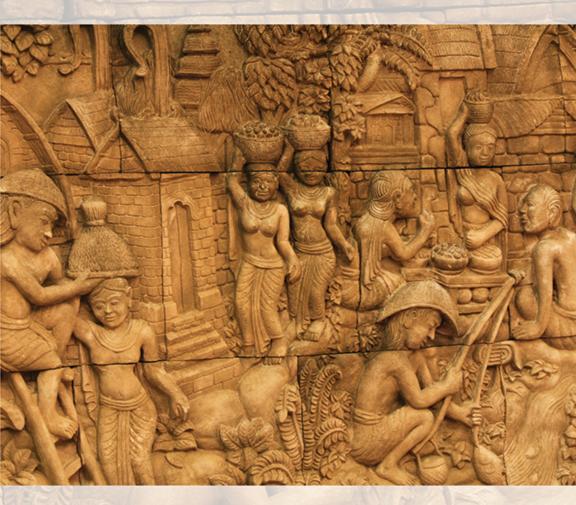# I ACTIVATE YOU
TO AFFECT ME

EDITED BY

CARLOS CORNEJO · GIUSEPPINA MARSICO
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to Affect Me

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I Activate You to Affect Me

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I ACTIVATE YOU TO AFFECT ME

Affectivating as a Cultural Psychological Phenomenon

Carlos Cornejo
Giuseppina Marsico
Jaan Valsiner

The second volume of *Annals of Cultural Psychology* is dedicated to the affective nature of human social relationships with the environment. The chapters here included explore the historical, theoretical and practical dimensions of the concept of *affectivating* originally introduced by one of us (Valsiner, 1999), as a potential tool of inquiry into the affective-sensitive dimension of psychological life within a cultural-psychological framework.

Why this new term? And why dedicate a whole volume of the Annals to contributions that, in one way or another—use the term for some theoretical purposes? The slightly awkward notion of affectiv*ating* brings the affective dimension of the human experience into the center of the scope of cultural Psychologies, which have usually focused on the social side of

human experiencing. Insofar as different versions of Cultural Psychology have fostered a view of the mind as socially constituted, aspects of the mind traditionally understood as individual have been minimized or even neglected. This has distinctively been the case of affects in social conceptions of mind.

The neologism affectivating indicates that *affect* can and should be considered in relation to the actions that the affected organism establishes with its environment. Thus, instead of being a passive happening into the individual organism, affect is tightly bonded with the actions the same organism performs in relation to others. In the case of humans, affectivating reveals the two-sided (Person → Environment and Environment → Person) process of relating—treating that relating as primarily an affective (and secondarily cognitive) process. A person is affected by aspects of their environments that previously have been made meaningful and therefore salient by that very person. So, people *actively* make certain aspects of their environment become affectively significant for them, and that significance feeds forward to their further relating with their *Umwelts* (Chang, 2009). In other words, affectivation refers to the process by which people act upon the environment turning it into *their own* environment, and therefore, becoming themselves sensitive—affectively tuned—to it.

The concept of affectivating involves two psychological dimensions often undervalued or even obliterated from contemporary cultural psychology, namely the affective involvement and the agentivity of people in their social encounters. The very neologism *affect + activating* reflects indeed both aspects. Importantly, affect and agentivity have been foregrounded several times throughout the history of the discipline. However, as the *Geisteswissenchaft*-versions of psychology progressively separated themselves from the physiological-experimental approach of the "new psychology" by criticizing the Cartesian view of mind (Dilthey, 1894/1977), dimensions of human mind that were seen as individual—such as affect and agentivity—lost their centrality. This battle of the *Naturwissenschaft* and *Geisteswissenschaft* in psychology that started in the 19th century (Valsiner, 2012) continued through the 20th century and continues in ours in the form of "the neurosciences" to take over psychology as a science in its whole. The human mind becomes reduced to beautiful colored pictures of the images of the brain—much to the fascination of journalists and the lay public. This of course leads to new versions of *fascination science* that builds on the sensationist "making of the news" in our contemporary mass media. What becomes overlooked is the perseverance of the very traditional individualistic model of the mind.

In opposition to the individualistic concept of mind that characterizes most of psychology, the newly emerged[1] versions of cultural psychologies emphasized from its beginnings the social constitution of the human mind.

Society and culture had a primacy in the explanation of the individual mind. Although this framework situated psychology within the social sciences, it had at the same time the negative effect of disregarding those psychological processes that are innerly felt and therefore less socially bounded.

In this context, it is worth remembering the historical grounds of affect and agentivity. In the case of affect, the basic orientation can be traced to Theodor Lipps and his re-introduction of the concept of *Einfühlung* [in-feeling]. Introduced during the Romantic era by Johann Gottfried Herder, Einfühlung originally worked as a methodological proposal for a non-rationalistic approach to foreign cultures (Musa, Olivares & Cornejo, 2015). The real knowledge of a different culture requires the temporal abandonment of the observer's own conceptual schemas, replacing them by the viewpoint of the observed culture. The way to do this is to *enter into* the foreign culture (i.e., to *feel into* oneself their form of life). The process implies an affective involvement—hence the term Ein-*fühlung*—rather than a rational procedure. Thus, according to Herder, the knowledge of people requires the reverberation into oneself of the alien affects while living like others.

