

# From 'Combining' by Nora Bateson

## Introduction

The pieces in this book are created in many tones, many textures and come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. I invite you to start wherever the pages open in your hands and, from there, flip around as your curiosity moves you. These compositions are here to speak to each other through you and your own impressions.

In my own way, I am hoping to bring buckets of warmth, context, and life into this strange era. This book is made of many things, in many voices, over many years. It is rigorous in its theory, at times expressed through scientific language, at times through personal vignettes and non-verbal expression. It is intimate, and it is global. It is verbal and non-verbal. The expressions are direct and indirect, spanning contexts that range from parenthood to sexual consent to promises and global politics. There is rage and frustration alongside beauty and awe. I am heartbroken and heart-lifted in these pages. Rage requires fear, love, curiosity, and confusion in an ecology of emotions. Perhaps, as a reader, you will find some pieces too spicy, too sweet, some too bitter, too metaphorical, too intellectual, or not intellectual enough. But they are here to feed each other and you, to ricochet and ping, to resonate and echo. I am aware that this is an unusual approach to entering a practice of perception. But I have taken the risk to offer these pieces side by side and let them make their own ecology for you, specific to your contexts.

What reads as surrealism to some may be banal to others. Each clump of words and pictures in the book is reaching around for the others, connecting in the particulars of your reading. They will do so differently as time passes; new resonances will ring. Even though some of these pieces have been published before this book in other places, I can say that I never meant for any of them to stand alone. Nothing in an ecology stands alone.

It is necessary to have an ensemble of all sorts of communication to meet ecology—intellectual, emotional, storied, non-verbal, physical. The communications must be diverse enough to meet the diversity of life. Disgust, humor, earnestness, seriousness, sexiness, pensiveness, silent awe, and gushing appreciation—together allow for the complexity of being alive to meet the complexity of life. It takes every kind of communication imagined and unimagined to meet this time. It takes complexity to meet complexity.

I invite you into this ecology of communication. Pick the flowers, pee in the bushes, throw the stones, watch the clouds, sleep in the shade, eat the fruit. I welcome you to wriggle and scratch in these pages and to find both rest and revolution.