

This is Play

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For me, it is one of the milestones of Western science (a singular moment comparable to Archimedes' famous bath) when Bateson went to the zoo and asked himself how monkeys who play fighting know that they play and do not fight.

—Georg Ivanovas¹

Meta

A DOG RUNS UP TO YOU WITH HIS MOUTH OPEN and puts his teeth on your arm. But he is also wiggling his tail. You let him do this because you know he is playing. The wiggling is a metamessage that is about the other message carried by the teeth. Here we have interspecies communication, at two simultaneous levels of abstraction.

It was Gregory Bateson, in the early 1950s, who figured out that animals, and humans, communicate on two or more levels at once. He called such activity metacommunication: a communication that tells the receiver how to interpret what is received. A metamessage is a context-marker, “a message which classifies actions or other messages.”² Not only is playing a form of communication, it is a paradoxical form of communication. “The playful nip denotes the bite, but it does not denote what would be denoted by the bite.” This is play—“these actions in which we now engage do not denote what those actions for which they stand would denote.”³ Put into words, this is a convoluted expression, but animals who play manage this relational intricacy all the time, and with flowing grace. In the evolution of communication, organisms reached a stage of being able to recognize signals *as* signals, to be trusted, distrusted, falsified, denied, corrected, amplified, et cetera. Play was the way Bateson came to recognize the metapatterns of interaction among living beings, to understand the communicational matrix of life, leading into his subsequent work on the double bind and the ecology of mind.

Paradoxical communication: the nip signifies both the absence and the presence of the bite. Freud, playing with his toddler nephew, watched the boy shout *fort! da! fort! da!* (gone! here! gone! here!)⁴—playing with the

absence and the presence of the toy that was thrown away, of the mother who went away. Absence and presence together, yes and no together.

From this intricate place in our heritage as animals and babies, metaphor, fantasy, and storytelling are hatched.

Bateson's observations were remarkable coming as they did against the background of midcentury psychology, in which all learning was conceived of as a sequence of "behavior" that could be modified by reward and punishment. "*Play* is not the name of an act or action; it is the name of a *frame* for action. We may expect, then, that play is not subject to the regular rules of reinforcement. Indeed, anybody who has tried to stop some children playing knows how it feels when his efforts simply get included in the shape of the game."⁵

This is play, this is exploration, this is practice, this is histrionics, this is art, this is religion, this is crime, this is trance. Bateson identified a number of contexts and context-markers that need to be understood as *meta* to behavior, *meta* to language⁶—to which we might add science, education, ritual, therapy, advertising, fiction, fantasy, entertainment, scholarship, theater. Quite often, we experience ambiguous mixtures and layerings of these modes.

As we expand the inventory of contexts—law, literature, philosophy, sport, and many others—it begins to resemble another list: Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* enumerates how many activities of human civilization are forms of play (or more accurately, are games). Bateson was not overly fond of *Homo Ludens*, feeling that Huizinga worked within too literalist a framework, not really understanding the difference between context and activity, and too bound up in the presuppositions of the WASP ethos.⁷ Nevertheless, it is illuminating to see how universal and pervasive playing is in the fabric of all culture, as we observe, for example, the deadly/frivolous game of politics.

It has become common to use *meta-* as a prefix to all sorts of words, to refer to the fact that this is at a level above, or deeper than, or classifying of, a certain behavior that we are talking about. Bateson is responsible for that, among other words or usages. A few days ago (2008) I turned on my car radio and heard a group of inside-the-Beltway political commentators talking about the war in Iraq. Two of them said that we need to have a metaconversation about the war. It is unlikely that these people had ever heard of Gregory Bateson, but here was an indication of the extent to which certain Bateson concepts, like the use of *meta-* or *double bind*, have filtered into our day-to-day vocabulary. While some of his language has become commonplace, his deep and systemic level of thinking has, alas, not.

The message *This is play* establishes a *frame*—another Bateson word that made its way into our vernacular. The fact of animal play means

that animals are capable of handling (and mishandling) frames of communication and activity. Framing was later adopted by Erving Goffman as a way of understanding social intercourse of all kinds and still later in George Lakoff's explications of how linguistic framing is used in political manipulation and propaganda.⁸ *Reframing* later became a key idea in psychotherapy and beyond. Bateson was not always thrilled by many of the applications of his ideas, which often were oversimplified and reified, but all these notions sprang in large part from his observations of play in monkeys and otters.

Inflecting

I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

—Wallace Stevens⁹

Play is the way we do it or say it, whatever *it* may be. Metacommunication is often carried on paralanguage: tone of voice, inflection, timing, facial expression, posture, kinesics, and many other factors for which we do not even have words. While Bateson was elucidating the layered nature of communication, his colleague Ray Birdwhistell was inventing the science of kinesics, the study of the messages carried on styles of movement. These developments reinforced each other as we came to understand that only a portion of language consists of words. Even earlier, in the 1930s, when Bateson was married to Margaret Mead, they created their landmark study *Balinese Character*, realizing that anthropologists cannot rely on verbal description of a culture; analog qualities of movement and timing give every action its flavor and meaning.¹⁰ Photos and film, while still inadequate, provided a partial means of communicating about the emotional tones and modes of interaction that are intrinsic to everyday life.

As a musician, I read a lot about music. While much of the writing is beautiful and interesting, I have not yet seen a description of music that gives me the slightest idea what a piece of music sounds like or how it goes. You simply have to be there in the flesh.

Neurologist Katherine Rankin has developed evidence suggesting that, just as certain (mostly left-) brain areas are involved in language, other areas are involved in paralanguage and the perception of context and humor.¹¹ When people have had damage to certain areas of the right brain, they are unable to understand the mood or mode of a commu-

nication. Rankin played pairs of video clips, for example, of two actors presenting a conversation between husband and wife, about the wife's relatives visiting for the weekend. The actors spoke exactly the same words in both videos. In one clip it was presented straight: the husband was glad to see the wife's relatives—"Let them *all* come over!" In the other clip it was clear that he hated her relatives. He spoke sarcastically, rolling his eyes and groaning, "Let them *all* come over!" To understand this simple dialog depends on the ability to detect the sarcasm that classifies the words.¹²

The script of the dialogue, as it would appear on paper, is like the dog's teeth, without the metamessage of the dog's tail—without the layers of analog gesture that classify, supplement, verify, undermine, comment on, complexify the meaning of the text. The brain-damaged patients lost the *modulation* of a message. The same content (notes, text, words, actions) may be cast in almost infinitely many tonal contexts.