Herder's look at the "feeling-into" was expanded about a hundred years later, when Theodor Lipps reintroduced it on the dawn of modern psychology. Lipps (1900) conceives *the process of feeling into the world* as a basic process behind the feeling of vitality immediately perceived in the ordinary encounter with objects and people; thus, Einfühlung is applicable to persons, objects, and places. It certainly explains the affective impressions we feel in front of things primarily intended to fulfill an aesthetic purpose, such as works of art; but, more importantly, it explains the permanent vital (micro-)adaptations of the organisms to the features of their environment: the pleasantness of sea landscapes, the fear in darkness, the gracefulness of a subtle gesture, and so forth. By using Einfühlung in this way, Lipps is not only grounding an aesthetic theory in psychological soil, but he is showing the ubiquity of aesthetics in any material form of our environment. Sounds, colors, proprioceptions, forms, pitches and tones turn out to be expressive of aesthetic feelings, which, mixed in ordinary life, have consequences for our perception and for our action upon our environment.

In the Einfühlung tradition, affect is tightly tied in with action. The reason for that is this: Affect is constituent of the vitality that animates every living organism. Rather than being an event that organisms undergo, affect is part and parcel of the continuing adjustment of sentient organisms to their respective environments. From this perspective, to separate affection from effection turns out to be an arbitrary scission between the organism and its environment. Again, this point has historical roots. One of the most conspicuous expressions of the holistic conception of the organism–environment

relationship was Jakob von Uexküll's organism-centered concept of Umwelt in the early 20th century (Chang, 2009).

Originally developed for providing a theoretical framework to biology, the notion of *Umwelt* [literally: surrounding world] was introduced in counterdistinction to the empiricist idea of an objective, neutral *environment* that inadvertently is assumed as common to all species inhabiting it. For there is a crucial difference between *environment* and Umwelt*:* while the first refers to the milieu which allegedly is the same for every organism, Umwelt corresponds to the environment as it is lived by a specific organism. Thus, each animal has its own Umwelt, depending on the specificities of its bio-physiological organization: "The Umwelt is always that portion of the environment that has an effect upon the sensible part of the animal body; the simpler the constitution form of an animal, the simpler the constitution form of its sensible parts" (von Uexküll, 1909, p. 249). What aspects of the environment are relevant for a given organism—that is, to what aspects of the environment is this organism sensitive and reactive—will depend on the constitution of the animal proper (or the *Bauplan*, according to von Uexküll's terminology). The Umwelt does not preexist the morphological features of the animal; rather, the Umwelt emerges as long as the organism expresses its physical characteristics. Thus, Umwelt and *organism* are from the start both co-constituted thorough a long developmental process. Far from being a passive receptor of environmental forces, the organism's organization plays a main role in the constitution of its Umwelt. This approach overcomes the old-established distinction between perception and action, for to be perceptually sensitive to some aspects of the environment presupposes specific modes of action upon it. The conceptual turn from *environment* to Umwelt implies accepting that every organism actively co-creates its own surroundings, to which it becomes perceptually sensitive.

Understanding the extension of von Uexküll's biological approach to the human sciences requires the introduction of *meaning* as the properly human way of constructing Umwelt. Thus, human Umwelt corresponds to the meaningful environment. People move and act in an always meaningful world, where meaning is both symbolic and expressive. It is symbolic since it is semiotically constituted; each color, gesture, verbal expression, and so on, conventionally stands for something else. But at the same time, the human world is always expressive since it is *affectively* perceived by people. Social and natural worlds do not appear as a set of physical stimuli, affectively neutral, ready to be captured or interpreted by people. Instead, social and natural worlds are immediately perceived as being pleasant or unpleasant, soft or rude, grumpy or kind. It is the blending of both dimensions—the sociosymbolic and the psychological-expressive texture of human environment—that composes the human Umwelt.

AFFECTIVATING IN CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY
PERSPECTIVE: OUR MAJOR QUESTION

An axiom in Cultural Psychology is that we experience by proactively establishing affective relationships with the world. We make the world around us "our own familiar world" and thereby humanise it! However, we also create symbolic worlds that are developmentally grounded in the world as we perceive and move in it, but for which the metaphor of containment becomes inadequate. These symbolic worlds don't simply contain "us": they are us (Benson, 2001). According to Casey "Where we are—the place we occupy, however briefly—has everything to do with what and who we are (and finally, that we are)" (Casey, 1993, p. xiii).

The two main and complementary general processes through which we *affectivate* the environment are "Bordering" and "Decorating." By making borders, humans try to define and hierarchically organize the world around them in order to understand it (Marsico & Varzi, 2016). In this vein, borders are conceptualized as the outcome of culturally organized processes which are not fixed, but based on a continuous organization and reorganization of the I-Other-World relationship (Simão, 2012, 2016). Borders are in fact not rigid and durable delimitations, but they are processes of semiotic configuration that make possible human actions in a given environment. The capability to create borders is strictly connected with the semiotic ability to produce "devices" for defining contextual occurrences (De Luca Picione & Freda, 2016).

Humans are also "decoration makers" and by doing so, they transform, modify and (re)invent the environment. These decorations are not merely a way to embellishing or "beautifying" our life-worlds, but they encapsulate meanings that we project into the environments and that they guide, in return, our feelings and regulate our emotional states. Thus, decorating ourselves and our environments is an act of externalization that feeds a process of constructive internalization.

