Body and Soul . . . and the Artifact: The Aesthetically Extended Self

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Abstract: *By thinking on my personal (som)aesthetic experience as a would-be jazz saxophonist, I will argue that the relationship between musician and instrument can exemplify the "extended self" thesis in the artistic/aesthetic realm. As can happen with a human partner, a special affective relationship may arise between human being and instrument and, through repeated practice, the instrument can become an indispensable element of the aesthetic habits by virtue of which we interact with the environment, thus becoming part of the (extended) self. As I will suggest, this special bodily and affective relationship is due to the affordances offered by the instrumental partner and to the expressive experiences that this encounter makes possible. This affective relationship is one of the reasons behind the regret we feel for the destruction or loss of artifacts. Thanks to the assiduity of a somaesthetic relationship, it happens that these objects become extensions not only of the body but also of the mind or "soul."*

Keywords: *artifactual agency, extended self, affective scaffolding, aesthetic habits, arts of action, artifact-human entanglement.*

1. Artifacts as Agentive Extensions of the Self

The philosophical inquiry I intend to develop in this article can be introduced by raising the following question: How is it that we feel such respect for material cultural artifacts that we feel sorry if they are damaged or lost and even find it morally wrong to damage or destroy them? The material cultural artifacts that I have in mind here include not only books, artworks, songs, and technological artifacts such as computers and smartphones but also, for example, pieces of furniture, clothes, jewelry, and toys. I also consider means of transportation (e.g., cars and bikes), as well as musical instruments; the latter two types of artifacts, in particular, will be the focus of the present article. Thus, the specific question driving the discussion in this article can be spelled out as follows: Why do we generally respect musical instruments and many find it sad, hideous, offensive, and morally wrong to damage or destroy them?

According to Davies (2003, pp. 108–118), we (should) respect musical instruments because they are "honorary persons," whereas according to Ravasio (2016), our revulsion toward

damaging or destroying musical instruments stems from the fact that unlike other tools, musical instruments are like *artworks*. My own view is that despite how incompatible these perspectives may seem, their difference does not seem to be crucial. Indeed, following Joseph Margolis (1974, 1999), it could be argued that *artworks are like persons*. Therefore, if a musical instrument is like an artwork, then it may turn out, as I shall defend, that it is also like a person, or, in a sense (and I will clarify in this article), a *part* of a person.

More precisely, my point is this: our relationship with musical instruments is like our relationship with artworks since these artifacts both shape, extend, and intensify our experiences. Artifacts, including those of which we take loving care (such as racing or mountain bikes, cars, jewelry, toys, clothes, or pieces of furniture), are like people we care for and people who take care of us: they become part of our "extended self" in the sense that they allow us to broaden, deepen, and enhance our experiences of the world.[1] In particular, musical instruments—and especially our own musical instruments that we habitually use to make music—are like artworks in that they extend our self by means of generating aesthetic experiences. The peculiarity of musical instruments is that—like other tools, such as a racing bike—they generate aesthetic experiences above all through the use we make of them (I say "above all" because mere contemplation of them as material and cultural artifacts and as symbolic objects can also result in rewarding aesthetic experiences).

Even more precisely, in this paper, I argue the following. Musical instruments (as well as other artifacts we deal with in our daily occupations) are like artworks in that they can possess an *agentivity* of their own—as has been theorized in different ways in relation to technological artifacts (see Mitcham, 2014, for a critical survey).[2] Artifacts, including artworks and other material cultural objects, are not inert. As outcomes and effects of active shaping production, they incorporate and often display in their own material body the agency that forged them, signaling its purpose, function, and meaning—or so some argue (cf., e.g., Gell, 1998). Through the different ways in which this embodied agency can be detected (e.g., by abducting it through perception and imagination), artifacts can produce affective and cognitive effects, exercise power, and establish relationships with human beings (as well as with other artifacts; however, I will not explore this theme here). Put succinctly, cultural material artifacts are endowed with values tied to ends and meanings of human agency, and they variously influence human behavior, change the way human beings perceive and understand the world, as well as modify the way they mutually (inter)act in the world. In a sense, cultural material artifacts are involved as partners in the *distributed agency* that characterizes our inhabiting the world as human beings—to such an

1 A clarification of terminology is in order here. The term "mind" is related to the cognitive sphere in general, whereas the term "self" seems to indicate a reference to consciousness and self-consciousness. However, in this article, I will use the two terms indiscriminately, particularly because I am interested in discussing one aspect of the theory of the "extended mind" or "extended self." In other words, "extended self" and "extended mind" are interchangeable notions, at least for the purposes of this article. Moreover, by "personality," I mean not only the state and status of being a person with self-awareness and potential responsibility for one's own actions (this could be encompassed by the notion of "personhood"), but also the particular array of characteristic emotional, mental, and physical responses to life situations that builds and manifests human beings' individuality. In this sense, on the one hand, it is possible to attribute personality to an artifact if it manifests (to someone) a specific individuality or a particular character, while on the other hand, human beings' individual personality is always extended, in the sense of being built from different experiences arising thanks to cognitive and affective interaction with other people, objects, and, more generally, the environment. The extension of the personality is therefore a question of degree, and the experiences we have also contribute to extending our personality in the sense of consolidating and deepening it.

2 The topics of *artifactual* and *material agency* are complex, being studied from different research perspectives and featuring very different aspects. Without any pretense of completeness, I present some of them here. An important current debate concerns the moral responsibility of the socio-material agency of technological artifacts (Kroes & Verbeek, 2014). Another topic of discussion is the (affective, emotional, and symbolic) power of images and pictures (Freedberg, 1989; Mitchell, 2005), on the one hand, and of sounds and music (Cochrane et al., 2013; Juslin, 2019), on the other. Still another question, of an ontological sort, regards the personal status of artworks (Margolis, 1974, 1999). Last but not least, key research issues include those of *material engagement* (Malafouris, 2013), *entanglement* between human beings and things (Hodder, 2012), and non-anthropocentric approaches to *distributed agency* and *creativity* (Knappett & Malafouris, 2008; Enfield & Kockelman, 2017; Clarke & Doffman, 2017).

extent that a kind of *personality* can be attributed to them.

Consequently, an intimate relationship can develop between the self and given artifacts, and a specific modality of *extension of the self* can follow from this relationship. Artifacts that are dear to us by virtue of the experiences they offer may be seen—and felt—not only as persons with whom we interact but also *as parts of our personality* (i.e., as elements of our *extended self*). Artifacts—as well as other persons (e.g., caregivers for newborns)—extend the self and become a part of it since the reciprocally integrated relationship between artifacts and users is responsible for particular actions and experiences that feed and shape the self's life. Artifacts are not passive tools; rather, they too are agents, not least because they afford interactions (cf. Malafouris, 2013).[3] The relationship with artifacts is structural in that it structures the self by means of inviting human beings to (inter)act. Artifacts thereby help to constitute the behavioral habits that rhythmically shape the individual and social life and regulate the interaction between human beings and the natural and social environment(s) in which they (inter)act.

