



# Perspectives on the Ideas of Gregory Bateson, Ecological Intelligence, and Educational Reforms

*C. A. Bowers*

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It is widely acknowledged that Gregory Bateson's ideas have been influential in a number of fields. Unfortunately, the importance of his ideas for understanding why public schools and universities continue to perpetuate ecologically unsustainable ways of thinking has not been adequately recognized. Given the deepening ecological and economic crises, this book is particularly timely as it clarifies how Bateson's five key ideas, when taken as a whole, provides the conceptual framework for introducing educational reforms that address both problems. That is, he explains why educators unconsciously continue to perpetuate the deep cultural assumptions that were constituted before there was an awareness of environmental limits, and how the emphasis on a possessive form of individualism and endless material progress undermines traditions of self-reliance within the world's diversity of communities. His contributions to making substantive educational reforms include: (1) Rethinking social justice issues in ways that take account of how the ecological crisis impacts the most vulnerable people; (2) How to make the transition to exercising ecological intelligence in the areas of democratic decision making and moral values; (3) Clarifying how computer-mediated learning perpetuates abstract thinking and the deep cultural assumptions that are at the cultural roots of the ecological and economic crises. The chapter on pedagogical and curricular decisions that foster ecological intelligence provides practical suggestions for how public school teachers and university professors can begin to make the transition to an ethnically diverse and ecologically sustainable future. Comments about the book: "We need an ecological consciousness which, in Gregory Bateson's words, is aware of the 'patterns that connect.'" Chet Bowers leads us into that unmapped territory with a compass which helps." - Wes Jackson, President, The Land Institute; author of *Consulting the Genius of Place*, and *Rooted in the Land: Essays on Community and Place* "Chet Bowers' philosophical reflections on Bateson's thought and its implications for education are thought-provoking, challenging, and very inspiring." - Fritjof Capra, author of *The Web of Life*, and *The Hidden Connections*

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