15(6): 63–84.

Merleau-Ponty, M. 1962 [1945]. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by C. Smith. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Mill, J.S. 1873. *Autobiography*. London: Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer.

Nica, E.I. and Links, P.S. 2009. Affective Instability in Borderline Personality Disorder: Experience Sampling Findings. *Current Psychiatry Reports* 11(1): 74-81.

Nolen-Hoeksema, S. 2000. The Role of Rumination in Depressive Disorders and Mixed Anxiety/Depressive Symptoms. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 109(3): 504-511.

Nussbaum, M.C. 2001. *Upheavals of Thought. The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nussbaum, M.C. 2004. Emotions as Judgments of Value and Importance. In Solomon, R.C. (Ed.). *Thinking about Feeling. Contemporary Philosophers on Emotion*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press: 183-199.

Nyquist Potter, N. 2006. What is Manipulative Behavior, Anyway? *Journal of Personality Disorders* 20(2): 139-156.

Parnas, J., Møller, P., Kircher, T., Thalbitzer, J., Jansson, L., Handest, P. and Zahavi, D. 2005. EASE: Examination of Anomalous Self-Experience. *Psychopathology* 38: 236-258.

Parnas, J. and Sass, L.A. (2001). Self, Solipsism, and Schizophrenic Delusions. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 8(2/3): 101-120.

Patočka, J. 1998 [1995]. *Body, Community, Language, World*. Translated by E. Kohák. Chicago and La Salle: Open Court.

Pazzagli, A. and Rossi Monti, M. 2000. Dysphoria and Aloneness in Borderline Personality Disorder. *Psychopathology* 33(4): 220-226.

Plath, S. 2005 [1963]. *The Bell Jar*. London: Faber and Faber.

Prinz, J. 2010. The Moral Emotions. In Goldie, P. (Ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of*

Philosophy of Emotion. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press: 519 – 538.

Pugmire, D. 2005. *Sound Sentiments: Integrity in the Emotions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Radden, J. 2013. The Self and Its Moods in Depression and Mania. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 20 (7-8): 80-102.

Ratcliffe, M. 2005. The Feeling of Being. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 12 (8-10): 43-60.

Ratcliffe, M. 2008. *Feelings of Being. Phenomenology, Psychiatry and the Sense of Reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ratcliffe, M. 2010. Depression, Guilt and Emotional Depth. *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 53 (6): 602 – 626.

Ratcliffe, M. 2012. Varieties of Temporal Experience in Depression. *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 37(2): 114-138.

Ratcliffe, M. 2013a. Why Mood Matters. In Wrathall, M.A. (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger's Being and Time*. New York: Cambridge University Press: 157-176.

Ratcliffe, M. 2013b. What is it to Lose Hope? *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 12(4): 597-614.

Ratcliffe, M. Forthcoming. Existential Feeling and Narrative. In Breyer, T., Mueller, O. (Eds.). *Funktionen des Lebendingen*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Reiland, R. 2004. *Get Me Out of Here. My Recovery from Borderline Personality Disorder*. Center City: Hazelden.

Ricoeur, P. 1988 [1985]. *Time and Narrative*. Volume 3. Translated by K. Blamey and D. Pellauer. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Ricoeur, P. 1994 [1992]. *Oneself as Another*. Translated by K. Blamey. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Roberts, R.C. 2003. *Emotions. An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rosfort, R. and Stanghellini, G. 2009. The Person in Between Moods and Affects.

Philosophy, Psychiatry & Pychology 16(3): 251-266.

Sartre, J.P. 1958 [1943]. *Being and Nothingness*. Translated by H.E. Barnes. London: Methuen.

Sass, L.A. 2000. Schizophrenia, Self-Experience and the So-Called 'Negative Symptoms'. In Zahavi, D. (Ed.). *Exploring the Self. Philosophical and Psychopathological Perspectives on Self-Experience*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company: 149-182.

Sass, L. A. and Parnas, J. 2003. Schizophrenia, Consciousness, and the Self. *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 29(3): 427-444.

Sass, L.A. and Pienkos, E. 2013a. Varieties of Self-Experience. A Comparative Phenomenology of Melancholia, Mania and Schizophrenia, Part I. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 20 (7-8): 103-130.

Sass, L.A. and Pienkos, E. 2013b. Space, Time, and Atmosphere. A Comparative Phenomenology of Melancholia, Mania and Schizophrenia, Part II. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 20 (7-8): 131-152.

Schechtman, M. 1996. *The Constitution of Selves*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Schechtman, M. 2001. Empathic Access: The Missing Ingredient in Personal Identity. *Philosophical Explorations: An International Journal for the Philosophy of Mind and Action*, 4(2): 95-111.

Schechtman, M. 2007. Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival: A Refinement and Defense of the Narrative View. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 60: 155-178.

Scheler, M. 1973a [1916]. *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*. Translated by M.S. Frings and R.L. Funk. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Scheler, M. 1973b [1957]. Ordo Amoris. In Scheler, M. *Selected Philosophical Essays*. Translated by D.R. Lachterman. Evanston: Northwestern University Press: 98-135.