In this sense, artifacts may be seen and felt not only as *other* persons but as *extensions* of the self. This is analogous to what can happen with people of whom we are fond: on the one hand, artifacts, like other people, are physically embodied in bodies different from our own; on the other hand, they are part of our extended self in that they constitute and extend our personality in terms of knowledge, affects, and experience. Consequently, artifacts affording aesthetic and artistic experiences can be perceived and felt as *aesthetic and artistic extensions of the self*. The way a musical instrument extends the self aesthetically is analogous to how other artifacts that we deeply appreciate as key elements of the most satisfying practices of our lives extend the self by means of making possible explorative experiences of the world, including aesthetic experiences. For instance, we may consider a racing bike to be also an indispensable partner for an aesthetic sporting experience that we particularly appreciate, thus inviting it to become a part of our extended self.

In other words, the musical instrument may not simply resemble a person we interact with momentarily. Rather, like people (we feel to be) indispensable to our life (because they have helped shape it as it is or, better, shape it as it comes into being through our experiences), the musical instrument we are used to playing becomes a kind of dear friend we particularly trust; moreover, like people (such as caretakers, partners, and friends) with and thanks to whom we experience the world aesthetically, the musical instrument becomes our partner in our aesthetic experience of the world. Thus, musical instruments make possible a specific kind of agency, becoming elements of (our) "extended" or "composite" agency (Hanson, 2014). Moreover, musical instruments are capable of broadening and intensifying our experience. Just as persons of our intimate personal sphere who can be considered—at least at some stages of life—parts of our extended self, instruments can become part of (our) extended self, of (our) distributed personality.

For the sake of clarity, I insist on the following point. This is not only true of musical instruments: artifacts of different kinds can be elements of a composite agency, thereby becoming parts of a distributed and extended personality; moreover, many kinds of artifacts are particularly significant because of the *entanglement*—between human being and the artifact—produced through the affective investment deriving from the gratification elicited by the aesthetic

3 There are different views regarding the nature of artifacts' agency and their degree of autonomy. The two opposite positions are the *Instrument position*, according to which artifacts are "mere instruments of human agency," and the *Agency position*, according to which "artifacts are on a par with goal-directed autonomous human agents" (Illies & Meijers, 2014, pp. 160–161). Here, I take a reasonable intermediate position according to which artifacts have a degree of agentive autonomy that depends on the kind of artifact, the kind of practice, the specific circumstances of the action, and the user.

experiences made possible by correspondence with the object. In my personal case, I guess that in different ways, my personality has been extended thanks to the different aesthetic experiences afforded by my Selmer Mark VI tenor saxophone and my Carrera racing bike.

Like artworks, musical instruments make aesthetic experiences possible in terms of artistic explorations of the world; however, the artistic exploration of the world afforded by the musical instruments we play involves us as agents rather than as spectators. This is not to say that the aesthetic experience of artworks is merely contemplative and passive.[4] The point is rather that in playing an instrument as, for instance, in riding a bike, we are the performers, while in viewing a movie, listening to a song, or contemplating a painting, we are enjoying—actively, in many ways, of course—the outcomes of the artists' activity.

Playing my saxophone during my daily practice, I experience the music that I produce through and thanks to the instrument. Moreover, I feel and savor my physical and (som)aesthetic contact with it: I sense the tactile feeling of embracing the instrument, feeling its weight through the collar, and touching the keys with my fingers, which, in turn, are stimulated by the object, its shapes, and its body. This body enters into an aesthetic interplay relationship with my body not only due to the sounds we make together but also by virtue of its physical quality and presence. I consequently become entangled with the instrument bodily and mentally. I appreciate the way it extends my expressive powers, inviting me to respond to its sensory offerings of a tactile, visual, and obviously sonic nature and to aesthetically explore the sonic world. This can happen even when the music I produce does not work as I would like. Better still, sometimes the sax makes me acknowledge that the way in which I would like the sounds to work is simply not good. So, I modify my expressive expectations thanks to the collaboration with the instrument that guides my musical actions; in turn, this experience affectively shapes my body and my time.

Analogously, when riding my Carrera racing bike, through the sensation of bodily entanglement with the vehicle, I feel the road running under me in contact with the wheels; clinging to the handlebars, I push on the pedals, appreciating the energy produced and the profuse effort and enjoying the environment I am traveling across and exploring. I trust the bike, and it is as if it trusts me too; and when I fall (fortunately, this rarely happens!), it is as if I have betrayed its trust. I drive and let myself be driven by the bike, following its requests. Sensing the air that I cleave while pedaling, I feel at one with the bike and enjoy the activity, which articulates my freedom. In short, I consider it an indispensable companion in an activity that enriches my own experience of myself in the world.

Of course, in both cases, it is repeated practice that shapes the characteristics of a relationship that becomes an important aspect—which is emotionally and aesthetically rewarding—of the habits that model and structure my self's life. Hence, the interaction with an artifact—indeed, the *correspondence* to an artifact—makes possible the realization of aesthetic experiences that shape and express the self and allow one to acquire *aesthetic habits* that extend the self and one's own personality. Musical instruments—and, analogously, bikes and other cherished artifacts—are more than simply tools through which we produce actions, develop embodied skills, and extend our self. Musical instruments, like particular beloved individuals, artworks of which we are fond, and other *affective objects* with which we interact (or "correspond" to and "resonate" with) scaffold our ecological niche aesthetically (Matteucci, 2019; Portera, 2020), thereby shaping our "aesthetic self" and extending it artistically. This is the reason an artifact can become dear to us to the point that we are sorry if it is damaged or destroyed: indeed, we may find such

4 See Bertinetto 2021 for a discussion of aesthetic experience as (en)active and engaged.

occurrences nearly unbearable. Not only is it like an artwork and like a person: it is (a part of) *us*, because it extends our personality—by losing it, our individual identity changes because that which is lost is a part of ourselves in terms of possible experiences, affections, and knowledge.

2. Extended Self (and Extended Agency)

From this section onward, the task of this article will be to articulate and explain the thesis that we take care of artifacts, such as musical instruments, because they are, or rather become (parts of) *us*. The view implicit in the proposal I have sketched so far is the idea that the mind is not an entity hidden in the skull of a human being.[5] Instead, the mind is a process (rather than an entity) grounded in the body and extended through the experiences that the human being has w hile/by interacting in the environment with other subjects and with/by virtue of objects and artifacts. The mind, or the self, is rooted in the body, is not reducible to the self-awareness of the ego, and has many different components, such as embodied, experiential, intersubjective narrative, and situative aspects (Gallagher, 2005, 2013). The self is extended by emotions and affects—which are essentially generated by patterns of bodily processes—as well as shaped by relationships with other persons and even things, including cultural objects and artifacts (both of the ideal kind, such as musical works, and of the concrete material kind, just like a particular piece of clothing, jewelry, or a bike or musical instrument).

