

PATTERNS

ASCD Systems Thinking/Chaos Theory Network/ American Society for Cybernetics

July/August/September, 2004

From the Editor:

In this issue of PATTERNS we look at the present world situation and ask the question that Bill Ellis raises in the Coalition for Self-Learning listserv.

What is it that determines and perpetuates cultural norms that are detrimental to the well being of people, if not threatening to human existence? He writes; It has been my contention — a la Illich's Deschooling Society — that our culture remains static as a result of the brain washing in our school system during the most formative years of our lives. The authoritarian, hierarchal, materialistic, undemocratic school/educate/teach system produces and perpetuates an authoritarian, hierarchal, materialistic, undemocratic society — a la Paulo Friere. We need a radically different learning system that lays the foundation and introduces future citizens into a radically different way of thinking about culture.

Then begins a lively conversation about Western European Mindsets defined as what we pass on to our children.

In this issue of PATTERNS, we take a different view of "mindsets" and "culture." We introduce a more dynamic, systemic, cybernetic view of our present social situation so well described in Michael Mendizza's lead article on the *Erosion of Democracy*. We shift our view to focus on the problem of epistemological errors. According to the insights of Elizabeth Burris (p.8), passive epistemological errors are the misunderstanding of, or the outright refusal to accept, reality; active epistemological errors are efforts to control other people to make them conform to one's own expectations or needs.

In an article titled, *The "Reality" of the Classroom: Epistemological Errors in Teaching*, she points out that

Propaganda, Dirty Tricks and The Erosion of Democracy

by Michael Mendizza

When a mother begins her story with "once upon a time," children know they are about to be enchanted. When we watch a magician or sit in an audience and watch excellent theater, we tacitly suspend our intellect, our reason and our discrimination and willingly allow ourselves to be swept away by the performance. Political propaganda is designed to sweep us away but without our consent, without our realizing that we are chorused and manipulated. This is clearly the case when the power and slick technologies of commercial advertising are used politically.

Political propaganda has been around as long as politicians. What sets propaganda apart from other forms of advocacy is the willingness of its users to change people's understanding through deception and confusion, rather than persuasion and reasoning. Today mass media adds hurricane force to the "stories" we are told, and not by our mothers.

Out of deep concern for what I see 'spinning' all around us and the price we all pay for not being more discriminating about how these "tricks are being used," I wrote an essay for my eighteen year old son, on this eve of his first presidential vote, and for my eighty-year old mother, who has voted pretty much the same her whole life.

My hope and request is that they increase their vigil, increase their awareness of how media is used to shape their world, their minds, their values and behavior. The need for aware, mindfull attention and intelligence has never been greater, nor has it ever been so difficult.

This essay ends with a question, "What about our children?" If we are living in the belly of the beast, like a fish unaware of the water it swims in, how do we raise children to respond with insight and intelligence in such an environment?

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN - On Saturday last, Judge Douglas and myself first met in public discussion. He spoke one hour, I an hour and a half, and he replied for half an hour. The order is now reversed. I am to speak an hour, he an hour and a half, and then I am to reply for half an hour.

Abraham Lincoln, August 27, 1858

So began the second of seven encounters known as the Lincoln-Douglas debates, a series of political discussions between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas. Lincoln lost the election for one of Illinois' two Senate seats but these

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the notions of "denial" and "control" are certainly familiar but what is different is the understanding of "reality."

Drawing on the work of Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, she explains that reality, far from being a fixed entity independent from us, is, simply put, the coupled nature of human interaction. From a systems perspective, the fundamental reality of human existence is its biological nature, and that nature, according to Humberto Maturana is "structurally determined." She writes, *I interact with my environment (including other human beings) in ways that are constrained both by my "bodyhood" (my physiology) and my behavioral history; and, while my fate is not pre-determined, the options I exercise in a particular situation are limited by these physical and behavioral factors (which are inextricably connected within me) (Maturana, 1988). That is, I perceive in collaboration with the environment around me using the perceptual mechanisms available to me; an independent "reality" does not exist outside of that collaboration.*

At the same time that all living systems function within the parameters of the reality of structure determinism, human beings are privileged to experience a second, separate level of reality: that created in language. Whatever unconscious, systems-level forces are at work in my daily interactions, I am constantly interpreting my experience, thereby creating a *language-based reality*, a story, that is not necessarily correlated to the reality of structure determinism.

Mendizza, referring to the work of Physicist David Bohm and Joseph Chilton Pearce, writes of "two fundamentally different "states of mind," the conditioned mind, educated, filled with content and reflexive, and the unconditioned, natural or original mind, pure potential, the innate capacity to learn and therefore to transcend the limitations and constraints imposed by our conditioning, self-image and beliefs. The conditioned state focuses on content, the past, what has

debates launched him into national prominence, which eventually led to his election as President of the United States.

Imagine sitting on a lawn with several hundred neighbors and listening to one of these four-hour debates, or all seven. By simple reckoning, seven debates, four hours each, is a whopping twenty-eight hours. Imagine the emotions floating in the air, the tone of each man's voice, their choice of words, how they stand, the expressions on their faces, the smell of the grass and the whispers of the crowd.

Now imagine sitting in a video-editing bay, rows of monitors flickering in the dark. Each features a different angle of our political leaders. It is late. Producers and electronic editors are at the controls, only the best, well paid professionals. There are thirty-frames of video for each second of this sixty second commercial and each is pondered with care and precision. "Let's look at take five on camera three again. Tweak the chroma to the left and raise the white levels just a bit. Fade in the flag. That's too much! Now the music. America the Beautiful, or should we use the Star Spangled Banner? Where's the roll with the Vietnam vet, the guy with no legs?"

