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## The Science of Synthesis

Exploring the Social Implications of  
General Systems Theory

By Debora Hammond

*“An important book filling a gap in intellectual history.”*

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Debora Hammond's *The Science of Synthesis* explores the development of general systems theory and the individuals who formed the Society for General Systems Research. In examining the lives and work of the SGSR's five founding members—Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Kenneth Boulding, Ralph Gerard, James Grier Miller, and Anatol Rapoport—Hammond traces the emergence of systems ideas across a broad range of disciplines in the mid-twentieth century. A metaphor and a framework, the systems concept as articulated by its earliest proponents highlights relationships and intercon-

nectedness among the biological, ecological, social, psychological, and technological dimensions of our increasingly complex lives. Seeking to transcend the reductionism and mechanism of classical science—which they saw as limited by its focus on the discrete, component parts of reality—the general systems community hoped to complement this analytic approach with a more holistic approach. As one of many systems traditions, the general systems group was specifically interested in fostering collaboration and integration between different disciplinary perspectives.

*The Science of Synthesis* documents a unique episode in the history of modern thought, one that remains relevant today. This book will be of interest to historians of science, system theorists, and scholars in such fields as cybernetics and system dynamics.

**Debora Hammond** is provost and professor of interdisciplinary studies at the Hutchins School of Liberal Studies at Sonoma State University.

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