The *extended mind* hypothesis has been famously argued by Clark and Chalmers (1998). Accordingly, the mind is not limited to spiritual faculties located inside the skull but is rather extended and distributed in the environment with which the self interacts. For instance, the stick the blind man uses to test the ground around him is a n extension of his perceptual faculties, thereby extending his mind (the example is famously made by Merleau-Ponty, 1945, pp. 165 f.); the notebooks on which forgetful people jot down information allow them to retrieve this information for use at the appropriate time, thus enhancing t heir cognitive abilities and extending their minds (as in the example offered by Clark and Chalmer, 1998).

This proposal has radical and soft versions (cf. Sutton, 2010). The *radical version* works on the basis of the *parity principle*. The objects that extend the mind, and through which the mind is distributed, acquire mental faculties equivalent to those of t he mind traditionally considered the mark of a human being's conscious and intentional agency. Mentality is the same property both when it is attributed to the object and to the subject. The *soft version* operates on the basis of the *complementarity principle*. Objects extend the mind not because the property of mentality is attributed to them in the same way as to the subject; rather, the objects through which the mind is distributed extend cognitive—and also emotional, affective, as well as aesthetic—powers of the self, whose center remains the self-conscious subject.

It is difficult to defend the radical version of the extended mind proposal. It does not seem appropriate to hold that the artifact and the subject are coupled in such a way as to form one single entity (or "system").[6] Moreover, the radical version falls into the "causal-constitution fallacy" (Adams & Aizawa, 2001) because it misconceives the causal role of the environment for our cognitive functions as constitutive within the ontological structure of the mind. The self is extended not because the environment is an ontological part of it but rather due to the

5 This view was already supported by William James (1890). It has been recently taken up by Damasio (2010; cf. Meini, 2012) and appears in new trends in the philosophy of mind and in the cognitive sciences (see, e.g., Noë, 2009).

6 Two systems are *coupled* when "they reciprocally influence and constrain their behavior over time, such that they can be modeled as one system" (Colombetti, 2013, p. 55).

interaction with the environment in which it is embedded.

Reciprocally, it is through experience and use that a self-conscious subject makes of the artifact that the latter incarnates mental and agentive powers: the self is extended through its relationship of engagement and entanglement with the object. By itself, a stick may simply be "a woody piece or part of a tree or shrub";[7] it can, of course, be used in many ways, but it is not part of an extension of the self. However, as it enters into a relationship with a self-conscious organism, their interaction is seen as a "composite agency," such as perceptually exploring the environment or music playing.

Indeed, it could be argued that the artifact (e.g., a notebook, a musical instrument, or a vehicle) is produced to perform the function of extending the self by virtue of making possible perceptual and cognitive experiences as well as other interactions. The artifact incarnates agency in terms of purposes and ends for which it was produced. One may even attribute (a material form of) *intentionality* to artifacts (cf. Verbeek, 2005). However, being produced for a specific purpose and manifesting intentionality are not yet exerting intentionality and performing the function for which the artifact was produced. The artifact affords a kind of agency on the users' part if and when it enters into a relationship with them.

Of course, some objects (for example, a well-crafted notebook or, indeed, a Selmer Mark VI tenor saxophone or Carrera racing bicycle) are born with excellent potential to contribute to the experiential extension of their users' self. They are configured to elicit specific experiences of interaction between the self and the environment that may be particularly rewarding for the users. However, this potential is not, in itself, sufficient to extend the self. This experiential potential is not yet actual experience, although the object bears the "mark of the mental" (Jacob, 2019), because it is an already embodied expression of human mind intentionality (as a material trace of the agency of its producers and as a tool suggesting specific functions and uses).

In any case, the user-instrument experiential extension does not seem to involve a rigid ontological reduction, based on the principle of parity, of the two components to a single system. Just as the blind man can use another stick to orient himself in the environment and the forgetful person can use another notebook to reconstruct a memory, the musician can play other instruments, and the cyclist can ride other bicycles. The extension of the self at issue here is therefore one based on the principle of complementarity.[8]

The soft version of the extended mind proposal based on the complementary principle, which explains the composite agency realized by the interaction between humans and artifacts, can be well explained in terms of the "scaffolded mind thesis" derived from the "niche construction theory" (Sterelny, 2010). Essentially, the thesis posits that the human being exploits the environment on an evolutionary scale to better interact with it by structuring environmental resources in such a way as to support its own cognitive transactions with the environment. The environmental resources on which human beings depend and by which they are transformed are, in turn, adopted, shaped, and transformed to improve human beings' capacities and possibilities. The construction of societies is a part of this process. This idea has

7 https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stick (accessed on June 2, 2021).

8 It could be argued that this also applies to parts of the body whose replacement seems to constitutively modify the identity of the self. Does the artificial prosthesis that replaces the amputated hand become part of the identity of the self on the basis of the complementarity or of the parity principle? I suspect the issue leads us to the Lockean paradox of personal identity as the ship of Theseus, whose material pieces can all be replaced over time and held together only by self-aware memory (cf. Locke, 1790, pp. ii, xxiv-xxvi). To get around the difficulty, one could understand the difference between the soft and the radical versions as a matter of degree. Although new technologies of implementation of the body are making more and more plausible the idea that an instrument can radically extend the self by becoming part of a single connected system, I take as intuitively plausible the assumption that the bicycle and the saxophone I use "extend the self" in a complementary way without rigidly constituting with it a single entity. I will come back to this in Section 4.

several advantages: in particular, while acknowledging the contribution of the environment to cognition, it nicely avoids the "causal-constitution fallacy."

Moreover, the scaffolded mind thesis can also be applied to the way in which individuals, in interactions with other individuals and by manipulating/building/using objects of different kinds, scaffold their body-mind system by building their ecological niche through the plastic shaping of habits capable of rhythmically regulating their transactions with the environment. Habits shape and guide the exercise of a practice and, in turn, are constituted and plastically (trans)formed by that exercise. Through its transactions with the environment, the self builds habits that regulate and facilitate those transactions, continuously and plastically changing precisely through those transactions (see Caruana & Testa, 2020; Bertinetto & Bertram, 2020).

Fortunately, defending the radical version of the extended mind proposal based on the parity principle is not necessary for the argument I am developing in this article, which is as follows: we find it abhorrent when cultural material artifacts (e.g., musical instruments, bikes) are damaged or destroyed because when entering into a relationship with their users, they become (complementary) parts of their extended self by means of offering *affordances* enabling perceptual, cognitive, affective, and aesthetic experiences. Artifacts and their users thereby enact an "extended" or "composite agency," that is, "agencies consisting of both human and nonhuman components" (Hanson, 2014, p. 62).

The philosophical literature on the notion of "affordance" is growing rapidly, and for considerations of space, I will not dwell on it in this article. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that affordances are not simply environmental opportunities but rather the emerging products—neither exclusively objective nor solely subjective (Gibson, 1979)—of changing and dynamic relationships between objects, organisms, and the environment. In other words, they are "relations between abilities of organisms and features of the environment" (Chemero, 2003, p. 181). This means that an organism's abilities and habits are functions of the specific relationships shaped between that organism and the objects they interact with and respond to within the environment.