Pump this finished spot, all sixty seconds, with its emotionally charged pictures and words, so few but so carefully chosen, into 70 million homes in-between the Lakers' playoff and the Kobe Bryant news update. Play it not once but again and again, like the instant replay of the second 747 exploding into tower two on 9/11 and ask yourself which experience would give you the deepest insight into the personality, the character, the integrity and vision of the next President of the United States. Sitting on the lawn or watching a sixty-second paid political announcement?

Propaganda has been around as long as politicians. Propaganda refers to deliberately false or misleading information that supports the political interests of those in power. Propagandist seeks to change the way people understand an issue, to change their actions and expectations in ways that are desirable to the group in power. .. The leaders of an organization know the information is one sided or untrue but present their view as if it were "fair and balanced."

The nature of politics and of political propaganda changed abruptly on September 26, 1960, as 70 million U.S. viewers watched Senator John F. Kennedy and Vice President Richard Nixon in the first-ever televised presidential debate. Content, the life blood of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, suddenly faded in importance. Kennedy looked good on tape. Nixon did not. From that day forward elections would be won or lost on appearance, not substance. On that day there began a steady shift of emphasis from ideas, which take time to share and even more time to digest and understand, to images, which are instantaneous. It wasn't long before we had our first actor-president, Ronald Regan. Arnold Schwarzenegger, also an actor, is rehearsing in the wings.

Not only did the nature and quality of our politicians change, so too did the voting public. Most get their news from television. You know the slogan, "give us twenty-two minutes (eleven of which are commercials) and we'll give you the world."

Fast cuts, dramatic images, few words, claims of in-depth, fair and balanced reporting are the breeding ground for propaganda. 90% of all books are sold to 10% of the population. In 1950 the average 14 year old had a spoken vocabulary of 25,000 different words. The vocabulary of today's teens is floating somewhere between 9,000 and 10,000 words, a 60% reduction in the tools used for critical and creative thinking. But, it really doesn't matter. Words are, like, so old.

Images are, "oh-my-god," so cool! Taken in by the sensory motor centers, their meaning is emotional, creating fourth-of-July explosions of feelings radiating in the right hemispheres of the brain. What we use to think of as "content," so valued in 1858, the neocortical, symbolic and metaphoric domain of the higher brain centers, are barely scratched by today's modern media. That's right, the expertly crafted image, like a cruise missile loaded with its stealthy emotional charge, is shot directly into the brain. And then the next, and the next.

Salvo after salvo, so many images, so fast that only a film or video editor can appreciate the artistry it took to create the frame by frame, blow by blow, now you see it-now you don't virtual experience. And we, the passive recipients of these

images, stare like rabbits in the path of an eighteen-wheeler absorbing their virus, soon repeating their slogans on demand, behaving as if we were their authors.

The strategy is well known by media buyers. Jump up and down like Chicken Little. Point to the other guy. Make him or her the enemy and repeat after me the simple slogan, "the sky is falling, the sky is falling and it's his (or her) fault." Repeat endless variations of this same message over and over again. Wrap it in the American flag. Toss in a vet or two with missing limbs. Blue screen the cast against an artificial video backdrop of fireworks. Cut to close-ups of chubby faces, mouths open, gazing upwards as if the second coming had just arrived. Flash the applause sign on and off. And you win the election. Fade up the announcer "Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to Politics 2004 - American Style."

We forget that this is theater, a staged performance where the special effects and shallow rhetoric is carefully crafted not to engage the intellect.

The medium, after all, is the message. This observation by Marshal McLuhan is as true today as it was in 1963. The content of media is not the illusion that media creates, what we think of as programming. The deeper meaning of media is how well the limitations of this technology can be exploited to keep you believing that what you are experiencing really matters. When in fact we are all staring at two-dimensional screens in darkened rooms with thousands of little dots flashing on and off.

As long as we are glued to the tube, that is, connected to the world primarily through media, the fact that 10 million people worldwide who took to the streets on February 21, 2003, in opposition to the invasion of Iraq, the largest simultaneous protest in world history, doesn't matter. That an estimated 408 species could be extinct by 2050 if the global-warming continues doesn't matter. That the US military budget for 2004 is \$401.3bn doesn't matter. That far more money is spent on advertising than on education doesn't matter. Like so many aspects of our lives, the public political process is completely shaped by media. The private political process, the agenda behind the media spin, is another matter.

I bring this obvious observation to your attention as a reminder to us all, and especially out of deep concern for our children. We are living in a mediated reality, what **Jerry Mander**, author of the classic *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, calls the belly of the beast. Jerry, former advertising executive turned activist, described it this way:

In one generation, out of hundreds of thousands years in human evolution, America had become the first culture to have substituted secondary, mediated versions of experience for direct experience of the world. Interpretations and representations of the world were accepted as experience, and the difference between the two was obscure to most of us.

A new muddiness of mind was developing. People's patterns of discernment, discrimination and understanding were taking a dive. They didn't seem able to make distinctions between information, which was preprocessed and then filtered through a machine, and that which came to them whole, by actual experience. Perhaps seeing was believing in a way that overrode the conscious mind.

At the same time, no one was even writing about how the machine changed information. Very few people understood it. Only advertisers studied the way the machine altered data, because that was the basic work of advertising to alter and confine information in advance so that it would have the desired effect. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent discovering how to do this.

It was suddenly possible for an entire nation of 200 million people to be spoken to as individuals, one to one, the television set to each person or family, all at once. I was chilled at the thought, realizing that these conditions of television viewing - confusion, unification, isolation especially when combined with passivity and what I later learned are the effects of implanted imagery - were ideal preconditions for the imposition of autocracy [dictatorship, despotism, fascism].

