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Extended mind, extended person, extended therapy?

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Abstract

Solution-focused (SF) brief therapy has always drawn on ideas from philosophy, with Derrida and Wittgenstein being particular influences on Steve de Shazer. More recently, connections have been made with embodied and enactive approaches, and this article is intended as a contribution to these discussions. Its entry point is a consideration of accounts of personal identity and personhood and of possible implications for these accounts arising from work taking place in the field of embodied cognition. This is a wide field and two aspects of it are considered in particular: the sensorimotor account of perception developed by O'Regan and Noë, and the extended mind thesis of Clark and Chalmers. It is argued that these embodied and extended accounts entail a holistic and extended view of personhood and personal identity. A discussion follows concerning how this might inform our ideas about therapy and other change work and about connections with SF in particular. The conclusion that is tentatively reached is that embodied and extended concepts of personhood require an accompanying extension of our ideas of change work so that this spreads beyond talking, beyond the clinic or office and beyond the individual.

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Introduction

Having recently become interested in the possibilities of integrating physical elements with talking therapies (Shennan, 2012), I was intrigued to come across connections being made between solution-focused (SF) work and embodied and enactive approaches in philosophy (SFCT, 2013; Editorial, 2014; Rucinska & Reijmers; 2014; McKergow, 2015). At this time I had embarked on formal philosophical study, in which I began to investigate what I discovered to be the very wide field of embodied cognition, including that fascinating part of it known as the extended mind thesis (Clark and Chalmers, 1998). Seeking a suitable focus for my investigations, I was struck by the view that, especially if an extended mind entails an extended self, 'accepting embodied or extended cognition will have interesting implications concerning autonomy, sociality, personal identity, and responsibility' (Wilson & Foglia, 2011). Given the competing claims of the physical and psychological in accounts of personhood and personal identity, I decided to consider how embodied cognition might affect these in particular (Shennan, 2014a).

In what follows I will summarise the results of these considerations. Having introduced the subject of personal identity, I shall look at how two ideas from the embodied cognition field might impact upon it: an enactive account of visual perception, and the extended mind thesis. After this I will return to what it was that intrigued me in the first place: the implications of all of this for talking therapies and for SF practice in particular. Given that personal identity concerns what it is to persist as the same person over time, how might this intersect with the business of helping a person to change? And how might this business be impacted by different accounts of the kind of thing a person is? If a person is essentially a mind, wholly contained in a brain that has a body only to provide its inputs and outputs and to carry it around, then an embodied engagement between therapist and client seems unnecessary. But if the body plays a fuller role in the personhood of the client, what then? And what if the person you are working with is more than the body

in front of you and in a very real sense includes aspects of its environment, including other people? I will suggest some tentative responses to these questions in the final part of this article, though I suspect that by the time you reach this point you will be having ideas of your own, as your own cognitive processes are extended into the words that are about to follow.

Personal identity

Two questions are tied up in accounts of personal identity:

1) What is the nature of a person?
2) What makes a person at two different times one and the same person? What is necessarily involved in the continued existence of each person over time? (Parfit, 1984, p. 202).

The latter is usually known as the persistence question, as it asks about what it is that enables a person to persist as the same person over time. The two questions are necessarily linked, as to answer the question of what makes a person persist over time requires us to have a view about what kind of thing a person is. Note that identity is to be zunderstood here as *a relationship* between persons – for example, the person writing this paper today is identical to the person who at the same desk was writing his thesis 18 months ago (so I might claim) – rather than as a *role* or *property* of a person – for example, part of this person's identity is that of being a writer.

Accounts of personal identity

The persistence question has been answered in a number of different ways, leading to different accounts of personal identity over time. The main types of account include:

- The 'Simple View' (Swinburne, 1973–4), which sees persons as immaterial souls or pure egos that have bodies

only contingently. I will not be considering this view here, as I believe it not to be affected by embodied approaches to cognition.

