

Foreword: **I asked Karø Goldt**

by Prof. Dr. Dr. Ranulph Glanville

There have been many projects attempting to combine art and science, but few as intriguing and perplexing as the one Karø Goldt presents in this book of photographs from her portfolio that she associates with the titles of references taken from Gregory Bateson's book "Steps to an Ecology of Mind". The photographs have been taken over the past decade or so: they were not taken with this project in mind, which, rather, arose from an insight and a curiosity: what can an artist do with academic references?

Many, if not most works that combine art and science are, in effect, illustrations in some artistic medium of some scientific principles or points. They are imaginative and elegantly constructed visualisations, usually mapped one to one with the science they illustrate, literal and sometimes almost verging on the propagandist. They can also be very appealing, helping lay people understand the science they present. But it is, I think, by not sticking to this Illustrative model that Goldt's book becomes intriguing and perplexing.

When I was first shown a draft of "The Bibliography of Gregory Bateson's Steps to an Ecology of Mind in Alphabetic Order of the Titles Part 1: A – O" I asked Goldt if she had read the texts Bateson referred to. She replied, "No!". She had used the titles themselves as a source, rather than as labels that point to something else (the publication's text). Later, she sent me a revised version, much reduced, in response to comments Michael Hohl and I had made. This began with a dedication: "Dedicated to all those, who do not believe everything they think." Clearly, this is positioned a contrary work, not fitting in the general art/science project mould.

If this is not a book that simply illustrates scientific principles or points, what is it? I think of it as an example of reconsidering and reframing in order to make personal insights visible to others. Perplexed by the association of the images and titles, I wondered how I could understand them together. Leaving aside those few images which I could interpret as illustrative of the titles they appeared with (just at the level of the titular words), such as "Culture, Illness and Care" and "Chance and Necessity", I have constructed the a number of relationships including the following:

association

e.g., "Coral and Coral Reefs" and "Getting Well Again"

embodiment

e.g., "Beyond Economics" and "Man in Evolution: the Teilhardian Synthesis"

extension

e.g., "New Paradigms" and "Janus"

provocation

e.g., "How Poverty Breeds Overpopulation" and "Feminism as Therapy"

Each of these relationships has stretched me: first, in finding it, second in becoming mindful of what I see. And each has lead me to reconsider the way I could treat a list of references in a manner different to, but possibly as valuable as the manner in which I would when wearing my academic's hat.

And each of these relationships also released in me a question about links between how Goldt and how I am look at the titles: cynically, ironically, tenderly, humorously, calmly, angrily: Goldt's pairings become keys to unleash emotional responses that I would not, normally (wearing my academic's hat), recognise or expect.

When I see this book in this light I find it deeply provocative. I do not find I can just flip through the pages looking at the pictures of the titles, as a coffee table book. I need to consider each, and the way photograph and title play together, to create my own relationship rather than having one thrust upon me. I have no doubt that Goldt has created this book through developing her own relationships, and might be able to make them quite explicit: I have seen her bravely show others how she relates to her own art. But I hope she would not do this, that the reason she has asked me to write this foreword is to help prevent this: I believe the point is to provoke us to reflect and to create our own understandings based on her insights and pairings rather than trying to impose her own attitudes on us.

Goldt brings us is a fresh way of using a reference list, itself an interesting challenge to one who, like me, has become accustomed to the conventions of the academic world. I believe this will also open exciting possibilities for others who don't deal in academic referencing. The challenge is to connect what she offers us on each page, perhaps looking at the types of relationships we posit when we reflect on what we have done and how we are doing it. (It also gives us, possibly unintentionally, a new way of organising our photo collections!)

Are there other works like this. Undoubtedly, though I cannot think of too many just now—which may be the pint. But I am reminded of Borge's "Book of Imaginary Beings";^[1] and of a conference on "Problems of Impossible Worlds".^[2] And, of course, I am reminded of that early 20th century movement to release the wildness of the imagination,

its savagery, that we call surrealism. This book might even be the outcome of one of the "Surrealist Games" that Brotchie and Gooding[3] encouraged us to play.

Gregory Bateson discussed the question of whether a computer thinks in these terms:

"Now, let us consider for a moment the question of whether a computer thinks. I would state that it does not. What "thinks" and engages in "trial and error" is the man *plus* the computer *plus* the environment. And the lines between man, computer, and environment are purely artificial, fictitious lines. They are lines *across* the pathways along which information or difference is transmitted. They are not boundaries of the thinking system. What thinks is the total system which engages in trial and error, which is man plus environment".[4]

I like to think that we can substitute create for think and medium for computer. Then I can see this work as an embodiment of Bateson's way of thinking: an acting with Bateson's text that reflects the Batesonian way. It does what it says. I take that as the first requirement for a work of art.

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[1]. Borges, J (1969) Book of Imaginary Beings, Harmondsworth, Penguin

[2]. Glanville, R and de Zeeuw, G (1988) Problems of Impossible Worlds, Amsterdam, Thesis

[3]. Brotchie A and Gooding M (1992) Surrealist Games, London, Redstone Press

[4]. Bateson, G, (1968) Pathologies of Epistemology, in Bateson, G (1972) Steps to an Ecology of Mind, New York, Aronson, p 502.

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