

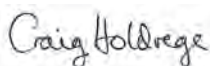
Dear Friends,

Human life is inconceivable without discovery, without surprises, without continual growth through new encounters, new insights, and the development of new skills. Life is movement and transformation. The power to come to terms with the inexorable flow of the context-providing world and to originate change is vital to our lives.

Much in this issue of *In Context* concerns discovery, surprise, and transformation through new insight. In fact, the main article in the Notes and Reviews section is not only about surprising discoveries that promise to transform the biologist's understanding of life, but about discoveries that themselves relate to fluidity, plasticity, and transformation at the molecular level. These are emerging as strong themes in contemporary molecular biological research — research that, due to the rapid development of new technologies and methods, is accelerating almost beyond all comprehension. The purpose of our article is merely to give you a hint of what is happening, and to point to implications that biologists in general have not yet been able to appreciate fully due to the inertia of old habits of thought.

The feature article in this issue shifts attention from the molecular level to that of common observation — observation of trees, and in particular the sugar maple and white oak. One of the main points of the article is that discovery and surprise can be mediated by the powerful tool of comparison. Looking for similarities and differences focuses one's attention in a healthy way on *what is there*, and invites endlessly detailed investigation. When we look at one subject from the vantage point of the other, we can see the first thing with fresh eyes; one image, clear in our minds, tends to make divergences in a second image “stand out” so as to be noticed more easily. The surprises that arise during this process can transform one's way of seeing.

One of the big, ongoing changes at the Institute has to do with the meeting in our experience, not of two organisms such as the sugar maple and white oak, but of two disciplines: Goethean *natural science* and Goethean *social science*. The news section contains an account detailing Craig and Henrike's recent trip to South Africa to work with Allan Kaplan and Sue Davidoff, consultants who work with professionals and organizations seeking to become change agents in a world of great social, economic, and political challenges. Allan and Sue, who previously spent three months studying at The Nature Institute, wanted Craig and Henrike to work with them in workshops involving participants from several different countries, many of them working for non-governmental organizations. There seems to be a developing hunger for such disciplinary cross-fertilization. This has been a fruitful turn *for us*, and requires a continuing transformation in our own understanding of what Goethean science is (and can be) about.



Craig Holdrege



Steve Talbott



## The Nature Institute

### STAFF

Linda Bolluyt  
Sarah Hearn  
Craig Holdrege  
Henrike Holdrege  
Stephen L. Talbott

### ADJUNCT RESEARCHERS/FACULTY

Jon McAlice  
Nathaniel Williams  
Johannes Wirz

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Barnes  
Douglas Feick  
Craig Holdrege  
Henrike Holdrege  
Jim Kotz  
Jan Kees Saltet  
Signe Schaeffer  
Jeffrey Sexton  
Douglas Sloan

### BOARD OF ADVISORS

Will Brinton  
Ruth Hubbard  
Gertrude Reif Hughes  
Wes Jackson  
Andrew Kimbrell  
Fred Kirschenmann  
Johannes Kühl  
George Russell  
Langdon Winner  
Arthur Zajonc

### *In Context*

Copyright 2011 The Nature Institute.

EDITOR: Stephen L. Talbott

LAYOUT: Mary Giddens

Single copies of *In Context* are available free while the supply lasts. The Nature Institute's online *NetFuture* newsletter is available at: <http://netfuture.org>.

The Nature Institute  
20 May Hill Road  
Ghent, New York 12075  
Tel.: 518-672-0116  
Fax: 518-672-4270  
Email: [info@natureinstitute.org](mailto:info@natureinstitute.org)  
Web: <http://natureinstitute.org>

The Nature Institute, Inc., is a non-profit organization recognized as tax-exempt by the IRS under section 501(c)(3).