One of the most illustrative example of both bordering and decorating process is represented by the garden that is the quintessential expression of the affectivating process. This is very evident especially when we consider home gardens. They are Border Zone (Marsico, 2016) of "cultivated nature" between public/private, inside/outside and natural/artificial. According to Lotman:

> The outside world, in which a human being is immersed in order to became culturally significant is subject to semioticization, i.e., it is divided into the domain of objects which signify, symbolize and indicate something (have meaning), and objects which simply are themselves. (Lotman, 1990, p. 133)

Thus, garden encodes a primarily cultural border between semiotized and not semiotized objects: the plants and flowers of which it is composed can be seen natural object independent by human cultural meaning. Yet, the intentionality of the plants arrangement and their localizations

> betrays the meaningful projections of the gardener at every turn . . . Which plants are intended as the focal point of particular vistas? Which foliage serves only to highlight more prestigious flora as its background? Which plants are acceptable garden material and which remain uncultivated? To each of these question could, and should, be added the attendant ". . . and why?" (Kaczmarczyk & Salvoni, 2016. p. 64)

Gardens are liminal spaces—they exist in between indoor and outdoor architecture. Thus, they are influenced by the house (the ultimate interior) that gives a structural form to the garden space and by the outdoor environment (the ultimate exterior) like the public street or another private house, etc. The garden is a cultural border "object" whose main purposes are mainly enjoyment, relaxation, and contemplation. However, it shows the highly sophisticated human capability of decorating spaces and, in doing that, affectively semiotize them for the sake of making them our own space. Garden, then, is a human arena (among many others) to explore the phenomenon of affectivation form a cultural psychological viewpoint and, therefore, illuminate the underlying dynamic process of affective semiosis (Innis, 2016; Tateo, 2016). Last—but not least—every human being carries a garden on one's own body. The constant dialogue of the natural growth and its cultural reorganization is present in each and every act of grooming one's hair, and the specialists in creating ever so fascinating hair styles are gardeners of the human bodies. The profession of hairdressers continues in human history as long as culture prevails and the desires to present our hair in ever new versions remain. Robots (at least so far) do not need hair salons—human beings do. Needless to add that "doing one's hair"—like grooming any other part of the body—is a primary affectivating experience.

OVERVIEW OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE VOLUME

The first three chapters of the present volume concern the theoretical delimitation of affectivating. In the first chapter, Steve Larocco puts into question whether the notion of affectivation implies a certain subject-centricity as expressed in the notion of volition. If this is the case, argues Larocco, affectivating should be complemented with the idea of *hetero-affectivation,* developed by him in this chapter. There are many ordinary social situations in which affectivation is "transpersonal," so that the "Self" that feels the world is no longer the origo of the feeling it lives by. Affect can, from Larocco's

viewpoint, be milieu-based and consists in what he calls "semio-affective nodes." Hroar Klempe's chapter offers a historical context of the concepts of *affect* and *feeling*. Based on Baumgarten's works on metaphysics and aesthetics, Klempe delves deeper into the *affect* part of affectivation, highlighting that a fracture between *feelings* as immediate and preverbal bodily reactions to sense impressions and *affects* as categorized emotions that can be differentiated by the intellect is visible from the early 18th century. Klempe observes that these important distinctions tend to be omitted by contemporary psychology, reducing affective phenomena to the verbalized emotions. Robert Innis points to that same duality of affectivating, when he describes it as a "Janus-faced concept." On the one hand, affectivating refers to the irreducibly individual inner feeling of being in the world, which is partially ineffable. On the other hand, it denotes the social nature of sign generation. From a semiotic point of view, Innis emphasizes that the typically human way of living in the world is through an endless play of signs, so that every human encounter is symbolic. To the same extent, Innis argues, the semiotic nature of the social world is phenomenologically experienced by people. The value of the notion of affectivation would therefore lie in capturing the very essence of Cultural Psychology. Christian Sønderby ends the section of theoretical considerations by evaluating the appropriateness of affectivation to overcome the classical objections of subjectivity against (cultural) psychology.

The second section of our book covers several chapters working on everyday situations and events that evidence affectivating phenomena. Lordelo, Brandão, and Bezerra explore the developmental dimension of affectivation through two case studies of children in the process of constructing their respective Umwelten. Both cases illustrate very clearly the ever-changing morphology of the Umwelt as people—in this case, children—make personal choices in a socially defined situation (e.g., educational contexts inside and outside schools). The examples show also how individual feelings about social instances (e.g., soccer training, ballet classes) change according to the actions and decisions children actively take by negotiating with others. Zack Beckstead inquires into the dynamic of affectivating through the study of memorials. These cultural devices correspond to material constructions heavily laden with symbolic values, so that they conform a case of socially configured Umwelt, which constrains and guides personal feelings and even the kind of movements and gestures people display in front of them. Beckstead exposes the features of this kind of affectivating and contrasts it with other social devices, such as slogans and idioms. By analyzing these cases, Beckstead shows the revelatory and prescriptive character of cultural artifacts: they suggest not only how the environment is to be experienced, but also orient people's future actions concerning them. Olga Lehmann describes the regulation between speech and silence in human

conversations as a consequence of socially guided instances. By extending the concept of Semiotic Demand Settings (Valsiner, 2000, 2006, in press), she develops the idea that affectivating processes take place in material and symbolic cultural spaces that promote certain behaviors, beliefs, and feelings while prohibiting or diluting others. The tacit instructions of whether, when, and about what to talk—as well as whether, when, and about what to keep silent—would be socioculturally circumscribed. Pablo Rojas' chapter connects the discussion on affectivating to the long tradition of the expressivist approach in human sciences. He describes the animated interiority implied in every musical experience, which includes feelings, motion, and participatory engagement. The connection of affectivating with the notion of expression brings light to the question on individuality versus collectivity raised in the previous section of this book: as *expression*, argues Rojas, affectivating should not be considered as a subjective source from which meaning is granted to an objective but inert outside world; since such an inexpressive world is a theoretical axiom rather than an empirically grounded fact. In her chapter, Emily Abbey analyzes the microgenetical construction of affectivating processes such as poetic lecture and feeling at home. She makes the case that the temporal structure of human experience influences the way in which semiotic meaning fields permanently evolve. By identifying the future-oriented feature of human experience, she differentiates a double function of signs: representation of the here and now; and presenting future possibilities—what could come next. Finally, this second section of the book concludes with a general commentary by Pablo Fossa.

