The Heterocosmic Self:

Analogy, Temporality and Structural Couplings in Proust's *Swann's Way*

'The scientific way of looking at a fact is not the way of look at it as a miracle'

(Wittgenstein, *Lecture on Ethics*, 18)

1. Introduction: A Waxing and Waning Self

Theories of distributed cognition, whether championing the embodiment, the extension, the enactive modality, or the embedded nature of cognitive processes (for a survey see Rowlands 2010: 51-84), have been stressing how our cognitive negotiation with the world is a matter of relation, interaction and integration between the mind and the world. According to these approaches, the mind is not isolated, insulated, confined, and impermeable to the world; rather it is 'coupled' (Varela et al. 1993; Clark 2011), overflowing, 'unbounded' (Menary 2007a), and 'porous' (Clark 2013). The idea of distribution of the mind into the world has contrasting conceptual consequences. From a cognitive viewpoint, it is largely considered as an empowering of the mind's domain, an enlargement of its cognitive territory (a cognitive positivity). From an experiential angle, it might generate a feeling of disconcerting fluidity or even an anxiety of groundlessness (an ontological concern).

The ontological fear of a shaking ground for our existence might prevail if we apply the idea of distribution to the self. What if we consider the self too as coupled, unbounded, overflowing and porous? The new question becoming, where does the self stop and the rest of the world begin? Clark and Chalmers already paved the way for an application of the

extended mind theory to the problem of selfhood and identity, when in their seminal paper they asked 'What, finally, of the self? Does the extended mind imply an extended self? It seems so' (2010: 39). Referring to their landmark thought experiment in which Otto, an individual with severe memory impairment, relies on his notebook to reach a destination, they argued that 'the information in Otto's notebook […] is a central part of his identity as a cognitive agent. What this comes to is that Otto *himself* is best regarded as an extended system, a coupling of biological organism and external resources' (2010: 39). Despite this early hunch, the application of the extended mind theory to the problem of selfhood has received so far surprisingly scarce attention. Even more surprisingly, the link between extended mind, memory and the self has been limited to synchronic, contingent, temporally restricted cases of cognition.

Part of the strength of Descartes' tautological formula about the role of the *cogito* in testifying to our existence came from its suitability to the problem of temporal persistence or endurance of the self. Distributed accounts of cognition have unleashed the mental from its internal boundaries, but have still to provide a comprehensive argument about how an extended and enactive self – being constantly and porously coupled with and extended into external spaces, environments and technologies – behaves *in time*. In his *Second Meditation*, Descartes himself famously proposed a simple thought experiment in order to test how our mind keeps track of identity in spite of (physical, therefore temporal) mutability. He asks the reader to think of a piece of wax, which is 'hard, cold, easy to touch […]. In short, it has all the properties that seem to be required for a given body to be known as distinctly as possible' (2008: 22). So far, Descartes says, it is easy to grasp its concrete existence for it seems impermeable and not prone to changes. But what if we bring the wax near the fire? Then 'the shape is taken away, it grows in size, becomes liquid, becomes warm, it can hardly be touched' (22). Does the same wax remain, Descartes asks? His rationalist answer is that it

does, because notwithstanding all changes, identity is not grasped by the senses but 'by the faculty of judging that is my mind' (23). Descartes aimed at downgrading, as in the doubts that motivated his *cogito* argument, the role of the senses and of imagination in perception of external objects and events. For him, both our perception of the self and our perception of the world are ruled and kept consistent through our rational activity.

Interestingly, in arguing for this claim, Descartes used for the wax the same qualifiers that distributed accounts of cognition use to recast the mind and the self – something 'extended, flexible, mutable' (22). By assigning these qualities to the mind and the self, though, extended and enactive approaches to cognition have reached the opposite conclusion to Descartes: claiming that the nature of our mind and self is constitutively tied to sensory-motor engagements with the world (with environments, tools, technologies) in which the body and senses play a crucial role. In short, if Descartes provided a compartmentalised account of the mind and the self as safely sheltered from worldly contingencies and temporal mutability, proponents of distributed cognition have been considering the former *in terms of* the latter. Passing from an idea of the self as ontologically solid and concrete to a waxing and waning entity, however, reopens the question that Descartes attempted to answer with his rationalist argument: how can the self persist in time if it is chiefly *constituted by* a series of constantly renewed couplings, enactions, and extensions? If the self does persist, what are the processes responsible for the temporal unification and synthesis of what enactivists call different 'sensorimotor contingencies' (O'Regan and Noë 2001)? If the self does not persist, what kind of phenomenology and new ontology underlies, or results from, this shift?

This essay focuses on these questions as they relate to an extended and enactive view of the self in the space-time trajectory explored in Marcel Proust's *Swann's Way* (2005) – the first volume of *In Search of Lost Time*. Proust's work is regarded as *the* monumental literary research on temporality, self and memory. I will argue, however, that extended and enactive

frameworks can provide important new insights on the key claims and findings of Proust's literary endeavour. Proust's first volume presents a view that the self, as I shall explain in the next section, is inherently distributed: either synchronically distributed into the external environment or diachronically distributed in what Varela, Thompson and Rosch call a 'history of structural couplings' (1993: 217). The problem, for Proust as well as for the distributed cognition framework, is accounting for the mechanism or faculty that is able to unite these contingent couplings into a single, continuous and temporally consistent self. In other words: how can the self be one and the same *in, through* or *in spite of* temporal changes? Proust's answer, this essay argues, is that our cognitive faculty of making analogies (or what he defines as 'the miracle of an analogy' 2000a: 223; 'le miracle d'une analogie', 2016a: 178) is responsible – a faculty eminently sensorial.

