HUON WARDLE

Gregory Bateson was one of the last and most distinguished products of the school of anthropology that Haddon and Rivers created in Cambridge after the Torres Strait Expedition. Beginning his career shortly after Rivers’ death, Bateson used the interwar years to create a theoretical approach that continued and deflected that of Haddon and Rivers. His major ethnography from this period, *Naven*, evidenced his complex academic positioning between the legacy of Rivers and the new paradigm emerging around Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. After the Second World War, Bateson’s intellectual project emerged as even closer to Rivers’ in both psychological and evolutionary dimensions. © 1999 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

In one of the case conferences and theorization sessions resulting from his work with schizophrenics in the United States during the 1950s, Gregory Bateson gave an account of an incident involving a psychotic informant which had startled him. Even though he usually communicated only in a kind of “word salad,” this was a patient with whom Bateson had built up a close relationship. One day, while Bateson was sitting beside him on the ward, “out of complete silence,” his friend suddenly said: “Bateson, you want me to come to live in your world. I lived in that world from 1920 to 1943 and I don’t like it” (Bateson, 1958a, p. 39).

The statement must have affected Bateson in a number of ways. First, after months of apparent mutual noncommunication, here was a revelation of underlying intentionality and responsiveness. Second, there was partial confirmation in this refusal to “live in Bateson’s world” of Bateson’s view that the problem of schizophrenia was the problem of understanding and manipulating communicational “worlds.” Schizophrenia, Bateson believed, was a form of message-sending that lacked the framing devices that would signpost what was being communicated. It was a kind of interaction that avoided at all costs building shared worlds of meaning, messages about messages.

At a more autobiographical level, Bateson may perhaps have been struck by the fact that this revelation of common sense was also in a certain way false—because between 1920 and 1943, Bateson himself had lived and communicated within a series of worlds, which, in truth, would always remain inaccessible to his ex-Air Force machinist friend. These worlds included academic conversation at high table in St. John’s College, Cambridge; violent debate in the Iatmul men’s house in New Guinea; and the “trance and dance” of villagers in Bali. It was the pursuit of certain elusive ideas through these worlds that had brought Bateson to the psychiatric clinic and into contact with the patient who sometimes referred to himself as “52318.”

Throughout his career, Bateson was concerned with what it means to communicate and

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what it means to fail to communicate (Bateson, 1973). That inquiry brought together ethno-
logy, psychology, and ethology and his starting point was the strange status of anthropology
in Cambridge after the death of standard-bearer of the discipline, Rivers, in 1922. There is
little doubt that Gregory Bateson is one of the chief legatees of the kind of anthropology that
Rivers and Haddon set up in Cambridge in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Like
Rivers, Bateson saw anthropology as an ultimately psychologically focused study, the scope
of which was comparative and diachronic.

**Between Torres Strait and the Trobriand Islands: Bateson’s Interstitial Positioning**

For British social anthropologists, reexamining the Torres Strait Expedition (Rouse &
Herle, 1998) is another step in a current process of rethinking the history of the discipline—
in particular, the controversial status of W. H. R. Rivers, anthropologist and psychologist (see
Young, this volume). Until recently, British anthropologists celebrated Malinowski as the
originator, in the Trobriand Islands, of close, long-term, participatory fieldwork—the mode
of empirical enquiry most characteristic of the discipline. They also pointed to Radcliffe-
Brown, whose analyses of the structure of social relations (focusing especially on systems of
family and marriage) provided a basic theoretical tool-box for ethnographers as practitioners
of a comparative sociology. The relatively simple periodization created around these figures
and their key works, with 1922 as a broad point of commencement, was taught to generations
of postwar students of social anthropology (Kuper, 1983; Leach 1982, pp. 24–28), and was
reinforced by the retrospective accounts of major British anthropologists such as Leach (1984)

Yet discussions that see Malinowski particularly as an Ur figure have long seemed
questionable to historians of the discipline, especially insofar as these histories have dramat-
ically underrated Rivers’ contribution (Kuklick, 1991; Langham, 1981; Slobodin, 1978;
Stocking, 1983, 1996). For anthropologists outside Britain, Rivers’ work, from the period of
Torres Strait onward, was comparable to that of Franz Boas in the United States and Marcel
Mauss in France: Levi-Strauss famously declared Rivers the “Galileo,” and Mauss the “New-
ton,” of anthropology (Levi-Strauss, 1968, p. 162). While Mauss is now firmly reestablished
in the anthropological pantheon (James & Allen, 1998), Boas has never left it, and Rivers is
gradually emerging as integral to disciplinary reevaluations (Grimshaw & Hart, 1993; Strath-
ern, 1995).