In the next section, different aspects of the person-environment relationship are analyzed from an affectivating point of view. Danilo Silva Guimarães explores, through the case of inter-ethnic dialogue, the self-other relationship. By analyzing interviews with members of a *Mbya Guarani* Amerindian community, Guimarães illustrates the centrality of affective involvement with the other in order to construct and negotiate a common world—a centrality which, even though it may be more obvious in distant cultures, is also always present in modern cultures. Amrei Joerchel applies the notion of affectivating to shed light on the process of construction of a home—and the feeling of being at home. By using Lipps' concept of Einfühlung as well as von Uexküll's *Funktionskreis,* Joerchel describes how the modification of the immediate material environment is semiotically guided. The transformation of an environment which becomes a home is guided by material alterations that induce (and are induced by) affective states. Vlad Glăveanu relates affectivating with creativity. In his chapter, Glăveanu develops through the case of craftsmanship—the decoration of Easter eggs by Romanian folk artists—the thesis that affectivating is situated at the core of creative production by affectively relating creators to their context and by prompting actions by creators

in these contexts. The section ends with a commentary by Wanderlene Reis and Ana Cecilia Bastos.

 Evelyn Díaz Posada and Lilian Rodríguez write a synthetic commentary on the whole book, as does too Alaric Kohler. In both cases, affectivating is highlighted as articulating the individual and collective dimensions of the human Umwelt. The importance of affectivating as an integration function between the symbolic and pre-symbolic, both representational and presentational; personal and social, etc., lies at the heart of the concluding remarks we extract in our general conclusions.

NOTE

1. Since 1990s, as they are visible in the leading journal in the field, *Culture & Psychology*, published since 1995.

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PART I

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND AFFECTIVATING

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CHAPTER 2

AFFECT, SEMIOTICS, VOLITION

Heteroregulation and Affectivating

Steve Larocco

ABSTRACT

Marsico and Valsiner (2013) have coined the term "affectivating" to designate the process whereby persons create affectively loaded semiotic markers and media in their environment in order to facilitate the autoregulation of affect. This process is controlled in their model by a relatively conventional model of volition. This paper will argue that affectivation is a much less chosen or will-directed process for two reasons: first, that social and other environmental determinants have already affectivated the environment in complex, overlapping, interleaved ways, submitting any volitional affectivations to dialectical mediation; second, volition itself is a troubled concept, since the regulation of affect may largely respond to semio-affective influences and forces in the environment rather than to will. In this sense, autoregulation may be an effect of heteroregulation, and volition may be a complex effect of forms of entrainment with and dialectical fashioning by an affectively loaded, semiotically apportioned and directive lifeworld.

Valsiner (1999) has powerfully argued that a complex, stratified interplay of affect, semiotic constructions, environment and volition enables the human subject to autoregulate his or her affective states, to fashion the flows and fluctuating intensities of affective life into provisionally stabilized, structured feelings, dispositions, orientations (and actions[1]). By *using* the other and the environment as semiotic means of mediation, the subject forges a personalized intersubjective environment as a means to modulate and manage his or her own states of arousal and feeling. The subject also thereby constructs a world to act within, a world in which actions make sense. Volition, in this model, is the manifestation of psychic integration structured for operational autoregulation, with volition being a higher order or executive effect of that system's quest for functional regulatory coherence in the face of present and future change and contingencies. Volition is the executor of the psychic system's push towards autoregulation and future-directed equilibrium. This autoregulation occurs because of the psychic system's inherent *tension* with its environment, which is always, to some degree, misaligned with or resistant to the psychic system's needs (for persistence in its mode of being, but also for affective regulation itself). For Valsiner (1999), this tension registers in autoregulation that is "decidedly *intrapersonal* and intensely *private*" (p. 42, my italics). It entails the subject semiotically producing and affectively energizing (affectivating) his or her environment in ways that are conducive to maintaining affective stability (through an evolving, heuristic equilibrium that can manage the novelty of the future). To use Valsiner's (1999) provocative language, the subject "*creates*" (p. 26) the precise subjective frames and world, an *umwelt* (at least in part) that will allow that subject to autoregulate her affective life, and volition is a crucial aspect of that creation. The feeling subject fashions into existence the specific, salient lifeworld that will enable her to live (and live *with*) her own present and future affective life.

This model of volition, however, and of affect, raises several interesting but complex questions. First, to what degree can a person actually will or choose an *umwelt*, even if only portions of it? What is the relationship between the *umwelt* and the world as such? These questions hold even if, as semiotic theory posits, one has no access to the world as such, only to some version of a semiotically mediated, human lifeworld. Since in semiotic theory the world always comes pre-processed as it were, that is, differentiated, categorized, structured and framed by the complex systems of signs, the world is never accessed in an unmediated form. Language, of course, is perhaps the major force in this, but other cultural forms such as ritual, frames of perception that are not lexical, etc., also pre-process the world. This inherent semiotic mediation opens a possibility to conceive of the world as radically open to human shaping; however, this shaping power is predominantly social rather than individual. Social orders determine semiotic forms

and mediations, not individuals (except in the rare case of innovations and improvisations, which do extend and even modify semiotic forms). As a consequence, the *umwelt* always exists and only can exist in relation to socially generated structurings of the life-world, which limit to a large degree the freedom one has to fashion one's *umwelt.*

