

Toward a notion of situated affective self?

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Many philosophers and cognitive scientists have recently insisted on the distributed nature of cognition: we exploit environmental resources in order to save cognitive effort, by substituting, complementing or integrating our cognitive capacities. Also, the philosophical analysis of affectivity and emotions has regained a certain momentum, and many philosophers have engaged in the study of this complex and fascinating realm. Not only the nature of emotions has been under scrutiny, but also the interaction between our affective life and the environment we live in. Inspired to the framework of situated and extended cognition and to transactional accounts of emotion, Griffiths and Scarantino (2009) proposed a situated theory of emotions and affectivity, according to which emotions should not be viewed as internal states providing information about a certain situation to an organism's decision making system, but rather as complex events constituted by a dynamical unfolding, developed in deep interaction with the physical and the social environment. On the same line, Colombetti and Krueger (2015) connect the situated view of emotions with the scaffolded view of the mind (Sterenly 2010), individuating in the notion of "affective scaffold" the material basis of our situated or scaffolded affective processes. The general idea is that "we regulate, organize, and maintain our affective life by manipulating everyday artifacts and spaces" (Colombetti et al. 2018, p. 1). I will discuss the notion of affective scaffold and of other related notions that have been proposed in the literature on situated affectivity. Drawing on the notion of material self by William James (1890), I will claim that these notions – affective scaffolds, evocative objects, emotive artifacts – have to do with our conception of self; together, they may delineate a further promising development of the study of the affective self as situated and scaffolded in the environment.

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