As Grimshaw and Hart show, the idiosyncratic charter myth of British anthropology was
made possible because Rivers died just as Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown were achieving
eminence (1993). This fact was compounded by the success of Malinowski and Radcliffe-
Brown in acquiring financial support for their research programs from the Rockefeller Foun-
dation. The result was that the “expansive moment” in British anthropology during the 1930s
and 1940s (Goody, 1997) also marked the overshadowing of Rivers’ achievements as an
originator of fieldwork method and as a key theorist of kinship relations and social structure
(Langham, 1981). For a generation of anthropologists during the mid-1920s, the absence of
Rivers was a great loss and meant the promotion of Malinowski in many ways by default.
As Margaret Mead recounted, Rivers “was the man under whom we [Reo Fortune1 and

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1. Reo Fortune won a two-year fellowship at Cambridge on the basis of a prize-winning essay comparing Rivers’
psychology to Freud’s (Mead, 1973, pp. 157–158). Later, Mead and Fortune would both significantly influence
Bateson’s work (Bateson, 1958a, p. x).
herself) would like to have studied—a shared and impossible daydream” (Mead, 1973, p. 158; Langham, 1981, pp. 304–308).

Bateson began his ethnographic tutelage under Haddon shortly after Rivers’ death, but before Malinowski’s anthropological supremacy at the London School of Economics had been fully established. In terms of the network of anthropological ideas, this placed him in an interstitial position, between the waning of Torres Strait and the waxing of the Trobriand Islands as iconic ethnographic sites.

Bateson’s early Melanesian research was funded by an Anthony Wilkin Studentship, so named in memory of one of the members of the 1898 expedition to the Torres Strait. He was also awarded a research fellowship at St John’s College (Bateson, 1958b, p. iv), the same institution at which Rivers had lived and worked. While clearly influenced by Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, Bateson was deeply immersed in the intellectual milieu fostered by Rivers at Cambridge (see Costall, this volume). In these comments, focusing primarily on his 1936 ethnography, Naven (Bateson, 1958b), I shall suggest that some of the peculiarities of Bateson’s project—the features that set it apart from the main discipline—derived from the epistemological space that had opened up in Cambridge anthropology in the 1920s and 1930s and the potential for innovation that this offered.

Bateson used this intellectual vacuum to create his own theoretical approach—continuing the psychological and temporally dynamic thrust of Rivers’ work, but calling on American cultural themes via Margaret Mead ([1935] 1963) and Ruth Benedict (1935) to contest Malinowski’s static social holism and, to a lesser extent, Radcliffe-Brown’s reification of social structure. Many of the diverse theoretical frameworks that Bateson drew on and which found their way into Naven he later discarded, while retaining core ideas that they carried within them. In the process, there emerged for him a personal field of enquiry with a uniquely synthetic approach to human and animal psychology and behavior—an approach unified under evolutionary theory, as it had been for Rivers and Haddon, but in which evolutionary theory had itself been refigured in Lamarckian terms as a process of learning and communi-
cation (Bateson, 1973, 1980).

**Time and Social Dynamism in Naven**

Let us treat first the diachronic and dynamic character of Naven as an ethnography. In contrast to the atemporal or synchronic positivism that both Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown increasingly saw as an a priori basis for the study of culture and society, Bateson understood culture as an inherently fragile equilibrium necessarily prone to transformation—the appearance of stasis was part of the enquiry, not one of the theoretical assumptions (Bateson, [1935] 1973, pp. 35–46; 1958b, pp. 111–114, 190). In this understanding we can see him as either ahead of his time or as lagging behind it—probably both.