My fears were encouraged one day in 1971, as I sat around my office reading the morning New York Times and noted a small item. It concerned a Pentagon proposal to President Nixon that an electronic gadget be attached to every television set in the country. Capable of being activated directly by the president, it would switch on every set in the country at once. It was to be used, of course, only in the case of extreme national emergency. My mind flew into a

been learned. The unconditioned state gives attention to the present, to capacity, possibility, what new discovery might be made now and the excitement this possibility brings."

We are reminded of the late Second Order Cybernetician **Heinz Von Foerster's** ethical imperative; *Live always so as to increase the number of choices...* but for him, the emphasis would be on 'invention,' not 'discovery.'

Again, we turn to the inspiration of internet exchanges. **Lucas Pawlik, Tonee Conspiracii** and **Chris Macrae** echo the experience of knowing-in-action, embodied knowing, which (through stories) helps us to see how our ability to language puts us in the position of being "massaged" by the medium as **Marshal McLuhan** originally named his book, *The Medium is the Message*.

Lucas reiterates Heinz Von Foerster's imperative and shares his experience. He writes;

I just had the most amazing dream. I woke up with the realization that freedom always requires imagination. Without imagination there is no choice. Without choice there is no freedom.

Those who promote realism, who tell us not to dream, take away our choices. They promote slavery, a state in which we simply have to accept whatever is given to us.

It is not unpolitical to dream. Dreaming is the necessity for the freedom of choice and as, it follows, the necessity for freedom itself. In this way thinking leads to being and being leads to thinking, both are inseparable.

Therefore, especially in times of political or personal crisis those thoughts led me to another imperative "Follow the white rabbit!"

Whenever we see a possibility to dream, to imagine, we must follow its lead. Humanistically speaking, this keeps us sane as it offers us choice. Politically speaking, it is our civil duty as it does the same for our country, for ourselves, our children, our friends and our relatives.

I've just awakened. I write to you, my friends as I know you have seen the white rabbit before in your life. "It is not silly, it is not unnecessary, it is not a hoax. It is the imperative of your personal and political freedom: Follow the white rabbit!"

(continued on next page)

Excerpts from: "And They Thought They Were Free."

by Milton Mayer

The dictatorship, and the whole process of its coming into being, was above all diverting. It provided an excuse not to think for people who did not want to think anyway. I do not speak of your "little men," your baker and so on; I speak of my colleagues and myself, learned men, mind you. Most of us did not want to think about fundamental things and never had. There was no need to. Nazism gave us some dreadful, fundamental things to think about - we were decent people - and it kept us so busy with continuous changes and "crises" and so fascinated, yes, fascinated, by the machinations of the "national enemies," without and within, that we had no time to think about these dreadful things that were growing, little by little, all around us. Unconsciously, I suppose, we were grateful. Who wants to think?

To live in this process is absolutely not to be able to notice it - please try to believe me - unless one has a much greater degree of political awareness, acuity, than most of us had ever had occasion to develop. Each step was so small, so inconsequential, so well explained or, on occasion, "regretted," that, unless one were detached from the whole process from the beginning, unless one understood what the whole thing was in principle, what all these "little measures" that no "patriotic German" could resent must some day lead to, one no more saw it developing from day to day than a farmer in his field sees the corn growing. One day it is over his head."

"If, let us say, the gassing of the Jews in '43" had come immediately after the "German Firm" stickers on the windows of non-Jewish shops in "33". But of course this isn't the way it happens. In between come all the hundreds of little steps, some of them imperceptible, each of them preparing you not to be shocked by the next. Step C is not so much worse than

paranoid pattern:

It's 4:00 A.M. Two hundred million people are awakened by the national anthem. Where is it coming from? There's the president!

"My fellow Americans, it is with extreme regret that I awaken you from your well-earned rest. Yet we are all met with a crisis so grave as to require it. An exhaustive investigation by your law enforcement agencies has uncovered a massive conspiracy to destroy our democracy, a conspiracy which enjoys at least the tacit support of thousands of students, journalists, attorneys and even certain judges and elected officials.

As your commander in chief, I have ordered the immediate arrest of the terrorists and the individuals in their support groups, whatever their rank or prestige. I have invoked the implied powers of the President to govern in such times of grave crisis, freed from the usual encumbrances. I am hopeful and confident that these emergency measures, taken to safeguard our democracy, will be short lived. Thank you, Godspeed and good night."

The set switches off by itself. Was it a dream? Back to sleep. A few months later I saw a follow-up story in the Times that said the Pentagon proposal has been scrapped. Apparently the administration felt people might "misinterpret the intentions of such a project."

In retrospect, I know that my scenario was fantastic and unsophisticated, deriving from my simple-minded notion that autocracy interventions can take place only through a single leader or coup. But whatever the intention of the Pentagon, and President Nixon, who has since asserted that presidents can create their own laws, it was clear that the existence of the technology itself had created a new potential.

We can all be spoken to at the same time, night or day, from a centralized information source. In fact we are. Every day a handful of people speak and the rest listen. Brutal and heavy-handed means of confining awareness, experiences and behavior may actually be a thing of the past. In many ways television makes the military coup and mass arrests of my imagination unnecessary.

We can begin to grasp the irrelevance of such acts that now a more subtle coup is underway. It takes place directly inside the minds, perceptions and living patterns of individual people. A technology makes it possible, and perhaps inevitable, while dulling all awareness that it is happening.

That was written in 1977. We zoomed past Orwell's 1984 and it is now 2004. Given current events, the swashbuckling rhetoric, the censorship of the press, the blatant use of dirty tricks to keep us looking in the wrong direction... (Flash, based on confirmed intelligence reports, the secretary of homeland security has raised the eminent threat of a terrorist attack to condition orange), the special effects and the unending media blitz, Jerry's fantasy feels less and less simpleminded every day.