Importantly, specific affordances are the "complements" offered by cultural material artifacts to the capacity of the self to perform "expressive aesthetic experiences." With this notion, I mean to express experiences of an appreciative sort in which, through a progressive integration of doing and undergoing, a felt, energetic, perceptual, explorative, and both savoring and savored interpenetration between the self and the world is accomplished, which results in what Dewey called "an experience."[9] Of course, the aesthetic experience happens in many ways and degrees. It can be more or less intentionally driven and can ensue from the attention to the perceptive, formal, and narrative qualities of an object (as happens in the case of a spectator of a film, the listener of a piece of music, or the viewer of a painting) or from the introspective attention of the

9 See Dewey (1980). If space were available, I could argue that this idea of aesthetic experience can accommodate at least some of the features of Kantian aesthetics. In particular, it accepts the view that experiencing aesthetically means turning attention to and engaging oneself in the affective/appreciative dimension of one's relationship with the world. By no means solely idiosyncratic, this particular relationship expresses the wonder at an unexpected encounter, not entirely controllable by the subject, with the perceptive qualities of objects that, in this sense, are considered "for their own sake." As I will suggest later on in this paper (see Section 5), not in spite of but rather for this very reason, the encountered objects are integrated into the experience of successful self-fulfillment due to a felicitous interplay and attunement between the self and the world. In the wake of Dewey, some recent proposals have tried to articulate the notion of aesthetic experience through the concept of "rhythm" (see, e.g., Vara Sanchez, 2021), and in the course of this article, I will use this notion too (see Bertinetto, 2020, for a quick conceptual overview of the notion of rhythm in a morphological framework). Still, I am skeptical that the concept of rhythm alone can do the work of clarifying the notion of aesthetic experience. This clarification also requires the adoption of other categories. Remaining in the context of notions usually adopted in the musical field, for instance, the concept of "harmony" could be well applied to aesthetic experience. Importantly, "harmony" not only conveys the idea of a dynamic and progressive organization and integration of parts into a whole but also that of the encounter with and of the possible overcoming of discrepancies and conflicting moments in the dynamic relationship between the self and the world. However, the literature on the notion of aesthetic experience cannot be surveyed here.

agents toward their own activity, as in the case of dancers or musicians absorbed in their own performative experience (see Gallagher, 2021; Vara Sanchez, 2021; and for the musical case, Høffding, 2018). Cultural material artifacts afford aesthetic experiences in many different ways and degrees. In the case of musical instruments, the realization of expressive aesthetic experiences occurs, in particular,[10] through artistic performances. In this sense, musical instruments, like artworks, are capable of doing more than simply becoming *partners* for the aesthetic exploration of the world through the production of aesthetic experiences; they also *complement* the self while and by extending its aesthetic range of action through a composite or extended agency.

3. Affective Scaffolding and Artifact-Incorporation: The Expressive Extension of the Self

The scaffolding process has a constitutive affective and emotional dimension. Importantly, the ecological niche we organize and engineer through our interactions with the world is not only cognitive but also affective. In general, understanding which aspects of the surroundings are relevant to the subject's action and well-being involves the affective dimension of bodily attunement (Slaby, 2008). As argued by Michelle Maiese (2016, p. 3), "[b]odily affectivity permeates our interpretations and patterns of attention and thereby enables us to make sense of the world." Bodily feelings open up the horizon of possibilities in which things are experienced in their relationship with the subject. The environment not only causally elicits affective experiences but "rather offers action-possibilities in the forms of emotions" (Candiotto & Dreon, 2021, p. 3).

Therefore, affective scaffolding (i.e., the shaping of affective niches made up of behavioral habits) is not only the outcome of passively undergoing emotional experiences; it depends on human beings' active engagement due to targeted and intentional behavior and even, and, in fact, most often, to dealings repeated every day with people and artifacts. Through active interventions, human beings modify the environment, thereby regulating their own affective conditions. Moreover, human beings model or scaffold their "affective environment," thereby affectively extending the self (Candiotto & Piredda, 2019) in many ways: "our affective states are environmentally supported by items of material culture, other people, and their interplay" (Colombetti & Krueger, 2014, p. 1172). In other words, the environment has "the power to shape and modulate individual affective styles" (Candiotto & Dreon, 2021, p. 9) or "affective habits" that scaffold our feelings: while and though interacting with(in) the environment, which affords emotions as patterns of bodily processes, individuals develop habits. These habits are affective as well as cognitive and regulate individuals' behavior and feelings.

As argued by Candiotto and Dreon (2021), the affective scaffolding of (the habits of) the self is *embodied* (in that it concerns bodily processes), *social* (because it is shaped through our interactions with other people and organisms), and *objective* (because it also concerns the material culture in which we are embedded and interactions with objects and artifacts). Through repeated involvement with people and artifacts, a condition of *trust* as well as a condition of individualization or *entrenchment* (Sterelny, 2010, pp. 475-477; Colombetti & Krueger, 2014, p. 1161), develop to the point that they can be considered elements of our affective extended self.

Not only can material artifacts perform their functions in ecological niches that they themselves contribute to shaping,[11] but they also "help humans regulate affectivity" (Candiotto

10 I wrote "in particular" because, for example, everyone, even non-musicians, can aesthetically appreciate the formal and perceptual qualities of an instrument as an object of contemplation.

11 For a philosophical discussion of artifacts' functions, see Eaton (2020).

& Dreon, 2021, p. 3) by means of building their aesthetic niche in terms of aesthetic habits of behavior. The entanglement and material engagement with an artifact, such as a musical instrument, through which aesthetic experiences repeatedly take place, make key contributions to the affective (as well as cognitive) scaffolding of the self. They provide the self with affordances for extending the expressive qualities, range, and possibilities of its experience.

While referring to Merleau-Ponty (1945), Giovanna Colombetti introduces, in this regard, the important notion of "affective incorporation." "Incorporation" means, in general, "the acquisition of a variety of habitual bodily skills;" however, more specifically, it refers to "the integration of material objects into habitual bodily skills" (Colombetti, 2016, p. 232). Accordingly, the second acquisition process ("object-incorporation") is a form, or a part, of the broader first acquisition process ("habit-incorporation"). We acquire embodied habits, thereby expanding the self, by integrating material objects in our "body schemas" (Colombetti, 2016, p. 234), that is, in the patterns of actions of the *lived body*: the body as felt, from the first-person perspective, as a subject of awareness. Hence, in repeatedly interacting with artifacts, we "incorporate" them into our habits. Significantly, this incorporation of habits and artifacts not only concerns the acquisition of technical and practical sensorimotor skills but also, I insist, has a constitutively affective dimension in that it scaffolds and extends our affective self.

