



The Nature Institute

Dear Friends,

Spring is a time of new beginnings and fresh hope. We here at The Nature Institute feel this invigorating surge of life with special force now, as we enter the third decade of our activity since the Institute's founding in 1998. Our many courses – here, nationally, and abroad – are flourishing as never before, with more and more young people being drawn to them. New colleagues are being found, and with them, tantalizing possibilities for expansion of our work into new domains. Even for those of us who are “old hands,” having been with the Institute from the start, our work seems to be reaching a culminating stage that carries the sense, not only of fulfillment, but also of burgeoning promise.

Actually, the sense of a new beginning is one that can fruitfully be encouraged at every moment and in every human activity. A beginning brings with it hope, as with the birth of a child. Every word released into the world is a bit like a child. Whether it is spoken in a course or to a colleague, or written in an article, or merely voiced as an encouragement to oneself, it is put forth because it is thought to carry some significance. That's what words *are*, bearers of significance. And significance always invites a response – in just the right circumstances, and for the person who is prepared for it, perhaps a life-changing response.

In this way we can healthily think that every word or gesture, every planting of a foot upon the solid earth, every action of significance (and doesn't every action carry significance?) can be the start of something new. What the world becomes will reflect all those continual beginnings and the direction in which they tend. Our own central hope is for freshening breezes in the realm of science, but human activities are always multifaceted in their significances, and it is impossible to predict the downstream consequences of one's actions. The key thing is to act in full consciousness of the grave responsibility involved in bringing new “children” into the world.

Regarding the work “now reaching a culminating stage,” the briefest of mentions may be worthwhile. Henrike has written a workbook on projective geometry, *To the Infinite and Back Again*, that will be available later this spring. The book is the fruit of twenty years of Henrike's teaching on this topic in a variety of courses. It is meant for lay people as well as math teachers.

Craig, who has been pursuing whole-organism studies for many years, is in the later stage of gathering these together, revising them, and adding new material for a book of his “collected works” on whole organisms. This includes a considerable treatment of evolution, and a substantial amount of material not previously published. But, yes, you will find in the book, when it is fully finished, the “short-necked” giraffe, the elephant, the sloth, and many of the other animals we have grown to appreciate through Craig's writing over the past two decades.

Likewise, Steve is now making steady progress on his book, tentatively entitled “Whole Organisms and Their Evolutionary Intentions.” Not long after you receive this issue of *In Context*, he expects to have reorganized our website's Biology Worthy of Life section, with a central focus on the book. Several draft chapters will be available, along with extensive indications of the content of several others.

Two articles in this issue, by Craig and Steve, bring you a foretaste of this work. You will certainly be hearing more about all these projects in coming issues.

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