Paranoid conspiracy? Not at all. The Medium is the Message. The medium, meaning the nature of the technology, determines who uses it, how it is used, the nature and quality of information that is passed through it, and equally important, what is filtered out. As Jerry describes so beautifully, the manner in which public political life is now shaped by the media is implicit in the technology. And that technology is not neutral! It does not treat all information the same. It has an enormous, built-in bias to appeal to our basic instincts, sex and violence, rather than deepening nuance. Mass media, by its nature, is the perfect medium for propaganda. And the more polarized the environment, the more likely the message will be crafted to appeal to our lower instincts. (See the excerpt from Milton Mayer in sidebar pp. 4 & 5).

*If even just a portion of what Mander and Mayer are describing is true, and I encourage everyone to read *The Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, the first and best analysis of our mediated reality and why it is a much greater threat to democracy than the Taliban, my question is: What about our children? If we are living in the belly of the beast, like a fish unaware of the water it swims in, how do we raise children to respond with insight and intelligence in such an environment? This question, I believe, gives new meaning to Mayer's title,*

And They Thought They Were Free.

Michael Mendizza.

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Book Reviews

Sight and Sensibility: The Ecopsychology of Perception

by *Laura Sewall, Ph.D.*

Tarcher/Putnam. 1999.

ISBN: 0-87477-989-8

In recent years, there has been a surge of interest in the connection between the human psyche and the natural environment. Fueled by a growing awareness of worldwide ecological degradation, an entirely new field of study, called ecopsychology, has emerged. At universities across the country, scientists are learning how the decline of our planet's environment affects not just our physical health but also our minds and emotions. In the tradition of *A Natural History of the Senses*, *Sight and Sensibility* shows how expanding the way we see the natural world can improve the way we relate to it.

Dr. Sewall is one of ecopsychology's leading pioneers and an expert in the study of visual process. Drawing on her fieldwork studying the visual behavior of baboons, teaching vision improvement to trace the evolution of human sight and the cultural development of different ways of seeing, she shows how we can:

- restructure the neural networks that determine how we see
- awaken to visual patterns and depth perception
- learn to see more of the world around us
- understand and potentially reverse the effects of ecological destruction.

The author also discusses the difference between just how much the human animal is capable of seeing, and how much we currently see. Instead of looking at objects, Sewall shows us how to change our visual process to one in which we perceive the relationships between objects—like many aboriginal cultures do.

A contemporary companion to John Berger's classic *Ways of Seeing*, *Sight and Sensibility*, the first book on ecopsychology for lay readers, is a fascinating blend of science, psychology, and poetry.

Laura Sewall is a professor at Prescott College in Arizona, where she teaches ecopsychology and chairs the human development program. She lectures at other universities and venues, including Esalen, the California Institute of Integral Studies, Common Boundary, and the Colorado Institute for a Sustainable Future. She lives in Durango, Colorado.

Unfolding Bodymind: Exploring Possibility Through Education

Edited by Brent Hocking, Johnna Haskell, and Warren Linds with an afterward by David Abram and David Jardine

Foundation for Educational Renewal. Brandon, Vt. 2001

ISBN: 1-885580-08-8

The Editors write that "Our primary interest as teachers, learners, and researchers is to concentrate on the possibilities offered for education by holistic and ecophilosophical schools of thought...It is the unfolding interactions among the authors that open spaces of possibility for us as editors. Each of us embraces different questions of language, environmental ethics and outdoor education, spirituality, and performance. It is the resonance of these webs of being that entwines us in this work.

This thoughtful collection of holistic approaches to our present eco-cultural crisis through an embodied form of teaching and learning is a must-read for teachers, teacher educators, and others who recognize the need for a different understanding of the importance of improvisation as a way of being.

I am drawn to Brent Hocking's remark on a book by Mary Catherine Bateson (*Composing a Life*. 1990. New York:Plume) in which she writes "*life is an improvisatory art, about the ways we combine familiar and unfamiliar components in response to new situations, following an underlying grammar and an evolving aesthetic.*"

Step B, and, if you did not make a stand at Step B, why should you at Step C? And so on to Step D."

And one day, too late, your principles, if you were ever sensible of them, all rush in upon you. The burden of self-deception has grown too heavy, and some minor incident, in my case my little boy, hardly more than a baby, saying "Jew swine," collapses it all at once, and you see that everything, everything, has changed and changed completely under your nose. The world you live in – your nation, your people – is not the world you were in at all. The forms are all there, all untouched, all reassuring, the houses, the shops, the jobs, the mealtimes, the visits, the concerts, the cinema, the holidays. But the spirit, which you never noticed because you made the lifelong mistake of identifying it with the forms, is changed. Now you live in a world of hate and fear, and the people who hate and fear do not even know it themselves; when everyone is transformed, no one is transformed. Now you live in a system which rules without responsibility even to God. The system itself could not have intended this in the beginning, but in order to sustain itself it was compelled to go all the way.

Milton Mayer

Not dictators, armies, and police forces, but the changing values and ideals of people are the butterflies that, flapping their wings, determine which way society will grow and develop. It is up to each of us to flap our wings and to launch our bifurcating societies along a humanistic evolutionary path.

Ervin Laszlo

The American Society for Cybernetics

www.asc-cybernetics.org/

A report on the 2004 ASC Conference in Toronto will be in the next issue of PATTERNS

GREGORY BATESON:

Multiple Versions of the World

Berkeley, CA November 19-20, 2004

A conference celebrating Bateson's centennial - and his continued influence

Announcing a very special event co-sponsored by the Association for Transpersonal Psychology, Bioneers, Foundation for Global Community, Global Business Network, Institute of Constructivist Psychology (Italy), Saybrook Institute, The Natural Step, Tides, Gordon Feller

Mary Catherine Bateson writes;
We have negotiated with Gordon Feller to provide special pricing for you and a guest to attend the Multiple Versions conference at UC Berkeley.

