



*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world."*

# Notes from the Field



Newsletter of the Institute for Intercultural Studies

Spring 2008

## Salzburg Seminar celebrates 60 years

On the 60th anniversary of the Salzburg Seminar, July 15, 2007, Mary Catherine Bateson talked to guests at Schloss Leopoldskron about her memories of the first gathering in 1947. The organization was founded by three Harvard University students as a venue for bringing together European students to heal the rifts created by World War II. Bateson was there during that first session along with her mother, Margaret Mead, who served as chair of the session's faculty.



Schloss-Leopoldskron has been the site of the Salzburg Seminar since 1947. Photo courtesy of Schloss-Leopoldskron.

As Bateson remembers, "I was seven. It was all out of a fairy tale – a castle, kings, queens, and I had all sorts of adventures." She also recalls that this was her first time outside of the US, and the beginning of her love affair with languages. "I came here on a sentimental journey but the meaning of being here has changed for me over the past four days...I find myself with a new sense of commitment."

Bateson shared with the audience her memories as a child, but she also put into perspective the state of the world and anthropology for those attending in 1947. During World War II, when anthropologists weren't able to travel, they continued their efforts to understand cultural differences, particularly as these affected the global conflict. These

anthropologists, in particular Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict, began to think about and study contemporary cultures in industrialized societies, and anthropology became, in a new way, a discipline of self-knowledge, not knowledge of the exotic and faraway but rather a process whereby people begin to know each other and themselves.

Once the war was over, travel opened up again and the vision of a program that would bring together a new generation of students from all over Europe that became

the Salzburg Global Seminar grew from the sense that understanding becomes possible when we bring people into face-to-face contact with each other in the context of serious study.

Bateson concluded: "I believe that we face two challenges today, one in the diversity of cultures and second in the possibility of environmental disaster. How will we develop the cross-national thinking on which it will be necessary to rely in constructing a more closely knit and more mutually intelligible world?" That was the mission in 1947, a mission which has become even more compelling today.

*For more information on the Salzburg Global Seminar, visit [www.salzburgglobalseminar.org](http://www.salzburgglobalseminar.org). You can watch Dr. Bateson's July 2007 presentation in Salzburg at [www.brightcove.tv](http://www.brightcove.tv).*

## In the Field: Current Projects

*The IIS is pleased to support two projects that foster intercultural understanding, each using particular leverage points which are likely to affect intercultural and international relations. One is aimed at creating more effective educational experiences to prepare Middle Eastern youth for an increasingly globalized world; the other enhances intercultural understanding through a collaborative community arts project in New York's Post-9/11 Chinatown.*

### **Arabic Touchstones: A discussion-based approach to education**

*Contributed by Dr. Graham Leonard*

Arabic Touchstones (MaHakaat), a discussion-based program for the educational curricula of the Arab world, will prepare students from early on and through the school cycle to problem-solve, to collaborate with others, and ultimately to teach themselves necessary skills in a technological and modern world. Based on the English Touchstones method, this program aims to develop critical thinking skills in the young in preparation for life and citizenship as well as for higher education.

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### **Archeology of Change: A collaborative community arts project**

*Contributed by Sam Quan Krueger*

In line with its mission to promote intercultural understanding via the arts, the IIS is contributing to a project that will foster dialogue among people of all cultural backgrounds in the setting of America's largest city. In 2008, the Museum of Chinese in America (MoCA) moves to new space at 211-215 Centre Street situated between Chinatown and SoHo in New York. Dedicated to reclaiming, preserving and presenting the history and culture of Chinese people in the United States, MoCA is creating a collaborative, community arts

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## What's On My Mind - Mary Catherine Bateson

### Some clues about making democracy work from Mead and Bateson

This has been an interesting year politically, with themes connected to the work of both of my parents. My mother, as many of you know, was patriotic in ways that were hard for my own generation to understand. She was a lifelong Democrat, yet she believed that for our kind of democracy to function it was important that the citizens believe that whichever party won, they would govern in acceptable ways – she used to cite the British phrase, “her majesty’s loyal opposition” to describe the appropriate attitude to the party out of power. She would have been grieved at the increasing bitterness and demonization between the two major parties.

Gregory was almost totally uninterested in electoral politics, but he wrote an essay about Woodrow Wilson’s fourteen points and the treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I that seems relevant. Deception is appropriate, he said, as a strategy within the context of war, but fatal to future trust in the process of making peace – a typical Gregory “logical type” argument that seems to apply to one



Photo courtesy of George Mason University

of the dilemmas that has been worrying in the context of elections, the probable loss of trust in the process from using voting machines that can be manipulated.

At the same time, the usefulness of science in providing trustworthy information, something that both Margaret and Gregory cared about, has been under renewed attack. Those who deny that species, including our own, have evolved over time are not simply arguing against a particular theory about something that occurred in the past, which is useful and often productive, they are also arguing against the very process whereby scientific findings are compared and verified – a process that we need to be able to trust if we are to make realistic decisions in the face of climate change and other issues that lie ahead.

