

KOIAS-Lecture on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023 in Kobe

**Yogi Hale Hendlin (Erasmus University Rotterdam):  
Blasen und Umwelten: The Atmospheric Philosophies of Peter Sloterdijk,  
Helmuth Plessner, and Jakob von Uexküll**

Abstract

Membranes have quickly become recognized in philosophy as much as biology the most relevant factor differentiating organisms. Rather than brains, hearts, or other previously prioritized organs, the skin or film separating one body from another, and from one's environment, distinguish the limit (Grenze) of the organism. Membranes protect and insulate, but are always porous, allowing for osmosis between the organism and its environment. For philosophy, this presents new insights into limnology, the study of boundaries, physical and metaphysical.

This talk discusses the relationship of an organism, but especially the human organism, to the surroundings. As Plessner suggests, this relation is always in flux, a refigured positionality both inside and outside one's own body. For Sloterdijk, this process of becoming both conceptually and physically is one of refraction, mediation, and uneasy separation, which permits fluid communication between entities. By positioning space as shared, Sloterdijk's bubbles are not of any individual's own creation, and yet they buffer in ways that appear misleadingly centric for each individual. Von Uexküll deploys the trope of soap bubbles (Seifenblasen) to emphasize how organisms are circumscribed from perceiving reality, according to their species-specific filter allowing only certain aspects of reality to show up as part of their environment (Umwelt). These three thinkers each have their own system. Yet, they share a focus on membranes and mediation, including describing the formation and movement of these cushions between experience and reality. Through a theoretical biology lens, this talk will discuss the implications of the bubble theory of filtered perception for philosophy and sensemaking.

Bio

Yogi Hale Hendlin, PhD, is an assistant professor at the Erasmus School of Philosophy, at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Hendlin is the editor-in-chief of the journal *Biosemiotics* and is currently translating the 1960 lectures of Helmuth Plessner into English. As an environmental philosopher, Hendlin focuses on interspecies communication, the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis in biology, and the effects of culture on human de-evolution.



16:00-17:00, May 10, 2023

Student Hall, Building A, Graduate School of Humanities, Kobe Univ.

No advanced registration required. Free Admission.