As Douglas Hofstadter suggested, analogy lies at the 'core of cognition', not simply as a computational information device for problem solving, but as the ground for perception affecting each of our experience of the world. In Hofstadter's own analogical image, analogy is not an 'itty-bitty blip in the broad blue sky of cognition', but 'the very blue that fills the whole sky of cognition – analogy is everything, or nearly so, in my view.' (2001: 499). Proust seems to assign to analogy a similar centrality and ubiquity in cognition, with a particular relevance to our perception of our self in time. The self, for Proust, is constantly morphing and – as the wax of Descartes or the self of distributed cognition – does not have finite and concrete boundaries. As the narrator of the novel says from the very beginning, the problem arises from the ontological datum that 'none of us can be said to constitute a material whole' (2005: 20; 'nous ne sommes pas un tout matériellement constitué', 1988: 69).

In *Swann's Way*, analogy is at the same time presented as a pre-requisite and a side effect of our extended and enactive self. On the one hand, in order to extend and couple with the world, the self is presented as analogically relying on previous experiences of past

interactions with similar scenarios. If this analogical repertoire is recruited successfully, analogy faithfully (and transparently) serves what Proust criticises as 'habit' (for a survey of the concept in Proust and French philosophy see Fülöp 2014) – the skilful mechanism responsible for our feeling of persistence in time; for the sense of a single self surviving and surfing mutable conditions. On the other hand, when habit misfires and a single analogical recognition of the world is negated, the protagonist becomes aware of the discontinuity in his temporal structure and he experiences an ontological anxiety of groundlessness. In the latter scenario, which is the one to which Proust assigns a revelatory ontological power, instead of sustaining a feeling of continuity, previously enacted worlds (and, importantly, even literary and imaginatively experienced worlds) backfire and re-emerge as possible presents – in a clash between synchronicity and diachronicity from which emerges what I define as Proust's 'heterocosmic self'.

Drawing on extended and enactive perspectives on mind and self, with forays into classic phenomenological accounts of the temporality of experience, this essay investigates Proust's exploration of the problematic extension of the self (temporally, spatially, ontologically). It suggests that for Proust analogy is the structural, cognitive, aesthetic, and ontological principle of what I will call his theory of 'distributed ontology'. In the first section, I introduce Proust's idea of the self as analogically distributed in space, time, and worlds along the synchronic, diachronic and heterocosmic axes. In the second section, I show how analogy is for Proust at the same time a key cognitive process in perception, an ontological condition of existence, and a writing tool for exploring and communicating the combination of the two. In the conclusion, I argue that as much as the contemporary sciences of the mind enlighten Proust's exploration of the self, Proust's work can also challenge and expand their field of investigation, especially by highlighting the role of analogy in distributed cognition.

2. Spatio-Temporal Couplings and the Extended Self: Synchronicity, Diachronicity, Heterocosmicity

So, where does the self stop and the world begin? Starting with the synchronic axis, and in line with the extended mind theory – and even more so with enactivist accounts of cognition – Proust's text collects examples of how, at every discrete moment in time, the self is coupled, interacting and integrating with the environment. Our self can be, for instance, spatially integrated with the room in which we sleep for a certain period of time. This kind of integration is, however, gradually achieved and easily disrupted. It takes time to get used to the coupling with the external space, or in Proust's terms, the coupling has to become a 'habit'. The process is slow and painstaking, and we all know that the first nights in a new bedroom can be unsettling. This is exactly the situation in which we find the narrating character, Marcel[1], at the beginning of the novel. He tells us how troubling and frightful it has been for him, as a child, to achieve a feeling of integration with his bedroom in Combray, until habit turned his room into a 'fixed point' on which his existence and melancholic thoughts become 'centered' (2005: 8; 'ma chambre à coucher redevenait le point fixe et douloureux de mes préoccupations', 1988: 56). At the beginning, however, he:

was convinced of the *hostility of the violet curtains* and of the *insolent indifference of a clock* […] until habit had changed the colour of the curtains, silenced the clock, brought an expression of pity to the cruel, slanting face of the glass […] *Habit! that skilful but slow-moving arranger* who begins by letting our minds suffer for weeks on end in

[1] Notwithstanding the homonymy and the autobiographical similarities, it is common practice for Proust's scholars to maintain a narratological distinction between Proust as the flesh-and-blood author and Marcel as the narrating protagonist. I will keep this distinction as neat as possible throughout the essay, without entering the critical debate around the tension between the writing and fictional stances in Proust's work (on which see, for instance, Balsamo 2007).

temporary quarters, but whom our minds are none the less only too happy to discover at last, for without it, reduced to their own devices, they would be powerless to make any room seem habitable. (2005: 7; emphasis mine)

[j'avais été […] convaincu de *l'hostilité des rideaux violets* et de *l'insolente indifférence de la pendule* […] jusqu'à ce que l'habitude eût changé la couleur des rideaux, fait taire la pendule, enseigné la pitié à la glace oblique et cruelle […]. *L'habitude! aménageuse habile mais bien lente* et qui commence par laisser souffrir notre esprit pendant des semaines dans une *installation provisoire*; mais que malgré tout il est bien heureux de trouver, car sans l'habitude et réduit à ses seuls moyens il serait impuissant à nous rendre un logis habitable. (1988: 56-57; emphasis mine)

This passage already condenses important information about the functioning of analogy in spatio-temporal couplings. Before the coupling takes place and the integration with environmental conditions becomes transparent, signals from the world remain chaotic and call for interpretation. The character perceives this interpretive moment as an analogical process of anthropomorphism whereby inanimate things appear agentive. The pre-coupling scenario, then, is not simply a lack of conceptual recognition or a wrong interpretation of perceptual patterns, but it discloses the possibility of alternative worlds, where objects have consciousness and intentions. As Waytz et al. point out, 'anthropomorphism goes beyond providing purely behavioural or dispositional descriptions of observable actions (such as noting that a coyote is fast or aggressive); it involves attributing characteristics that people intuitively perceive to be uniquely human to nonhuman agents or events' (2010: 58).