There were strong reasons why Bateson would resist an atemporal view of culture, and his postwar research was to bear his thinking out. Haddon, Bateson’s teacher, had trained as a biologist, as had Bateson himself initially. Bateson’s father was, of course, a famous theorist...

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2. “Administered by Rivers and Haddon, the Anthony Wilkin Studentship was deliberately used as a means of perpetuating what they took to be the tradition of the 1898 expedition” (Langham, 1981, p. 66).

3. The synchronic approach in anthropology describes the process of treating a society as a time-slice—ideas about historical cause are thereby avoided since the emphasis is on the interconnection of parts within the slice of time separated off for analysis heuristically. Debates between Radcliffe-Brown, as an advocate of synchronicism, and Rivers with his historical, diachronic approach reached back to the first decade of the twentieth century (Stocking, 1996, pp. 304–323).
of evolution — iterativeness and dynamism were implicit in Gregory Bateson’s way of thinking. It is also worth remembering that, in 1927, Bateson had been sent to New Guinea to study the effects of contact between indigenous populations and colonial whites, with Haddon’s stirring recommendation that “we may... be justifiably gratified that it has fallen to a Cambridge man to undertake this important research” (Lipset, 1980, p. 125). But the impetus for the investigation had been created even earlier. In 1922, Rivers’ work on Melanesian depopulation had been published. In this social psychological study, Rivers analyzed the suicidal loss of hope suffered by Melanesians in the face of colonial control (Rivers, 1922). Where the new, Malinowskian focus was on social stasis, Rivers and Haddon both recognized that the subjects of ethnography were undergoing radical, often brutal, transformation.

For all this, it is also true that, throughout Naven, Bateson wavered in his views on these issues, torn between the older diffusionist paradigm and the newer synchronist one. His description of a conversation with Rivers’ former student and longstanding advocate, F. C. Bartlett, makes this clear — Bartlett warned against any artificial division of synchronic and diachronic, while Bateson himself remained equivocal (Bateson, 1958b, p. 119; fn1). However, to present his case in favor of a historical approach, Bateson pulled together both the Cambridge diffusionists (the “heliolithic historians” as he called them) and Ruth Benedict’s approach to culture in a slightly odd partnership. The following quote in defense of diffusionist writers such as Rivers, Elliot Smith, Layard, and others was part of this broader advocacy of historical interpretation against synchronic positivism:

The major achievement of...the heliolithic historians is, not their theory that almost all of the cultures of the world have been derived from those of Egypt and Sumeria, but the picture which they have given us of the processes of change and degradation in culture. It is high time that some student set to work upon the classification of these processes. (Bateson, [1936] 1958b, p. 111).

Benedict’s concept of culture configuration — encapsulating, as Bateson saw it, the idea of culture as Zeitgeist — provided a contemporary support for his view that social and cultural relations inevitably embodied their own transformation (Bateson, 1958b, pp. 112, 175, 179, 190). Bateson’s idiosyncratic line between Radcliffe-Brown’s emphasis on “society” and an American usage of “culture,” and his transitive approach to both, perhaps inevitably led to confusion — or, perhaps worse, to a sense that he was refusing to accept the new intellectual demarcation lines and alliances of the time. Radcliffe-Brown, for one, was unable to under-
stand Bateson’s careful distinction between society, in which the unit of analysis is the individual, and culture, in which the unit is the behavioral act, or why this distinction was relevant to studying the inversions and identifications of Iatmul ritual relationships and behavior (Bateson, 1958b, pp. 25–26; Radcliffe-Brown, 1937). Bateson needed both culture and society to show, on the one hand, how prone the kinship-based social organization of the Iatmul villages was to conflict and break down, but on the other, how cultural dramatization periodically came into play to avert this social disintegration.