Scherer, K.R., Walbott, H.G. and Summerfield, A.B. (Eds.). 1986. *Experiencing Emotions: A Cross-Cultural Study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Seligman, M.E.P. 2006. *Learned Optimism. How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*. New York: Vintage Books.

Shearer, S.L. 1994. Phenomenology of Self-Injury Among Inpatient Women With Borderline Personality Disorder. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 182(9): 524-526.

Shoemaker, S. 1968. Self-Reference and Self-Awareness. *The Journal of Philosophy* 65(19): 555-567.

Slaby, J. 2008. Affective Intentionality and the Feeling Body. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 7(4): 429 – 444.

Slaby, J. 2012. Affective Self-Construal and the Sense of Ability. *Emotion Review* 4(2): 151 -156.

Slaby, J. and Stephan, A. 2008. Affective Intentionality and Self-Consciousness. *Consciousness and Cognition* 17(2): 506 – 513.

Slors, M.V.P. 1998. Two Conceptions of Psychological Continuity. *Philosophical Explorations: An International Journal for the Philosophy of Mind and Action* 1(1): 61–80.

Solomon, A. 2002 [2001]. *The Noonday Demon. An Anatomy of Depression*. London: Vintage.

Solomon, R. 1973. Emotions and Choice. *The Review of Metaphysics* 27(1): 20-41.

Stanghellini, G. 2004. *Disembodied Spirits and Deanimated Bodies: The Psychopathology of Common Sense*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stanghellini, G., Bertelli, M., Raballo, A. 2006. Typus Melancholicus: Personality Structure and the Characteristics of Major Unipolar Depressive Episode. *Journal of Affective Disorders* 93(1-3): 159-167.

Stanghellini, G. and Rosfort, R. 2013. Borderline Depression. A Desperate Vitality. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 20 (7-8): 153-177.

Stiglmayr, C.E., Shapiro, D.A., Stieglitz, R.D., Limberger, M.F. and Bohus, M. 2001. Experience of Aversive Tension and Dissociation in Female Patients With Borderline Personality Disorder – A Controlled Study. *Journal of Psychiatric Research* 35(2): 111-118.

Strasser, S. 1977 [1956]. *Phenomenology of Feeling. An Essay on the Phenomena of the Heart*. Translated by R.E. Wood. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Strawson, G. 1999. The Self and the SESMET. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 6(4): 99-135.

Strawson, G. 2004. Against Narrativity. *Ratio* 17(4): 428–452.

Styron, W. 2001. *Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness*. London: Vintage.

Tangney, J. P., Stuewig, J. and Mashek, D.J. 2007. Moral Emotions and Moral Behavior. *Annual Review of Psychology* 58: 345-372.

Tappolet, C. 2000. *Emotions et Valeurs*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Taylor-Aiken, A.J. 2011. *Relatedness and Alienation in Interpersonal Understanding: A Phenomenological Account*. Durham theses, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/3338/> Accessed: 16th May 2015.

Taylor, G. 1985. *Pride, Shame, and Guilt. Emotions of Self-Assessment*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Teroni, F. and Deonna, J.A. 2008. Differentiating Shame From Guilt. *Consciousness and Cognition* 17(3): 725 – 740.

Thompson, E. 2007. *Mind in Life. Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind*. Cambridge (MA) and London: Belknap Press.

Thompson, T. 1996 [1995]. *The Beast. A Journey Through Depression*. New York: Plume.

Tolstoy, L. 2006 [1877]. *Anna Karenina*. Translated by J. Carmichael. New York: Bantam.

Velleman, J.D. 2003. Narrative Explanation. *The Philosophical Review* 112(1): 1-25.

Velleman, J.D. 2006. *Self to Self: Selected Essays*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wilkinson-Ryan, T. and Westen, D. 2000. Identity Disturbance in Borderline Personality Disorder: An empirical Investigation. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 157(4): 528–541.

Wittgenstein, L. 1958. *Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations". Generally known as The Blue and Brown Books*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Wong, Y. and Tsai, J. 2007. Cultural Models of Shame and Guilt. In Tracy, J., Robins, R., Tangney, J. (Eds.). *Handbook of Self-Conscious Emotions*. New York: Guildford Press: 209-223.

World Health Organization. 1992. *The ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioral Disorders. Clinical Descriptions and Diagnostic Guidelines*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Wyllie, M. 2005. Lived Time and Psychopathology. *Philosophy, Psychiatry & Psychology* 12(3): 173-185.

Zahavi, D. 1999. *Self-Awareness and Alterity. A Phenomenological Investigation*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Zahavi, D. 2003. *Husserl's Phenomenology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Zahavi, D. 2007. Self and Other: The Limits of Narrative Understanding. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 60: 179-202.

Zahavi, D. 2008 [2005]. *Subjectivity and Selfhood. Investigating the First-Person Perspective*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.

Zahavi, D. 2010. Minimal Self and Narrative Self. A Distinction in Need of Refinement. In Fuchs, T., Sattel, H., Heningsen, P. (Eds.). *The Embodied Self. Dimensions, Coherence and Disorders*. Stuttgart : Schattauer Gmbh: 3-11.

Zahavi, D. 2014. *Self and Other. Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.