4. Performer/Instrument Mediation

However, the acquisition of habits in interaction with objects is often understood as the learning of embodied skills that allow the user to carry out actions automatically. In this way, for example, many understand the incorporation of the musical instrument into the musician's action habits in terms of the acquisition of techniques and expertise. Of course, this is an important aspect of the "composite agency" shaped by the interaction between the self and an artifact. The trained and targeted relation with the instrument shapes particular sensorimotor schemes for the precise prediction of expressive musical actions and their outcomes. According to Marc Leman (2016), this can happen in two ways: through the "dialogue-mediation" mode or the "prosthesis-mediation" mode.

The first type of mediation "occurs when a tool is experienced as part of the environment, such that the tool acts as a device that necessitates a dialogue" (Leman, 2016, p. 151). It is the kind of situated interaction between human performers and material tools such as musical instruments that happens when inexperienced performers deal with the affordances provided by the instrument. This maintains its own autonomy as a material artifact—in comparison with actions performed by integrating parts of the musician's body, such as the hands and mouth—thereby expressing its proper material intentionality (or "material will"; cf. Leman, 2016, p. 151).

Instead, "[t]he prosthesis mode of mediation occurs when the tool is experienced as a natural extension of the human body, such as a music instrument which becomes a part of the human body and transparent" (Leman, 2016, p. 151). "Transparency" means that musicians control the instrument in the same way they control their hands and mouth. The prosthesis mode is the typical way of interacting with the musical instrument proper to the professional musician, and in particular to virtuosi, who master the instrument, dominate its "material will," and use it for their own expressive purposes. As such, the "prosthesis-mediation" is an application of the radical version of the extended mind proposal, according to which material parts of the environment are ontologically coupled together with the self and completely under its control. Accordingly, as claimed by Tom Cochrane (2008), objects outside the body, such as

musical instruments, can be combined with the self's actions and brain state in such a way as to "physically realize an extended cognitive system": "the instrument is part of an extended loop between the musician's brain, the muscles of his hands or lips and the keys of the instrument" (Cochrane, 2008, pp. 332 f.).

Hence, the ideal of the technically skilled musician is modeled on the radical version of the extended mind proposal based on the parity principle, while the dialogue mediation mode is understood as a sort of attempt to achieve this complete integration between instrument and musician achieved with the prosthesis-mediation mode.

Two objections can be raised against this view. The first objection (explicitly addressed by Nannicelli, 2019, to Cochrane, 2008) is as follows. The prolonged and repeated use of an artifact, such as a musical instrument, can shape the instrument as well as the body and soul of the musician to the point of rendering them more and more suitable for each other, and the musician may view the instrument as indispensable to her own musical practice. Still, they nevertheless remain distinguishable and separate entities, although—over time—more and more "made for each other." The scaffolding hypothesis also works better than the radical version of the extended mind hypothesis in its application to the intertwining of musician and instrument.

The second objection is based on the fact that the instrument cannot have its own bodily feelings, and obviously so. Accordingly, the dialogue-mediation mode arguably better respects the idea that the instrument is part of a composite agency articulated by habits incorporated into the musician's scaffolded self, rather than a piece of a single ontological entity. Moreover, this mediation is not *only* a matter of acquiring technical skills. The point is not only how well and robustly a musician becomes able, by virtue of repeated training and performances, to integrate the physical entanglement relationship with the instrument into her sensorimotor skills. The key point here is the role of expressive affectivity in human/artifact aesthetic agency.

Following the aforementioned research concerning affective scaffolding (Colombetti & Krueger, 2104; Colombetti, 2016; Maiese, 2016; Candiotto & Piredda, 2019; Candiotto & Dreon, 2021), I suggest expanding the musician/instrument mediation—and the human being/artifact relationship in general—also to the embodied affective dimension, understanding it as a contribution to the affective scaffolding of the self's aesthetic niche. The emphasis should thus be shifted from the technical skills of the professional musician and from the uncertainties of the musical student to the role that performative practices play in the configuration of affectively connoted aesthetic experiences, which expressively orient interaction between the self and the world in both cases.

In other words, the instrument/musician mediation is a clear case of affective object-incorporation that, as I will suggest, extends the self expressively by scaffolding affective and aesthetic habits. Giovanna Colombetti (2016, p. 242) is correct in observing the following:

> *the instrument is experienced as* that through which *a certain affective state is realized, created, or even better "articulated" in the performance. In this process, the instrument is not taken as an intentional object, but neither is it incorporated only into the musician's sensorimotor schema . . . . While performing . . . , the musician is affectively touched by what she plays, and she is also motivated to play in a certain affective way (a way that will strike her as so or so).*

While interacting with the instrument, not only motor intentionality but also "affective intentionality" is in play. In other words, the (repeated) process of interacting with/through

the instrument is the way affective scaffolding develops by means of arousing affective states, articulating them during the performance,[12] and exploring them expressively. While perceiving the effects of the entrenched entanglement with the instruments (e.g., the sounds played), musicians also experience their bodies as they undergo affective changes due to the performative activity. Instruments are felt as partners in the articulation of the produced affective states, thereby extending the self in a complementary way: "The instrument, like the body, is experienced as that through which the musician can let herself 'go through' a certain affective process" (Colombetti, 2016, p. 243). Performing the expressive art of playing music through interaction with the instrument, the self undergoes the process of affective scaffolding through which trust toward the (correspondence with the) instrument and entrenchment of the instrument within our personality grow. As both an experience of world-exploration and of aesthetic self-knowledge, this process expands the self, developing the performer's personality and "sense of self" (Colombetti, 2016, p. 244).

5. Aesthetic Experiences Through Artistic Extended Agency

Interaction with objects participates in affective scaffolding. Bicycles, cars, furniture, clothes, and musical instruments produce effects on our personality: these kinds of interaction constitute and extend our personality because they expand and enrich the sphere of our cognitive and affective experiences. They produce affordances that move us to explore the world, thereby becoming parts of our extended self.

However, clarification might be in order here. Note that I am not arguing that the self or the mind are constitutively made up of the objects with which we interact. Rather, they are extended in a complementary way by those objects with which we interact in our experiencing of the world (see Section 2). Although we can conceptually distinguish a notion of self (or mind) abstracted from the relationship with the objects with which we interact in the world, actually, since the very first interactions between infant and caregiver, the self is cognitively and, importantly, *affectively* scaffolded (see Section 3). An important aspect of this scaffolding is its aesthetic dimension, and for this aspect, entanglement with artifacts is often crucial.

Interaction with artifacts discloses a dimension of "participatory sense-making" (Fuchs & De Jaegher, 2009) that also has a creative dimension: Lambros Malafouris (2014) called it "creative thinging." The corresponding interaction with objects is certainly embedded in habits that affectively scaffold the self, but the very process of this correspondence between human beings and artifacts is a *creative entanglement*, "discovered or constructed in moment-to-moment, improvisational thinking inside the world" (Malafouris, 2014, p. 145).