Anthropomorphism is therefore a matter of perceiving possible worlds intruding our reality, and by means of analogy detecting in the environment 'both physical features, such as

perceiving a religious agent in a humanlike form, and mental capacities that people believe are uniquely human, such as the capacity to have conscious awareness [and] possess explicit intentions' (Waytz et al. 2010: 58). As the next section will show, this animist disposition of the main character of attributing malevolent intentions to curtains and clocks is just a local example of his broader attitude to think of souls (and selves) as potentially migrating or morphing into different shapes and forms across time. Analogy at the same time allows their detection as well as silencing their presence by supporting the recognition of the environment which the habit is in charge of completing and stabilising. Habit will turn temporary quarters into transparent spatio-temporal couplings, in which the self can feel centred and cosmically anchored. Its ordering manoeuvre will silence the chaos; conceal the complexity of a possible cosmos, and assign to the self an illusory geocentric perspective.

Thankfully, as soon as they are established, cognitive extensions with spaces can become so habitual that we barely perceive their running. This is until something or someone alters the structure of the coupling and we start feeling again perturbations in our cognitive extended system. As Clark and Chalmers point out, these perturbations might be considered as threatening the very core of the self involved in the cognitive interaction. In line with what Proust is representing, they argue that a serious conception of the self as distributed in the environment 'will have significant consequences […] in the moral and social domain. It may be, for example, that in some cases interfering with someone's environment will have the same moral significance as interfering with their person.' (2010: 39). Sometimes the interfering might be guided by the best of intentions, as when a family friend decides to give Marcel a magic lantern to entertain him before falling asleep. The gift has the opposite effect of altering the coupling between him and the room, generating a feeling of decentering and disanchoring of Marcel's identity:

Someone had indeed had the happy idea of giving me, to distract me on evenings when I seemed abnormally wretched, a magic lantern […]. But my sorrows were only increased thereby, because this change of lighting was enough to destroy the familiar impression I had of my room […]. Now I no longer recognised it, and felt uneasy in it, *as in a room in some hotel or chalet, in a place where I had just arrived by train for the first time.* […] I cannot express the discomfort I felt at this intrusion of mystery and beauty into *a room which I had succeeded in filling with my own personality* until I thought no more of the room than of myself. *The anaesthetic effect of habit [has] being destroyed*. (2005: 8-9; emphasis mine).

[On avait bien inventé, pour me "distraire les soirs où on me trouvait l'air trop malheureux, de me donner une lanterne magique […]. Mais ma tristesse n'en était qu'accrue, parce que rien que le changement d'éclairage détruisait l'habitude que j'avais de ma chambre […]. Maintenant je ne la reconnaissais plus et j'y étais inquiet, *comme dans une chambre d'hôtel ou de «chalet»*, où je fusse arrivé pour la première fois en descendant de chemin de fer […]. Mais je ne peux dire quel malaise me causait pourtant cette intrusion du mystère et de la beauté *dans une chambre que j'avais fini par remplir de mon moi* au point de ne pas faire plus attention à elle qu'à lui-même. *L'influence anesthésiante de l'habitude ayant cessé* […]. (1988: 56-58; emphasis mine)]

The magic lantern, by projecting the colourful images of its glasses over the room is perturbing and ultimately disrupts the spatio-temporal cognitive system constituted by Marcel coupled with his room. By no longer recognising the room as his own, a fissure opens between his mind and the environment, and the formerly extended self returns fluctuating and awaiting further anchoring or extension. By loosening the connection with his room, he gets

lost in this fissure. This cognitive fissure opens up a wider gap in which analogy comes into play. As the passage clearly shows, once the original connection is disrupted, Marcel begins analogically to recollect previous spatio-temporal extensions (such as arriving for the first time in a hotel). From the singularity of a stable, painfully achieved entanglement with the room (of one self in one world), he passes now to analogically perceive himself pulled into previously enacted worlds. As Alva Noë puts it, 'habits are world-involving', since they are tied to the current world they belong, and these couplings constitute our self – or as Noë puts, "we are *of* them" (2009: 69). Noë alludes also to the fragility of this relation, explaining how 'habits and skills are environmental in the sense that they are triggered by environmental conditions and *they vanish in the absence of the appropriate environmental settings*" (97; emphasis mine). And as soon as habits are disrupted, analogy-making comes to the fore of cognition (and awareness) firing a multiplicity of worlds, all potentially matching our perception. In short, if habits are world-involving, *defamiliarisation is world-multiplying*.

Going back to the spatio-temporal axis, whenever there is a rupture in the synchronic spatial cognitive extension, the diachronic temporal axis re-emerges in guise of analogically triggered previous interactions between selves and worlds – or what I refer to in what follows as 'analogical worlds'. This rupture, for Proust, is far from exceptional, and his view of the self in time is described as a discontinuous series of 'new selves' each of which ought to, according to the narrating protagonist, 'bear a different name from the preceding one' (1996: 681; 'Ces nouveaux « moi » qui devraient porter un autre nom que le précédent', 1990: 175; see Landy 2009: 105). In a radical view of the self as a fragile distributed entity, Proust seems to suggest that the rupture and the discontinuity occur on a daily basis. In fact, whenever we fall asleep, disconnecting from the room we sleep in, we disentangle from our extended self by losing our connection with the space. When we awake, we only gradually 'read off', in Marcel's terms, signals in the environment to geolocalise our position in the world. However,

the reconnection to the spatio-temporal position we actually occupy can go easily wrong, as the narrator explains in the following passage:

When a man is asleep, he has in a circle round him the chain of the hours, the sequence of the years, the order of the heavenly bodies. Instinctively he consults them when he awakes, and *in an instant reads off his own position* on the earth's surface and the time that has elapsed during his slumbers; but this ordered procession *is apt to grow confused, and to break its ranks*. […] [S]uppose that he dozes off in some […] abnormal and divergent position, sitting in an armchair, for instance, after dinner: then *the world will go hurtling out of horbit, the magic chair will carry him at full speed through time and space*, and when he opens his eyes again he will imagine that he went to sleep *months earlier in another place*. (2005: 3; emphasis mine)