Conference Registration Fee

(includes lunch, complete documentation kit, and more)
Sat, Nov 20 \$160.00 w/10% discount \$144.00

Pre-Conference Reception

(evening reception with wine-tasting, special exhibit of previously unseen Bateson photographic work)
Fri, Nov 19 Meet speakers and sponsors \$53.00

Here are some further details on the November cluster of events in the San Francisco Bay area, including a video-linked East Coast conference. Those attending events at the AAA and on the Berkeley campus should be aware that the archive of Gregory Bateson's post WWII papers and photography is in the Special Collections Library of the University of California at Santa Cruz.

AAA ANNUAL MEETING

San Francisco, CA November 18, 2004

Since we last communicated, further information on Bateson-related events and sessions at the AAA in San Francisco (Nov 17-21) has become available. We are trying to find out if these sessions will be open to the public, subject to a day-pass fee, and will let you know via our website once we get that information.

Culture and Personality section

"Once and future theory:

Next steps towards Gregory Bateson's ecology of mind"
Thurs, Nov 18 10:15am-12:00pm, Room Yosemite C

AAA Presidential Session

"Gregory Bateson and the Science of Mind and Pattern"
Thurs, Nov 18 4:00-5:45pm, Continental Ballroom 6
Following this session, there will be a Reception and Film Program in the same room starting at 6pm.

Further details are available at <http://www.aaanet.org>

*To receive this special price, please print, fill out and mail this registration form to
Gordon Feller at the address indicated.*

For details on this event visit <http://www.batesonconference.org>

Please enter my registration for the Multiple Versions conference:
Number of attendees: Conference _____ Reception _____

Name _____

Affiliation _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Amount enclosed: _____

*Please send this form with check to: Multiple Versions Conference Attn: Gordon Feller
870 Estancia, San Rafael, CA 94903*

Several Bateson events have been added in the coming months and into 2005. Additional events have been added to the cluster in Europe this autumn, which already includes events in Genoa, Italy and Barcelona, Spain.

Turin, Italy October 22-23, 2004

**PATTERNS WHICH CONNECT:
THE SYSTEMIC NATURE OF MAN**

Associazione Episteme de Torino

Galleria d'Arte Moderna

Turin, Italy

Send enquiries to: episteme.to@libero.it

Milan, Italy November 3, 2004

Centro Milanese de Terapia della Famiglia

Milan, Italy

Lecture/seminar by Mary Catherine Bateson

Contact: centro.milanese@iol.it

New York, NY November 20, 2004

**ART, CIRCUITRY, AND ECOLOGY:
HONORING GREGORY BATESON**

CUNY Continuing Education and Public Programs

CUNY Graduate Center, New York, NY

As a part of the bi-coastal Bateson centennial celebration, this conference explores the interplay between Bateson's ideas about art and the emerging interest in relational and ecological aesthetics. Includes a live telecast from Berkeley CA of presentations by Gordon Feller, Mary Catherine Bateson, Carol Wilder and Peter Harries-Jones at the Multiple Versions conference to be held on the same day. Co-sponsored by Media Studies, New School University.

Details: CUNY Graduate Center <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/cepp/courses/media.html#1>

Contact: James Andrews at continuinged@gc.cuny.edu

Bali, Indonesia December 15, 2004

JAKARTA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL (JIFFest)

Special showing of Bateson's films from Bali and New Guinea in the 1930s.

Kaua'i, Hawai'i February 2-5, 2005

Association For Social Anthropology In Oceania (ASAO)

Annual Meeting, Kaua'i, Hawai'i

**"THE GANG OF FOUR, OR BATESON, BENEDICT,
FORTUNE AND MEAD IN MULTIPLE CONTEXTS"**

Organized by Gerald Sullivan (University of Notre Dame) and Sharon Tiffany (University of Wisconsin, White Water)

Copenhagen, Denmark August 18-21, 2005

**BATESON AND THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE
SACRED: THE SCIENCE-RELIGION PATTERN**

Copenhagen, Denmark

An international conference in association with the University of Copenhagen's Research Priority Area, Religion in the 21st Century.

For ASC Membership information:

Contact Robert Martin

Truman State University, Kirksville MO 63501, USA

Phone/Fax: 660/385-6513

Email: martin@truman.edu

Publications/On-Line Resources

Hampton Press continues its reissuing of Gregory Bateson works.

Steps to an Ecology of Mind was reprinted in 2002.

Angels Fear and Our Own Metaphor should be reissued later this year.

Sacred Unity, edited by Rodney Donaldson, has been delayed.

Common Ground, a Bay area magazine, will feature a profile of Gregory Bateson in its November 2004 issue.

Information at: <http://www.commongroundmag.com/>

The Italian magazine **Teseo** will publish a special issue on Gregory Bateson in late 2004. The issue will be written and edited by Luciano Paccagnella, professor at the University of Turin.

An Italian group, **Associazione culturale il Narratore**, <http://www.ilnarratore.com/> has honored Gregory Bateson's memory in his centennial with three pieces by or about him read aloud on their website, including "**Metaphors and Butterflies**," recorded live in 1975 in Big Sur, California and an excerpt (in Italian) from David Lipset's biography of Bateson. This group also intends to publish an audio recorded summary of the **Circolo Bateson conference in Rome in May 2004**.

We have been doing our best to make information available about the various events because we are not in a position to stage one ourselves. Many are either invitational or narrowly disciplinary, but we feel it is important to include as many as possible to allow those of us who've worked with Bateson's ideas to have an opportunity to pursue the inter-connections between the many fields of knowledge. I believe that revisiting these ideas in the context of today's problems may bring new and corrective insights.

