

*Nora Bateson*



*Small Arcs  
of Larger Circles*

*framing through  
other patterns*

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**The Opening Chapter**

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With a Foreword by Sahra Bateson Brubeck

## If You Knew Me Well You Would Know That I Would Give You Everything

For you, a respite of uncontainability. Safe pages for words, to taste them as they find their rightness. Let them rest in their silky beds of lyrical dreams. Let them run like rivers down mountain-sides, arranging curves and switches where textures change along the way. Thoughts yet unmet arrive in cloaks of language, becoming bards to take you where you can see that you are wide inside.

Words are delicious, but cannot say much. They often lose the water of meaning before it is delivered. But they can be stirred to form descriptions of the breath, glances, gestures, and pulses between lives. Perhaps writing is finding a scrape in the skin of knowing, where the sting and dirt and blood of the day is let out, and music is let in.

There is no language to define the spiraling processes of the vast context we are participants in. We do not have names for the patterns of interdependency. To lock down the delicate filigree of life in explanation is to lose it, but not to see it is disastrous. Words are what we have. The why, of why we do anything at all, matters.

An inside-out kaleidoscope—a de-fragmenter—might be useful for looking at a fractured order through a lens of unity. A superhero in a comic book might have such a tool at her belt. The way we see affects what we do, in both the broad strokes of global study, and the details of a day. Playing with the limits of our perception, our knowing, and tweaking the cultural script is like using a lemon juice wash to reveal the invisible ink and unspoken scaffolding we inhabit.

The ink of interrelationship bleeds across the boundaries between professionalism, academic research, and the banality of daily life. Theory and philosophy are stained with the mundane and both are vis-à-vis. What holds this collection of sightings together? What holds anything together? Glue is superficial, so not that. Thread is better, sewing, mending the torn-apart seams of perception—possibly. It is the right question—what is holding it together?—and the question alone might be the source of inquiry. Surely a search for the elegance in a mess of weighted compensations, and river-washed shapings of the context of life, is enough of a spine. Perhaps?

The thing I want to say in this book is not in any of the pieces, but is woven by you in the way you make linkings and meta-linkings.

In the wake of human history thus far, devastation and destruction point to a misconception about the ‘way of things’ or, as some might say, the ‘order of life.’ Whatever the errors are, they are brutal to our inner worlds and the larger ecology of which we are a part. It might be that we are navigating with the wrong map. The way in which sense is made of this smorgasbord of ideas today will differ from how that same sense-making fits tomorrow. Unwritten, uncondoned.

To break away from the bricklaying of evidence-based strategic solutions is a huge risk. The loose threads of golden flexibility are a pirate’s booty of unproven and mock-able guesses. This is not allowed, and I am not qualified. Interloping across disciplines and subjects, I am just here with two eyes to see the parallax, and to blindly feel for the hidden thinkings in the bottom of a black handbag. My father, Gregory Bateson, a scientist of many shades and a thinker, has given me a great deal to work with, and hopefully to give my own extension to. I cannot know where his thinking ends and mine begins, nor do I care to draw those lines. Both of us are here, along with 3,500 years of western civilization and the long history of human evolution, wondering how to change the course of this story. Conceptually I am walking the thin glass plank barefoot—chaos peppered with elusive still points on both sides.

The depths to plunge are the abyss of love at the end of the plank. In fact, in each glimpse of this collection is a love story. These pieces are naked flirtations within a landscape of longing, a melting point of meetings in a panorama. To be a participant in a complex system is to desire to be both lost and found in the interrelationships between people, nature, and ideas. It is an infinite expansion where a small bird’s nest is tucked into the twigs of a gnarled oak tree that stands patiently atop a hillside. A pond below reflects its branches against the clouds, and tall grass is led by the wind to dance like water. They are in conversation together with us. Are there edges? The tree is in the park, which is in the city, in the Pacific Northwest, in the northern hemisphere, on a spherical globe of vitality, orbiting a larger globe of fire. Anyone’s heart is liable to be broken open by the simple poetry of the many entanglements captured in a single blink.

Written in geological calligraphy, we are swirled and looped into each other in movement and pattern. We learn together, with the trees, and the trade winds, the living maps of cities, and the soup recipes of our

ancestors. Cause and effect trade hats like a shell game, losing count on purpose. The limbs of history and the future's lust are always synchronizing.

These are the dipping breadsticks, the stewing roots and the wild herbs of my unauthorized knowings. These are living things, barely interested in the page, but swarming into warmth. In the kitchen, in the street, in the forest, in the sea, in my cells and in the cache of breaths I cannot count—there is something holding all of this together, all of us together. There is an alive order that we are within and that is within us.