Information flows in digital and analog forms. Text (whether ancient or modern) is digital: a letter of the alphabet is either *a* or *b*, not halfway between. Digital transmission is compact, easy to preserve. Gesture and tone are analog, exhibiting continuous gradation and variation, of which any verbal or quantitative description will be sketchy and inadequate at best. "It is as if he had related that a given musical composition was set in the key of C major, and asked us to believe that this skeletal statement was a sufficient description to enable us to understand why this particular composition altered the mood of the listener in a particular way. What is omitted in all such descriptions is the enormous complexity of modulation of communication. It is this modulation which is music."¹³ Musicians are frequently (mis)taught that their primary task is to play the notes; then later, they can add in the inflection and expression as modifiers. The reality of musical experience is quite the opposite: of its essence analog, its infinite play of expression can be described by notation in only the most superficial and sketchy sense.¹⁴

Digital text takes on analog quality by evoking the physiological feelings of sounds and as each word mingles into the flow of personal and collective memory. Analog expression takes on some digital qualities when we put a label on it. *This is sarcasm* and *This is not sarcasm* are not either/or alternatives, but exist in subtle gradations in each individual interaction.

As we mature and make mistakes in our relations with other people, we all struggle to be better sensitized to context-markers, and thus to tone. Tone of voice is not necessarily a "mere" modifier. The word *modifier* implies a subservient quality to a main item, filling in the details accidental to its primary essence. But this is not necessarily so. The tone or relational context can be as important as the content, if not more so.

Not, Sort Of

When people talk about play, they tend to say what it is not—"it is not real" or "it is not serious"—and then the rest of the sentence gets rather vague when the speaker realizes that play is serious. The word "not" is somehow very important in this.

—Gregory Bateson¹⁵

Bateson's writing is often seen as difficult. He makes us dig down under our fundamental assumptions and premises, usually unexamined and often unconscious; down to the pre-kindergarten level of how experience is organized, before we learned 1, 2, 3 or *a, b, c*.¹⁶ Bateson asks us to grapple freshly with the very simple words that we take for granted: words like *if* or *then*; *not* or *is*; words like *me* or *know*; like *sort of* or *as if*.

Even in the play of monkeys, apes, dogs, and otters, there is the exchange of metamesages, which means that the animals who play are operating on multiple levels of mental organization. The dog or monkey, play-fighting, delivers a nip that is *not* a bite. The playing animal is able to convey *not*. If we consider conscious speech as the end-all of evolutionary sophistication, then this *not* may seem impossible or miraculous. "The existence of such a signal proves the dog able to communicate at, at least, two Russellian levels or logical types."¹⁷ Surely dogs are not thinking about Bertrand Russell, but in play, they are demonstrating a level of mental complexity for which many people do not give animals credit. The message *This is play-fighting* indicates that this is *not really* fighting or *sort of* fighting. For Bateson, the act of playing puts us into the land of the Liar's Paradox—in which you create a context marked by brackets { } and then say {"everything I say in these brackets is false"}. To logicians, such paradox is prohibited speech, but everyday life is full, actually made of it.

Watching a movie, reading a novel, we know this is fiction, the world of *as if*, yet we cry real tears at the death of a character (a nonexistent person whom we come to care about) or at her finally uniting, against all adversity, with her lover. The actors are pretending, but we are pretending, too, sometimes with great commitment.

In the father-daughter metalogue, "Why a Swan?" sparked by a trip to the ballet, we jump from the *sort of* in play to the *sort of* in metaphor, the fundamental component of art and literature.

FATHER. Then I evidently do not know what the word "sort of" means. But I do know that the whole of fantasy, poetry, ballet, and art in general owes its meaning and importance to the relationship which I refer to when I say that the swan figure is a "sort of" swan—or a "pretend" swan.

DAUGHTER. Then we shall never know why the dancer is a swan or a puppet or whatever, and shall never be able to say what art or poetry is until someone says what is really meant by "sort of."¹⁸

In the great sweep of organic evolution, the appearance of play is where organisms first learned to say *sort of* and *stands for*. "My personal interest in the abstract problem of play is a desire to know about those processes whereby organisms pull themselves up by their bootstraps. And they do it, as far as I can see, by loosening up on the rules of communication. . . . They play with these structures or rules and thereby move forward to new rules, new philosophies, etc."¹⁹ Playing puts us in the subjunctive mood. "If I were really trying to bite you, I would do *this*." There are even documented cases of what seems to be fantasy pretending in chimps and gorillas ("If my leg were really hurt, which it isn't, I would limp like this.")²⁰ Thus we map our experience onto other territories: aggression onto the territory of game, our oedipal feelings onto a play by Sophocles.

Pretzels and Klein Bottles

I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

—Wallace Stevens²¹

Playing, exploring, artmaking, religion are not activities but contexts. Such contexts are more intricate than any idea we can have of them. If we write, as Bateson did, of the message *This is play*, we can set it off with italics or quotation marks. But in life, we constantly encounter messages like this is play run together with other words, signs, actions with no punctuation to separate them out from each other. The dog's wagging tail, or the person winking her eye or crossing two fingers while talking, are very simple examples. As such, they give us a way to begin grasping the far greater complexity of real-life situations involving play, fantasy, and creativity. The tail-wagging provides a "simplified paradigm around which theory might crystallize. Newton's artificially simplified concept, the free-falling body, was such a seminal idea in the field of physics. It was a myth, a fictitious idea around which physical theory could take shape."²²

The idea of levels of learning and communication is partly derived from Russell's theory of logical types, which presents a hierarchy of stratified layers of meaning.²³ The menu is *about* the meal, at a different level of abstraction; and one sign of insanity would be trying to eat the

printed menu instead of the food. Bateson sometimes diagrammed these levels as concentric onionskins.²⁴ However, such diagrams were only a jumping-off point to understanding complex layers of relationship that intertwine and interweave in ways that are often easy to perceive but hard to explain.

There is deadpan humor, in which one level of analogic communication stands for several. The expressionless face stands for the laughter, which, if it were there, would have commented on the situation one finds funny or pathetic: layers within layers.

