In this compact, enlightening, and stimulating volume, three authors offer a spirited account of the importance of somewhat diverse notions of affordance for an approach to architecture that is both action-oriented and attuned to the emotional dynamics of lived experience. Their message is that we can improve the spaces, buildings, and landscapes that we inhabit by mastering how we act within them and understand them.

In classic accounts of vision, the key question is “What do you see?” In developing his ecological psychology, J.J. Gibson asked “What actions does the environment make possible?” He introduced the term **affordance** for the perceptual cues that the organism’s surroundings offer for possible action. Given the further question “How does the environment make you feel?,” some architects now regard the **atmosphere** of a building as an affordance – though I would suggest that, if so, it is a non-Gibsonian affordance.

Architect Sarah Robinson cites the image of a “rocking chair as the soul of the porch.” Here, the notion of atmosphere predominates; but once one considers sitting in the chair, Gibsonian notions take over. Robinson emphasizes that architecture should be thought of in terms of relations, connections, processes, and couplings of action and movement. She offers a scholarly assessment of Gibson’s writings, agreeing that atmosphere is not an affordance in Gibson’s sense. She articulates different ways that affordances function with the intention “to stimulate thinking about the endless ways to engage our bodies and minds in the ecology of our daily lives.”

Architectural historian Harry Francis Mallgrave views such relations between the built space and the human being as attunement with action-related prospects in one’s spatial surroundings. This is a Gibsonian view, but atmosphere certainly enters the mix through his own experience as an architectural historian, and his call for architecture to shift its emphasis from “object to experience.” A central concern for him is that, all too often, designers are “looking for a technological solution rather than creating a human niche that allows people a set of affordances.” He espouses biophilic design, including the importance of buildings being designed and built around gardens which, following the ancient Persians, he calls **paradises**.

Philosopher James R. Hamilton addresses the complementarity between the affordances the designer intends to provide and the multiplicity of affordances that will be experienced by people in the designed environment. A key challenge for the designer is that (contra Gibson’s notion of direct perception) affordances rest in great part on the experience the user brings to the artifact, an experience shaped by culture as well as by the individual’s physical capabilities. Hamilton gives particular attention to differing notions of the term **function** as it applies to biological systems and designed artifacts.

The volume is enriched by Andrea Jelić’s introduction, a Postscript by the editor, Bob Condia, and an exceptionally interesting, attractive, and informative set of illustrations.