

News from the Institute

Events



- This past June, an 11th and 12th grade science class from the **Waldorf School of Saratoga Springs** came to the Institute to study animal morphology with Craig, using our unique bone collection.

- Stephen Talbott gave a talk for the Linnean Society of London at their online conference, *Evolution 'On Purpose': Teleonomy in Living Systems*, held in June. His aim with the presentation, Steve shares, “was to do what I could to bring attention to the interiority of living things, while noting the distinctions, as well as the connections, between conscious human capacities, the capacities of the cells in our bodies, and the capacities of other organisms. I am convinced that recognizing the connections between conscious human activity and biological activity in general is fully as important as acknowledging the distinctions.” To link to a video of his talk entitled “**Toward a Thought-Full Teleology**” and some brief notes about Steve’s experience of the conference, go to the homepage at natureinstitute.org

- For the first time, we offered an **independent research residency** this past July to individuals



Independent Study group meets to share progress on individual programs.

who have participated in our programs and want to continue Goethean phenomenological research. Seven individuals came to the institute and worked for one or two weeks on an individual project. Projects ranged from studying local bobolinks and cedar trees to investigations of thermal radiation. The residency also included dialogue and study with Jon McAlice, Craig, and Henrike, and many fruitful individual conversations. Several participants were previous graduates of our yearlong Foundation program who returned to the institute for further support in practicing phenomenological science.



- In mid-July, with travel restrictions eased, we were able to host our two **Foundation Year** cohorts for their intensive at the institute; one group completed their training this past summer, the other group will finish next summer. We were pleased to see how the newest cohort, having had a pre-emptive year of remote learning (due to pandemic scheduling changes), had a good foundation to engage fruitfully in all the practical work during the two weeks. As a result, we will expand our program to have a period of remote learning before the first residency. We plan to enroll a new class of Foundation Year students in 2022 (for application information, see box on page 11).





Heather Rosenthal, an MC Richards student, observes Henrike's water pressure experiment.

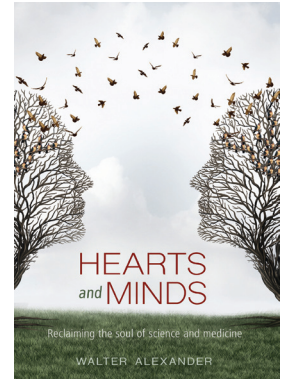
- Beginning in August, we resumed our collaboration with the **MC Richards Program** (freecolumbia.org/m-c-richards-program), a trans-disciplinary course from late summer through the spring for young adults, run by Free Columbia in Ghent, NY. Henrike and Craig will offer participants courses in Dynamic Morphology; Qualities of the Four Elements; Visual Experience; and Learning from Plants.



- Henrike gave an evening talk at the institute in September on "**Practicing Transformative Thinking — The Wisdom of the Cassini Curves**," followed by a workshop the next morning in which she guided participants in a variety of exercises. Astronomer Giovanni Cassini first investigated this geometric form in 1680 when he was studying the relative motions of the Earth and the Sun. Like other work in geometry, this work is a pathway that brings clarity in thinking, challenges the imagination, and can lead to surprising insights.

- In October, New York City-based medical journalist **Walter Alexander**, presented a talk on the findings in his book, *Hearts and Minds: Reclaiming the Soul of Science and Medicine* (Lindisfarne; 2019). He spoke on how the subjective side of human experience has been evicted from scientific processes that are evermore reductionist and mechanistic. While these modes of thinking continue to produce miracles in technology and medicine, Alexander states, they have

discredited the personal and human experience altogether — to great consequence. His work tells a tale of emerging discoveries — ones that restore our own self and consciousness as integral to the workings of the world.



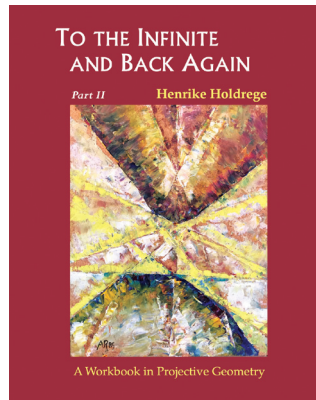
- In the fall, Craig gave a number of online presentations to educational organizations interested in the Goethean approach. The events included:
 - A talk on "How Green is Our Thinking" for the **Kadoorie Earth Programme** in Hong Kong
 - The keynote talk for the 2021 International Conference on Educational Innovation of the Center for **Waldorf Education at National Tsing Hua University in Taiwan**; the theme of the conference was "Facing the Challenges of the Future and Sustainable Development"
 - Three sessions, based on his book *Thinking Like a Plant*, for participants in an online studio that offers classes on **inner development for educators in Taiwan**;
 - A question and answer session about some of the topics in his book, *Seeing the Animal Whole*, with participants in an online course, "Goethe and the Language of Holistic Science" run by **Holistic Science Journal** and **Escola Schumacher Brasil**.