Mary Catherine Bateson

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The Institute for Intercultural Studies

www.interculturalstudies.org

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HELP WANTED

*We are looking for an intact copy of the 60-minute film, **Interaction and Communication in Three Families**, made by Gregory Bateson with Weldon Kees in the 1950s. The copies held by UCSC are missing the sound track, including Bateson's commentary. If you know of anyone who might have a copy with audio, in any film or video format, please contact us immediately at mcb2004@attglobal.net. As it stands, the record of Bateson's work is incomplete, and we would like to be able to show the film in November, so we seek your help urgently.*

Equally serious but less pressing is the need for conservation work on Bateson's raw footage from Bali and New Guinea in the 1930s, now in the Library of Congress, and postwar footage located in various places in California. Any financial help you can offer will be most appreciated. Please consider sending a donation (tax deductible in the U.S.) to the Institute for Intercultural Studies, 67A E. 77 St., New York, NY 10021.

Spontaneity In The Classroom: A Systems View of Teachers' Knowing-In-Action

By Elizabeth Diane Burris

Ed.Note. This is an abstract of the author's Ph.D. dissertation. We include it in this issue as a response to the disturbing view of the public mind set portrayed in the article on propaganda and democracy by Michael Mendizza. We believe that a pedagogy that is based on the objectivist, mechanistic, model of knowing and thinking contributes to the "new muddiness of mind" in which secondary versions of experience is substituted for direct experience and the difference becomes obscure. In an increasingly complex society, Burris' research is valuable in showing how a shift in perspective in teacher education is basic to our ability to further democratic ideals.

This study has two basic purposes: to show that the knowing teachers do in classrooms is fully embodied, not just centered in the brain, and to begin an analysis of such knowing from a systems perspective. Such a study is important for a number of reasons. First, the traditional research into teacher thinking, which has taken a variety of approaches, most recently the application to teacher knowing of an information processing model, has, largely, by neglect, failed to illuminate "irrational," or non-cognitive, aspects of classroom behavior. Due to the centrality in Western popular culture of the objectivist, or mechanistic, mode of knowing and thinking, however, the information processing approach continues to dominate both teacher education and conceptions of teaching and learning__ which leads to the second reason why this study is important.

In the actual work of teaching and supporting student teachers, the limitations of objectivist explanations become clear. What, for example, do we make of emotions in teaching? of intuition (or lack of it)? of body language and other forms of non-verbal communication? of the mind-bogglingly complicated network of relationships teachers and students engage in or carry with them throughout a school day? Not only do these powerful aspects of knowing need to gain mainstream credibility, but teacher educators, teachers, and students need acceptable ways to talk about them. This study, then, begins by showing that these ways of knowing indeed exist in everyday classroom interactions, and it undertakes to explain them using language derived from both the systems framework and teachers themselves.

The systems, or enactivist, framework this study relied on is decidedly anti-objectivist. Whereas the objectivist paradigm separated the knower from the world, the systems perspective recognizes the knower and the world to be mutually constituting, to be co-created. Perception under enactivism is not indirect, resulting from the internal construction of representations of objects, but direct, concomitant with the maneuvering that surrounds structural coupling, or the constrained, interlocked interactions that help to maintain the fundamental organization of connected living systems. Cause and effect is a less

useful means of understanding systems than are the concepts of co-regulation, or the co-creation of behavior and reality, consensual frames, or the mutually accomplished sense of affordances and constraints that govern certain interactions, and emergence, or the arising out of structurally coupled systems of qualities and experiences whose roots are in the interaction and which, in turn, contribute to the interaction's evolution. While the center of cognition in the objectivist framework is the brain, for systems theorists it is the body whose actions constitute our knowing; the brain is just one component of this highly complex cognizing system. Knowing, then, is more accurately referred to as knowing-in-action, a term that emphasizes the fundamentally embodied and enacted nature of cognition.

A systems approach to social science research calls for a specialized methodology that recognizes the impossibility of precision in reporting on others' experiences of knowing. I chose to trace the knowing of three ninth grade highschool teachers, two English and one social studies, through stimulated recall protocols conducted immediately after each of four classes. Our focus during the stimulated recalls, in which each teacher and I reviewed and discussed certain segments of videotapes I had made of the classes, was spontaneity, those moments when the teachers found themselves "flyin' by the seat of their pants," relying on all forms of knowing, not just that experienced in the brain. I structured the study, both data collection and analysis, around four basic relationships that I, with the help of Noddings & Shore (1984), posited teachers enact in their classrooms: relationships with the self, the students, the subject matter, and the acts of teaching. In addition to videotaping the teaching and conducting stimulated recalls, I asked each teacher to do a Pupil Sort (after Morine-Dersheimer, 1978-79a) for each class (in which each teacher classified the students who were in class according to her own categorization schemes), interviewed each teacher about the three remaining relationships (with the self, the subject matter, and the acts of teaching), explored the epistemology that seemed to dominate in each teacher's protocols and pushed her to attempt a more enactivist explanation of her knowing, and, finally, asked about each

teacher's relationship with me and the research. I transcribed all of the stimulated recalls, Pupil Sorts, and interviews as well as some of the class videotapes. These data were the basis for the general case studies that comprise Chapters Three, Four, and Five as well as the analysis in Chapter Six of the themes that emerged from the teachers' stories of their experiences of knowing and the metaphors the teachers employed to describe these experiences.

the students' needs as people and as learners. In fact, the teachers' personal relationships with the subject matters they taught, while responsible for their original decisions to become a teacher, did not necessarily translate directly into the relationships they enacted in class with their students.