Where Bateson was respectful, if unorthodox, in his treatment of Radcliffe-Brown as a theorist, the same was not true of his relationship to Malinowski. Despite protestations of indebtedness in the prologue to Naven, Batesoon’s portrayal of the currently dominant functionalist school is dismissive. Most clearly, there was little room in functionalist thinking for an understanding of the flux of disintegration and reintegration clearly evident among the Iatmul. Bateson’s chapter on “The Concepts of Structure and Function” reduced the explanatory value of functionality ad absurdum to seven ludicrously vague meanings:

1. The direct satisfaction of human needs. 2. The indirect satisfaction of human needs. 3. The modification, elaboration, etc., of human needs. 4. The moulding and training of human beings. 5. The integration of groups of human beings. 6. Various sorts of interdependence and relationship between elements of culture. 7. The maintenance of the status quo. Etc. (Bateson, 1958b, p. 28).

Not surprisingly, Malinowski reacted violently to this kind of apostasy. In a foreword to Firth’s We the Tikopia, he contrasted Firth’s “thoroughgoing” empiricism with American-influenced texts like Naven, in which the “queer and alarming” approach to human reality was based ultimately on “a few hypostatized impressions” (Firth, 1936, pp. vii, viii).

The Psychological Dimension

... the wau [mother’s brother] puts on a skirt and fixes an orange-coloured fruit... in his anus and goes up the ladder of the house displaying this as he climbs. At the top of the ladder he goes through the actions of copulation with his wife, who is dressed and acts as the male. The iaua, [sister’s child] is much ashamed at this spectacle and the iaua’s sister would weep at it. The orange fruit represents an anal clitoris, an anatomical feature frequently imagined by the Iatmul and appropriate to the wau’s assumption of grotesque femininity. (Bateson, 1958b, p. 20).

Apart from being a signal of Bateson’s distinctiveness from the two dominant British figures, Benedict’s modeling of culture was also vital for Bateson in emphasizing the alliance between anthropology and psychology. In Naven, this alliance was absolutely central, and again it spoke in complex ways to the continuity of Rivers’ project in Bateson’s. The alliance was particularly well encapsulated in the psychologically and temporally based concepts of schismogenesis and eidos—the two ideas that Bateson singled out in his epilogue as of possible enduring significance (Bateson, 1958b, p. 279).

Broadly put, schismogenesis describes a kind of communication that leads to an incremental exaggeration of difference through cumulative interaction: a process characteristic of the unfolding tensions within Iatmul villages, and one that was dramatized to the maximum in the relationship between Iatmul mother’s brothers (wauas) and their sister’s children (iauas). We are informed by Bateson that he came up with the concept by thinking both about Iatmul personality and political power struggles in 1930s Europe, and by “leavening the mixture with a little Hegelian dialectic” (Bateson, 1958b, p. 266). His aims were allied with those of...
social psychology — what was key were the “reactions of individuals to the reactions of other individuals” (Bateson, 1958b, p. 175). Schismogenesis emerged from this reverberative effect of reactions to reactions as a process of increasing cultural differentiation and disintegration. This process was visible in the contemporary political meltdown in Europe, Bateson argued, but it could also be observed in the schizophrenic’s deteriorating communication with other family members (Bateson, 1958b, pp. 180, 186, 196, fn1 et al.).

Presenting us with a kind of analytic version of Hegel’s master–slave dialectic, Bateson then defined two types of schismogenesis: “symmetrical,” where both parties react with assertiveness to each other’s behavior, and “complementary,” where one party is dominant while the other is submissive (Bateson, 1958b, pp. 176–177). He made two important arguments. The first was that the serial inversions of the eponymous naven ceremony, in particular the buffooning female behavior of the mothers’ brothers, reversed and compensated for everyday schismogenesis (Bateson, 1958b, p. 194). The strutted masculinity of the women similarly dramatized standard cultural behaviors by inversion and in this way released tensions between different social groupings:

Their faces were painted white with sulphur, as is the privilege of [male] homicides, and in their hands they carried the decorated lime boxes used by men and serrated lime sticks with pendant tassels whose number is a tally of men killed by the owner. This costume was very becoming to the women and was admired by the men. In it the women were very proud of themselves. They walked about flaunting their feathers and grating their lime sticks in the boxes, producing the loud sound which men use to express anger, pride and assertiveness. (Bateson, 1958b, p. 15).

