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# A stroll through the worlds of animals and men: A picture book of invisible worlds

**JAKOB VON UEXKÜLL**

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# A stroll through the worlds of animals and men: A picture book of invisible worlds\*

JAKOB VON UEXKÜLL (1934)<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

This little monograph does not claim to point the way to a new science. Perhaps it should be called a stroll into unfamiliar worlds; worlds strange to us but known to other creatures, manifold and varied as the animals themselves. The best time to set out on such an adventure is on a sunny day. The place, a flower-strewn meadow, humming with insects, fluttering with butterflies. Here we may glimpse the worlds of the lowly dwellers of the meadow. To do so, we must first blow, in fancy, a soap bubble around each creature to represent its own world, filled with the perceptions which it alone knows. When we ourselves then step into one of these bubbles, the familiar meadow is transformed. Many of its colorful features disappear, others no longer belong together but appear in new relationships. A new world comes into being. Through the bubble we see the world of the burrowing worm, of the butterfly, or of the field mouse; the world as it appears to the animals themselves, not as it appears to us. This we may call the *phenomenal world or the self-world of the animal*.

To some, these worlds are invisible. Many a zoologist and physiologist, clinging to the doctrine that all living beings are mere machines, denies their existence and thus boards up the gates to other worlds so that no single ray of light shines forth from all the radiance that is shed over them. But let us who are not committed to the machine theory consider the nature of machines. All our useful devices, our machines, only implement our acts. There are tools that help our senses, spectacles, telescopes, microphones, which we may call *perceptual tools*. There are also tools used to effect our purposes, the machines of our factories and of transportation, lathes and motor cars. These we may call *effector tools*.

Now we might assume that an animal is nothing but a collection of

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