When the teachers I worked with spoke of knowing-in-action, they joked and told stories and used dialogue, but the most salient and widespread linguistic formulation was meta-

The questions that drove this study were as follows:

1. *How does a teacher know what to do when she is teaching spontaneously? How does this knowing-in-action feel? What relationship does a teacher's knowing-in-action have with the plan she brought to the lesson?*
2. *How do a teacher's relationships with the students, the subject matter, the acts of teaching, and herself contribute to her knowing-in-action?*
3. *What language do teachers use to describe and explicate their knowing-in-action? What adjustments, if any, do they make when asked to think and talk in enactivist terms?*

The study found, first, that teachers' knowing is indeed embodied. When asked how they knew what to do at particular moments in their teaching, the teachers I worked with brought up awareness, emotions, caring (and other related ways of knowing that Ruddick, 1989, calls "maternal thinking"), love, faith, confidence, and intuition—all experiences that can certainly involve cognition but happen in the body as a whole. The teachers' knowing-in-action involved many feelings—excitement, frustration, interest, sympathy, guilt, anger, happiness, pride, disgust, impatience—but the answer to the question of how knowing-in-action felt ended up revolving around feelings of control, different personae, authenticity, dilemmas, fun, and amusement—all sensations that emerged spontaneously out of classroom interactions. The concept of emergence suggests a very different way of understanding these phenomena; for example, I suggest that a teacher's feeling of control is not the direct cause of certain actions but an "emergent property" of a living system in a particular state. Our focus when we want to speak or think about control in classrooms, then, might not be on the teacher's actions so much as on the underlying relationships that the class enacts and out of which the feeling of control can arise. (see Maturana story)

The relationship between each teacher's planning and her actual classroom behavior varied by teacher, of course, but it boiled down to the same basic thing: for these three teachers, lesson plans (when they were actually prepared) could be useful advance organizers that helped constrain the realm in which the teacher and her students co-regulated, but they were at best approximations that correlated only loosely to the actual events that unfolded in each classroom and did not preclude or even always influence the spontaneous acts that comprised each day's lesson.

As might be expected, the relationships these teachers enacted in the classes I videotaped were unique to each situation; Chapters Three, Four, and Five go into great detail on this front, in general, though, all three teachers claimed that students come before subject matter, that, important as love and knowledge of subject matter are, more important still are

phors. Because metaphors rely for their meaning on common experiences that are fundamentally physical (Johnson, 1987), an analysis of the metaphors these three teachers used as they talked about their knowing-in-action confirms the embodied nature of even abstract expressions of knowing. The metaphors illuminate each teacher's particular experience of knowing and teaching as well.

The teachers' responses to my challenge to think about their knowing in enactivist terms varied quite a bit, from one teacher who didn't have any translating to do (as she already automatically spoke in enactivist terms) to another who tended to have a very difficult (though amusing) time of it.

One interesting finding that I expand on in the Conclusion is the possibility that, like other complex systems, teachers and their classes might function optimally at the "edge of chaos," where the level of energetic stimulation is high enough to support communication and creativity but low enough to maintain dynamic stability. I explore the perhaps surprising and certainly unconventional consequences of this possibility for teacher education. I also consider the ramifications of the systems framework for future research on teaching, expressing my hope that such research will become the norm rather than the exception as we work out how to track and understand the fascinating diversity that necessarily characterizes such complex social systems as we find in each and every classroom.

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Stories of Self-Organization

I like the format of what I call a "conversational collage." On the internet, the process bears the rather ominous name of "lurking" but it allows for the personal creation of patterns of thought much like I imagine goes on in the mind of a child listening to "adult talk."

With permission, this is a collage of a conversation between Lucas Pawlik who lives and works in Vienna, Tonee Conspiracii in Australia, and Chris Macrae who is in the U.K. Readers of PATTERNS will remember the series of mind games titled, "Forget the Observer," by Lucas Pawlik in past issues (July, September, November 2001).

I offer the following as a companion piece to Elizabeth Burris' study of knowing-in-action on the previous page.

From: Chris Macrae

wcbn007@easynet.co.uk

**To: Mag. Lucas Pawlik
lucas pawlik@gmx.net**

RE: stories of self-organisation

Hi Lucas,

I am interested in working out which methods cluster around self-organizing. For me, the conversational families start with email and open space.

Lucas Pawlik responds.

Hi friends, Chris, a friend of mine, made me think about the use of methods of self-organization. Perhaps you would like the little story I wrote. Also you might notice that this story is a hidden self-referential circle, because it talks about noticing what we do in our life through little examples we experience in our life, while the whole story is exactly a little example which catches you in the middle of your life.

The Controlled Accident

In Zen-Buddhism there is this wonderful method called "controlled accident" which basically means you arrange the environment so that minor accidents can happen or that there is space for original ideas which are the base for the future methods. The key lies in the continuous development of these methods. Let me give you two nice examples:

A master wanders through the forest together with his two disciples. He picks a stick and asks the first disciple: "What is this?" The disciple hesitates and the master reaches out to hit him on the head. They continue walking.

After awhile the master picks up another stick and asks the second disciple: "What is this?" The second disciple replies "Let me see. Please give it to me!" And as he is given the stick he hits the master.

Now I do something that is normally only done on rare occasions. I will explain what happens there.

The meaning of what a stick is, or if it is to be called a stick at all, of course, rises through communication, though interaction. The first disciple hesitated, he didn't accept the stick as a stick. He could make something else out of it but, in fact, he couldn't make anything out of it so he hesitated.

The master simply gave him an example of what this thing could be by hitting him.

When the second was asked, he instantly joined in and made something out of the situation. He let it hit somewhere else. In a less brutal version he probably would have made a flute out of it.

The essence lies in a lively practice through which we can experience how we create reality through our interaction. Every method I would understand as perceived patterns we notice within our practice.

Therefore, Buddhists place emphasis on the fact that the perception and the actual creation of patterns is of primary importance while the actual discussion about these patterns is only of secondary importance.

The primary sense of methods as in such perspective is to raise our awareness. This is why the actual repetition is only of little use within such a perspective while all accidents are of great importance because they show us along which lines our practice develops itself.

