



The Nature Institute

Dear Readers,

We have never chosen a specific theme for an issue of *In Context*. What we present comes out of our ongoing work. It so happens that for this issue the contributions — without our having planned it that way — coalesced around the topic of qualities.

How do we perceive qualities in the world and in ourselves? How does abstract thought obstruct our ability to perceive and take seriously what we experience? How can we develop our capacities in a way that allows us to enter into a richer dialogue with the world, a dialogue that leads to deeper insights? In what way can quantitative assessment of phenomena become embedded in larger qualitative understanding?

Such questions arise in our research. We challenge each other with them in our meetings and research gatherings. They underlie much of the work we do in our courses. We pursue these questions in the effort to establish a more grounded relation to the world that supports our existence.

You will find contributions from five different authors in this issue. You can discover how each of us is grappling with similar concerns regarding qualities, each in our own way. And you will encounter a surprising variety of phenomena, ranging from the color blue to the quality of numbers in the different kingdoms of nature; from the experience of warmth to the anatomy and physiology of the cow; and from budding plant life to the long neck of the giraffe.

Many years ago, German scholar Fredrick Amrine wrote about “The Metamorphosis of the Scientist” in relation to the Goethean approach to science. The Goethean “method” — if one can use that term at all — does not have to do with applying one established framework to natural phenomena. It is an approach that, in my view, asks: How do I need to adapt my sensibilities to what presents itself in experience so that more can be revealed? This question relates to all my experience as a human being, not only to scientific inquiry in a narrower sense. Goethe spoke of the development of new “organs of perception.” He did not mean new physical organs. He meant developing capacities through a wakeful and immersive meeting with the world.

The need for such a metamorphosis becomes glaringly clear when we work toward a science of qualities. There are many habits of thought to overcome, and we come up repeatedly against our own boundaries. We can sense that the way we are thinking about things is not adequate to them, that our attention is not refined enough to take in the nuances we intimate. This “not knowing” is an invitation to engage differently; it creates an opening. When we return again and again in this unsettled awareness to the phenomena, explore them from different angles and in new contexts, the qualitative world begins to light up. In this issue we share some of this work.

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

In Context

Copyright 2022 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).