The second proposition, less explicit in the book, but perhaps more interesting, was that, in engaging themselves in schismogenic relationships, the parties to those relationships were tacitly agreeing to abide by shared rules of communication framing their apparent divergences (e.g., Bateson, 1958b, p. 181). This latter idea was one that Bateson carried much further in his later work on schizophrenia and on animal ethology. One of the most striking images of schismogenesis from Bateson’s later research is of two octopuses hiding from each other behind the same sand filter (Lipset, 1980, p. 234).

Bateson’s development of the concept of eidos was influenced by reading F. C. Bartlett’s book, Remembering (Bartlett, 1932; Bateson, 1958a, p. 222, fn1; Costall, this volume). Among other insights, Bartlett had shown that in reproducing exotic cultural narratives from memory, subjects deployed the narratorial schemas already familiar to themselves—they reshaped the stories, but in their own idiom. He argued that “remembering is . . . an imaginative reconstruction or construction . . . it is thus hardly ever exact . . . and it is not at all important that it should be so” (Bartlett, 1932, p. 213). Of more significance were the implicit schemas that ordered the reproduction and transformation of memories. For his part, Bateson wanted to know what were the interactional mechanics of thought underlying Iatmul knowledge. Were the apparent distortions in Iatmul totemic thinking a product of the agonistic mode in which it was expressed? These questions represent one of the many unfinished projects of Naven.

The chapter on eidos also evidenced the complicated affinity that Bateson detected between the Iatmul modes of understanding and his own. Trained to think in terms of the abstract morphology of evolutionary theory, he was clearly drawn to the Iatmul idea that human and animal life was at base constituted from patterns of waves:
Another subject which is the matter for... intellectual enquiry is the nature of ripples and waves on the surface of water. It is said secretly that men, pigs, trees, grass—all the objects in the world—are only patterns of waves... [C]lans have personified the waves and say they are a person (Kontum-mali)... I invited one of my informants to witness the development of photographic plates. I first desensitised the plates and then developed them in an open dish in moderate light, so that my informant would be able to see the gradual development of the images. He was much interested... Kontum-mali was one of his ancestors and he saw in the process of photographic development the actual embodiment of ripples into images, and regarded this as a demonstration of the truth of the clan’s secret. (Bateson, 1958b, pp. 230–231).

The idea of human knowledge as a flux between moments of integration and periods of dispersal recurred powerfully in Bateson’s later analyses of art and perception as processes participating within wider mental ecologies (Bateson, 1973).

Neither schismogenesis, nor eidos, was fully accepted into anthropological terminology. An obvious factor in this was that Bateson was failing to distance himself from psychology while writing within an emergent discipline that was beginning to erect firm boundaries between itself and that subject. And, as we have seen, Naven also undermined the defining role of synchronism in the new anthropology. These elements alone advertised the degree to which Bateson was still committed to the older polythetic anthropology developed by Haddon and Rivers. As an ethnography, Naven was on the crossroads between networks of ideas—this interstitial placing explains the strangely hybrid-like quality of the book and the often confusing way in which key ideas were formulated Radcliffe-Brown had correctly diagnosed this structure when he described Naven as a series of “intellectual adventures” forming an “intellectual autobiography” (Radcliffe-Brown, 1937, pp. 173, 174).

One part of the difficulty in reading Naven, as indicated by Radcliffe-Brown’s comments, is that Bateson deployed techniques of ethnographic exposition that deliberately set the book apart from the contemporary anthropological genre. Some of these techniques were deliberately literary. They included, for example, the ironic juxtaposition of images of intellectual debate in the Iatmul men’s house—embodiment “pride and histrionic self-consciousness” (Bateson, 1958b, p. 124)—immediately after a discussion of the academic ethos at high table in St John’s College, Cambridge:

The Latin Grace, the architecture of the college, the snuff after dinner on Sundays, the loving cup, the rose water, the feasts... This intimate relationship between ethos and cultural structure is especially characteristic of small segregated groups where the ethos is uniform and the “tradition” very much alive. (Bateson, 1958b, p. 121).