The creative dimension of the bodily entanglement between the self and the artifact is an important aspect of the aesthetic experience that the interaction with the instrument performs by virtue of object-incorporation and affective scaffolding. A specific feature of artifacts such as musical instruments and bikes is that they allow even non-professional artists and cyclists (most people) to aesthetically explore the world through performative artistic experiences that are potentially satisfying for the performers (even when there is no audience). Performers have an experience that they themselves set in motion through their engaged entanglement with the artifacts. Playing a musical instrument (i.e., making music together with or through the musical instrument), as well as riding a bike (thereby admiring the environment of the route and proprioceptively savoring one's own effort and fatigue but also one's movement and speed

12 I mean not only or mainly a performance (possibly with fellow musicians) in front of an audience, but also a training performance.

in harmony with the vehicle) are thus, at the same time, types of agency that take place through interaction with a cultural material artifact that extends the agentive and experiential possibilities of the self as well as typical "arts of action."

According to Thi Nguyen, "arts of action" are aesthetic/artistic practices enjoyed by the performers themselves through the way they act and perform. They are artistic practices "marked by distinctively self-reflective aesthetic appreciation": "the focus of the appreciator's aesthetic attention is on the aesthetic qualities of their own actions" (Nguyen, 2020, p. 2). "The enactors experience aesthetic properties in their own actions" (Nguyen, 2020, p. 10). The activity producing the enactors' or performers' aesthetic experience results, notably, from the composite agency generated by the interaction between the self and an artifact (e.g., a musical instrument or a bike). In other words, the complementary extension of the self, accomplished through material engagement, elicits the aesthetic experience of the enactors' own inter-activity with the artifact. Thus, the aesthetic self-appreciating activity depends on the artifact because "the precise aesthetic character of that activity is dependent on its being evoked by that particular artifact" (Nguyen, 2020, p. 23). Yet, the relevant aesthetic properties concern not only, and not even primarily, the outcomes of the (inter)activity but also, and mainly, the ways performers enact their entangled correspondence with the artifact.

However, an art of action, such as playing a musical instrument (or riding a bike), does not (usually, at least) resolve into a single performance. Rather, it requires consolidation into a practice through incorporating behavioral habits. At issue is the habitualized enactment of an art of action that produces, in an exploratory way, aesthetic experiences through repeated interactions with an artifact. The entanglement with the artifact expands the sensory powers of our body and can arouse new representations of the world we inhabit, shaping our actions and our experiences, that is, our selves (cf. Verbeek, 2005; Ilies & Meijers, 2014). Thus, the self, while expressing itself through the practice of expressive arts, is also aesthetically scaffolded through the modulation of its "habits of attention, engagement, and response" (Maiese, 2016, p. 5) afforded by corresponding with the instrument. Playing a musical instrument and riding a bike are cases of practices shaped through repeated exercise so as to produce aesthetic action habits and cognitive/affective experiences that, in turn, shape the self, and by virtue of which the self expressively navigates the world. The repeated aesthetic/artistic interaction of entanglement with the artifact scaffolds the self by generating its *aesthetic habits* and, more generally, its aesthetic *niche* (Portera, 2020). The self is aesthetically extended through artistic interaction with the musical instrument (or with the bike or other objects).

Hence, in reference to my (and others') practice of playing an instrument (and riding a bike), the point is this: since the incorporation of habits contributes to shaping personal affective but also creative, expressive, and poetic styles (i.e., *aesthetic* styles), the incorporation of artifacts into personal expressive aesthetic practices of "arts of actions" also contributes to extending (even in an intensive sense) the aesthetic expressiveness of the self. As rightly remarked by Richard Shusterman (2011, p. 157), *style* is "an integral part of one's own being, so that changing one's style means in some way changing one's self" (Shusterman, 2011, p. 157). An "aesthetic style," I contend, is a kind of "affective style" (Colombetti & Krueger, 2014), a notion that, in turn, enriches that of "somatic style" introduced by Shusterman (2011). While a *somatic* style is due to the multifarious and variable sensory aspects of a personal bodily style in terms of visual, tactile, sonic, gestural, and other types of appearances and experiences,[13] an *affective* style also involves

13 Yet, as observed by Shusterman (2011), somatic style may also be generic and indicate the bodily style of groups or classes of persons.

reference to the affective, emotional, and expressive dimensions in play through the sensory aspects of the aesthetic habits of the self. An *aesthetic* personal style is the particular mode of aesthetic scaffolding of the self, developed through entangled (embodied and embodying) interactions with artifacts and other people of whom we are fond.

The aesthetic habits we develop through interacting with artifacts and incorporating them in the course of the repeated exercise of arts of actions we enjoy as enactors shape and guide our perceptual and expressive experiences and are (trans)formed by the enactment of our perceptual and expressive experiences. Hence, each instance of the art of action consisting in playing a musical instrument (or in riding a bike) contributes to generating aesthetic experiences consisting of expressive enactments of sonic and tactile perceptions that consolidate into habits that, in turn, feed the aesthetic experience back. The (trans)formation of the aesthetic habit of playing the instrument thereby shapes and intensifies the affective and emotional bond with the instrument through and together with which those aesthetic experiences are made and those habits are developed. The self invests in the artifact an affective and emotional charge analogous to that which it experiences with the people closest to it, that is, the individuals thanks to whom it enacts its experiential orientation in the world.[14]

Practical training and exercise (in my specific case, the exercise of playing my Mark VI Selmer tenor saxophone) model the body-mind system cognitively, affectively, and aesthetically. Through this practice, embodied habits develop that retroact on the relationship of entanglement and engagement with the artifact. The instrument becomes part of a living expressive-creative composite agency of aesthetic exploration of the world. Moreover, it becomes a constitutive and (felt as) irreplaceable element of an engaged relationship by virtue of which the self shapes itself through that aesthetic exploration. Musical instruments, but also bikes, clothes, artworks, and other cultural-material artifacts, are entangled with the user as affordances for modeling the expressiveness of the relationship between subject and environment through an affective scaffolding that permeates the aesthetic experience.

The specific instrument, I claim, is charged with affective value. It is indeed *this* specific artifact, as an individual item with its specific history linked to the vital history of the performer, that creates a particular affective atmosphere (which is often non-thematic and implicit, especially for the involved player).[15] On the one hand, the artifact has a symbolic value due to the kind of object it is and, possibly, to its trademark: a symbolic value endowed with charm that is capable, in itself, of expressively scaffolding the experience of those who use it (which is, of course, the case with my Selmer Mark VI Tenor sax, which is the sax once played by famous jazzmen such as John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins). On the other hand, it is the repeated interaction with the artifact in the practice of an expressive art of action that generates aesthetic habits that shape a specific intimate, expressive relationship. The bodily relation with a musical instrument may be a powerful instance of affective and aesthetic scaffolding in that it can contribute to shaping affective and expressive styles (i.e., aesthetic habits of behavior that, in turn, regulate the enactment of aesthetic experiences). In this regard, as argued by Merleau-Ponty (1945, p. 168), the instrument and the musician become the medium for the correspondence relationship responsible for the (habit of) musical production, that is, for the engineering of a specific aesthetic niche.