- Psychological continuity accounts, the currently dominant type of view, which are based on seeing persons as minds (Johnston, 1987). They have been supported in large part by various thought experiments, which aim to draw on our intuitions about what happens to the person when mind and body are seemingly prised apart.
- Bodily continuity accounts, in which the criterion of personal identity is the spatiotemporal continuity of a functioning human body (Thomson, 1997). These currently receive less support, but related 'somatic' accounts (for example, Olson, 1997), based on the concept of a person as a human being or organism, have been gaining ground.

My contention is that aspects of embodied cognition undermine psychological continuity accounts, and support a particular human being account associated with the later work of David Wiggins (2001). This suggests a more integrated view of the person compared to the 'either/or' psychological or purely bodily accounts. I also contend that the extended mind thesis entails a further enlargement of our concept of person and thus in what is required for personal identity over time.

As noted above, psychological continuity accounts are supported by thought experiments, perhaps beginning with John Locke, who imagined the soul of a prince replacing that of a cobbler in the cobbler's body, and claimed that 'everyone sees he would be the same person with the prince' (Locke, 1694, p. 44). Locke's claim was not based on the presence in the cobbler's body of the prince's soul *per se*, but on the idea that the soul was the bearer of the consciousness of the prince's past life.

Locke's 'memory criterion' has been subjected to some strong objections over the years, though these have been met

with refinements to his account, which have been sufficiently successful to make psychological continuity the currently dominant view (Johnston, 1987). Locke's updating has involved thought experiments that have reflected developments in knowledge from the influence of science and a shift in focus from the soul to the brain as the bearer of our memories and other mental features.

Such thought experiments have therefore involved various means of 'brain transfer' with one influential case being introduced into philosophical discussion by Shoemaker (1963). This involves two men, Brown and Robinson, who have their brains temporarily extracted in order to ease the removal of brain tumours (in this case medicine has advanced beyond its current capabilities). The operations are successful, but the brains are mistakenly replaced in the wrong bodies. One of the men immediately dies, but the other, the one now consisting of Robinson's body and Brown's brain, survives and eventually regains consciousness. Shoemaker names the latter Brownson, and says that when asked his name, Brownson automatically replies 'Brown', that he recognises Brown's wife and family, and is able to describe in detail events in Brown's life, while evidencing no knowledge of Robinson's past life (1963, pp. 23–24). The predominant reaction to this case is that Brown has survived as Brownson. We will consider where these reactions come from below, but first we will introduce an important piece of work in the field of embodied cognition, which has implications for Brown and Robinson too.

Embodied cognition

One starting point for an understanding of embodied cognition is provided by the embodiment thesis (Wilson & Foglia, 2011):

> Many features of cognition are embodied in that they are deeply dependent upon characteristics of the physical body of an agent, such that the agent's beyond-the-brain body plays a significant causal role, or a physically constitutive role, in that agent's cognitive processing.

Embodied approaches present a challenge to the traditional cognitivist view of the mind, based on a computer metaphor in which the brain receives sensory inputs and then does all the cognitive processing, before producing its behavioural outputs.

There might seem to be a *prima facie* case that the embodiment thesis entails a bodily continuity requirement for personal identity. However, this requirement is for the continuation of the same *actual* body, and it seems to be sufficient for most explanatory concepts within the embodiment field that the agent has *a* body, of a certain *type*, which sits quite easily with a psychological continuity account (Shennan, 2014a). However, there are at least two embodied cognition developments that do not sit so easily; the sensorimotor account of sensory experience (O'Regan & Noë, 2001) and the extended mind thesis (Clark & Chalmers, 1998). These are both examples of what Shapiro (2011) calls the 'constitution hypothesis' of embodied cognition, where the main point of contention with the traditional cognitivist approach concerns the constituents of the mind (he contrasts this with the conceptualisation and replacement hypotheses). Where standard cognitive scientists situate the processes *constituting* the mind entirely within the brain, advocates of constitution assert that the body is, literally, part of the mind, or even that the world beyond the body can be such a constituent.