Think of professional sports. As children, athletes come to a sport for its joy, its intrinsic interest, and the playful manipulation of patterns in their world. There are children and parents who focus on winning, and there are those who focus on playing well and enjoying their game; and the two motivations are usually mingled. Especially gifted players get shunted over into the professional arena where they may have the blessing of making money doing what they love. That is a mixed blessing. They may become tied up in the knots of nonplay issues of prestige, money, and so forth. The dominance-submission aspects and the nurturance-dependency aspects of life get all mixed up with play and delight, and it is difficult to untangle them. In our day we have the spectacle of athletes doping themselves to perform better, implying a nonplayful state of desperation.

Artists, as they play, are simultaneously bidding for approval and sometimes begging for survival. The archetype of the creative artist in a tangle of mixed contexts may be found in Scheherazade, who had to tell an enchanting story every night, or her head would be cut off.

In daily life, the messages, *This is play*, *This is practice*, *This is performance*, *This is professional*, loop around each other in recursive knots of feedback—logical layers with a twist. Is this play? Dare we play? Where are the lines that separate play, acting, storytelling, and lying? How far can we push play before it becomes something else?

Levels of communication connect over, under, around, and through each other. It may be more accurate to say *pretzels* rather than *levels*. The knotted loops of contexts, and contexts of contexts, are not random, not merely complicated: the complexity itself has recursive form. Perhaps the best image is a transdimensional shape like a Möbius strip with its half-twist that flips up and out into the third dimension, or its big brother the Klein bottle, which loops up and out between three and four dimensions—a closed surface that doubles back on itself, with no inside and no outside.²⁵



Context Inside-Out

One friend says to another, “You are taking me too seriously.” Are we playing now? Are we joking? Is this sacred? Is this practice? How much can we trust each other? Mixtures and degrees of play, mixtures and degrees of friendship or romantic love—all these contexts, like the Klein bottle, have no inside and no outside, except from limited points of view. Some people can’t take a joke, and some people can’t tell a joke, and often we argue about which is which. Some satire cuts to the bone, while other satire is incompetent. Cartoons and jokes that are meant to be funny may be taken quite otherwise.²⁶

Bateson’s work on the double bind, which unfolded as a result of his understanding of play, ultimately has more to do with the general human condition and pathologies of communication than with schizophrenia per se, but it shows how the misidentification of context-markers can lead to great suffering. Contexts get scrambled by conscious or unconscious misattributions of messages like *This is play*, when metaphor is taken literally or when the name is confused with the thing named.

Context may be appealed to as extenuating circumstance for cruelty: “we were just joking”—as in the case of the gruesome photographs that emerged from the Abu Ghraib prison in 2003. Practical jokes may be funny or painful. Many of us enjoy puns, but people who don’t enjoy them feel sabotaged because they thought the conversation was about a subject, and suddenly the conversation is about the language.

The theater or stage is a context-marker for a separate play-space—we don’t call the police when people are murdered before our eyes in *Hamlet*, but Hamlet himself stages a play in which the layers of context are meant to be ambiguous and porous, where the inside and outside flow into each other: “The play’s the thing wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king.”²⁷ His play, *The Mousetrap*, is an Elizabethan Klein bottle.

“Take it away, it isn’t Wilson’s!”

Gregory told the story of an Englishman named Wilson who manufactured vinegar in Liverpool. He sold pints and quarts and advertised in the *Liverpool Courier*, saying “Wilson’s vinegar is good.” He made money and advertised in the *London Times*, saying “Wilson’s vinegar is the best.” He came to America, to a conference of public relations people. The advertising executives said, “Let some other sucker make the vinegar, you just make the labels. We’ll create a campaign for you. We’ll hire Rockwell Kent to paint a sacred scene. Let’s see, where does vinegar occur in the Bible? Ah, I can see it: the two thieves on the cross; Jesus in the middle;

a Roman centurion holding up a sponge on the end of a stick; and the words: 'Take it away! It isn't Wilson's!'"²⁸

Messages about playfulness, sacredness, and other frames of reference can be simulated and misused. Metaphor, which partakes of primary process, of dream and fantasy, can be manipulated. Sex sells because everything we see and hear is colored by primary process—the intricate algorithms of mammalian feeling and relatedness that are mostly unconscious and mostly unnamable.

This is play, This is sacred, This is art are context-markers for matters that are often best left separate from secular concerns, best left inaccessible to purposive manipulation. Gregory spoke of the screen between metaphoric mind and literal mind, poetry mind and prose mind, as a beneficial pattern. He made much of how Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Ancient Mariner achieved a form of enlightenment gazing down at the sea-snakes—"And I bless'd them unaware!"²⁹ "The Ancient Mariner could not have blessed the sea snakes *unaware* if he had been accompanied on his famous voyage by a pressman with camera and flashbulbs."³⁰ It is important to guard against conscious simulation of the messages of primary process, "which can be done rather easily by any confidence trickster who has a little more control over his movements and facial expressions, than is really good for him."³¹ He adapted a famous line from Jesus to say, "Let not thy left hemisphere know what thy right hemisphere is doing."

That secrecy is a protecting of parts of the whole process-mechanism. Because there is this screen between the two sides, the prose and the poetical, because there is that barrier, it is possible for people who ought not to do so, to use this [poetical] side as a way of influencing people, use charismatic aspects, use propagandistic aspects to play with your emotions in various ways, for political purposes, commercial purposes . . . things which the rising generation in this country is doing its best to kick in the pants, not to be influenced by these rather cheap appeals to things which ought not to be cheap at all.³²

That Bateson said this of and to the rising generation of the late 1960s and early 1970s prompts us to remember the case of corporate rock, wherein the music of rebellion, outrage, and freedom is subsumed into a method of marketing. Rock 'n' roll is a sacred subject for many people. Producers of corporate rock hope that the metamessages formerly carried by the art form will to some extent adhere to its new incarnation as a tool serving "the system"—a misappropriation of that for which the metamessages stand. Likewise, we can be thrilled by the beauty of a child's spontaneous play and fantasy, but if we ask the child to repeat the same sequence when the relatives come over, we have a horse of a very different color—and a double bind for the child.