A second question has to do with the issue of psychic integration, and the relationship between volition and affect. What does volition actually manifest or represent, and do we actually choose what we choose? In other words, to what extent are our choices our own, and to what extent are they pre-given, a kind of sorting of limited, given options using limited, pre-fashioned inclinations and dispositions? To elaborate further: is affect integrated enough with other psychic structures or modules for a conventional notion of volition to define the goal-directed or future-oriented behavior of a given person/organism, and precisely how metaphoric is conceptualizing volition as manifesting an executive function? This question is crucial, for at stake is the "truth value" of conceiving of volition as a controlling agency that is "in charge" of other psychic structures or modules. From the perspective of consciousness, of course, there is a "self" that is in control that "wills" behavior and actions, but that understanding may be a misconception. What consciousness takes as manifesting its control of action may, at times, be a retroactive effect rather than a cause. The psychic processes that produce those actions may not fully or even predominantly register to or as consciousness. Assimilated semiotic forms, for example, such as a particular culture's lexicons of value and evaluation, often make an individual the passive vehicle for predetermined framings of the world that the individual lives and experiences as willed choices. When I eat a lobster and not a tarantula or locust, I think that I'm simply exercising my will; if I lived in a different culture, one that regularly ate insects and spiders but not crustaceans, that exercise of will might make no sense and seem much more like an absence of choice and volition. This difficulty raises a more abstract, conceptual problem, which involves parsing out the relationship between affect and semiotic forms by trying to work out to what extent they involve enmeshed, overlapping or distinct, structured mechanisms or fields.

A third question has to do with the nature of affect itself. Valsiner's model posits, in spite of its important recognition of the intrapersonal dimension of emotion and affect, that autoregulation is, in part, "intensely private" (Valsiner, 1999, p. 42). The supposition that affect is, at least in part, private in such a way (subject to an isolated system of autoregulation) is open to further inquiry. What does it mean for affect to be "private," and what are characteristics of the boundaries that would make it so? As Marsico and Valsiner (2013) point out, boundaries often manifest connection, interchange and transmission as much as separation and distinction. And they may well be open or porous. Finally, there is a related question

as to whether affect lodges or emerges only in persons, or whether it exists in non-personal forms threaded through and stemming from the environment itself. In other words, is the non-human or even inanimate environment, or perhaps more precisely, are nodal points within it, always already affectively charged in ways that work against the notion of an *umwelt*, of a world that is subjectively constructed according to the autoregulatory needs of a given organism/person? Is one's *umwelt* selectively "affectivated," to use the term coined by Marsico and Valsiner (2013, p. 6), by which they mean affectively activated (the environment is affectively activated by the subject so the environment, in turn, affects the subject's autoregulation), and if so, in what sense? To put the question somewhat differently: do persons load their environment, their semiotically fashioned surrounding (Lotman, 1997), with semio-affective nodes or objects conducive to autoregulation, and if so, to what degree, and how willed or directed is any such affective imbuing? A related question follows: to what extent does a person situate himself or herself in and compose a given lifeworld by volition and to what extent is a person affectively and non-volitionally situated and composed by that lifeworld?

THE SEMIOTIC LIFEWORLD, AFFECT, AND HETEROREGULATION

While the answer to the latter question is almost certainly a complex interaction of both processes, it is worth considering in this regard that humans as subjects may well live in affectively loaded and focalized surroundings that resist and at times negate volition and autoregulation, as the environment may have its own mélange of affective tones and composition, as it were, in which it embeds the subject. Such milieu-based affect is typically condensed in what I would call semio-affective nodes, that is, semiotically salient objects or other entities (including persons) in the environment that function as affective receptacles, conduits and focalizers. This environmental structure strongly suggests that the privacy of affective autoregulation may not be so private at all, that volition may, at times, find its genesis outside the human subject. In fact, the environment is typically not affectively loaded in only one way, but simultaneously bears differing nodal loadings or compositions of affect through its overdetermined genesis by differing sociosemiotic systems and formations simultaneously. For example, a church or a priest may simultaneously induce feelings of solace, acceptance and community for some while propagating feelings of exclusion and moralistic judgment for others. Similarly, Las Vegas may generate energy, excitement and license to some, while simultaneously provoking contempt and disgust in others (as a manifestation of American decadence). These differences are not primarily

a matter of personal choice, but rather of differing sociosemiotic systems investing given portions of the world with substantially different affective loads, which then affect different subjects in dialogic relation to their own affective feelings. As a consequence, perhaps autoregulation is, in part, heteroregulation, a process that entails subjection, acclimation, alignment and accommodation to such prefabricated semio-affective constellations as much as choice.

In this sense, I would suggest that the relationship between one's affective promptings and one's lifeworld is as much dialectical and dialogical as it is subject to a mirroring recursivity (Baer, 1987) wherein the environment reflects back what one has projected onto or into it. The environment is not affectively neutral or empty, a kind of blank slate for affective projection. Rather, it is a charged field of semio-affective nodes and focalizations, each of which has the potential to induce and transmit affective response. In this way, the lifeworld often resists or negates the individual's own affective feeling rather than matching or mirroring such feeling. And this occurs even when an individual may choose to cultivate objects (semio-affective nodes) that are supposed to help mirror the chooser's affective states. For example, a person who preserves the wedding ring of a dead spouse for comfort may find that the ring actually re-induces the trauma of the loss or even anger over abandonment. The ring as semio-affective node is a complex object, with an array of semio-affective potentials that may resist a given subject's aims or will. This does not mean, however, that the socioaffective environment is somehow autonomous, a kind of fixed system. The relation between affect and lifeworld is not an "autopoietic" construction, to use Luhmann's term (1996), through which he designates self-generating, self-sustaining systems that persist by limiting that system's interaction with environmental complexity and difference.[2] The lifeworld is comprised of a profusion of ever-vacillating semio-affective nodes, creating both resistance and complexity. These nodes are not isolated or closed. Instead, the boundary between any particular node and its surrounding is open, allowing for constant alterations in affective charges, focalizations and loads, even if the social order predominantly attempts to specify what these alterations might be.

