

Student David Lipset has written "Gregory Bateson: The Legacy of a Scientist"

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David Lipset was a 20-year-old student at Harvard when he first met Gregory Bateson, the esteemed anthropologist and social scientist. At the time, Lipset was becoming frustrated with his studies, and Bateson's philosophies and his approach to academe greatly appealed to the young student.

Now, almost nine years after their first meeting, Lipset has written "Gregory Bateson: The Legacy of a Scientist" (Prentice-Hall, 1980). The authorized biography covers the life and career of Bateson, who is known for the field work he conducted in Bali with his first wife, Margaret Mead; for his development of the double-bind theory of schizophrenia, and for his contributions as a theorist in the fields of psychiatry, ethology and communications.

Lipset, currently a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, San Diego, became acquainted with Bateson during a nine-month anthropology tour of Asia which Bateson led.

"I found him fascinating," Lipset said. "I had never met a natural scientist with his breadth of interest; not just in science, but in poetry and the arts as well."

A year later, Lipset wrote an essay on Bateson called "A Tear is an Intellectual Thing." In 1975, with the aid of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Lipset began working on the book.

At the core of Lipset's extensive research were the interviews he conducted with Bateson himself. He also had access to Bateson's private and professional correspondences and his field notes. He travelled in England and the United States to meet with friends and colleagues of Bateson's.

Among his sources were Margaret Mead, R. D. Laing, Erik Erikson, John Lilly and Nora Barlow, Charles Darwin's granddaughter.

"I once interviewed Margaret Mead on a night flight from New York to San Diego, where she was going to address a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science," Lipset said. "My father, who was a member of the AAAS, reported that she began the meeting the next day by saying 'I just spent the night with David Lipset'."

Since Bateson, currently a University of California regent, is still alive, Lipset said he thought of the biography as a piece of field work.

"The biography is incomplete, as it doesn't describe Bateson's ultimate impact or his death," Lipset said. "I also did not spend much time discussing certain personal and scientific aspects of his life. I believe, though, that a biography can only approximate a subject, whether he or she is living or dead. In that sense, every biography is necessarily incomplete."

The book was described in *Psychology Today* (June, 1980) as "a wonderful biography... an intellectual history and a vivid character portrait, no mere recitation of events in an academic life."

Lipset said that in the book, he attempted to explore the way that Bateson's life was a reflection of the man's historical and cultural background. As the son of eminent biologist William Bateson, Gregory was expected to pursue a career in the natural sciences. He was named in honor of Gregor Mendel, the Augustinian monk whose early work in heredity was incorporated into a new science named "genetics" by the elder Bateson.

Bateson's eventual work in the social sciences, rather than the natural sciences, was a logical development when examined in the light of his family heritage, Lipset believes.

After five years of research and writing, Lipset said he has come to regard Bateson's endless drive to challenge and discover and his ability to combine science with a variety of disciplines as his greatest qualities.

"In the beginning, I was infatuated with him and his ideas," Lipset said. "As I've worked on the biography, I've become more distanced and more critical, but I still find him to be an extremely unique individual."

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