Rome Mayor Dancing

ROME—Tourists to Rome risk no longer being able to quench their thirst or raise their voices as they stroll the city’s historic streets. The new right-wing mayor Gianni Alemanno has issued a “public decorum” ordinance forbidding eating, drinking, singing or “lounging around” on the streets of the capital’s centre. . . . Alemanno, a former youth leader of a neo-fascist movement, made law and order a central plank of his campaign in April’s city election, including a clamp-down on immigrants and gypsies.

—Reuters News Agency, July 11, 2008³³

The wagging tail of the dog meets its adversary in the wagging finger of the scold. From educators bemoaning the decline and fall of culture to demagogues raging at the decay of morality, there has always been a supply of people who can’t stand the sight of other people having fun.

Play is not the way to maintain a tightly controlled society or a clear definition of what is good, true, or beautiful. Play is not the way to preserve religious, political, or intellectual orthodoxy. We continue to encounter the tradition of puritanism, often in places where the monotheistic religions hold sway.

And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars, my joys & desires.³⁴

Many people regard the arts as a frill (*mere* play), but the dictators of the twentieth century, both great and petty, often made it their first order of business to censor and monitor the arts. They clearly felt they had something substantial to fear from the free play of artistic creativity. Politicians and preachers who condemn art, who condemn violent or sexual material in song lyrics or movies (or violent Shakespeare or Sophocles), are often among the most enthusiastic boosters of real violence in war. These authorities on what is good for us are threatened by play, unless it is channeled into organized sports, drunkenness, and other diversions.

There seems to be no evidence that young people who see such disreputable material or listen to wicked song lyrics grow up to be mass murderers. However, Stuart Brown, who did exhaustive studies of mass murderers and other violent criminals, found that they did suffer from play deprivation. Brown goes on to say, “It seems to me that playless creatures may have an inflexible, narrower, more lizard-like stereotyped

sense of 'self' and reality. In a small-brained (cortex) cold-blooded reptile, no options for complex cooperative play seem likely. In the murderers previously cited, their inflexibility in the presence of stress, and narrowed repertoire of behavioral responsiveness and enslavement to strong urges of affect could be attributed to 'play map deficiency' from abuse and deprivational circumstances."³⁵

To play is to open our eyes to different possibilities, and that is terrifying for some people. Such people and their institutions feed on, and stimulate, certain fears that we all share to varying degrees. Fear of other people's play cannot be unrelated to fear of one's own play—to emancipation anxiety, to fear of standing out and making a fool of oneself. These fears can make a self-sustaining, resonating circuit.

Quite aside from the joylessness and misery of authoritarian contexts, they promote monoculture. Bateson points out, as do all ecologists, that monoculture is the quickest path to extinction. The patter of xenophobic, nativist thinking affirms that we stay with our kind and they stay with their kind, supposedly the natural way of things. Nature works in a very different way, with an opulent play of variety. Variation is the raw material of evolution, both organic and cultural.³⁶ The great renaissances of world civilization occurred in places and times of opulence, when, through trade and other forms of culture contact, alien ways could rub against each other. Play is the way of combinatorial flexibility—the ability to see things from many angles and to change our habits. Ross Ashby, one of Bateson's cohorts in the founding of cybernetics, discovered the Law of Requisite Variety—the principle that living systems, to evolve and learn, require variety and generate variety; and that when variety is suppressed, a system becomes nonfunctional and eventually extinct.

The Opposite of Play

May God us keep from Single Vision & Newton's
sleep.

—William Blake³⁷

The opposite of play is not work or seriousness, because work can be play and play can be serious. It is not even, as some have suggested, depression because depressed, people may have lively and fruitful fantasies. The opposite of play is one-dimensionality or literal-mindedness.

Bateson gives us the image of Wordsworth's character, Peter Bell,

A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.³⁸

—and calls Peter Bell Wordsworth’s “enemy,” walking around with his ordinary, prosaic perception as the only rule by which to measure experience. When Bateson picked up this subject more than half a century ago, psychology and the social sciences were dominated by metaphors taken from Newtonian physics. The dominance of this paradigm may be, if anything, even more pronounced today. We continue to conceive of the universe as consisting of *things* and *forces* that act on things.

My son’s ninth grade English class were given an essay question that instructed them to name the “qualities” “in” a certain character in a novel. We say that a person “has” courage, or pride, or arrogance, or “a” temper—as though these were substances like salt. Innumerable students are asked to write about “historical forces” or “movements.” Was Blake or Beethoven “a romantic”? Such is our deeply ingrained linguistic habit of reifying relationships and activities into *things* that you can “have.”

Bateson used to wince painfully at such materialistic talk. He referred to “historical forces” and so forth as *dormitive explanations*, after Molière. *The Imaginary Invalid* contains a coda in pidgin Latin in which a group of doctors ask a medical student an exam question: “Why does opium put people to sleep?” The student answers, “Because, learned doctors, it contains a dormitive principle.” They congratulate him on his brilliance and admit him to the profession. “It is nonsense to talk about ‘dependency’ or ‘aggressiveness’ or ‘pride,’ and so on. All such words have their roots in what happens between persons, not in some something-or-other inside a person.”³⁹

Our task here, if you will, is de-reifying: loosening the grip of literalism. Bateson was fond of the slogan “Help Stamp Out Nouns,”⁴⁰ and much of his work was aimed toward that challenge, aimed toward de-reifying our way of thinking. Almost any noun can become a dormitive principle: “instinct,” “courage,” “romanticism”—and, dare we add, “creativity” and “play”? We do so love to nail things down.

Recently, I went to England to give a talk on improvisation in music, theater, dance, and other fields. A few days before this talk, I walked into a London bookstore. As I passed the self-help section, the corner of my eye caught a thick red book with white lettering on the spine, titled IMPROVISING. I did a double take. I went back to the shelf to look for the book, and it was not there. I thought perhaps I had seen a book whose title contained letters in common with *improvising*. But there was no such book. It was a pure hallucination. The hallucination was a gift: giving me the essence of my talk, transforming my habits of speaking. What performers do is not the noun *improvisation*—which can so easily be turned into yet another artistic object to be pinned down—it is *improvising*. If we want to avoid abstract epistemology and ask how to stamp out nouns in ordinary life, the answer is improvising, playing

in real time. Playing can propel us right out of the limiting mindset of things-and-forces.