A sensorimotor account of sensory experience

O'Regan and Noë (2001) reject the standard view of visual experience, which holds that vision results from activations of internal representations in the brain, so that 'an envatted brain, stimulated in the right way, should have the same visual experiences as a normally embodied brain' (Shapiro, 2011, p. 164). Their alternative framework emphasises the importance of bodily movement to perception, and so extends 'the constituents of perception into the bodies of perceivers' (ibid.). According to this framework, 'vision is a mode of exploration of the world that is mediated by knowledge, on the

part of the perceiver, of what we call sensorimotor contingencies' (O'Regan & Noë, 2001, p. 940). By sensorimotor contingencies they are referring to 'the structure of the rules governing the sensory changes produced by various motor actions' (2001, p. 941).

There are sensorimotor contingencies that relate to the visual apparatus and another set determined by the attributes of the objects presented to that visual apparatus. Examples of the rules in the first group include those concerning the effects on retinal stimulation of making certain eye movements. For instance, shifting an eye's focus from the midpoint of a horizontal line to a point above it would lead to a line represented on a flattened-out retina as straight becoming curved: 'in general, straight lines on the retina distort dramatically as the eyes move' (O'Regan & Noë, 2001, p. 941).

The second group of sensorimotor contingencies relate to the visual attributes of objects. A good illustration of those concerning the attribute of shape is found in the records of patients whose vision had been restored after being born blind with congenital cataracts. 'One such patient … is surprised that a coin, which is round, should so drastically change its shape when it is rotated (becoming elliptical in projection)' (O'Regan & Noë, 2001, p. 942). Similarly, a teenage boy, shown his father's picture in his mother's locket, post-treatment, was startled 'that a large face could be express'd in so little room' (ibid.). These examples point to the routine knowledge of perspective and how movement effects this that is held by people with normal vision. O'Regan and Noë claim that 'the visual quality of shape is precisely the set of all potential distortions that the shape undergoes when it is moved relative to us, or when we move relative to it' (ibid.). It is the (tacit) knowledge of the laws abstracted from this set of distortions that enables the perception of shape.

This knowledge and the visual experience that arises from it are, according to O'Regan and Noë, determined by the *particular* features of the *particular* visual apparatus of the perceiver. They make this clear when replying to doubts expressed in a response to their article, about whether 'every

small difference in the low-level details of sensing and acting will make a difference to the conscious visual experience' (Clark & Toribio, 2001, p. 980). By low-level the respondents were referring, for example, to the emphasis on the small details of the effect of eye movements on a retina. O'Regan and Noë replied, first:

> '… where there are physical differences, there are also qualitative differences . . . we hold, as Clark & Toribio are right to point out, that differences in our bodies (and thus in sensorimotor contingencies) will make a difference to our experiential states.' (2001, p. 1013); and later:
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> 'For two systems to have the same knowledge of sensorimotor contingencies all the way down, they will have to have bodies that are identical all the way down (at least in relevant respects). For only bodies that are alike in low-level detail can be functionally alike in the relevant ways.' (2001, p. 1015).

To summarise this account, specifically of visual perception and experience but which is generalisable to other sensory experiences, 'perceptual experience *just is* a mode of skilful exploration of the world' (Noë, 2004, p. 194, emphasis in the original), where the specific nature of this experience depends on the specific skills of the perceiver, which depend in turn on the perceiver's particular visual (or other sensory) apparatus.

We can now apply this account to the question of personal identity arising from Shoemaker's brain transfer case, and I think the conclusion to draw is clear. As noted, the predominant reaction has been that Brown survives as Brownson. Wiggins initially reacted in this way (1967), and so favoured a Lockean account of personal identity. Later, Wiggins concluded that the common reaction had two distinct origins. Most people who took this view believed that, assuming the brain transfer was executed sufficiently well, 'Brownson's experience would be a subjectively seamless continuation of Brown's' (Wiggins, 2001, p. 207). A second group (smaller, Wiggins thought, and including himself) believed Brownson was Brown because, by

virtue of receiving his brain, 'the seat of memory and consciousness', he was 'the functional inheritor and continuator of all of Brown's vital faculties' (2001, p. 207).