These nodes often interact with an individual's emotional processes in a dialectical or dialogical rather than mirroring relation. One well might look to the environment for emotionally loaded objects, which reinforce or confirm what one already feels. Yet, that doesn't mean that one will find what one is looking for. It may be that what one finds instead in the lifeworld are affectively loaded objects and focalizers that differ from and even negate the emotional processes that one is hoping the environment will confirm or support. In this sense, the relation is often interactive and dissonant rather than passive and resonating. More precisely, an individual's specific, moment by moment environment is made up of multiple

semio-affective nodes, some of which are affectively consonant and some of which are dissonant. One's own affective processes involve the constant engagement with this diverse, affectively loaded surrounding, marked by both difference and similarity. Consequently, an individual is always involved in processes of affective heteroregulation, as the environment always situates the individual in relation to dissonant affective charges, nodes, and fields, which the individual cannot simply suppress.

VOLITION AND THE AFFECTIVE SEMIOTIC

To begin to unfold the complexity in how affect invests a lifeworld, I will address the relationship between volition, the *umwelt*, the world as mediated by cultural semiotic systems, and the world as such. Von Uexküll's (1982/1940) biosemiotic notion of *umwelt* captures effectively the way that organisms perceive predominantly only those aspects of the material world that are significant to them. According to von Uexküll, organisms live in specific perceptual/experiential worlds defined by biological interest and need. In humans, however, the immediacy of the *umwelt* and its determinate character largely give way to a much more mediated relation, one produced by culturally fashioned semiotic systems operating within an encompassing semiosphere (Magnus & Kull, 2012; Lotman, 1997).[3] These semiotic systems mediate the world as such, encompassing and differentiating it according to traditions and conventions of meaning and significance. They create, enable and delimit a "distribution of the sensible," to borrow a phrase from Rancière (2006). Working dialogically and, at times, dialectically, semiotic media frame and fashion social macrocosms and microcosms that are structured not by markers construed predominantly according to biologically motivated salience, but rather by multiple strata of signs producing a world, or perhaps, better, contextual zones, of variegated, multileveled cultural directives and significance. It is crucial to note that these media do not only structure or enframe the cognitive; they also participate in affectively loading and apportioning the social environment in both its human and non-human dimensions. For example, the feeling of wonder that one may feel at seeing Michelangelo's *Pietà* or Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Theresa* derives from a particular semiotic construction of aesthetic feeling, one that can find deep pleasure in the representation of sacred trauma, turning carved stone into a bearer of the sublime. The experience of entrainment at a soccer match is similarly a result of the semiotic mediation of the sensible, for it is that mediation that makes the collective watching of men in short pants kicking a ball an emotionally hypercharged experience. As the tradition that emerges from the work of Durkheim has suggested, affect exists in the social field as an energizing and often binding force, and is

not restricted to the bodily boundaries of any given subject (Ahmed, 2004, p. 9; Ahmed, 2010; Collins, 2004, pp. 34–40). It exists in things and in the relations between and interactions of bodies. This is not to say that affect in the social field is isomorphic with affect in the field of bodies, but rather that affect exists in both milieus and translates relatively easily across the highly provisional, pervious boundaries between them.

The reason for this translatability between affect in bodies and affect in the social field is that affect, in both places, is predominantly semiotic; that is, affect, even as a motivating force, is always already a sign. In bodies, affect is a particular form of semiotic information that registers as feeling and as motivation. Affect signifies bodily states, changes in bodily states, and the motivational impact of bodily states. Thus, in bodies, affect works through its signaling of physiological states, flows, and conditions. One might call this affective/semiotic coupling, in which affect only *acts* as it becomes semiotic, as it functions as a sign. Affect, even as a biopsychic phenomenon, is not the physiological states themselves, but their emergence and registration as signs.

There is an analogous process in the social field. In a given lifeworld, objects register and signify what I might call "social presence." Social presence is meant to denote the sense that objects don't exist in isolation or simply as themselves; rather, they are what they are because they are the effect of a social world that imbues them with form and function. Objects take their place as such as they take on social presence, which differentiates them from other portions of the social field, but which also, crucially, also provides objects with affective valences and investments that give them human value and significance. In this sense, any object becomes a sign for and conduit of the social affective investment of affect in that object; the object exists as a socioaffective phenomenon and registers that sociality in its apperception. And because certain objects have more intense socioaffective investments than others, the social field is not affectively homogenous; rather, it is structured and differentiated by nodes of affective intensity, objects (whether human or non-human) that prefabricate affective responses. One weeps at the Viet Nam War Memorial in the United States because one feels the presence of social affect in the object (people weep or feel grief even if they have lost no immediate friends or family in the war). The object itself serves as a semiotic conductor of collective affect with which it has been coupled. In this sense, the object is affectively charged, bearing a semiotic structure that entails both cognitive and affective dimensions. The specific structure of the relation between the semiotic (taken in its purely cognitive frame) and the affective is worth much more theoretical attention than I can provide here, but I would like to suggest that it is complex and needs more theoretical work. The object, semiotically, manifests the following: a socioaffective presence as I suggested above; conventional affective

valence(s); a salience or non-salience that derives from collective memory; ideological investments; and personal affective associations. The interplay of all of these socioaffective registers composes, in any given instant, what affect and how much affect an object holds and transmits to any given subject, in other words, its affective *force* and nodal value. What is crucial for the argument in this paper is that the object *is* affectively loaded. And because objects and milieus can *hold* these values and feelings, they *possess* affective charges and potentials. The affective dimension of the object is not simply metaphoric, even though that affective dimension does not bear the same relation to bodily processes that we normally associate with affect as a bio-psychic phenomenon. Nonetheless, this account does support my contention that affect exists in transmissible ways in objects in the social world, and there is a constant process of translation between affect in bodies and affect in social objects and surroundings.