It’s interesting that these toxic trends seem to have developed and converged in the same decade.

Visit [www.marycatherinebateson.com](http://www.marycatherinebateson.com) to read what’s currently on her mind.

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## Books and Resources

A new book by Maureen Molloy, ***On Creating a Usable Culture: Margaret Mead and the Emergence of American Cosmopolitanism***, explores how Mead was influenced by, and influenced, the meanings of American culture and



secured for herself a unique and enduring place in the American popular imagination. The author, professor of Women’s Studies at the University of Auckland (N.Z.) explores these influences in the context of Mead’s four popular ethnographies written between the wars (*Coming of Age in Samoa*, *Growing Up in New Guinea*, *The Changing Culture of an Indian Tribe*, and *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*) and the academic, middle-brow and

popular responses to them. Published by University of Hawai’i Press, the book will be available in April 2008.

The second volume of Springer’s Biosemiotics series, ***A Legacy for Living Systems: Gregory Bateson as Precursor to Biosemiotics***, will be published in April 2008. This book, edited by Jesper Hoffmeyer, will be a resource for scholars in the biosciences, philosophy and medicine who are seeking an elegant new approach to exploring highly

complex systems. Scholars from ecology, biochemistry, evolutionary biology, cognitive science, anthropology and philosophy discuss how Bateson’s thinking might lead to a fruitful reframing of central problems in modern science. Bateson’s bioanthropology is shown to play a key role in developing the set of ideas explored in the new field of biosemiotics. The idea that organismic life is indeed basically semiotic or communicative lies at the heart of the biosemiotic approach to the study of life.

Noel G. Charlton’s ***Understanding Gregory Bateson: Mind, Beauty, and the Sacred Earth*** will be issued in May 2008 by SUNY Press. Charlton offers what is hoped to be an accessible introduction to Bateson’s work, distilling and clarifying Bateson’s understanding of “mind” or “mental systems” as being present throughout the living Earth, in systems and creatures of all kinds. Part biography, part overview of the evolution of his ideas, Charlton aims to situate Bateson’s thought in relation to that of other ecological thinkers and to open up his work to a range of disciplines and introduce it to a new generation of readers.

***Kybernetes***, the international journal of systems, cybernetics and management science, has published its Gregory Bateson issue, available online at the Emerald website, [www.emeraldinsight.com](http://www.emeraldinsight.com). This memorial issue (Volume 36, Issue 7/8/2007) includes writings by Bateson as well as articles contributed by dozens of scholars, including Nora Bateson, Dmitry Fedotov, Gordon Feller, Phillip Guddemi, Inga-Britt Krause, Stephen Nachmanovitch and Wendel Ray.

# William Bateson: Geneticist

## A new biography suggests influences on Gregory Bateson's thought

Contributed by Donald R. Forsdyke

William Bateson, the father of Gregory Bateson, brought the work of Gregor Mendel (and much more) to the attention of the English-speaking world. He commanded the biological sciences in the decades after Darwin's death in 1882. In the upcoming biography *Treasure Your Exceptions: The Science and Life of William Bateson* (New York: Springer, 2008), Alan Cock and Donald Forsdyke examine his life as a major contributor to the turn-of-the-century revolution in biology. In this book, they attempt to reconcile the genocentrism of George Williams and Richard Dawkins with the hierarchical thinking of Richard Goldschmidt and Stephen Jay Gould. The anti-Darwinian arguments of William Bateson are only now, a century later, gaining recognition.

As recorded in David Lipset's biography, *Gregory Bateson: The Legacy of a Scientist* (1980), William and Beatrice Bateson were much involved in the education of their boys – John, Martin and Gregory. Their days began with breakfast readings from the Old Testament, Bunyun or Shakespeare, lest they grew up “empty-headed atheists.”



William Bateson (right) with Wilhelm Johannsen. Bateson coined the word “genetics,” from Johannsen's term “gene”. Photo courtesy of the John Innes Centre.

The boys were in day-to-day contact with their parents who in the first decade of the twentieth century were bringing Mendel to the attention of the English-speaking world and crossing varieties of plants and animals in their gardens at Grantchester.

