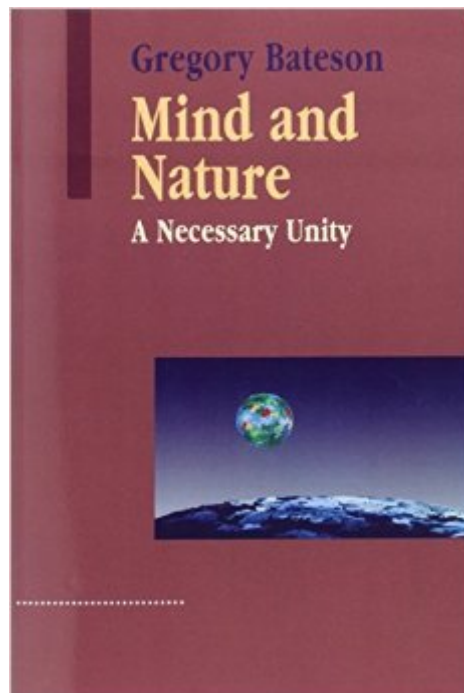


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Mind And Nature: A Necessary Unity (Advances In Systems Theory, Complexity, And The Human Sciences)



Synopsis

A re-issue of Gregory Bateson's classic work. It summarizes Bateson's thinking on the subject of the patterns that connect living beings to each other and to their environment.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gregory Bateson is difficult to "get" but incredibly rewarding once you do understand him. The number of concepts he deals with in this masterwork is amazing; the number that are still relevant more than twenty years after publication is stunning. Mind and Nature will some day be seen as one of the most important books of the Twentieth Century. Bateson does not just tell us what he knows -- he shows us, using marvelous examples from nature that you will never forget. He gives beautifully clear -- on the sixth or seventh reading for some people -- descriptions of learning-by-the-individual and evolution-by-the-group as ***essentially similar fusions of analogic and digital (or energy and pattern) integrations.*** Learning-by-the-individual is "somatic" and benefits the survival of the individual, but ***that*** survival in turn becomes the evolutionary driving force for the group because the genes of the individual are passed on in the germ (genetic) line of the species. Mind and Nature are an essential unity. But what's more, the processes by which both mind and nature work are the SAME: Whether individual learning or group evolution, some pattern-preferencing mechanism "selects," from a set of cast-up possibilities, some qualities of some kind. The selecting mechanisms can ONLY select from those cast-up possibilities. When those qualities have survival value, they get passed on. Far more than just a re-statement of Darwin, the essential unity of Mind

and Nature described by Bateson has vast implications for our understanding of ourselves and our place in the universe. We are as one with Nature, as one with the way of the Universe.

Sit in on a lecture by an engaging and knowledgeable prof and you can expect to pick up a few tidbits. You certainly don't expect to come away knowing everything the prof knows. The subtitle of this book is about what Bateson knows, but you don't need to know any of that (or be particularly interested in it) to read this unusual book. My subtitle would be: You're Smarter Than You Think You Are."I read this book in a Bantam mass market edition after sampling a piece of it in some science magazine (maybe Discover). Gregory Bateson was a renaissance man (which is one of the delights in reading him), the former husband of anthropologist Margaret Mead, and best known for the double bind theory of schizophrenia, included as an essay in *The Ecology of Mind*. That theory may not sound well-known at all, but it's the basis of family counseling and why we talk about dysfunctional families (instead of just individuals). And we've all been in situations that are double binds, or as these no-win situations are known in everyday jargon: "damned if you do, damned if you don't". Bateson wrote this book as metafiction, which is to say he talks about the book in the book, and he includes a handful of metalogues with his daughter, Catherine Bateson, herself now a writer for such magazines as *Smithsonian*, although he made them up. These metalogues reflect on ideas in the book and widen the feedback loop, as it were, to include the reader. They are relaxed and leisurely and not meant to be persuasive. My experience reading this book was that it changed the way I saw everything.

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