[Un homme qui dort, tient en cercle autour de lui le fil des heures, l'ordre des années et des mondes. *Il les consulte d'instinct en s'éveillant et y lit en une seconde le point de la terre qu'il occupe*, le temps qui s'est écoulé jusqu'à son réveil; *mais leurs rangs peuvent se mêler, se rompre*. […] Que s'il s'assoupit dans une position […] déplacée et divergente, par exemple après dîner assis dans un fauteuil, alors *le bouleversement sera complet dans les mondes désorbités, le fauteuil magique le fera voyager à toute vitesse dans le temps et dans l'espace*, et au moment d'ouvrir les paupières, il se croira couché quelques mois plus tôt dans une autre contrée. (1988: 52-53; emphasis mine)]

Here Proust is reflecting, through his narrating character, on what sleep and awakening might reveal about the continuity of self and consciousness. A couple of decades before Proust wrote this page, William James already referred to sleep as one of the peculiar problems for

the view of consciousness as a continuum. In his *Principles of Psychology*, James was noting how, despite our feeling of continuity, 'the life of the individual consciousness seems, however, to be an interrupted one […]. Sleep, fainting, coma, epilepsy, and other "unconscious" conditions are apt to break in and occupy large durations of what we nevertheless consider the *mental history of a single man'* (2007:199). Commenting on this passage by James, Owen Flanagan rightly points out how a 'stream, then dry land, followed by another stream do not a single stream make' (1992: 157). The cosmic imagery of Proust's narrator seems to embrace this view about the problematic discontinuity of consciousness during sleep by recasting it on a cosmological spatio-temporal scale. He seems to suggest that, despite being mostly an instantaneous and immediate re-connection, previous worlds (spatio-temporal enactments and extensions) and orbits are still present; and that a self, then no-self, then self do not a single self make. If this liminal moment of awakening derails in the wrong re-connection or re-extension, the world of a single man would fall out of his orbit and, traversing time and spaces, re-couple with previously enacted worlds (and selves).

As Proust suggests immediately after, in fact, this liminal transition before we re-connect to the place we are in – and with the self resulting from this extension – can sometimes last longer than usual, opening a larger fissure in which, before our self tying to a single world, our identity presents itself in the plural form of analogical memories of previous worlds we experienced:

[F]or me it was enough if, in my own bed, my sleep was so heavy as *completely to relax my consciousness*; for then I lost all sense of the place in which I had gone to sleep, and when I awoke in the middle of the night, *not knowing where I was, I could not even be sure at first who I was.* I had only the most rudimentary sense of existence, such as may lurk or flicker in the depths of an animal's consciousness; I was more destitute than the

cave-dweller; but then the memory – not yet of the place in which I was, but of *various other places where I had lived and might now very possibly be* – would come *like a rope let down from heaven to draw me up out of the abyss of not-being*, from which I could never have escaped by myself: in a flash *I would traverse centuries of civilisation*, and out of a blurred glimpse of oil-lamps, then of shirts with turned-down collars, would *gradually piece together the original components of my ego*. (4; emphasis mine)

[Mais il suffisait que, dans mon lit même, mon sommeil fût profond et *détendît entièrement mon esprit*; alors celui-ci lâchait le plan du lieu où je m'étais endormi, et quand je m'éveillais au milieu de la nuit, *comme j'ignorais où je me trouvais*, *je ne savais même pas au premier instant qui j'étais*; j'avais seulement dans sa simplicité première, le sentiment de l'existence comme il peut frémir au fond d'un animal: j'étais plus dénué que l'homme des cavernes; mais alors le souvenir—non encore du lieu où j'étais, mais *de quelques-uns de ceux que j'avais habités et où j'aurais pu être*—venait à moi *comme un secours d'en haut pour me tirer du néant* d'où je n'aurais pu sortir tout seul; *je passais en une seconde par-dessus des siècles de civilisation*, et l'image confusément entrevue de lampes à pétrole, puis de chemises à col rabattu, *recomposaient peu à peu les traits originaux de mon moi*. (1988: 52-53 ; emphasis mine)]

This passage explains how the synchronic extension of Marcel with the room is unleashed when falling asleep. Awakening, the synchronic connection that has been momentarily untied, a fissure opens in which the very feeling of personal identity is lost. The fissure or, Proust's terms, this relaxation of consciousness ignites analogies with a vast universe of possible worlds, first spanning and spinning centuries of civilisation, and then being gradually narrowed down to previous worlds Marcel had personally experienced as past self-extensions.

In the end, a single world and a single self are restored. These are key components of what I will call in the next section Proust's theory of 'distributed ontology'. Existence is distributed synchronically, when it forms a unity of self and world at a specific moment in time. Existence is distributed diachronically as a series of every time new selves coupled with new worlds, in a feeling of discontinuous ontology. As a result of this double extension or, in Landy's words, a Proustian 'dual predicament' (see Landy 2009:101), the self becomes a fluid, ever-changing entity which moves from worlds to worlds in what I would define as a *heterocosmicity*. For Marcel, each one of 'those worlds which we call individuals' (1996: 343; 'mondes que nous appelons les individus', 2016b : 246) is always distributed into a multiplicity of worlds.

The fact that we perceive, albeit in rare conditions of disruption, this discontinuity *from within* could suggest that in the end something or someone remains constant after all. As Evan Thompson proposes, while interpreting the same passage from Proust in the light of phenomenological, enactivist and Buddhist traditions, 'although deep sleep creates a gap or rupture in our consciousness, we feel the gap from within upon awakening. Our waking sense that we were just asleep and unaware isn't outside knowledge, it's inside, firsthand experience. We're aware of the gap of our consciousness from within our consciousness' (2014: 236). Thompson here is referring to the persistence of a minimal sense of self close to the 'most rudimentary sense of existence' of an 'animal's consciousness' to which Proust is alluding. The distinction that Thompson stresses between the 'self as the subject of present-moment experience' and the self as the 'mentally represented object of autobiographical memory' (236) is an important one. The former minimal level of selfhood, Thompson says, already brings a degree of individual connectedness to the surrounding world, and this feeling is always present, even if just as the individual feeling of a *me* being lost. Still using the awakening state as an example, Damasio similarly explains how 'awakening meant having