- On November 12 at 7:00 pm, Stephen Talbott will give his final (and just about only) talk at the institute on "**Gestures of Life**," which he describes unapologetically as an offering of "notes from desperately unsatisfactory encounters with the living interior of self and world, along with intimations of their meaning for science." Stephen has been a senior researcher at The Nature Institute since its inception in 1998. For more than 20 years he has been building a body of work (see his *Biology Worthy of Life* project, <https://bwo.life/org/index.htm>) that illuminates natural phenomena and calls for a qualitative approach to examining organisms. Steve's talk is free and open to the public; donations are appreciated.

- Craig has been asked to give a talk in February at the **Annual International Conference of Biodynamic Agriculture** in Dornach, Switzerland. The topic of the conference is: *The quality of biodynamic products and what it means for the earth and for human beings*. Craig's talk will focus on the concept of quality. Today quality is often assessed in purely quantitative terms. What is missing from such assessment? What kind of consciousness do we need to develop in order to perceive and understand quality in a more expansive way?

Publications

- After two years of writing and illustrating, **Henrike Holdrege's** new publication, Part II of *To the Infinite and Back Again — A Workbook in Projective Geometry*, will be available at our online bookstore this fall! A short excerpt is featured in this issue on page 5.

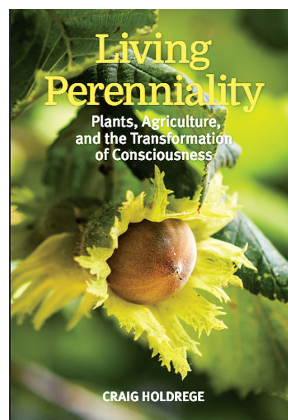


- As the experience of the pandemic continues to affect our lives, it also informs our work. For more than a year, Jon McAlice and Craig Holdrege have been examining viruses culturally and scientifically as a **'boundary phenomena'** — that which arises when we meet something not easily categorized, something that presents a plethora of riddles.

As Jon states, "In such situations, we often overlook the possibility that is being offered and simply tweak established forms to make space for the new appearance. This has certainly been the case in the development of our understanding of viruses. We try to find a way to make them fit into the modern scientific conception of what life is, rather than allowing the questions they raise lead us into broadening and deepening our understanding of life as it presents itself to us."

Craig and Jon will share their findings and insights in a new publication on our website.

- In his new monograph, *Living Perenniality — Plants, Agriculture, and the Transformation of Consciousness* (New Perennial Publishing; 2021), Craig Holdrege weaves together the study of annual and perennial plants, agriculture and its origins, and riddles of human consciousness. (A short excerpt is featured on pages 6-7.)



What connects these disparate topics is his striving to discover and articulate ways of moving beyond learning *about* nature, to learning *through* or *with* nature. In this way, the book proposes, it may

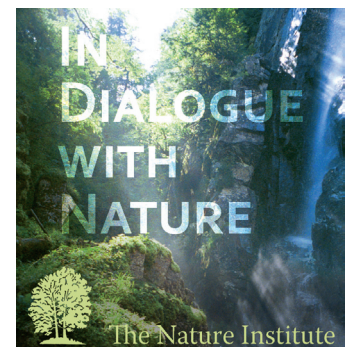
be possible to develop capacities to perceive, think, and act in ways that are in sync with the dynamics of the living world.

At natureinstitute.org/store, copies of the book can be ordered (\$12). A link to a free pdf of the text is also available.

- This past summer, **Resilience.org** published an excerpt from Craig's new monograph, *Living Perenniality* (New Perennials Publishing; 2021). The organization describes its mission as "building community resilience in a world of multiple emerging challenges."

In the fall, Craig's article, "Viruses in the Dynamics of Life," was reprinted in the November 2021 issue of the **Biodynamic** journal. The piece was first published in 2020 at natureinstitute.org and is one of our most popular and shared articles.