14 Something like this also happens with the affective investment toward artists and public figures who, due to their works and their lives, not only acquire a strong symbolic value and meaning for many people but become elements of the affective organization of the daily aesthetic experience of the self. The death of a famous singer, for example, can elicit an emotional impact similar to mourning for a loved one.

15 Cf. Griffero (2014).

Of course, professional musicians (or professional cyclists) are more able than non-professionals to establish a valid expressive relationship even with difficult or not entirely functional artifacts. That is, they are able to discover affordances for a satisfying expressive experience even in instruments that others will instead experience as recalcitrant in character and as obstacles to their expressive performance. In other words, highly trained and skilled professional musicians (or cyclists) have developed behavioral and aesthetic habits so solid and, at the same time, so creatively plastic that they can find affective affordances for expressiveness even in unusual, unfamiliar, and "recalcitrant" artifacts. In the famous example offered by Merleau-Ponty (1945, pp. 167 ff.), an experienced organist is able, in a short time, to make use of an organ he does not know, incorporating it into his own body and expressive schemes, that is, acquiring with it quickly a relationship of trust.

Unlike these professionals, average practitioners (who are, on average, passionate about what they do) are instead tied to a particular artifact with which, due to how it was crafted as well as its material and functional qualities, they develop a specific affective relationship; consequently, they have more difficulty achieving the same level of trust with other artifacts of the same kind. Being incorporated into these amateurs' practice in a way that molds their self in a powerful relation of affective entrenchment, the artifact becomes *almost* irreplaceable: it is *this* particular artifact that affords the expressive explorations of the world that affectively and aesthetically scaffold the self, producing its specific affective and aesthetic style. The replacement of the artifact would involve a disorienting transformation of the self. This happens when individuals encounters an artifact with which they enter into an *empathic symbiosis*, such that they pour themself into the relationship with the object, indeed into the object itself. The instrument gradually "becomes entrenched not just in the musician's motoric repertoire, but also in the musician's repertoire of expression and feeling" (Colombetti & Krueger, 2014, p. 1164). The regularly repeated and habitual relationship with the instrument is, I think (and here I differ with Colombetti and Krueger), even in the case of non-professional musicians, responsible for the increasing entrenchment of the instrument "into the corporeal schema" (i.e., it is incorporated pre-reflexively and experienced as a part of our self) and "into the body image" (that is, into our sense of the appearance of our body to others).

Moreover, it is noteworthy that through repeated practice, a kind of "performative entrenchment" also develops. The instrument is not solely incorporated in such a way that something is perceived through it while the instrument remains unnoticed. Moreover, it is not only a matter of acquiring sensorimotor automatisms and automatized performing skills. Instead, the "performative body" (Legrand, 2007, pp. 500–502) is characterized by a condition between entire self-transparency and intentional self-attentiveness. Although one is not intentionally focused on the activities of one's body, one is proprioceptively and pre-reflexively aware of one's movements and positions: as suggested by Colombetti and Krueger (2014, p. 1166), the instrument is incorporated (entrenched) into the performative body, being "neither entirely transparent nor explicitly attended to, but is nevertheless experienced as a present instrument of performance and expression." Yet, it is not simply a matter of "motoric mastery over the instrument" (Colombetti & Krueger, 2014, p. 1164) but rather of creative exploration of expressive affordances and possibilities. Therefore, as I contend, performative entrenchment happens not only to professional musicians but also to amateurs like me, who, in fact, love to dedicate themselves to a practical aesthetic experience—to an *art of action* involving intimate and repeated interaction with an artifact. Then, the specific artifact becomes a special partner for the user: since the primary aim is not to achieve high performative results but to explore

aesthetically one's interaction with the world, the specific artifact becomes a part (felt as) irreplaceable of the aesthetic-affective habits developed.

Please note that it is not only the music I play that reorganizes the physical, social, and, importantly, affective and aesthetic space I occupy during the corresponding entrenched interaction with the instrument. It is not only the music I play that affectively and aesthetically scaffolds my self and my world: I do not only delegate the task of regulating my affectivity to music (Krueger, 2019). Moreover, in this case, I do more than just "actively select specific activities and interactions with the material world" (Colombetti & Krueger, 2014, p. 1163); rather, I directly intervene in the environment, acting together with and through the material artifact. It is my *playing* (with) the saxophone—thereby playing music and exploring the environment sonically —that affectively and aesthetically scaffolds my self and my world through the aesthetic exploration of *my* musical sensitivity and expressiveness. I am at the same time attuned to the music I am making and pre-reflexively self-aware of my (inter)action with the saxophone (cf. Gallagher, 2021, p. 136).

The entrenched entanglement with the instrument provides us with aesthetic affordances, namely, opportunities for exploring our felt body and its dynamic affective and expressive relation with the environment through a sensory medium. This is a powerful way to gain and structure our self-awareness, both in a non-thematic and pre-reflexive way, as well as in a thematic and conscious way. The aesthetic experience provided to the self by musical practice through the organism/instrument dynamic and multi-layered relation is a sensory exploration of the environment that, at the same time, is an auto-exploration of the (extended) self.

My point is that the repeated practical, performative, attentive, and devoted relationship with an object capable of shaping one's aesthetic niche is a case of affective incorporation that extends the self. Therefore, it makes possible those specific expressive aesthetic experiences that articulate its individual vital history. Aesthetic experience causes us to live and explore intensively the conditions of experience as an affective enactive transaction between organism and environment, which includes the "incorporation" of artifacts (cf. Bertinetto, 2021). In this regard, aesthetic experience, as Mark Johnson (2018, p. 2) observes, encompasses "all the processes by which we enact meaning through perception, bodily movement, feeling, and imagination" and is a participative and affectively engaged experience of resonance with the world (cf. Berleant, 2013) that intensifies our ordinary experience. When appreciated aesthetically, then, the ordinary also becomes extraordinary. Ordinary things and experiences become aesthetically extraordinary when perceived in such a way as to bring out the wonder of habit, intensifying one's own bodily awareness of existence into a personal "art of living" (Shusterman, 2013). This is the reason we care about developing aesthetic habits that extend our self. The way we organize habits that offer a rhythm to our usual correspondences with the world we inhabit and the way we savor these daily occupations affectively scaffold the self, shaping the expressive qualities of life.

It is not only daily practices such as, for example, cooking, taking care of the furnishing of one's room, or sports practices that become important ways of giving meaning to one's life through an affectively and expressively satisfying organization of the relationship with the world; even personal artistic practices, such as playing an instrument, become powerful modalities of potentially fulfilling everyday aesthetic experiences. The expenditure of energy and resources (in terms of time, physical and mental fatigue, money, etc.) can be rewarded by the satisfaction and enjoyment that the self can feel as a result of its own making. This satisfaction, in turn, is due to the extension and intensification of one's experience through the sensory, affective, emotional, and cognitive exploration of the world and of the self, which, at the same time, organizes one's

own existence and responds to the contingency of what happens in sense-making ways. By enacting expressive creativity in sensory dimensions linked to different media, the self realizes a vital rhythm capable of possibly taming and exorcising, through the expressive responses it receives through its aesthetic exploration of the environment, the anxiety that permeates human existence (Cometa, 2017).

