



The Nature Institute

Dear Readers,

This issue of *In Context* has a lot to do with the theme of connectedness. It happens to be a theme that has been central to me personally since I was 16 years old. At that time I felt a stark sense of isolation and questioned whether I could find meaning in the world — whether there is meaning to find at all. So the search to discover connections between me and the world, and between the manifold features of the world, has been ongoing. I am glad to say that more and more threads of connection have shown themselves in the course of these 50-plus years. And as a result, disconnect in thought and action — in myself and in others — appears all the more vividly.

One way to characterize the mission of The Nature Institute is to say that we want to cultivate an increasing awareness of how things on earth are truly and inextricably interconnected, and thereby help counteract the increasing fragmentation we witness in the world. So in this issue you can read about different ways of working with this task.

Biologist and author Suzanne Simard is one of the scientists who, through painstaking research, has shown how plants are intimately and dynamically connected through underground fungal-root (mycorrhizal) networks. It has become glaringly clear that the way we habitually think about organisms being separate from each other is woefully inadequate. A central question that arises from her new book (reviewed on p.3) is: How do we move beyond that habitual attitude of mind, which just assumes that things *are* separate from each other, rather than being intrinsically connected?

This is an especially challenging task for geneticists and evolutionary thinkers who, despite ever-growing evidence to the contrary, still often cling to the idea that individual genes are what make things happen in organisms. Steve Talbott shows that it is impossible to understand hereditary, developmental, and evolutionary processes unless we acknowledge that the organism as a whole is the living and orchestrating context for all “part” processes (see p. 14).

This fall, the second part of Henrike Holdrege’s workbook in projective geometry is being published (see p. 5). This book is all about cultivating, in a rigorous way, thinking in transformations and polarities. Working with this kind of geometry can help us develop inner sensibilities that apprehend relatedness and transcend the boundaries of conventional thought.

While geometry cultivates sensibilities through pure thought, at the other pole of human experience we have the sense perceptible world. How to become more present and awake to what experience in the sense world can reveal to us? That is a central theme that Jon McAlice addresses in the feature article (p. 18). He characterizes a relation between ourselves and the world in which there is resonance — a mutual resounding of me-in-world and world-in-me. While we all have moments in which we sense a deeper connectedness with things, a speaking of the world in me, it is another matter to tread a disciplined pathway to cultivate capacities to allow the world to speak every more strongly. That is one way of characterizing the Goethean way of developing experience-based scientific understanding.

Craig Holdrege

CORE STAFF, RESEARCHERS, AND FACULTY

John Gouldthorpe
Craig Holdrege
Henrike Holdrege
Seth Jordan
Elaine Khosrova
Kristy King
Veronica Madey
Jon McAlice
Stephen L. Talbott
Gopi Krishna Vijaya

ADJUNCT RESEARCHERS AND FACULTY

Bruno Follador
Marisha Plotnik
Vladislav Rozentuller
Sergio Spalter
Nathaniel Williams
Johannes Wirz

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Stefan Ambrose
Megan Durney
Craig Holdrege
Henrike Holdrege
Marisha Plotnik
Jan Kees Saltet
Signe Schaefer
Jeffrey Sexton
Nathaniel Williams

BOARD OF ADVISORS

Will Brinton
Gertrude Reif Hughes
Wes Jackson
Andrew Kimbrell
Fred Kirschenmann
Johannes Köhl
George Russell
Wilfried Sommer
Langdon Winner
Arthur Zajonc

In Context

Copyright 2021 The Nature Institute.

EDITOR: Elaine Khosrova
LAYOUT: Mary Giddens
COVER ART: Kristelle Esterhuizen

Copies of *In Context* are free while the supply lasts. All issues are posted on the Institute website.

The Nature Institute
20 May Hill Road
Ghent, New York 12075
Tel.: 518-672-0116
Email: 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).