



The Nature Institute

Dear Readers,

Much of our work at The Nature Institute focuses on *how* we experience, explore, and come to insights. The *what* of knowing always appears as the result of the interweaving of self and world. If we do not become more keenly aware of our points of view, our biases, and predilections, we may end up thinking the picture of the world we paint is “the way things are” rather than a particular perspective that can both illuminate and color our understanding. As the saying goes, if your only tool is a hammer it is tempting to treat everything as a nail.

Awakening to the *how* means becoming more aware of the ways in which the quality of our attention and intention informs what the world can show us. This awareness can stimulate us, on the one hand, to free ourselves from ingrained habits of mind. We can strive, to speak with Thoreau, to explore with “more free senses” and practice a kind of open attentiveness that lets us apprehend something already known for a “thousandth time ... as something totally strange.” On the other hand, we can consciously consider things from different perspectives, shifting points of view. With a growing flexibility of mind, the world can show herself in greater breadth and depth.

These are practices that we work with in our education programs and that you can get a glimpse of in the News section of this issue. You will also find an array of articles that revolve around awakening to the *how* of knowing and gaining meaning-filled experiences and insights.

Can we heighten our attention for the concrete appearances that are waiting to be perceived in the sense world and that we all too often hardly notice? In her article, Henrike Holdrege describes different types of shadows one can encounter. Paying careful attention to them, and to the contexts they appear, can lead to a surprising insight.

Just as we pass by shadows without concerning ourselves with them, so we might, year in and year out, pass by dandelions in the spring and not give them any more attention than registering them as weeds in a yard or field. But those yellow flowerheads are an open secret. Jon McAlice relates in his article how high school students, guided in considering dandelions carefully and relating them to other flowers, can recognize this open secret and stand in awe before this “common” plant.

In this issue’s feature article, Steve Talbott addresses the topic of knowing in a foundational way. He challenges the widespread notion that we are somehow separate from things and that knowing means forming subjective representations of the world. He wants to help the reader move beyond this frame of mind. Can we begin to see that we live in *one* world, a world in which we are active participants, not only in what we outwardly do, but also in the ways we perceive and conceive of things? The implications of this transformation of understanding are immense.

Craig Holdrege

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

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

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