We may summarise the ethos of the [iatmul] ceremonial house by describing the institution as a club—not a club in which members are at ease, but a club in which, though separated from their womenfolk, they are acutely conscious of being in public. (Bateson, 1958b, p. 125).

Bateson also repeatedly challenged his own scientific authority. In the 1936 epilogue he insisted that in terms of facts, the contribution of Naven was “meagre” and that theoretically all the ideas presented were “to some extent platitudes” (Bateson, 1958b, p. 279). In the 1958 epilogue he reiterated these criticisms, explaining his approach retrospectively:

The book is clumsy and awkward, in parts almost unreadable. For this reason: that when I wrote it, I was trying not only to explain by fitting data together, but also to use this explanatory process as an example within which the principles of explanation could be seen and studied. (Bateson, 1958b, p. 281).

8. Of course, statements of this type also serve to emphasize the character of the book as a scientific work.
But this analytical statement in a sense side-stepped the core issue because, besides being a commentary on Iatmul schismogenesis and eidos, *Naven* was clearly also a statement about the frameworks governing Bateson’s own schismogenic relationships, not only with Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, but also with his Cambridge milieu. Only much later, when the ideas of *Naven* had been cleansed of this intraparadigmatic complexity, could they find a new currency in the work of anthropologists like Edmund Leach. At the time, the book was too schismogenic for its own good. S. F. Nadel, a student of Malinowski and later one of the most brilliant theorists of postwar social anthropology (1957), accused Bateson of dismissing functionalist theories of social motivation without having anything with which to replace them (Nadel, 1938). In Bateson’s words, *Naven* had “fallen flat on its face” (Bateson, 1973, p. 18).

In the 1920s and 1930s, however, Bateson had developed at least two avenues of thought that were fundamental for his later research. The first of these approaches concerned the structuring of transformation within communities and human relationships. The second concerned how processes of interaction give rise to shared communicational frameworks that in turn give meaning to the interactions themselves. While there is a family resemblance between *Naven* and contemporary British ethnographies, these core issues—especially the second—were quite distinct from the anthropological preoccupations of the time. It was these avenues that took Bateson via Bali and through a reluctant stint as a wartime propagandist to his first hand work with schizophrenics. His earlier investigations had allowed him to rephrase the problem of schizophrenia as a problem of communication.

Ironically, after the war, freed from the constraints of institutional anthropology, Bateson’s project emerged as much closer to Rivers’ even than in the interwar years, both in diachronic and psychological terms. Leach has argued that Rivers’ enduring influence on British anthropology was largely “by inversion” (Leach, 1982, p. 25)—mainstream anthropologists after 1922 discarded history and especially diffusionist ideas, they rejected psychology, and they firmly disconnected the study of culture from evolutionary theory and biological theorizing generally. Bateson, however, increasingly returned to the themes that had characterized his early training in Cambridge.

There are a series of suggestive parallels linking Rivers’ work up to 1922 and Bateson’s investigations after the Second World War. Against the currents of contemporary anthropology in the 1940s and 1950s, Bateson argued for the study of social transformation, worked closely on psychological issues, and used an increasingly explicit evolutionary framework. Early in his career, Rivers had built his social and psychological investigations on a formulation of protopathic and epicritic states evidencing lower and higher levels of neural integration—as phenomena grounded in this basic structure, society and psychology were ultimately reducible to evolutionary biology (see Young, this volume). By contrast, Bateson’s evolutionism reversed this reduction of culture to biology—instead, evolution was best seen as a process of communication, or message-sending, made up of ever-widening levels of contextual integration, messages about messages (Bateson, 1973).

There is no way of knowing for sure how far Bateson consciously retraced his steps.