my temporarily absent mind returned, but with *me* in it, both property (the mind) and proprietor (me) accounted for' (2010: 4). Proust seems to grant this minimal level of subjectivity, yet emphasises how our mind and body are incapable of resting in it; they inescapably hurry into looking for a richer connection with the environment in order to regain a higher degree of selfhood. When the protagonist explains that 'not knowing where I was, I could not even be sure at first who I was', he suggests that even minimal spatio-temporal coupling is the requisite for even a still basic sense of self. Importantly, though, Proust does not seem to share the idea that higher levels of self-identification are merely a representational, autobiographical or narrative affair of which mind and language are exclusively in charge. Quite the opposite: he presents the transition and the gap between the animal sense of existence and higher levels of spatio-temporal self-individuation as something relying heavily on embodied (re-established) cognition and (re-established) coupling. In a non-representational, pre-linguistic and enactive vein, Marcel reports how:

even before my brain, *hesitating at the threshold of times and shapes*, had reassembled the circumstances sufficiently to identify the room, it – *my body* – would recall from each room in succession the style of the bed, the position of the doors, the angle at the daylight came in at the windows, whether there was a passage outside, *what I had in mind when I went to sleep and found there when I awoke*. (2005: 5; emphasis mine).

[avant même que ma pensée, qui *hésitait au seuil des temps et des formes*, eût identifié le logis en rapprochant les circonstances, lui,—*mon corps*,—se rappelait pour chacun le genre du lit, la place des portes, la prise de jour des fenêtres, l'existence d'un couloir, avec *la pensée que j'avais en m'y endormant et que je retrouvais au réveil*. (1988: 58; emphasis mine)]

The cosmological book of history of spatio-temporal couplings is not written in a language that only the rational faculty of judging can understand. Its deciphering is better performed by the senses, Proust says, in line with an anti-Cartesian view of cognition. This is not surprising, given that the book collects a history of sensorimotor engagements and extensions. As for the problem of a discontinuity of the self, here Proust is writing about how the body is responsible *for informing the mind* about how to bridge the gap between pre- and post- sleep states and worlds. Yet the strength of the Proustian exploration relies more in the kind of ontological revelations we can access in the rare moments of defamiliarisation in which this transition becomes perceptible and the self is revealed as fluidly able to occupy multiple positions in space and time. To understand the self as constantly re-constituted by discrete sensorimotor interactions, we have to abandon the idea of a stable unity towards a conception of the self as an extended process generating a heterocosmicity.

This also means that we have to get rid of the idea of the self as a single substantial entity. In this respect, what I have called the disclosing of a 'fissure' after the disconnection of sleep can be described, in the enactivist terms of Varela, Thompson and Rosch, as an 'evocation of groundlessness' (1993: 217-219). This unsettling moments show us how our self is, still with Varela, *just* a 'history of structural couplings', because 'we could discern no subjective ground, no permanent and abiding ego-self. When we tried to find the objective ground that we thought must still be present, we found *a world enacted by our history of structural couplings*' (1993: 217; emphasis mine). Analogy, by filling the 'cognitive liminality' (Bernini 2015) of our momentary 'evocation of groundlessness', is the volume in which we 'read off' our history of distributed cognitions. In other words, analogy *is* our history of structural couplings underlying the self as a history of distributed worlds. Therefore, a new set of questions arises. Where does one world stop and the rest of the worlds begin? How

does the self migrate from one world to another? Do analogical relations also play a role in our interpretation of other people's worlds? Can literary analogies function as tools for exploring the role of analogy in cognition? These are the questions that I will address in the next section.

3. Analogical Worlds: Metempsychosis, Retentional Trajectories and Distributed Ontology

To recapitulate, Proust emphasises the role of analogy at least at two levels. First, analogies are the very ontological structure of our existence: they are the way in which our self is distributed in a succession of coupled enactions with worlds that each time can be – voluntarily or not – recalled. Second, Proust suggests that analogy making is a key cognitive process that recruits previous analogical worlds as key cognitive tools to make sense of reality. The liminal moments of groundlessness in which we can perceive the analogical process spinning worlds is an exceptional case that makes evident a process that is *always* operating: namely, our analogical mode of interaction with the world, our projecting over the current world analogical worlds in order to make sense of it. Between the self and reality, in fact, there is for Proust a constant veil, an opacity that has to be interpreted, mostly by means of analogies. He explains how for him, 'in all perception there exists a barrier as a result of which there is never absolute contact between reality and our intelligence' (2000a: 357; 'Car il y a entre nous et les êtres un liséré de contingences [...] qui empêche la mise en contact absolue de la réalité et de l'esprit', 2016a: 281). As with the magic lantern, but with a more familiarising effect, it is by projecting previous analogical worlds over this opaque screen that we can make sense of what stands in front of us – both in terms of continuity (it is my

room) and discontinuity (it is my room in world *x* and not my room in world *y*). It is a matter of recognising patterns and novelty by resorting to previously experienced wordily extensions.

In *The Analogical Mind*, Gentre, Holyoak and Kokinov describe analogy as 'the ability to pick out patterns, to identify recurrences of these patterns despite variation in the elements that compose them. […] Analogy, in its most general sense, is this ability to think about relational patterns". (2001: 2). In this definition, however, analogy seems to be exclusively about continuity and discontinuity – a perceiving of differences in contiguity. I would suggest instead that Proust's view is more radical, and that for him the relation between analogical worlds and the present world is not just a contiguity but close to, in Leinbinz's terms, a 'compossibility'; that is, the idea that the actual world is just one among many possible worlds with which it coexists. For Proust, as soon as one world ceases to be actual – as well as the self in it – it does not cease to be present and to some extent possible. In his recent book, *Proust as a Philosopher*, Miguel de Beistegui also refers to Leibniz's idea of worlds' 'compossibility', suggesting how in Proust every episode of involuntary memory or analogical memories in the gap of awakening function as the projection of a medieval storyworld by the magic lantern over the room of the young Marcel, where 'both worlds, both spaces, and both eras blend and join into a single reality that's irreducible to either one or the other, all the while remaining tangible and alive' (2013: 83). The idea of analogical compossibility of worlds, though, is in Proust a very specific kind of blend. If all the previously enacted worlds and selves remain dormant and alive, in the re-activation of their presence we experience more a superimposition than a blend.