AFFECT, CONTAGION, RESISTANCE

The relationship between this affectively loaded signifying world (neither an *umwelt* or a world as such) and the subject turns on two modalities of interaction. On the one hand, the relationship involves possibilities of resonance, entrainment, conduction and contagion (Collins, 2004, pp. 47–101; Hatfield, Cacciopo, & Rapson, 1993; Brennan, 2004). The affective life of persons is, in this sense, stimulated and fashioned (affectivated) by the affective lives of others and of the social field itself. For Collins (2004), this occurs through ritual interactions, by which he means not only large scale cultural events, but also, following the work of Goffman (1959), the structured, repetitive microdynamics of everyday interpersonal interaction. Our emotions and affects are fashioned by our mimetic (or empathic) impulses, our inclinations (often non-conscious and therefore, in some sense, non-volitional) to be in concert with the affective dimensions of the social environment, whether that environment is narrowly interpersonal, collective or institutional and structural. There is a push from the social, affective environment for alignment, accommodation, sharing and/or solidarity, all species of entrainment. While at times one may *want* such entrainment, suggesting a process that works through something like volition, entrainment often also just happens to us. To use Hatfield, Cacciopo, and Rapson's metaphor (1993), affect and emotion can be contagious, catalyzing particular interindividual affective responses. In this sense, we often live as entrainment's effect, not its cause. Entrainment and emotional contagion frequently compose and will us rather than we willing them. So while we may seek out collective scenes of entrainment—rock concerts, soccer matches,

dances, raves, etc.—we often passively accede to everyday versions—to emotional alignment and contagion—without thought or decision.

On the other hand, the affective relationship between subject and lifeworld also remains complexly dialectical, derived from difference and negation as much as by acclimation and alignment. As Collins (2004, pp. 50–53) notes, rituals often fail to generate entrainment, and may not be amenable to improvisational recalibration.[4] He is thinking predominantly of more institutional rituals, such as a mass or other formal ceremony, but such miscarriage holds true as well for the microinteractions of everyday sociality. Miscarried social and/or situational alignment leads to affective dissonance and discord (I try to cheer you up but my cheeriness alienates you). But even beyond failed situations of entrainment and alignment, the affective environment (with its complex interleavings of affect) typically differs from what any individual is precisely experiencing at any given moment, and the affective conjuncture that follows involves tension and, potentially, negation. In such interaction, one's affects encounter an affectively charged domain of difference and/or resistance (which can reside either in persons or objects or both, even when one tries to affectivate them). The environment is *already* "affectivated," that is, affectively charged by sociosubjective processes, but these processes are often heterogeneous to the affective registers supposedly controlled by the will or desire of any given subject. When one enters a non-descript modernist bureaucratic building, for example, the "inertness" of the architecture exerts an affectively neutralizing or depressive function, whatever emotional states one already was feeling. In such a situation (and all situations are, to some degree like this one), one's affect may be affected, even regulated, but it is not quite *autoregulated*. It is, to use a term derived from Hegelian thought, hetero-affected (Malabou & Butler 2011, p. 623), that is, influenced and in part generated by affective charges and compositions that exist outside any private affective system in social, contextual media, nodes and zones. To use a different term deployed by Malabou and Butler (2011; Malabou 2008), affect is *plastic*; it is flexibly modeled and modulated in and through the dynamics and transmissions of environmentally fashioned experience. Affect is contagious, conductive, in circulation, altering in intensity and form between and amongst psychic modules, persons and things (semiotic, environmental nodes). A person, on a trip, may be euphoric when entering the Sistine Chapel, for example, but his or her consequent experience will depend on the size and emotionality of the crowd, its spacing and movement, the lighting of the room, its smell, its specific architecture, whether he or she has binoculars or not to better see the frescoes, the temperature, etc. The person may expect an experience of awe or something like it, but that feeling, however much the person intends it, is not subject to volition. If the crowd is somber but distracted, or abuzz but not with reverence, the person's euphoria and desire

for wonder may drain away to be replaced by an ego-dystonic melancholy of sorts, or perhaps a hybrid affective feeling—melancholy mixed with a residue of awe. The semio-affective context, the situated lifeworld, thus becomes an inherent constituent in the "psychic" affective system, perhaps a dominant constituent, and its complexly distributed affective loads and charges powerfully engage with and alter any subject's affective conditions and inclinations (which are engaged with and impacted by that subject's semio-affective lifehistory in addition to the situated lifeworld). To use Valsiner's phrase, the state of affairs in which a subject functions is "separate-but-nonseparate" (2006, p. 9) to its lifeworld, its semio-affective context.