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9. The themes raised in Bateson’s chapter on eidos clearly preempted aspects of Leach’s brand of structuralism. To draw on one example, Bateson highlighted the possibility of comparing details of the “patterns of thought” of one culture with those of another, such as Greek myths and Iatmul myths (Bateson, 1958b, pp. 247–248). Leach’s landmark Malinowski Lecture of 1959 is precisely premised on the idea of generalizing from such structural details of cultures rather than comparing cultures taken as a whole (Leach, 1961). However, even though *Naven* was reprinted in 1958, it is not mentioned by Leach, who instead focuses critically on the work of his Cambridge colleagues, Fortes and Goody.
towards Rivers’ famous treatment of shell-shock patients in his own work with schizophrenia, but there are startling echoes (Slobodin, 1978, pp. 54–68; 1998). In his limited role as therapist, Bateson was not trying to adjust the value orientations of his patients as Rivers had attempted in the context of the war. He was, however, like Rivers, deeply involved in exploring the “patient’s broken narrative and his unsuccessful attempts to reconstruct it” (see Young, this volume). The following interchange, once again with patient “52318,” can perhaps stand as iconic of this process toward an integration of fragmented messages. Just as it had done for Rivers, the experience of ethnographic research allowed Bateson a variant, distanced viewpoint on what constituted mental illness and what therapy meant. He was fascinated by this patient’s poetic, rhythmic use of language. What interested him were the interactional cues that would connect his meanings with his informant’s—creating shared frames of reference based on past interaction. This interview also exemplifies a therapeutic approach Bateson later characterized simply as “primary acceptance accompanied by doubt” (Bateson, 1962, p. vii):

**Patient:** When you have to send a shirt back to the factory, it becomes awfully incriminating. So those who force a man to smoke to take him out of a bank building, and do things like that to him become overintoxicated when they have grey au-to-mo-biles. Understand?

**Bateson:** No.

**Patient:** That’s perfect.

**Bateson:** I wasn’t meant to anyway, so what the hell?

**Patient:** It wasn’t meant to have movement in it.

**Bateson:** One half of this whole competition or war—or call it whatever you like—is [you] trying to make it difficult for Gregory Bateson to understand what [you] want to say. But [you still] want to say it like hell.

**Patient:** Listen, some of us weren’t using . . . if you ever confuse an eye,10 you’ll never get a man to recognize his name. (Patient gets up and starts to orate, pacing the floor.) No-doze tablets are reasonable. They always say “Awake!” “Awake!” “Awake!” (Lipset, 1980, p. 216).

Later Bateson came to realize that No-Doz tablets, the tablets businessmen used to stop themselves from falling asleep, were like him, Bateson, telling his friend to “Awake,” telling him, as he would later put it, to come to live in Bateson’s world (Bateson, 1958a, p. 39). The conversation encapsulates within the play of conversation many of the lessons learned in Naven concerning the reﬂexivity of human relationships. But, where before it had been the Iatmul maternal uncles, here it was Bateson himself who was trying to avoid a break down in communication and to create the possibility for conscious reﬂection on inchoate communication.

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Viewed in comparison with the kind of anthropology that Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown spearheaded and which developed after the Second World War, Bateson’s own progress seems strangely marginal. Contrastingly, understood in relation to the anthropology Rivers had bequeathed to Cambridge after World War I, Bateson’s route from schismogenesis to schizophrenogenesis and onward to studies of animal communication seems much more explicable. His understanding of human culture as part of wider evolutionary processes was,
after all, what had linked him to Haddon and the other Cambridge anthropologists in the first place. Nonetheless, Naven represents, at least in part, a period of negative dialectic for Bateson—the struggle between his evolutionist background and contemporary understandings of culture and society ultimately enabled him to find a synthesis between human science and evolutionary theory. But this in turn involved rethinking evolution as communication—as culture writ large.

It was a haphazard journey, but the pre-First World War Cambridge anthropology had been haphazard in its global scope and in its search for answers with underdefined methods. Until recently, Haddon and Rivers were effectively written out of the story of how modern anthropology developed; as, to a large degree, was Bateson himself. However, Naven not only evidences some of the continuities and deflections that connect Bateson to the earlier tradition, it also bridges the gulf between Rivers and Malinowski. The interactions with Rivers posthumously, with his colleague Haddon, and with important students, of these two (such as Bartlett), represent a Batesonian lost world—a world that has only recently begun to be revisited by British social anthropologists.

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