Improvising/playing with other people is a practice based on listening and responding in real time, and the more we do so, the more we are able to soften our edges, to turn stone into lava.⁴¹ In the case of the teacher who demands those hard-edged and illusory nouns, one can react against her and establish a firm counterposition that this is a stupid assignment—or one can find ways to engage with her, find some empathy for her harried life, improvise some language that mediates between the points of view. Such improvising is not easy, but it can be done.

A central Bateson idea is that art, dream, myth, play, fantasy, all the activities where metaphor rules, serve as correctives to our narrow conscious purposes.⁴² Bateson saw parallels between rational scientific materialism and fundamentalist religion; both tend to a certain literal-minded approach that flattens the world according to a single acceptable epistemology and frame of reference.

Freeing our mind from entrapment in nouns is a theme that runs throughout the Bateson universe, a magic tool to dissolve our hardened vision and see the world not by its linguistic labels but closer to things as they are. “But,” Gregory quoted from Wallace Stevens, “things as they are / Are changed upon the blue guitar.” It would be handy to carry a de-reifier in our pockets, like the neuralizer in *Men in Black*. And yet, we have such a device already, in our capacity for playing, imagining, seeing, improvising, and relating, which is easy to forget but also easy to retrieve.

Nuggets of Story

The parable of dormitive explanations gives us an insight into Bateson’s whimsical and relational way of thinking in stories. Without the story from Molière, “dormitive principle” does not scan—so he interrupted many of his writings and lectures to retell it. Wouldn’t it be faster and simpler to say *reification* or *misplaced concreteness*? Dormitive, however, gives us some information that the idea of reification does not. In addition to making a dry philosophical idea playful and funny, we see the picture of both the student and his professors proudly colluding in their illusory ideas, in a dance of mutual reinforcement. The rhythm of storytelling—interplay, pause, interplay, punch line—gives us a chance to participate and identify, and see from a relatively undefended vantage how we ourselves indulge in these mutual reinforcements of illusion all the time. In addition, we have the resonance of dormitive principles as ideas that put our minds to sleep.

In a conversation with film critic Roger Ebert, Martin Scorsese said that he was never interested in boxing before he made *Raging Bull*. “When I received the book back in 1974 I had never seen a fight. I didn’t know anything about boxing. It’s about a boxer, not about boxing. It’s about a man.” Ebert added, “Frequently people will discuss the subject matter as if that is what the film is about. Oh, it’s a film about boxing, or it’s a film about gangsters. A film is not about its subject; it’s about *how* it’s about its subject.”⁴³ This is a profoundly Batesonian statement and goes to the heart of the play issue.

Mysterious Play (*Fushigi Yugi*)

It’s all made of stories.

—Gregory Bateson⁴⁴

Play is easy to recognize but impossible to define. We may try to define it, but our definitions will be clumsy, inadequate, and circular. That is because play is *about* definition.⁴⁵ It is *meta* to “ordinary” activities like aggressing or kissing, but especially, it is *meta* to the activity of defining. In playing, we are fluidly changing definitions of things: the piece of rubber is a sword, the sword is a penis, ad infinitum. In the animé (Japanese animation) series called *Fushigi yugi* (Mysterious Play), some teenagers from contemporary Japan get caught up in the parallel universe of an ancient Chinese kingdom of magic. We think of parallel universes as an invention of our contemporary science fiction era, but they have always been with us. Pretend-play, theater-play, music-play, sports-play, and mythology are all about parallel universes and alternate time-streams that work according to their own laws and patterns different from the everyday. In play, definitions slip, slide, perish, decay with imprecision, steal from the poets.

Since we are linguistic beings, a large amount of our play and fantasy comes in the form of stories, myths, jokes, poetry, and hybrid visual-linguistic forms like theater or film, or illuminated pages by Stan Lee or William Blake. It is only a step or two from the message *This is play* exchanged among river otters to Coleridge’s “a semblance of truth, sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.”⁴⁶

And

The double bind theory of schizophrenia is also
the double bind theory of laughter and humor.
—Gregory Bateson⁴⁷

Bateson's catalytic paper was a theory of play AND fantasy.

Blake: "To the Eyes of the Man of Imagination Nature is Imagination itself."⁴⁸ This is Imagination. Nature is seething with information. We can see patterns that are implicit in the world around us. Metamessages. Context-markers. Gesture. Tone. Silence. Not complete sentences—not a unidimensional sequence of subject-predicate or thing-action, which is not how communication actually flows. The revolutionary insight of cybernetics is that information flows in circuits. The dog's wagging tail and eager eyes require a response from you, which requires a response from the dog, and back and forth it goes. Metamessages, like all the interplay that constitutes life, are segments of recursive feedback loops. Your receiving/responding to the message, *This is play*, reinforces my putting out the message, and keeps the play going.

To Bateson, the root subject of all communication is relationship. When a military commander tells you to do something and adds, "and that's an order," he is talking about the subject matter but more importantly about his relationship to you. The cat mewing at your leg is probably saying not "Milk!" but "Dependency!"

Mind is nowhere; play is nowhere. At a public conversation between Jonas Salk and Gregory Bateson, someone asked them, "Where is the mind?" Salk pointed at his head. Gregory made a circular gesture between himself and Jonas. Bateson insisted that mind functions on difference, a bit of information, the elementary unit of an idea. He asked, If you have a cup and a table, where is the difference between them? Is it in the cup? The table? Squashed in the space in between them? In the observer's brain cells? Obviously, none of the above. It is nowhere, and certainly no "thing." Similarly, play is nowhere—it is not the "behavior" of the playing animals, it is *meta*—at a different level of abstraction. Bateson's play research was seminal in bringing us to understand the world of living systems, a world of form and pattern, not a world of things, forces, behavior, or events.