HETEROREGULATION AND HETERO-AFFECTIVATION

Such circulation, transmission and sway of affect are not merely socially and/or institutionally mediated, however; they are often socially and institutionally *directed*. This forcible dimension of the socioaffective environment weighs against any sense of the *umwelt* as inert or passive; rather, the world one lives in affectively and semiotically is constantly changing, but more importantly, it is affectively and semiotically *active*, communicating with and *affecting* how and what one feels, constantly. As Fourez (2007) has argued, the social, hegemonic world affectivates us as subjects in specific ways according to its own aims in order that we be socially integrated, in order that we feel we belong and *want* to do so. In this formation of a disposition for belonging, there is often a tension between psychic and social integration, or, to use a different language, between autoregulation and heteroregulation. The dominant order imposes itself through semio-affective contextualization by making autoregulation an effect of heteroregulation. The boundary between the self and the social here is open and provisional, but also, crucially, in some ways, illusory, a reification. What the person in his or her "interiority" feels as chosen and private, actually comes, predominantly, from the social world, not simply through habituation or conditioning, though each has its effect, but *transitively*, in the moment. In social settings, the boundary between self and other is not clear. The most obvious example of this occurs during entrainment, in which aggregations of people dynamically share the same predominant affects. The shifting boundary between self and other is more complex than the example of entrainment suggests, for it often involves a remarkably intricate dialectics of internalization and externalization of feeling and behavior, induced by boundary-crossing affect.

To give an example in its complexity: A colleague on a committee wishes to dissent from a committee initiative, but feels intensely uncomfortable in doing so and suffers distress at being an "annoyance."[5] In my colleague's

complex mix of feelings, all of which he fantasizes that he can (or should) control, he has become a conduit and receptacle for affective flows in a social field in which certain kinds of semio-affective dissonances and resonances are produced and certain kinds are inhibited. He feels disapproval, wants to belong, but also feels affectively committed to differing principles (which also affectivate him). Rather than being able to adapt in any simple sense and achieve autoregulation through some act of volition, he instead becomes *dysregulated*, feeling affectively inhibited (in relation to his principles), aroused (in relation to guilt and shame), entrained (in relation to the phatic affective exchanges and transmissions of the committee itself, which produce and reproduce belonging—through being friendly, exchanging pleasantries, etc.) and alienated (a meta-affect that registers the disjunction between the affectively performing "self" and other affective registers). While my colleague wants to feel free of such tension, he can't, because his affect is being heterogenerated and, perhaps to a lesser extent, heteroregulated. The institutional world, of which the committee is a manifestation, does not want him to be able to comfortably autoregulate in this circumstance, through volition or otherwise, because that would allow him to dissent without affective distress, without a breach in belonging. The committee (as a function of the social and institutional managing of affect) makes him *feel* dysregulation and his inability to overcome it (often without precisely intending to do so). It makes him feel his privacy, his autonomy, even his volition, as a *problem*, because that feeling, aroused transitively in and by the milieu, will direct compliance (or trouble noncompliance) towards and through heteroregulation itself. As he feels and identifies with his colleagues' disaffection with his dissent (and his partial affective/cognitive misalignment with them), he becomes, to use a paradoxical term, *dialectically entrained*; that is, he becomes entrained by affect that he feels negated by (not negated as an independent self as he blends into a desirable affective milieu, but rather negated in his affective autonomy, unable to sustain or equilibrate the emotional energy bound to his dissent, yet not fully relinquishing it either).

Through the term "dialectical entrainment," I am trying to capture conceptually and theoretically the motivating force and psychic effects of socioenvironmentally generated affect that differs from what one feels in the moment. Such affect may simply be discordant with what one feels at a given point in time, or, more typically, it can be ego-dystonic, that is, threatening to notions of whom one believes or feels oneself to be. In normal entrainment, one's feelings align with affect that is in accord with one's current dispositions and desires (or what one would like them to be); this is not the case in dialectical entrainment. In that phenomenon, dystonic environmental affect captures and generates synchronous feelings in the subject (at some level "against one's will"). However, as it does so it does not fully preempt

or erase others. The entrainment is not complete. So what one feels is an antagonism or friction between one's feeling alignment with the dystonic, entrained affect, and one's prior feelings and dispositions which continue, under contention, into the present. In the particular example I have used, one feels the affective weight of how one is annoying others (a sense of self-aggression and dereliction which becomes one's own) while simultaneously feeling a countervailing sense of affirmation and umbrage at that very aggression. The socially entrained emotion emerges in a dialectical relation with residual feelings and remains in that conflicted relation. Rather than entrainment leading to a full sense of affective alignment with others—affective synchrony—it instead leads to affective disalignment and friction.

To return to the example of my colleague: what he feels in the moment as his own affective life is intensely engaged with and driven by that of the milieu, across a boundary between self and situated lifeworld that only provisionally exists. His interiority, his guilt, is transitively educed by the other, by an affectively active social coterie/environment. In my colleague's self-directed aggression, in his guilt, he feels a version of what the coterie feels, but as his own feeling. In the moment it arises, his guilt is paradoxically a species of entrainment, effected by the semio-affective milieu. His affectivation in this example is complexly transpersonal and largely beyond volition, even though it feels entirely private. It is hetero-affective and dysregulated, and his desire is for heteroregulation, that is, towards a new affective equilibrium that tolerably aligns with the others' affect, which he experiences as both his own and as not his own. The *umwelt* is the *andere Welt*, as it were.

PROBLEMS OF VOLITION

To complicate things further, I will now address more specifically the inter-involvement of affect and volition. To do so, I will first explore the notion of volition itself. Zhu (2004) argues for a distinction between volitions and intentions, with intentions being thoughts about what one wants to do, while volitions are about what one wills to do, about executive action, control, and performance. In this view, volition entails the translation of intentions into actions. To use the language of Searle (Zhu, 2004, pp. 177–178), volition involves the crossing of "gaps" in mentation between thought and action, between, for example, intending an action and initiating it. One way of thinking about this is that volitions are acts or activities of mind while intentions are states of mind (Zhu, 2004, pp. 185, 193).

This account, however, is problematic. First, it treats volition predominantly only in its most simple manifestation—as the voluntary control of actions, here conceived largely as musculoskeletal. Volition in this depiction designates the higher order process of *deciding* and *enacting*, translating