The notion of 'conceptual blending', as formulated by Fauconnier and Turner (2002), can be useful to grasp the specificity of Proust's analogical account of the extended or heterocosmic self. As we have seen, Proust considers analogy both as an ally of habit in maintaining a feeling of continuity and consistency in the self-world relation as well as the

mechanism misfiring when this relation is momentarily broken. The former stabilising role of analogy is accounted for by Turner and Fauconnier in terms of 'compression' (115-119) – the mental faculty whereby we integrate multiple domains or elements into a single unified concept. For them, among many other forms of compressions our mind performs, the feeling of our identity as consistent in time is the result of this cognitive process. They suggest that our mind manages to compress each new evolving stages of our life into a single blend (our self), and that 'human mental life is unthinkable without continual compression and decompression involving identity' (115). The self, then, would be what Turner more recently has defined as an 'overarching blended self, which can be stable in the blend despite considerable inconsistency across the various selves' (2015: 79).

This successful compression of multiple selves into a single, consistent blend is indeed something Proust recognises, but only as the more illusory and representational (that is, conceptual, abstract, disembodied) outcome of analogy – as the arranging cognitive work of habit that analogy can both support and unmask. For him, moments of decompression in what he later in the novel calls the 'whirlpool of awakening' (2005: 224; 'tourbillon du réveil', 1988: 277) are ontologically far more revealing; and the experience of being pulled into the cosmological whirlpool more enticing. These ruptures disclose at the same time the 'distributed ontology' of the self (the multiplicity of worlds still possible and accessible in the history book of structural couplings) as well as its groundlessness and fluidity. This is the kind of ontology that Proust aims at exploring, pointing at an idea of self *as* distributed into multiple space-time worldly couplings *thanks to* its fluidity. And the idea of a superimposition in which discontinuities or disanalogies can be constantly perceived as ontologically present is for him more important than stressing the consistency of this superimposed mass of layers, as it is evident in the following geological image:

All these memories, *superimposed upon one another*, now formed a single mass, but had *not so far coalesced* that I could not discern between them – between my oldest, my instinctive memories, and those others, inspired by a taste or "perfume" […] – if not real fissures, real geological faults, at least that veining, that variegation of colouring, which certain rocks, in certain blocks of marble, points to different origins, age, and formation. (2005: 223).

[Tous ces souvenirs *ajoutés les uns aux autres* ne formaient plus qu'une masse, *mais non sans qu'on ne pût distinguer entre eux*,—entre les plus anciens, et ceux plus récents, nés d'un parfum […] —sinon des fissures, des failles véritables, du moins ces veinures, ces bigarrures de coloration, qui dans certaines roches, dans certains marbres, révèlent des différences d'origine, d'âge, de «formation». (1988: 276; emphasis mine)]

The reference to a 'single mass' can be read as an allusion to a sort of ontologically overarching self. However, Proust's emphasis falls clearly more on the *incomplete* coalescence of the mass, and the entire image is aimed at accounting for the discernibility (that is, compossibility into the same substance) of the superimposed layers. If an idea of a self emerges from this metaphor, is of the self as a node of compossible superimposed layers of previous enactions and extenstions (elsewhere described as 'the layers of my mental soil' 2005: 221; 'des gisements profonds de mon sol mental', 1988: 274).

Putting this geological image in relation to optical metaphors whereby Proust expresses the feeling of this distributed ontology of the self can help clarifying why superimposition prevails on, or contrasts with, the idea of a self as a successful blend. The first optical device is the stereoscope. In the third volume, the *Guermantes Way*, Proust explains how to recall the image of Albertine from a temporal distance felt like looking at her 'behind the lens of a

stereoscope' (2000b: 418; 'derrière le verres d'un stéréoscope', 2012: 352). Here, Proust is suggesting that by unifying two points in time (the present remembering self and the past experiencing self) we achieve (spatial) depth in (temporal) perspective. This perspectival view of self and memory had been for Proust a major aesthetic goal in representing the psychology of his characters, as he explains in an interview in *Le Temps* in 1913,, famously asserting that 'there is plane geometry and geometry in space. Well, for me the novel is not only plane psychology, but psychology in time' (13 Novembre 1913; 'Vous savez qu'il y a une géométrie plane et une géométrie dans l'espace. Eh bien, pour moi, le roman ce n'est pas seulement de la psychologie plane, mais de la psychologie dans le temps'; my translation). The idea of the stereoscope, though, is only partly appropriate since the conjunction of past memories to the present moment discloses not just a three-dimensional depth, but a four-dimensional ontology of spaces and selves in time. For the narrating protagonist, the self is like a universe that you can travel (and he admits, in relation to his memories, an 'inclination to travel' 222; 'désir de voyage', 1988: 275) in space *as* time, or vice versa. Like the church that the protagonist used to walk as a child is textured by different strata from different epochs, the self is 'an edifice occupying, so to speak, *a four-dimensional space – the name of the fourth dimension being Time* – extending through centuries its ancient naive' (2005: 71; 'un édifice occupant, si l'on peut dire, *un espace à quatre dimensions—la quatrième étant celle du Temps*,—déployant à travers les siècles son vaisseau', 1988: 121; emphasis mine). As Shattuck notes, Proust portrays not just a stereoscopic view of the self, but a 'stereological' consciousness which sees the world simultaneously' (1983:47). The idea of a stereoscope, though, remains valid insofar as it points at a necessary degree of analogical similarity between the two images in order for depth to emerge.