It will be clear that if our sensory experience arises in the way that O'Regan and Noë propose, then neither of these reasons for believing that Brown continues as Brownson hold water. Assuming the bodies of Brown and Robinson are not identical, there will be differences in their visual apparatus and in the apparatus relating to their other sensory modalities. This will imply in turn that there will be differences in their sensorimotor contingencies and hence they would have different experiences. O'Regan and Noë see consciousness too as governed by a person's sensorimotor contingencies (2001, p. 963). The brain 'must be "tuned to" these laws of sensorimotor contingencies' (2001, p. 943), and hence it will be integrally involved in the active exploring that leads to sensory experience and consciousness (and this much should be obvious). So, on their account, it is hard for us to make sense of what it would be like to be Brownson, or if 'he' could have survived at all. If a person did persist, it is not clear what their experience would be like or what sense they would be able to make of the world, and there is certainly no reason to believe that the person would be Brown, any more than it would be Robinson.

A both/and human being account

Wiggins then developed his own version of a human being account of personal identity, which receives support from O'Regan and Noë, given the central place in his argument of his reconsideration of the Shoemaker case. His argument is a complicated and lengthy one, which we do not need to rehearse here, as what is important for the purpose of this paper is to note the support Wiggins receives from embodied cognition, and to consider implications of his conclusions.

Wiggins stresses the need, when confronted with a question of personal identity, to be clear about the kind of thing a person is, and he develops a particular concept of person as human

being. Drawing on Locke's idea of person as a 'forensic term', he points out that for a term to be forensic it must have a public use within the interpersonal sphere (2001, p. 234). Strawson (1962) claims that humans naturally hold 'reactive attitudes', such as gratitude, anger, sympathy and resentment, towards others, and Wiggins asks what is required of the concept of person so that humans are able to react to each other in these natural ways. He finds an answer in another idea of Strawson's (1959), that to be a person is to have both mental and physical properties. When we self-refer 'we refer to an entity which has two sides or aspects, the physical and the mental, and not to a thing which possesses only the mental sort of feature, something else having the physical features' (Snowdon, 2009).

In this concept of a person, the bodily aspects and those aspects that might be deemed psychological, or suggestive of the person's character, cannot easily be prised apart. 'How a human being stands or walks or frowns or smiles or laughs or sulks or earnestly entreats, or how he fries an egg, this is one part of what he is', just as much as those actions that might be more commonly thought to express a person's psychology, such as what he or she might choose to say, or how musically he or she might play the violin (Wiggins, 2001, p. 234). What Wiggins is getting at is not so much that the ways a person physically appears and behaves express aspects of that person's character and so are as much an essential part of the person as their character, as even this implies a separateness, but that the two aspects are one and the same. The mental does not supervene on the physical so much as they necessarily co-exist together. It is the physical aspect of this co-existence that provides the human presence that can be responded to by others, and a person's character is not independent of his or her physiognomy or body. Similarly, in some remarks about changing bodies, Williams (1956–7, p. 11–12) sees it as a puzzle that 'when we are asked to distinguish a man's personality from his body, we do not really know what to distinguish from what', and concludes 'I take it that this was part of what Wittgenstein meant when he said that the best picture of the human soul was the human body'.

If Brownson is Brown then the bodily and other aspects of Brown have been separated from each other in a way that is hard to conceive.