The whole story came to my mind as I like the picture of searching for different methods of self-organisation as a trick to notice how we are self-organising our life all the time. It is an interesting viewpoint to see such methods, as a mirror mirror-

ing a mirror. Suddenly we notice how we co-create our life all the time and are therefore able to influence it or, vice versa, we more easily stop to get in our own way all the time.

__best Lucas

**From: toneee conspiracii
conspiraciisoundz@yahoo.com**

**To: Mag. Lucas Pawlik
a9305790@unet.univie.ac.at**

Interesting story. I have been trying to absorb this little tale into my thoughts and been making feeble attempts to try and add to it. Can't say that I've been successful. I can only use my painting work as a way of exploring a controlled accident.

You take a canvas or any type of environment, such as a room or a studio or performance and you throw a number of elements together and use the result to develop further ideas.

This is a constant process of experimentation that does not appear to make any sense except over time. The trick being to never accept that a work is finished but to see it as a small element in a much larger scheme.

This method does not always make sense to other people who are treating each attempt at making (or to use a better term "an attempt at resolution or completion of a task") as a single instant that is finished when the particular object or 'text' is completed.

I can't see if this point I'm making applies to self organization or self referential circles. But the idea of controlled accidents is something that as a creative person I find as an absolutely invaluable tool.

With art, making the object could be

(continued on next page)

said to be completed when the viewer completes the circle that has been initiated when the artist makes the work. The viewer's comprehension of the work is usually accepted as the end result. If the viewer 'understands' the object then it could be said the work or text is successful.

But in your case the student does not trust his own interpretation of the object. He hesitates because he is wary of the master or the 'author'. He is sure that it is a trick.

This could be seen as how contemporary art is viewed. The viewer is not sure of what he sees because all his normal habits of how to interpret the text have been rearranged so he is no longer sure what he is looking at or how to react.

The second student could be seen as a more enlightened person because he sees that he, as the receiver of the concept is put in a position where his awareness is what completes the cycle. He completes the artwork, text, situation, or whatever you want to call it by how he ENGAGES with the idea.

I feel that what you are trying to say here parallels greatly the streams of contemporary art thinking that puts more emphasis on the concept behind what one sees then on the surface of the individual 'text' in question.

Much of what is put forward as art work as an interpretation of such ideas could be seen as a way of shifting reality by how we engage with an idea. If we look at color field painting by someone like Mark Rothko or a minimalist cube by Donald Judd, how do we understand it if we are always falling back on perceptual habits that only let us see art as art if it is a landscape with a house and cow in it or a sculpture that represents a Greek athlete.

The core perceptions that have developed with the evolution of 20th century art have a core of understanding that we create our reality through constantly evolving interactions with new developments in 'texts' that test our understanding of what is true and what is false.

The color field painting by Mark Rothko may not seem true to someone who engages with it for the first time but the fact remains it is in front of you and it is true. The viewer must shift his percep-

tion in order to accommodate it. He must understand what lies underneath this single example, the concepts and worlds of the internal. The idea.

The viewer has to be aware that states of reality are many and varied and do not end with what the literal interpretation may or may not be.

These games in conceptual art have varied beginnings but a good place to begin would be with Marcel Duchamp, c'est ni un pipe.

I don't know if this really covers everything or whether I've missed the point entirely, but I'm pretty sure that there is something there which could be extracted as a worthwhile contribution.

yourz tone

Lucas replies,

Once a week I am holding a Taiji and Qigong class in a multi national health club. Most of my students are either from the UNO or senior managers. Most of the people in my class are around 50 years old (women are generally a little bit smarter so I get quite a few women between 30 and 40).

The topic of my class is always the same__awareness, communication and well-being.

Generally, it takes about 2-3 years till they get what I call an idea of what caring and well-being actually means. By 'idea' I mean 'image,' a feeling which stays in your mind and which guides you through the day. It takes at least a year till they are willing to experience something which is beyond "I have to be good at taiji." or "I should do it because...."

***By 'idea' I mean 'image,'
a feeling which stays in
your mind and which
guides you through the
day.***

Nowdays when I think I should do my tai ji I would rather go for a walk, because I can see the difference between those who simply enjoy being in my class and those who have to do something. Those who have to do something have to work three times harder to get the same results and they usually don't last longer than a year or two then they give

up.

I always teach people how to communicate with the body and let them work in teams right from the first lesson.

The curious thing is that the success of my class almost killed my class, because of the "problems" I create. There are too many longtime customers in my class who dare to express their ideas freely which frightens the management. The management constantly believes that I am up to something because they would not accept the fact that the customers would actually come up with those ideas by themselves. As my clients talk to each other and organize themselves all their well learned customer strategies break down, because my clients would far too quickly notice that they are in no real conversation, but that what they are told is just the new management policy.

I am in many ways amazed how well self-organisation works and it takes nothing more than genuine interest, time, and supporting structures which provide space for the people to act. I think my story of my Saturday mornings in this Wellness club is just a little example which shows that self-organisation can happen, but has its problem with the rigid context within which it commonly has to grow.

I just came home from a singing lesson a friend gave to me who used to be an opera singer. Today was his 76th birthday. After being through all the classical training, singing all over the world, he has studied chanting for the last ten years. He is, so far, my favourite singing teacher because all we do is let the body open up space to resonate. Your body makes a sound, the sound (noise) lets the body vibrate which creates more sound which opens up more space in the body which again creates more sound and so it goes on....

Please excuse that I send you such variant thought patterns and you don't worry about my storytelling. Cheers,

Lucas Pawlik

Pawlik is completing a book on how language creates reality which combines Wittgenstein, Von Foerster, G. Bateson and Shakespeare and Taoism.

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