BATESON, Gregory (May 9, 1904-July 4, 1980)

Gregory Bateson was an English anthropologist, social scientist, communications theorist, and cyberneticist. His most famous work, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972)*,* is a compilation of essays in which he set forth important ideas on psychology, cybernetics, anthropology, and epistemology. From the late 1920s until World War II, he conducted extensive fieldwork, first in New Guinea. There he studied Iatmul ritual and formulated the notion of “schismogenesis,” escalating division within social groups cause by self-reinforcing interaction. He later conducted fieldwork in Bali with then-wife Margaret Mead before moving to the United States. In 1956 he became a naturalized U.S. citizen. His work with the “Palo Alto Group” established him as a pioneering researcher and theorist in cybernetics and human communication. His “double bind” theory posits that schizophrenia arises from untenable communication paradoxes. Several conditions must be met, including: (1) the presence of two or more persons; (2) repeated experience (as opposed to a single traumatic occurrence); (3) a primary negative injunction carrying a burden of punishment if disobeyed; and (4) a secondary injunction at odds with the first and also enforced by punishment. Bateson’s ideas provide a theoretical foundation for “brief therapy” and “family therapy.”

For further reading, see: Noel G. Charlton, *Understanding Gregory Bateson: Mind, Beauty, and the Sacred Earth*. Albany: State University Press of New York, 2012.

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