The extended mind

I think Wiggins is saying that to persist as a person requires both bodily and psychological continuity, and I believe the extended mind thesis (EMT) enlarges personhood further, by implying that social and environmental continuity are also needed. The 1998 paper in which the thesis was originally presented is also published in this issue of *Inter*Action, so I will not summarise it here, but encourage the reader to assimilate one of the most cited philosophy articles of the past 20 years. Like the work of O'Regan and Noë, the EMT is concerned with what constitutes the mind, and suggests that this includes not only the agent's beyond-the-brain body but also elements of its environment.

The question then arises – does an extended mind entail an extended self? Clark and Chalmers believe it does (1998, p. 18). There is, however, no consensus on the issue, including among those who are sympathetic to the EMT. Wilson (2004), for example, points to counter-intuitive consequences of accepting an extended self for our notions of freedom and responsibility. For if a cognitive agent is spread into the world, then why, for example, should we punish just one part of the agent, the part within the body, when it commits a crime?

Clark and Chalmers themselves were a little tentative in saying that the self '*may* also fall beyond the skin' (1998, p. 18, my emphasis). It may simply be that they were following the default self-follows-mind view that lies behind the intuitions which bolster psychological continuity accounts of personal identity. However, Clark has gone on since his paper with Chalmers to develop a full and compelling account of an extended concept of personhood, and one which might allow for Wilson's concerns. Clark argues for his account in part by pointing to its helpful implications for scientific study.

Clark and extending the human conception

The development in Clark's thinking on extended cognition is apparent in his comment:

> It is our biological nature … to be open to many forms of physical and cognitive hybridization. Some of these … may be so intimate as to effectively extend the thinking agent. All of them are crucial parts of the nested, iterated and ongoing process of cognitive self-re-creation that is the characteristic mark of human intelligence (2005, p. 9).

We extend ourselves by recruiting parts of the world to join our biological organisms in our cognising. Clark suggests this recruitment is governed by the 'Principle of Ecological Assembly', according to which 'the canny cognizer tends to recruit, on the spot, whatever mix of problem-solving resources will yield an acceptable result with a minimum of effort' (2008, p. 13). These resources might include 'memory glasses' to help Alzheimer's patients recognise faces, silicon substitutes to replace an impaired neural resource as suggested by the example of a Californian spiny lobster (Clark, 2005), or, more prosaically, pen and paper, notebooks, calculators and phones. Crucially for Clark's position, the brain plays the lead role in the recruitment drive, in which it is 'cognitively impartial' (2008, p. 118–22). For example, it will store information externally as well as internally, and use gestures and movement as well as introspection to do its cognising. It 'simply uses whatever it can . . . to get the job done' (p. 122).

Clark characterises cognition as extending *beyond* the organism while remaining centred *in* the organism. This suggests that if extending cognition requires a new conception of persons, then the difference might be more modest than first thought, modest enough to assuage Wilson's concerns about freedom and responsibility, yet significant enough to hold greater promise for scientific study. Taking, for example, the cognitive system comprising 'pen, paper, graphics programs, and a trained mathematical brain' (2008, p. 116), Clark questions how far the behaviour of this system can be

understood by examining its component parts separately before putting them back together. While accepting that the scientific study of such hybrid systems is in its infancy, Clark makes the case for the need for such study, and points to its possibility in the work of Wayne Gray and his colleagues (ibid., pp. 118–21): 'the first stirrings of a science … targeting genuinely hybrid ensembles: soft-assembled coalitions comprising biostorage, motoric and perceptual modes of access and bioexternal storage'.

We could take a similar position as therapists and change agents, by considering the implications for our work of accepting a more extended view of the person and whether these implications would enhance or hinder this work. I will in fact adopt such a position in the final part of this article.

Environmental continuity

If Clark is right, and persons are not simply using the environment around them but are actually spread into the environment, then this suggests that environmental continuity is required for personal identity. This is in fact supported by the sensorimotor account of sensory experience. O'Regan and Noë suggest that vision requires not only knowledge of the laws of sensorimotor contingencies, but that the perceiver is 'tuned' to these laws and so able to actively exercise its mastery of them (2001, p. 943). But this idea of being tuned 'only makes sense within the context of the behavior and purpose of the system or individual *in its habitual setting*' (ibid., my emphasis).