William's father, William Henry Bateson, became Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, where William grew up, and

later vice chancellor of the university. He had attended Shrewsbury School and Cambridge University with Charles Darwin and Thomas Butler. The latter's son, Samuel, authored *Erewhon* and *The Way of All Flesh*. With the advocacy of George Bernard Shaw, these received wide attention after Butler's death in 1902. However, Samuel Butler also wrote four books on evolution between 1878 and 1887: *Life and Habit*, *Unconscious Memory*, *Evolution, Old and New*, and *Luck or Cunning as the Main Means of Organic Modification?* that failed, and still fail, to receive attention. Together with Ewald Hering of Prague, Butler saw heredity in informational terms and attacked Darwin's natural selection theory. Darwin's son Francis, and Canadian expatriate George Romanes, became Darwin's research associates in the 1870s. After Darwin's death in 1882 Romanes also came to question the power of natural selection while quixotically attempting to defend Darwin against Butler. After graduating in Zoology and undertaking various collecting expeditions (America, the Russian steppe, Egypt), William came to share Romanes' views on Darwinian natural selection. Indeed, following the deaths of Romanes and Butler, William emerged as the world's major critic of the role of natural selection in evolution. Despite his close friendship with Francis Darwin,

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## About the IIS

The Institute for Intercultural Studies was founded by Margaret Mead in 1944. She defined its concerns as “advancing knowledge of the various peoples and nations of the world, with special attention to those peoples and those aspects of their life which are likely to affect intercultural and international relations.”

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For information on current projects, books, resources and archival materials managed by the Institute, visit our website at [www.interculturalstudies.org](http://www.interculturalstudies.org)

## William Bateson: Geneticist (continued from page 3)



William Bateson at work in the gardens in Merton Park, Surry. Photo courtesy of the John Innes Centre.

he did not become fully aware of Samuel Butler's quarrels with Charles Darwin until 1908. William's new enthusiasm for Butler occurred when the boys were at impressionable ages. John was killed in the First World War. But for Martin, Butler became an obsession – perhaps a manifestation of a mental instability that was to lead to his suicide in 1922. As pointed out by Lipset, the

strong influence of Butler is evident in Gregory Bateson's writings. They also display the influence of his father, whose views were ridiculed in the decades after his death despite their similarities to those of Richard Goldschmidt and Stephen Jay Gould. Thus, Gregory's evolutionary writings – *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972), and *Mind and Nature* (1979) – and particularly his emphasis on hierarchical levels and context, can now be seen as mediating the transmission of the Victorian ideas of Ewald Hering, Samuel Butler and George Romanes through the twentieth century to the twenty-first. New advances in the bioinformatic analysis of genomes have thrown fresh light on the subject.

*Contributed by Donald R. Forsdyke, who is also the author of The Origin of Species, Revisited (2001) and Evolutionary Bioinformatics (2006).*

## In the Field: Current Projects (from page 1)

### Arabic Touchstones (continued)

The English Touchstones program, created some twenty years ago, uses great literature of various cultures as its focus and takes students step by step into the processes of discussion-based learning. Touchstones materials have been developed through experience and piloting, and the method is used in public and private schools in the USA for more than 600,000 students and abroad in translations in China, Haiti, South Africa, Eastern Europe, and Chile. MaHakaat is the first Touchstones curriculum, however, to use non-Western texts.

Interestingly, these discussion methods resemble the learning methods of the Umayyads and Abbasids in the Golden Age of Islam. In recent times, the Arabs have allowed emphasis on memorization to hamper the development of critical thinking and thus limit intellectual power and creativity. Current methods, mainly memorization, limit the young to learning uncritically materials passed on in their own culture or what they borrow from other cultures, especially Western writings and textbooks.

Borrowing Western curricula Westernizes young Arabs. Memorizing Western textbooks, even in Arabic translation, teaches information without enabling youths to be creative. It emphasizes information over process. Modernization can be achieved by discussions in Arabic through the Arabic language and within Arabic/Islamic cultures. Arabic Touchstones, MaHakaat, will facilitate this process by adapting, not merely translating, its texts and Teachers Manuals into Modern Standard Arabic so that the method can take roots and develop insights unique to the new cultural context. Materials have already been developed and teachers trained in their use in the Kingdom of Jordan and in schools run by the Palestinian Provisional Authority in Gaza and the West Bank.

*Contributed by Dr. Graham Leonard. For more information on the Touchstones Discussion Project, visit [www.touchstones.org](http://www.touchstones.org).*

### Archeology of Change (continued)

project, "Archeology of Change: Mapping Tales of Gentrification in New York City's Chinatown." Tomie Arai, print-maker and installation artist with more than 20 years of experience in community activism, and writer and poet Lena Sze, a native of New York's Chinatown, will together work to explore the character of Post-9/11 Chinatown. Their efforts will culminate in a site-specific installation for MoCA's new facilities opening in 2008.

"Archeology of Change" approaches the issue of gentrification from a dialogic perspective, using oral history, community conversations, and arts-based workshops to unpack the layers of social, economic, and psychological impact on New York Chinatown's adults and children who live, work or go to school there. Through this process, the project will provide vehicles and forums through which community members can voice their perspectives and experiences and pose visions for an alternative future. Informed and guided by her engagement with community members, Arai will create an interactive gallery installation at MoCA. Parallel public programs and forums, such as MoCA's new series, "If Anything Is Possible," which brings together key figures around current affairs to discuss blueprints for change, will be developed to draw public attention to, and engagement with, issues of gentrification and visions for managed development.

*For more information, visit [www.mocanyc.org](http://www.mocanyc.org).*

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