Carol Wilder-Mott points out what a clean break it was for Bateson and his colleagues in cybernetics and systems theory to put forth an epistemology based on multileveled, multimodal signs and messages.⁴⁹ Since Aristotle, our understanding of communication (and much of literature) was based on the idea of rhetoric: I have a message, I intend to transmit it to you, I need to learn the most effective and organized

method of transmitting my message. But in the world according to Bateson, atomic concepts like *I, you, thing, action*, do not reflect the real workings of mind and nature. In prose, one voice speaks at a time. In music, multiple voices are flowing simultaneously with paradoxical messages, modes, and moods that both harmonize and contradict each other. Bateson says: “We do not even know what a primitive digital system for the discussion of patterns of relationship might look like, but we can guess that it would not look like a ‘thing’ language. (It might, more probably, resemble music).”⁵⁰

To the nonplaying mind, a primrose is a primrose. But to the mind that plays with pattern, the primrose and its relatives share patterns of symmetry, patterns by which the parts relate to each other. So (as Gregory held up a pair of flowers), each is a metaphor for the other. The elephant’s trunk and my nose are metaphors each for the other. Playing with patterns, we merge two and get a third, as in nearly every joke. Arthur Koestler captured the importance of *and* with the word *bisociation*: the explosive little pop that happens when two patterns that had previously seemed totally unconnected come together.⁵¹ This is the essence of both humor and creativity. Gregory, still with the pair of flowers, would say, “Patterns are sort of sexy things. You’ve got one of them, then you have two of them; put them together and you have a third. It’s possible that the fascinations of yin and yang are such juxtapositions of patterns, which are highly sexual matters, and that the fun partly is that this is generative of another pattern. The sexual metaphor is not entirely academic.”⁵²

What’s a Meta For?

American culture stresses—almost as though it were an item of religious dogma—the notion that goals can be specified and that the means of attaining those goals can then be planned with articulate clearness.

—Gregory Bateson⁵³

Gregory claimed that “some wag” (himself, as far as I can tell) was circulating this misquotation of Browning:

A man’s reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what’s a meta for?⁵⁴

Here he evokes *and*, at the same time, pokes fun at the very complex relationship between play and purpose.

There is, by now, quite a large literature on play in anthropology, psychology, education, literary studies, and other fields. Many attempts to define play refer to it as purposeless activity that is outside the requirements of daily life, outside of making a living and so forth. Much of the same literature goes on to conclude that play is profoundly adaptive and has an evolutionary purpose. Play has evolutionary value because it makes organisms flexible, better able to learn, better able to combine things in new ways so that we, humans and animals, are more ready to adapt to changing circumstances.⁵⁵ Bateson also engaged in that type of explanation, as have I; those of us whose thinking is conditioned by the evolutionary idea naturally ask, "What is the adaptive value of play? Why did evolution select for organisms who play?" Indeed, "higher" organisms seem to be the ones who play the most.

As humanists, we feel that we are on to something important when we discover the uses of art: a spur to evolution and learning, being prepared for the unexpected; we understand the importance of the Law of Requisite Variety. Marvelous as it is to discover all these purposes to play, there is something a bit disturbing about the whole procedure.

Students of childhood play are looking for an educational payoff. Students of animal play are looking for an evolutionary payoff. The payoff is there, but (and how could anything having to do with playing not involve paradox?) when we deliberately cultivate that payoff, we are no longer playing. There is a fluid dynamic between finding benefit in play and playing for the joy of it. To this extent, such studies feed into the ethos of puritan-utilitarian society. Play, or art, or universities for that matter, are "worth it" if they have a "purpose." In contemporary culture, we are concerned that everything we do be useful for something. We are a utilitarian people, and the concept of free activity that exists for the joy of doing it is not as appealing to us as something that has ulterior educational or commercial value.

If we carry the functional argument beyond a certain point, we find ourselves in the land of half-baked pseudoscience like the "Mozart makes you smart" fad.⁵⁶ The fact that Mozart's fantastic play has value in itself is not sufficient because in order to justify financial and other kinds of support for the arts, we have to demonstrate that Mozart will raise a fetus's IQ, which will make the fetus grow into a productive unit in the economy. Similarly, we justify the existence of the symphony hall or the art gallery in town by showing that the arts establishments bring in business to restaurants, shops, and tourist industries—putting play to work.

Peace Profound and the Gift of Complexity

I know noble accents
 And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
 But I know, too,
 That the blackbird is involved
 In what I know.

—Wallace Stevens⁵⁷

When dogs play with us, there is biting and the opposite of biting. When humans enjoy horseplay, there is aggression and the opposite of aggression, dynamically rolling together. This is a rich, complex, and multilayered form of interplay that I will dare to call *peace*—quite different from peace as simple abstinence from aggression, as when Israelis and Arabs, or Irish and Northern Irish, are reluctantly dragged into a conference room to make a show of being civil to each other. Friends and family members who love each other are capable of insulting and teasing one another, fooling around with irony, tussling in the dirt. Aggressive play is part of love. This is why the one-dimensional peace between political enemies, the peace that is the simple absence of war, is so fragile and brittle. This is the great pitfall of peace studies as an academic field, and why often the most interesting peace projects include members of opposing gangs/nations/ethnic groups making some kind of theater together, for example the very successful City at Peace program (which Bateson's granddaughter helped develop). Thus the screwball comedy *You Don't Mess with the Zohan* (2008) brings insight to relations between Israelis and Palestinians that is missing in many earnest, well-meant position papers from think tanks.

My friend, the musician Karlton Hester, signs all his e-mails "Peace Profound." I am beginning to understand that this is more than a nice-sounding formula. There is a difference between peace and peace profound. Diplomacy is sometimes called war by another means—people struggling at a conference table over who can gain the advantage over the other, how to make the best deal. By all means making a deal over a conference table is far, far better than war. However, it is not peace. Peace is being able to play.

Bateson gives us the gift of complexity. But we seldom want complexity, and often our ingrained epistemologies run right over our chances of evolving. To play comfortably with and in paradox is a vital activity, from which we often hide.

A Tibetan lama is questioned by a young man, a sincere practitioner with a furrowed brow. The young man says, "I am committed to the practice but I have the doubt." He is willing to do pujas, prostrations,

and so forth to the goddess/archetype Tara, but is Tara really there? Sometimes the lama talks as if she is a real person and sometimes as if she is a symbol. "So, Rinpoche, Tara, does she really exist or does she not?" For a few moments the lama ponders, then raises his eyes to meet those of his inquirer. A smile spreads across his face. He responds, "She knows that she is not real."⁵⁸

As the best of comments on this brilliantly on-target evasion, I offer you again the image of the Klein bottle, with no inside and no outside, looping around in a dimension we cannot see but can imagine. Like playfulness, metaphor, sacrament, you can hold a 3-D model in your hand and talk about it, but that is never the real thing. Is Tara real or not? Nonsense! For the Catholic believer or the Protestant, is the bread and wine a symbol or is it really the body and blood? A few centuries ago, as Bateson often said, Europeans killed each other in large numbers over whether the sacrament was a simile or a metaphor. The *or* of the question is nonsense, for in this sacred play there is no inside and no outside. Just like the liar's paradox, which vibrates between true and false, the paradoxical communication that is the essence of playing has no inside and no outside.