EMT's support for environmental continuity can be shown by taking Otto and his notebook (Clark & Chalmers, 1998) from Manhattan to Mars in a variation of a thought experiment used to support a psychology continuity account (Parfit, 1984). This involves a person entering a teletransporter and having their brain and body destroyed, a scanner having first recorded the exact state of all their cells. This information is transmitted to a 'replicator' machine on Mars, which creates a new body exactly like that of the person who walked into the

teletransporter on Earth, out of new matter. Has the person on Earth survived? There appears to be psychological continuity, but, even without worrying about the bodily issues at play, the lack of environmental continuity poses a problem. Otto could be catered for quite straightforwardly, as the scanner should have no problem recording the contents of his notebook. The replica of Otto on Mars will have an exact replica of Otto's notebook, and although this will not be of any immediate use, he will be able to write new information in it, and also advise any of Otto's friends making contact from Earth to ask for the whereabouts of that restaurant they both liked and so on (thanks to Mandrigin, 2007, for this appealing idea).

But Otto's was simply one thought experiment designed to demonstrate the logical possibility of an extended mind. If there is reason to suppose that this is possible then there is no reason to suppose that the external storage and apparatus that is part of an extended cognitive system would have to be limited in size to a notebook. If we consider Clark's ideas of cognitive systems being temporary hybrids including whichever external resources the brain recruits to best undertake a cognitive task, then perhaps we are led to the need for a teletransporter that is able to transmit any size and any number of potential external parts of a cognitive agent. As it would not be known in advance what these parts might be, perhaps the only way to be sure that psychological continuity would be maintained would be to transport every aspect of the person's environment, that is, to transport Earth onto Mars.

The absurdity of the idea, even within a thought experiment that is fantastical at the outset, might be seen to reflect the lack of attention given to the environment in thought experiments used to bolster traditional accounts of personal identity, and to suggest the profound part that one's environment can play in maintaining one's sense of self.

Social continuity

In their paper on extended cognition, personal identity and neuroethics, Wilson and Lenart (2014) discuss collective

memory and group minds and suggest that what might have been thought of in those terms might be 'more plausibly viewed as cases in which the extended cognition of the individual involves a social environment involving other people' (p. 432). They invoke Wilson's social manifestation thesis: 'the idea that individuals engage in some forms of cognition only insofar as they constitute part of a social group', and conclude that this offers 'an expanded role for the extended mind thesis', and one that 'contains implications for personal identity' (ibid.). What is being suggested is that personhood requires the presence of other people, both for its development perhaps – would the apes who brought up Tarzan have been able to induct him into personhood? – and for its persistence across time.

As we saw earlier, Wiggins focused on the importance to the person of the interpersonal and he noted that Strawson 'showed how intimately our ideas of agency and responsibility depend on human beings' reactive and participative attitudes towards other human beings' (Wiggins, 2001, p. 234). The conclusion that Wiggins draws concerns the importance of the person's 'human presence', which brings physical attributes to the fore and which elicits others' reactive attitudes. But then the human presence of the others who are displaying these 'reactive attitudes' is also required.

Wiggins is not saying that a person's environment, including other people or their mental states, actually becomes part of that person. Wilson and Lenart also resist this idea and talk about extended identity rather than accept Clark's idea of an extended self. Perhaps it is a question of degree. Many believe that in a persistent vegetative state, the organism continues and the person does not. What about being in a persistent isolated state? Could personhood also diminish, perhaps to zero, as a function of isolation from other people? There seems to be a strong case that some form of social continuity is required for the persistence of personhood and to be the same person at one time as another.