- Since the debut this past summer of our podcast, *In Dialogue with Nature*, we have shared episodes on various topics, including a conversation between staff on "Thinking Like a Plant;" a live public talk on "Resonant Space;" and Craig's presentation for his new book *Seeing the Animal Whole — And Why It Matters*. Future episodes are in production. We welcome your comments and suggestions at info@natureinstitute.org.



- The newest chapter, "**Development Writ Large**," in Stephen Talbot's online book *Evolution As It Was Meant to Be — And the Living Narratives That Tell It's Story*, fine-tunes the central conclusion of this seminal work, according to Steve: We already know more than enough to say that evolution is a purposive, or directive, or telos-realizing process. His aim in the new chapter and grounded in all the preceding chapters is to "facilitate the changed angle of vision that can enable the reader to grant full recognition to what is already known. I want to jog evolutionary thinking out of its customary pathways."

The chapter can be linked to from the homepage at natureinstitute.org, or you can freely access the chapter and entire book at our adjunct site, bwo.life.

From Our Mailbox



I wanted to share a recent project that we are neck deep in as a direct result of taking Craig's class. I was out speeding my way through garden tasks about two weeks ago, and there was a monarch fluttering about at the edge of my periphery in a very particular way. I thought to myself, "Craig would definitely tell you to stop your nonsense and quietly sit down and pay attention." And so I did. Turns out she was laying eggs in our small milkweed garden! And so now we are all getting to enjoy protecting those eggs until they get through the caterpillar stage and emerge as butterflies. It's such a delight to see how much bigger they are each morning!

Warmly, Kelsey J. London

Here at Camphill Ghent, we have been greatly enjoying issues of In Context. Our residents in Assisted Living [who have the features read to them] just loved hearing about the life of the bloodroot plant as a manifestation of early spring. We also really enjoyed learning about the buffaloes in a later issue. The depth of observation demonstrated by Craig through his true living experience of the natural world is inspirational. In our fast-paced society, it is a gift to have an organization like The Nature Institute to bear witness to natural phenomena. These cannot—or at least ought not—be hurried. For those in the later part of their lives it is so beneficial to learn about nature in this quiet, attentive manner. In Context has, in this regular, weekly way, become an important part of our cultural and learning activities.

Thank you kindly to all those who contribute to the making of such a valuable resource!

*Kristina Labaty
Resident Volunteer / Marketing and Fundraising Coordinator
Camphill Ghent, Chatham NY*

Applications for The Nature Institute's upcoming 2022 Foundation Course, *Encountering Nature and the Nature of Things*, are now available at natureinstitute.org.

Comprised of two residential summer intensives and 15 months total of guided practice before and between these residencies, our training is for people who are deeply interested in nature and serious about developing an understanding and practice of the science of phenomena. The program offers the challenge and the opportunity to move beyond the static, object-like abstractions of contemporary thought toward a fluid, transformative way of perceiving and thinking.

Comments from recent course participants:

"The course has inspired me to weave more moments for mindful observation into my work with both adults and children. I feel much clearer about how I can bring elements of this practice to people who would not otherwise have access to it."

"This course was a reaffirmation that the senses are what I can keep turning to as a source of inspiration — and culture correction to my thinking. However, I also discovered how importantly disciplined thinking contributes to my world."

Seed Development

Drawing Progress

CECILIA EYSSARTIER



As a biologist and educator, I had the opportunity to participate in a fellowship program at The Nature Institute in 2017 and from this experience, realized that I needed to further focus my understanding of nature by unfolding a new way of seeing. Participating subsequently in the institute's year-long Foundation program in Goethean science with my colleague and husband, Luis Monterubianesi, greatly enriched my view of phenomena in nature, while also allowing for a cross-cultural exchange with participants from other parts of the world.

After our two-week intensive in the program, I studied seed development, creating many illustrations, a few of which you see here.

In order to conduct a thorough research project, I planned weekly observations over a period of one year, which was later extended to two years due to the pandemic. During this time, the drawing practice, which integrates science and art, deepened the quality of my observations. My ongoing experience encouraged by The Nature Institute has made me aware of the importance of practice and time in order to observe phenomena in process and in context.

As a result of our experience, coupled with our professional expertise in biology and nutrition, we developed the Pocket Garden Education Program (<http://qumara.net>) to promote quality food education. We are currently based in Germany and work in partnership with other organizations and universities to integrate the holistic science practice we learned at The Nature Institute. We strive to highlight the multiple possibilities that open up from this qualitative perspective, and for which we are grateful.