Herbert Tucker, inviting me to write this article, wrote: "I'd hope you might find something to play with 'inside' Bateson's thought, some knot or joint or 'harmonia' where he doubles back on himself and so poses a puzzle your essay might lay out and solve." The shape he describes is a marvelous description of a Klein bottle—and with this image, we understand that there is no inside or outside to Bateson's thought. That is why Bateson has seemed confusing to many people. He was profoundly interdisciplinary—not merely linking up different disciplines, but inhabiting, and inviting us into, a world that is of its very essence empty of such distinctions. He had a way of turning science into art and art into science, looking at the living world so that we see context, relationship, and circulation rather than the boundaries of my skin-bag and your skin-bag.

Metaphor That is Meant

Now I a fourfold vision see
 And a fourfold vision is given to me
 'Tis fourfold in my supreme delight
 And threefold in soft Beulah's night
 And twofold Always. May God us keep
 From Single vision & Newton's sleep

—William Blake⁵⁹

“May God us keep from single vision & Newton’s sleep” reappears throughout Bateson’s writing over the decades as a protective gesture to ward off literal-mindedness, to resist our deeply ingrained tendency to flatten things onto a plane. Gregory spoke of the vital importance of multiple views of relationship. Playing is lived relationship, always playing-with, dancing-with, even when you are playing with yourself in the inner worlds of fantasy or the private pleasure of craftsmanship in your garage workshop.

What’s a meta for? Catherine Bateson states, “One can use an imagined identification with another person to enhance one’s understanding of an idea or event by asking, how would so-and-so see this? . . . playing a question through alternate filters and seeing how it is processed each time.” She goes on to discuss seeing *through* another person, experiencing people as verbs, Gertrude-ing, Gregory-ing.⁶⁰

The first piece of Bateson writing I discovered, as a nineteen-year-old student, was the transcript of a free-form discussion he organized in 1955, called “The Message, ‘This is Play.’” What I found extraordinary about his style and substance, and what kept me searching, was that he presented an antidote to our tendency, in studying things, to try to flatten them. Gregory’s touch as a teacher, as I found out when I met him a couple of years later, was to allow everything we looked at, from entropy to visionary art, to curl up out of the page into three and more dimensions.

Investigating the *sort-of* and *as-if* of everything from monkey play to poetry, Gregory pointed to the ancient experience of *sacrament*. This is “the metaphor that is meant. . . . Here we can recognize an attempt to deny the difference between map and territory, and to get back to the absolute innocence of communication.”⁶¹

“A Theory of Play and Fantasy” is a very formal paper, drawing on Russell’s theory of logical types, and puts our nose right into the range of Bateson’s thinking, full of fantasy and imagination yet highly intellectual—and thereby off-putting to many people. He wrote to me that “a sacrament is the reciprocal of a dormitive explanation.” It is hard to imagine anyone describing sacrament as the reciprocal of anything, but Gregory would instantly respond with Blake’s “For a tear is an intellectual thing.”⁶²

As a musician, four decades later, I am still learning how to play fully and with utter commitment, as a practice, a Way of empathy, an interplay with other human beings that combines great freedom with great concentration and responsibility. Such play opens up layers within layers as we explore each other, explore mind and nature. Within its own delimited time and place, it is the most important thing in the world, because it is of course no thing at all. Call it a difficult, joyful form in which by

manipulating instruments, symbols, wave-forms of sound and light, body movement and sensation, we enact patterns that somehow encompass the entire experience and complexity of what it is to be alive.

IVY, VIRGINIA

NOTES

- 1 Georg Ivanovas, "Still Not Paradigmatic," in "The Beginning of a New Epistemology: In Memorium, Gregory Bateson (1904–1980)," special issue, *Kybernetes* 36, nos. 7/8 (2007): 847.
- 2 Gregory Bateson, "The Message, 'This is Play,'" in *Group Process: Transactions of the Second Conference*, ed. Bertram Schaffner (New York: Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation, 1955), 170.
- 3 Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," first published in *Psychiatric Research Reports* 2 (Dec. 1955): 39–51. The version cited here will be that found in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology* (San Francisco: Chandler, 1972); the quoted material comes from page 180.
- 4 Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey (1920; New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1961), 13–14.
- 5 Bateson, *Mind and Nature* (New York: Dutton, 1979), 139.
- 6 Bateson, "The Logical Categories of Learning and Communication," in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 279–308.
- 7 Bateson, "Gregory Bateson on Play and Work," letter to Phillip Stevens, *Association for the Anthropological Study of Play Newsletter* 5, no. 4 (1979): 2–4.
- 8 Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate: The Essential Guide for Progressives* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Pub., 2004).
- 9 Wallace Stevens, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," stanza V, first published in *Harmonium* (New York: Knopf, 1923), repr. in *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 93.
- 10 Bateson and Margaret Mead, *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis* (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1942).
- 11 Katherine Rankin et al., "Detecting Sarcasm from Paralinguistic Cues: Anatomic and Cognitive Correlates in Neurodegenerative Disease," *NeuroImage* (forthcoming).
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- 13 Bateson, "Group Dynamics of Schizophrenia" (1960), repr. in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 231.
- 14 Stephen Nachmanovitch, "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing): Bateson's Epistemology and the Rhythms of Life," *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 30, no. 1 (Fall 2007): 32–53.
- 15 Bateson, "The Message, 'This is Play,'" 145.
- 16 Nachmanovitch, "Gregory Bateson: Old Men Ought to be Explorers," *CoEvolution Quarterly* 35 (1981): 34–45.
- 17 Bateson, *Mind and Nature*, 136.
- 18 Bateson, "Metalogue: Why a Swan?" in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 34.
- 19 Bateson, "The Message, 'This is Play,'" 216.