Implications and connections with SF

Finally let us consider what these philosophical investigations might offer to the business of helping change to happen, and what some of the connections might be to SF in particular. It has been suggested that SF 'stretches the world' of the client (McKergow, 2015), which I think fits with the ideas explored above, though I think they can and perhaps should take us further. To engage with an extended – or stretched – concept of a person requires us also to stretch our ways of working. Let me outline some possible ways of doing this, beginning with how change might be approached by keeping some things the same.

It might seem paradoxical to consider connections between therapy and consulting – activities aiming at change – and personal identity – which concerns what is required for someone to stay the same. So a good place to start these considerations might be with an apparent paradox identified by the American logician, Irving Copi, in relation to identity through time:

1. If a changing thing really changes, there can't literally be one and the same thing before and after the change.
2. However, if there isn't literally one and the same thing before and after the change, then no thing has really undergone any change (cited in Gallois, 2012).

It may be instructive here to recall that the Formula First Session Task was instrumental in the initial development of solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) (Lipchik et al., 2012):

> Between now and next time we meet, we want you to observe, so that you can tell us next time, what happens in your (life, marriage, family, or relationship) that you want to continue to have happen (de Shazer & Molnar, 1984).

The task as originally worded invited clients to list what they *didn't* want to change, and – another apparent paradox – after being invited to do this, clients would frequently return and

report positive changes they had noticed (Lipchik et al., 2012, p. 13). As de Shazer (1985) went on to reflect, perhaps what is constant is change itself, which is 'not only possible, but inevitable'.

Yet it may be that narrative therapy has come closer to answering Copi's paradox, with its focus on 'intentional states of identity' based upon a person's hopes and dreams, intentions, commitments, purposes, beliefs, values and principles (White, 1997). It is important to stress that here too, these states not seen as fixed and the task is one of constructing *preferred* identities. However, by encouraging clients to consider what they give value to and to trace the histories of these values, the narrative approach can provide a strong sense of personal continuity. The SF practitioner tends to focus on the client's recent past and immediate future, and might want to consider borrowing from narrative practice by going further back and focusing on the client's persisting values – as some already do (Chang & Nylund, 2013).

Assuming that there *is* a persisting person sitting in front of us in the consulting room, I believe we would do well to hold the enlarged notion of this person given by Wiggins's human being account of personal identity and by the EMT, supported by the sensorimotor account of experience. Any changes made by a person conceived of in this way will occur within a continuing humanness, comprising both bodily and psychological aspects that cannot be prised apart, and degrees of environmental and social continuity.

McKergow (2015) talks about therapy as stretching the world of the client through stretching their 'field of affordances', and argues that SFBT does this in useful ways. Affordances arise in the relationships between person and environment that offer (afford) the person possibilities for action, the term being introduced by Gibson (1979) and used in his 'ecological approach to visual perception'. This is a precursor of O'Regan and Noë, who state their indebtedness to Gibson given their account of sensory experiences as being active – 'as things we do rather than as things that happen in us' (2001, p. 1019) – and so I believe their account offers

further support for McKergow's idea. O'Regan and Noë believe they differ from Gibson in their emphasis on 'the particular idiosyncratic laws peculiar to each human individual' (ibid.) and, to the extent that this is the case, being mindful of their account might focus us more on the particular ways an individual client interacts with their environment.

What would be <u>your</u> way of doing that?

How would you do that in a way that was right for you?

The EMT and the concept of the person we have arrived at would suggest that stretching the client's world involves stretching the client, and therapists need to be mindful of this in the questions they ask. Waking up tomorrow after a miracle, will be a whole person, body and soul/mind, in a setting, including other people, that is an integral part of that person. The emphasis within SF of eliciting rich, concrete descriptions of preferred futures and progress towards them is supported by Wiggins's holistic account. This makes clear the importance of eliciting a description of how the client will stand, walk, smile or laugh . . . 'or how he fries an egg', for the person's psychology is *in* those actions; they do not simply express it.

