"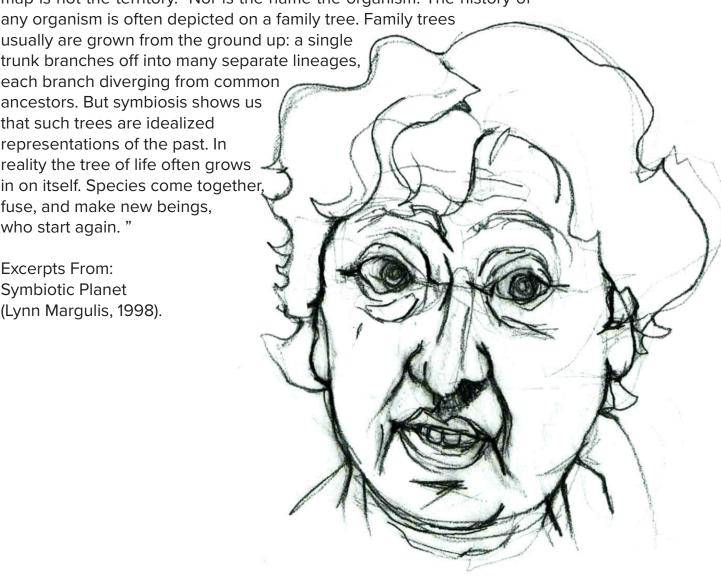 Many circumstances conspire to extinguish scientific discoveries, especially those that cause discomfort about our culture's sacred norms. As a species, we cling to the familiar, comforting conformities of the mainstream. However, "convention" penetrates more deeply than we tend to admit. Even if we lack a proper name for and knowledge of the history of any specific philosophy or thought style, all of us are embedded in our own safe "reality." Our outlooks shape what we see and how we know. Any idea we conceive as fact or truth is integrated into an entire style of thought, of which we are usually unaware. Call the cultural constraints "trained incapacities," (...)

One widely held unstated assumption is the great chain of being. It defines the venerable position of humans as the exact center of the universe in the middle of the chain of being below God and above rock. This anthropocentric idea dominates religious thought, even that of those who claim to reject religion and to replace it with a scientific worldview. (...)

Taxonomy is the science of identifying, naming, and classifying organisms. Names and classification schemes organize great quantities of information. Taxonomies, like maps, bring into relief selected distinguishing features. However, in the phrase popularized by the English-American philosopher-anthropologist Gregory Bateson, "The map is not the territory." Nor is the name the organism. The history of any organism is often depicted on a family tree. Family trees usually are grown from the ground up: a single trunk branches off into many separate lineages, each branch diverging from common ancestors. But symbiosis shows us that such trees are idealized representations of the past. In reality the tree of life often grows in on itself. Species come together, fuse, and make new beings, who start again. "

Excerpts From:
Symbiotic Planet
(Lynn Margulis, 1998).

This activity was developed by Jane Pirone and Barbara Adams for a series of speculative storytelling workshops titled "Collective Effervescence". All artwork by Jane Pirone.