This simultaneity of selves and analogical worlds, as we have seen, is mostly operating in the background, (pre)serving habitual recognition of a single self in a single spatio-temporal

connection to a single world. But when analogy breaks rank, such as in the moment of awakening, we can have a glimpse of the 'shifting and confused gusts of memory' (2005: 6). To describe the blurred access to this analogical spinning of worlds and selves, Proust uses another optical image, that of a 'bioscope'. He explains how 'in my brief spell of uncertainty as to where I was, I did not distinguish the various suppositions of which it was composed more than, when we watch a horse running, we isolate the successive position of its body as they appear upon a bioscope' (2005: 6; 'souvent, ma brève incertitude du lieu où je me trouvais ne distinguait pas mieux les unes des autres les diverses suppositions dont elle était faite, que nous n'isolons, en voyant un cheval courir, les positions successives que nous montre le kinétoscope.', 1988: 54). Once again, in order for the bioscope to create a feeling of a moving horse, each image has to be at the same time similar and different. But here Proust is using the image to suggest that, in the feeling of a self moving through spaces and time, the protagonist is not able to isolate each image. The only dynamics he can perceive is that there are discrete images generating a movement. In other words, he is pointing at the feeling of rapid successions that approximates simultaneity – the self becoming an almost simultaneous movement from world to world. If we were to complement Proust's optical images with a more recent technological innovation derived from contemporary research on memory and imagery, the simultaneity of previously enacted worlds that he is describing can be thought of in terms of a holographic image. As Steven Kosslyn and colleagues suggested, memory does not work serially, 'as if one were paging through a photo album, examining each snapshot in turn' (45). Instead, they explain, 'it is possible that images themselves can be searched in parallel whenever a particular one is sought [..] just how holographic memory systems work' (45). In a holographic image, a laser impresses the image of more than one object on a single plate, and the 'same plate can retain images of many pairs of objects – all of which are "searched" in parallel when light is shined through it' (47). This simultaneous

parallel search (and emersion) of multiple images from a single plate seems very close to what Proust is describing. In awakening, multiple analogical worlds are emerging and searched in parallel to match a single wordily scenario. In short, we can say that *the heteroscosmic self might become conscious of its ontology in momentary accesses to the holographic working of memory*.

In this respect, Proust is interestingly distancing himself from phenomenological accounts of memory and temporality. Building on Husserl classic view of temporality, Varela sets forth an important distinction between memory recollection and the phenomenology of our experience of time. In Husserl's terms, Varela explains, our intimate experience of time has a tripartite structure: every temporal experience having an impression, a retention and a protention. When we experience an event or an object as extending in time, as with an unfolding melody, we do not perceive gaps between the notes. This is because each note follows the tripartite structure of temporality, according to which it brings a retention of the just-past note, an impression of itself, and a protention to future possible notes. Memories, Varela argues, cannot be equivalent to retention because 'in the present I "see" what just passed; in memory I can only hold it in a representation as if through a veil. Thus memory and evocation have a mode of appearance that is qualitatively different from nowness' (1999: 276). The retention of the just-past moment has for Varela a phenomenological presence or a 'nowness' that memories do not. In Proust, though, this distinction is twisted, and Husserl's terminology can be used to illuminate his peculiar ontological theory. As we have seen, it is precisely because memories are *experienced* as present, because past worlds are re-presenting themselves qualitatively as a 'nowness' that the Proustian ontology and analogical cosmology reaches a hermeneutic salience (as opposed to a scientific validity). It is because what Varela calls 'retentional trajectories', usually operating at local and contingent levels of temporality, are stretching too far – bringing back to the 'nowness' worlds that should be consigned to the

abstract phenomenology of recollection –that the linear, self-unifying (Zahavi 2012) sense of temporality turns into a centripetal force. *Retentional trajectories become possible orbits, and previous selves compossible planets*. There is no simple and successful 'blending' of two worlds, but an ontological duplication and co-existence.

As for which experiential model might have helped Proust devine this sort of cosmological phenomenology, together with a sustained introspection of momentary disruptions of habit, the act of reading might have provided him with an experiential model of how this ontological compossibility can work. As Proust explains at the beginning of the novel, when reading literature we are immersed into (to an important extent, analogically; Green et al. 2002; Bernini and Caracciolo 2013), and we become part of, new fictional worlds without ceasing to occupy the world in which we are reading ('it seemed to me that I myself was the immediate subject of my book: a church, a quartet, the rivalry between Francois I and Charles V', 2005: 1; 'il me semblait que j'étais moi-même ce dont parlait l'ouvrage: une église, un quatuor, la rivalité de François Ier et de Charles Quint.', 1988: 49). As soon as Marcel stops reading, Proust goes on, the memories of the imaginary world in which he was immersed remain with him as ghostly presences, as 'the thought of a previous existence must be after metempsychosis' (1; 'comme après la métempsycose les pensées d'une existence antérieure', 1988: 49). The idea of a metempsychotic transfer or transmigration of one world into another, I would suggest, is crucial in Proust's theory of distributed ontology – and the concept of metempsychosis, so far analyzed in his work as a religious experience (Lewis 2010: 81-110) can be naturalized as a cognitive theory of selves and world with the framework of distributed cognition.

In Proust's novel, previous selves, experiences and worlds migrate into the new following world in the same way imaginary worlds remain with us after reading. Not just as stored knowledge, but as what Fox Harrel's define as "phantasms" (2013); presences that despite

being non-actual are analogically compossible and contribute to the meaning of our experience. Phantasms, Harrel explains, can be constituted either by cultural or phenomenological experiences, by artifacts, stories or lived memories. In Harrel's words:

> We all have everyday experiences that are simultaneously understood within broader stories. The real-world balcony might prompt you to imbue the scenario at hand with deeper significance. You might imagine call up to your lover on the balcony, as you just saw in a scene from a filmic adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. […] The results of this mapping of imagery and ideas – which you previously experienced […] – onto immediate sensory perception of the balcony are phantasms. (2013: 5)

Harrel here is pointing at the ghostly nature and meaning-making import of what I have called Proust's analogical worlds. For Proust, both the fictional and actual worlds we experience migrate in time and always remain ghostly or 'phantasmal' presences embedded in every new experience we make.