In this context, the affective incorporation of an artifact becomes a structural part of the expressive organization of the experience (i.e., the particular way we integrate our personality into the experiences we undergo), in particular when the affective incorporation becomes a special condition for the success of the performance of an art of action. The incorporated artifact becomes a constitutive element of the affective and expressive *style* that aesthetically extends the self through the enactment of an artistic practice. Thus, what is particularly relevant for the aesthetic (and also the narrative) organization of the self is not above all (or even to a large degree) the achievement of extraordinary artistic skills but rather the ordinariness of an expressive practice that becomes, owing to habit, an indispensable extension of the self. In this ordinary aesthetic habit, extraordinarily creative qualities can then unexpectedly emerge, which help to reward the efforts made (especially initially) to give life and momentum to the practice and to sustain it.

Therefore, the artifacts with which the self, as a performer of "arts of action," is involved become a condition for the generation of the vital rhythm through which the self forms and transforms its aesthetic identity. Our engagement with artworks as well as with artifacts that we incorporate into our aesthetic practices and our performing body can be understood as a "second-person relation characterized by openness and curiosity" (Brinck, 2018, p. 211) through which we express ourselves, (trans)forming routine practices and habits and savoring them aesthetically.

The artifacts we particularly cherish (e.g., a musical instrument or a bicycle) are, in this respect, like artworks. Art extends the possibilities of human meanings and values: "the arts enact basic ways for us to inhabit our world" (Johnson, 2018, p. 203), making sense of "the structures, qualities, and felt direction of our embodied experience" (Johnson, 2018, p. 210). Artworks are artifacts that express and embody the multifarious ways in which human beings manifest their lived engagement with the world, offering affordances for interactive experiences of *sense-making* (i.e., of enactive perception or *perceptualization*: Matteucci, 2019) of the world. Therefore, artworks are like persons (Margolis, 1974) in that they afford our active perceptual and imaginative interaction, eliciting intense affective participation in a process of joint sense-making. The same goes, I have argued in this paper, for cherished artifacts: artifacts through and with which we enact "arts of actions" that extend the self, thereby allowing the self a vivid and intense experience of perceptive, imaginative, and emotional exploration of the world, which, in turn, affectively scaffolds the self. These artifacts are like artworks and, consequently, like persons as well.

However, the affective entanglement with artifacts is not just a relationship with a person with whom the self merely enters into a short dialogue, only to see the person disappear after the dialogue ends. This can happen with artworks that are experienced one time only, typically during a brief visit to a museum, that then disappear from our life. Instead, a cherished artifact is like a person with whom one organizes one's life over an extended period of time, like those artworks (or those authors and artists) that we experience repeatedly (perhaps also thanks to reproductions) and that aesthetically shape the mobile identity of the self, being incorporated in its aesthetic habits. Indeed, a good bike or a good sax (and similar objects) in which we trust

and for which we care are good travel companions, and, as with a life partner, it is difficult to tear ourselves away from them (and when we do, it is sad and painful).

6. Conclusion: Why We Do not Want to Destroy Saxophones, Artworks, or Bikes

Here, at the end of this paper, I return to the question with which I started. Why are we sorry if an artifact we deal with in our experiences is lost, ruined, or destroyed? (Here, I would add: aside from any financial loss.) I think Davies (2003) and Ravasio (2016) are both correct after all. Damage inflicted on a musical instrument is affectively felt in a way analogous to that visited upon a person (as Davies asserts) or artwork (as Ravasio argues). The musical instrument that allows us to aesthetically explore the world, shaping aesthetic habits capable of scaffolding our aesthetic niche, is like a beloved person who is part of our extended self precisely because she complements the self by contributing to its ecological and aesthetic niche. The same goes for artworks, primarily those with which we establish an everyday affective and emotional relationship: artworks with whose meaning but also with whose corporeal dimension (see Andrzejewski, 2019) we are engaged, intertwined, and entangled to such an extent that they extend, aesthetically and artistically, our selves, bodies, and souls.

The objection could be raised that this view is misleading. Indeed, one may reason that we also feel discomfort and disgust for the damage and destruction of musical instruments and artworks that do not belong to us and with which we do not have an intimate and aesthetically operative relationship of the kind we have with our own musical instruments, bicycles, and artworks. However, this objection is a weak one. When we learn that someone has lost a loved one, we can—obviously, depending on the circumstances—empathize with that individual. We can emotionally understand that this loss is a blow to the identity of the extended self of the bereaved, a disruption of this person's affective, cognitive, and ecological niche. The same goes for artworks, musical instruments, and other material cultural artifacts that do not belong to us and to which we do not belong. The discomfort that we can empathically feel with those who are suffering from the damage, destruction, or disappearance of such objects is the basis of our moral condemnation of acts that lead to such consequences. In fact, we are personally familiar with how much the flourishing of our self owes to the aesthetic experiences that can be accomplished owing to the self-extension that their "incorporation" in our habits makes possible. This experiential knowledge and this empathic feeling are grounds for the normative attitude that generally binds us to respect, as much as possible, the obligation not to damage artifacts: it is thus not solely nor even primarily for economic and legal reasons. Of course, such reasons cannot be neglected either; however, I think it is sound to argue that those reasons too are ultimately based on the affective scaffolding of the interaction with artifacts, which is capable of aesthetically extending the self.

In conclusion, in this article, I have suggested that the reason we feel sorry and disgusted about the loss and destruction of cultural material artifacts, such as saxophones or bicycles, is that they become parts of us. Indeed, they complement our self by making possible a distribution of agency that allows for valuable (som)aesthetic experiences and by scaffolding our affective environment. The artifact is incorporated not only into our sensorimotor skills but also becomes entangled in our affective and aesthetic niche. In doing so, it helps to develop our personality. This is particularly evident and relevant in the relationships between human beings and artifacts that make possible a particular kind of distributed agency, that of the "arts of action": aesthetic

practices in which agents aesthetically experience the properties of their own actions. The habituation of these practices scaffolds aesthetic niches that extend the self by virtue of shaping somatic, affective, and aesthetic styles. Thus, the artifact becomes charged with affective value and becomes part of the vital history of the self: the self enters into an empathic symbiosis with the artifact that organizes the everyday expressive correspondences with the world it inhabits, making sense of it. This explains why it is sad and painful to break away from particular cultural material artifacts and morally reprehensible to destroy them: we share with them our body and soul.[16]

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16 This paper was made possible thanks to financial support from the research project "Normative aspects of aesthetic appreciation" (PID2019-106351GB-I00) of the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. Many thanks also to CAPES PRINT for having offered me a "bolsa de professor visitante Chamada interna PRPG 04/2019." Many thanks also to Falk Heinrich, Adam Andrzejewski, and two anonymous reviewers for precious suggestions and comments.

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