- 20 Juan-Carlos Gomez and Beatriz Martin-Andrade, "Fantasy Play in Apes," in *The Nature of Play: Great Apes and Humans*, ed. Anthony Pellegrini and Peter Smith (New York: Guilford Press, 2005), 139–72.
- 21 Stevens, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," stanza II, *Collected Poems*, 92.
- 22 Bateson, "New Conceptual Frames for Behavioral Research," in *Sacred Unity: Further Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, ed. Bateson and Rodney Donaldson (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 94. Bateson was speaking here of John von Neumann's game theory, but could well be speaking of his own.
- 23 Bateson, "Logical Categories of Learning and Communication," in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 279–308.
- 24 Bateson, "The Message, 'This is Play,'" 146.
- 25 This photo is of a three-dimensional approximation of the Klein bottle, which in fact exists in four dimensions and cannot be realized in three. If I draw a two-dimensional picture of you with your arms folded across your chest, it looks as though one of your forearms is piercing the other, when actually one is crossing behind the other in a third spatial dimension. Likewise, the place where the neck of the Klein bottle seems to pierce into itself is a 3-D view of a bend into a fourth spatial dimension. The photo of the Klein bottle (and the bottle itself) are by Cliff Stoll, Acme Klein Bottles, Oakland, California, 2008.
- 26 That is, the *New Yorker* cover purportedly spoofing critics of Barack Obama, July 21, 2008.
- 27 Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 2.2.1136–37.
- 28 From personal correspondence with the author.
- 29 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," in Coleridge and William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads* (Bristol: Longman, 1798), 25.
- 30 Bateson, Governor's prayer breakfast, Sacramento, CA, January 1976, reprinted in Bateson and Mary Catherine Bateson, *Angels Fear: Toward an Epistemology of the Sacred* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 76.
- 31 Bateson, "Consciousness and Psychopathology" (lecture, Naropa Institute, Boulder, CO, Summer, 1974).
- 32 Bateson, "Consciousness and Psychopathology."
- 33 "Wine, Women and Song? Not in Rome's Streets," *Thomson Reuters News Agency*, July 11, 2008. Available on-line: <http://www.reuters.com/article/lifestyleMolt/idUSL1123297720080711>.
- 34 William Blake, "The Garden of Love," in *Songs of Innocence* (London: The Author & Printer W. Blake, 1789).
- 35 Stuart Brown, "Play as an Organizing Principle: Clinical Evidence and Personal Observations," in *Animal Play: Evolutionary, Comparative, and Ecological Perspectives*, ed. Marc Bekoff and John A. Byers (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 256.
- 36 Important in this regard are two circa 1900 books, William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Modern Library, 1902), and Gregory's father, William Bateson's *Materials for the Study of Variation* (London: Macmillan, 1894).
- 37 Blake, letter to Thomas Butts, November 22, 1802, *Letters of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (New York: MacMillan Co., 1956), 79.
- 38 Wordsworth, "Peter Bell" (1819), cited in Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity* (New York: Dutton, 1979), *About Bateson: Essays on Gregory Bateson*, ed. John Brockman (New York, Dutton, 1977), and other writings.
- 39 Bateson, *Mind and Nature*, 133.
- 40 Coined by Anatol Holt, in Mary Catherine Bateson, *Our Own Metaphor: A Personal Account of a Conference on the Effects of Conscious Purpose on Human Adaptation* (New York: Knopf, 1972), 63.

- 41 Nachmanovitch, "Stone & Lava" (lecture, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ire., August 11, 1999).
- 42 Bateson, "Style, Grace and Information in Primitive Art," in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 128–52.
- 43 Martin Scorsese, interview by Roger Ebert, recorded at Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State Univ., Columbus, OH, February 28, 1997. Rebroadcast on *Fresh Air*, WHYY, June 27, 2008.
- 44 Bateson, "Consciousness and Psychopathology."
- 45 Stephen Miller, "Ends, Means and Galumphing: Some Leitmotifs of Play," *American Anthropologist* 75, no. 1 (Feb. 1973): 87–98.
- 46 Coleridge, chapter 14 in *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1983), 2:6.
- 47 Bateson, "Metaphors and Butterflies" (lecture, Esalen Institute, Big Sur, CA, 1975).
- 48 Blake, letter to Dr. Trusler, August 23, 1799, in *Letters of William Blake*, 35.
- 49 Carol Wilder-Mott, "Rigor and Imagination" in *Rigor and Imagination: Essays from the Legacy of Gregory Bateson*, ed. Wilder-Mott and John Weakland (New York: Praeger, 1981), 5–42.
- 50 Bateson, "Problems in Cetacean and Other Mammalian Communication," in *Whales, Dolphins, and Porpoises*, ed. Kenneth Norris (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1966), 577.
- 51 Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (New York: Macmillan, 1964).
- 52 Bateson, "Metaphors and Butterflies."
- 53 Bateson and Jurgen Ruesch, *Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry* (New York: Norton, 1951), 236.
- 54 Bateson, letter to John Brockman, afterword to *About Bateson*, and Mary Catherine Bateson in *Angels Fear*. In the Browning poem "Andrea del Sarto": "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, / Or what's a heaven for?" Browning also coined "Less is more" in the same poem.
- 55 Miller, "Ends, Means and Galumphing," 87–98.
- 56 When the Mozart effect became popular in the 1990s, I attended a massive trade show of musical instrument manufacturers in Los Angeles, where the halls and escalators of the convention center continuously rang with a ding-dong marketing ditty that warbled, "Music makes you smart! Music makes you smart!" I found myself visualizing the zombie of Mozart, rising out of the mists of his pauper's grave in Vienna, to slowly strangle the purveyors of this nonsense.
- 57 Stevens, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," stanza VIII, in *Collected Poems*, 94.
- 58 Ajahn Amaro, "Finding the Perfect Balance," *Buddhadharma* 6, no. 4 (2008): 27.
- 59 Blake, letter to Thomas Butts, November 22, 1802, *Letters of William Blake*, 79.
- 60 Bateson and Bateson, *Angels Fear*, 194–95.
- 61 Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," 39–56.
- 62 Blake, *Jerusalem* (London: The Author & Printer W. Blake, 1804), 52.