A final question is how does this metempsychotic atmosphere migrate into Proust's writing? It is enough to read the first pages of *Swann's Way* to realise the overwhelming, or in Wasser's terms, 'hyperbolic' (2014) use of analogies in the novel (see also Virtanen 1954; Meyers 1972). These analogies, through which Marcel explains his own experience, often become sufficiently detailed, expanded and informationally 'saturated' (to use Doležel's expression; 1998: 170) to count as proper embedded fictional worlds (Palmer 2004) in which the reader gets anomalously trapped and excessively immersed, almost forgetting the target experience which the comparison was about (Genette 1982: 203-228). Here is Marcel analogically comparing his lying in bed waiting in vain for his mother to an invalid in bed who misleadingly hopes someone is about to come:

[It was] [n]early midnight. The hour when an invalid, who has been obliged to set out on a journey and to sleep in a strange hotel, awakens by a sudden spasm, sees with glad relief a streak of daylight showing under his door. Thank God, it is morning! The servants will be about in a minute: he can ring, and someone will come to look after him. The thought of being assuaged gives him strength to endure his pain. He is certain he heard footsteps: they come nearer, and then die away. The ray of light beneath his door is extinguished. It is midnight; someone has turned out the gas; the last servant has gone to bed, and he must lie all night suffering without remedy. I would fall asleep […] . (2005: 2)

[Bientôt minuit. C'est l'instant où le malade, qui a été obligé de partir en voyage et a dû coucher dans un hôtel inconnu, réveillé par une crise, se réjouit en apercevant sous la porte une raie de jour. Quel bonheur, c'est déjà le matin! Dans un moment les domestiques seront levés, il pourra sonner, on viendra lui porter secours. L'espérance d'être soulagé lui donne du courage pour souffrir. Justement il a cru entendre des pas; les pas se rapprochent, puis s'éloignent. Et la raie de jour qui était sous sa porte a disparu. C'est minuit; on vient d'éteindre le gaz; le dernier domestique est parti et il faudra rester toute la nuit à souffrir sans remède. Je me rendormais […].' (1988: 50)]

In Proust's writing process, itself a cognitive extension (Menary 2007b; Bernini 2014), analogy becomes at the same time *a tool for the expression or exploration* of analogical worlds and *a manifestation* of what is explored or expressed. Proust's hypertrophic use of analogies in his writing is a cognitive device for making manifest in literature what is already operating in everyday cognition. There are constant traces of other analogical worlds that live

with us as meaning-making presences, and literature can employ analogy to represent and explore this process.

In Proust's work, this is true not just for the protagonist's individual world and experiences, but also for how Marcel or other characters make sense of each other. For instance, Swann obsessively compares people to Italian paintings. To him, the kitchen-maiden's smocks 'recalled the cloaks in which Giotto shrouds some of the allegorical figures in his paintings, of which M. Swann had given me photographs. He it was who pointed out the resemblance, and when he inquired after the kitchen-maid he would say: 'Well, how goes it with Giotto's Charity?' (2005: 125; 'Comment va la Charité de Giotto?', 1988: 145). When directed to other people, analogies can serve also as a cognitive tool for channeling empathy, as Husserl already pointed out talking of empathy as an 'analogical transference' by means of which we, in Husserl's words, '*couple*' or '*pair*' with other people establishing a 'phenomenal unity' (quoted in Zahavi 2014: 132-135). In Proust, the 'phenomenal unity' between two worlds (self-to-self; self-to-others; others-to-others) is always permeated by, and results, in a multiplicity of worlds, which nonetheless functions as a meaning-making dynamic.

As Merleau-Ponty poignantly noted, human experience of reality is tied to a restricted and internal view from within a single world. We are not allowed a cosmological impartial view from elsewhere, which would allow us to contemplate, compare and describe the interaction between the multiple worlds of each individual. We are not, in Merleau-Ponty's phrasing, a *kosmotheoros*, because:

[I]f I am a kosmotheoros, my sovereign gaze finds the things each in its own time, in its own place, as absolute individuals in a unique local and temporal disposition. Since they participate in the same significations each from its own place, one is led to conceive of

another dimension that would be transversal to this flat multiplicity and that would be the system of signification without locality or temporality (1968: 113)

Proust seems at the same time to acknowledge the separateness of each individual world (either within the diachronic unfolding of the self or in the synchronic interaction of different individuals) as well as suggesting that by using and bringing attention to the cognitive import of analogy we can, even for brief moments, access the kosmotheoros' system of signification and perspective over the entire extended and heterocosmic universe.

Conclusion: Cognition and The Miracle of Analogy

Tweaking Hofstadter's remark about the ubiquitous role of analogy in mental processes, the essay aimed at showing how Proust's work places analogy at the core of distributed cognition. It showed how analogy is for Proust the ontological principle of the self considered as continuously extended in spatio-temporal couplings with the environment. These discrete extensions in space and time of an ever changing self remain, in Proust cosmological and metempsycotic imagery, constantly present and possible worlds (what I have called analogical worlds) that can re-emerge whenever habit fails in its preserving (consolidating and illusory) cognitive work. Secondly, analogy is in Proust's work a central cognitive process which, chiming with Hofstadter's remark, (either consciously or unconsciously) operates in our perceptual and social experience of distributed re-cognition. Thirdly, literary analogies are in themselves cognitive tools that can at the same time express and explore analogical processes in our meaning-making enaction of the world.

This is the multilayered view of analogy that, I argued, can be detected if we look at Proust's treatment of self and temporality through the lenses of extended and enactive theories of cognition. What Proust's text (and literature in general) can offer to cognitive research is one of the objects of the present volume and a question that has to remain open for it to be productive. The present essay, though, endorsed the working assumption made by the psychologist Richard Epstein in his article on Proust and William James where he articulates the belief that 'works of literature are one possible source of data about the subjective nature of experience, for the job of the writer is to record experiences (including internal experiences) that have not been noticed before' (2004: 214). This holds true, I maintain, for the many insights Proust has developed by recording the functioning, malfunctioning and exploratory possibilities of the cognitive process he referred to as 'the miracle of an analogy' (2000a: 223). In order to better understand the specificity and autonomy of a literary exploration of cognition, though, we should also focus on what remains so far unaccountable by science, bearing in mind that, as the epigraph by Wittgenstein says, the scientific way of looking at the world is not the same as looking at it as a miracle.

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