



# **Understanding Gregory Bateson: Mind, Beauty, and the Sacred Earth (SUNY Series in Environmental Philosophy and Ethics)**

*Noel G. Charlton*

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*Introduction to Gregory Bateson's unique perspective on the relationship of humanity to the natural world.*

Gregory Bateson (1904–1980), anthropologist, psychologist, systems thinker, student of animal communication, and insightful environmentalist, was one of the most important holistic thinkers of the twentieth century. Noel G. Charlton offers this first truly accessible introduction to Bateson's work, distilling and clarifying Bateson's understanding of the "mind" or "mental systems" as being present throughout the living Earth, in systems and creatures of all kinds. Part biography, part overview of the evolution of his ideas, Charlton's book situates Bateson's thought in relation to that of other ecological thinkers. This long-awaited volume opens up this challenging thinker's body of work and introduces it to a new generation of readers.

"...Charlton has taken an unusual, indeed unique, approach to the works and thought of Gregory Bateson."  
— *Cybernetics and Human Knowing*

"A valuable book, primarily directed to specialists in environmental philosophy, ethics, and action." —  
*CHOICE*

"This is a publishing event of the first order: an incomparably lucid exploration of Bateson's unique insights into the nature of mind and of the living Earth. Noel Charlton's book, both elegant and accessible, sheds new light on Bateson's revolutionary relevance to our time." — Joanna Macy, author of *Mutual Causality in Buddhism and General Systems Theory: The Dharma of Natural Systems*

"The uniqueness of Bateson's thought came from its broad range and its generality. In an age characterized by fragmentation and overspecialization, Bateson challenged the basic assumptions and methods of several sciences by looking for patterns connecting different phenomena and for processes beneath structures.

"This book is a wonderful introduction to the key ideas of this pioneer in systemic thinking. By identifying Bateson's revolutionary concept of 'mental process,' immanent throughout the living world, as the foundation of his science and philosophy, the author is able to present Bateson's complex and wide-ranging ideas as a coherent body of thought. From the central concept of mind as immanent in nature, Charlton maintains, flow Bateson's understanding of aesthetics, his awe of the sacred, and—perhaps most importantly—his insistence on the need to develop a new ecological ethics that reconnects us with the living Earth. I highly recommend this important and inspiring book." — Fritjof Capra, author of *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems* and *The Hidden Connections: A Science for Sustainable Living*

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