The importance of environmental continuity increases the importance of what I have called elsewhere 'concretising' – inviting the client to notice differences about themselves at certain times and in actual places (Shennan, 2014b). The rationale I have given for this practice is that the questions are easier to answer when 'concretised' in this way, but given the notion of person under discussion here they do more than that, by respecting that these places are important for the client's sense of self. An extended view of a person also suggests it would be legitimate, and potentially useful, not only to situate descriptions of a person in the world around them, but to ask about changes in that world, as parts of it will be parts of the person too.

Paying attention to environmental continuity might also give us pause for thought about where our work with our clients takes place. Just as it would only make sense to see Otto with his notebook, it might also be that to work with the whole person means to work with them in their familiar environ-

ment. Social workers and detached youth workers characteristically do their work on their clients' own territory (Jordan, 1987; Smith, 2005), and perhaps are thereby more likely to be working with the whole person. Conversely, many of us, I would venture, have experienced a sense of depersonalisation when entering the professional territory of hospital, clinic or office.

Similarly, the importance of social continuity underlines the importance of relationship questions, and not only inviting the client to describe themselves from the perspectives of others but importantly to describe the differences they might notice in others in their preferred future or have noticed about others as part of their progress towards this future. By the same token, the possibility that other people might be involved in the person of the client suggests a legitimacy to hopes of change in another providing the contract or platform for a piece of change work. And just as environmental continuity sensitises us to where work might take place, so social continuity might prompt us to consider who might be involved in this work. The thrust of these considerations in respect to environmental and social continuity is away from an individualised notion of therapy or other change work towards one which allows for a more fluid and shifting conception of what constitutes the person of the client.

Such a conception of the person might also call for an extended, flexible and shifting type of therapy. Clark's 'canny cognizer' would be met by a canny therapist, who uses pen and paper, artwork and other artefacts that could be recruited to aid the client. Many SF practitioners already use simple written lists and various means to represent scales visually. Once again, there may be lessons to be learned from narrative practitioners, who have extended the use of documentation much further, in particular by looking at how they share documents to link clients with other people in their world (Fox, 2003).

While documents used in this way are an adjunct to approaches, such as SF, that remain mainly talk-based, in other approaches talking becomes secondary to other modes of

communication. The validity of art and music therapies may be enhanced by the EMT in particular. In a review of Clark (2003), the archeologist Steven Mithen (2004) develops a fascinating theory of how humans came to make the great cognitive leap of the Upper Palaeolithic period. Where Clark and Daniel Dennett had speculated that it was the development of language that enabled the emergence of personhood (Clark, 2002), Mithen pointed out that spoken language had originated much earlier while written language was still to come. What did appear at this significant moment in human development was art, in the form of carvings and pictures on cave walls, through which, Mithen suggests, 'the floodgates of self-reflective reason were opened' (2004, p. 167). And a fascinating recent article on 'affordances and the musically extended mind' suggests that acts of 'musicking' give access to new and otherwise inaccessible emotional experiences. Musicking is a term that refers to how we actively engage with and use music, which can be used 'as a tool for motivating both individual and collective actions' (Krueger, 2014, p. 1).

Finally, in considering the extension of our notions of therapy and change work, a concept of the person based on the idea that body and mind cannot be prised apart might suggest the use of bodily approaches. In this way, clients would not only be asked to talk about physical aspects of themselves, but to use them as part of the therapeutic activity. Bodily approaches in therapy have been around for a long time, and lay people have known for even longer that exercise, movement and dance are good for well-being, but they have only crept very slowly into SF and related approaches (Shennan, 2012). In an extended therapy the pace might quicken.

I have used the word 'might' a lot above, as I think one has to be tentative about using philosophical ideas and arguments to determine how we do our therapy. The case for an extended mind is fascinating, though it sounds far-fetched to many, and for an extended self even more so. Yet I think it can only be helpful to stretch our ideas of the personhood of the client, of the client's world and of therapy. I look forward to the ideas

on these pages becoming part of the cognitive systems of others, and to my mind being extended further in turn as I come across the new ideas that I hope and trust will emerge.

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