

# News from the Institute

## Events

- Our staff continues to work with and mentor two cohorts of students enrolled in our **Foundation Course** in Goethean science. With the advent of Covid-19 and its restrictions, we had moved our teaching online and extended the course by one full year, engaging the students with a substantial study program in readings of foundational texts in holistic and phenomenological science, podcasts in which staff discuss the readings, live group discussions with staff and students via Zoom, and independent observational work. This summer, students from both cohorts will convene at the institute for a two-week long intensive.



- We are collaborating with the M.C. Richards Program, a full-time, year-long course in trans-disciplinary, contemplative learning for young adults, run by Free Columbia in Ghent, NY. In November, Craig led a course in animal morphology and evolution; in December,

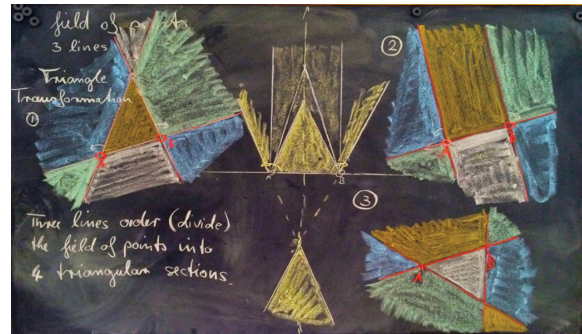
Henrike taught a course on optics, light and color; in February she taught projective geometry as a way of strengthening and expanding thinking capacities; in March, Gopi Krishna and Mark Gardner led a course in physics and technology; and in May, Craig will teach plant observations, botany and plant metamorphoses. More information on the program is available at [freecolumbia.org/m-c-richards-program](http://freecolumbia.org/m-c-richards-program).

- In February, Henrike gave a class on astronomy to parents in a Waldorf-inspired homeschooling group. In March, Craig gave a half-day workshop on Goethean science for participants in a one-year training course in biodynamic agriculture at the **Pfeiffer Center** in Spring Valley.

- Craig was the inaugural speaker for a series of online lectures, beginning in March, on holistic science sponsored by **Schumacher College** and the **Field Centre** in the UK. To an audience of more than 240 participants, Craig addressed the topic of “Goethe and the Evolution of Science,” presenting examples of Goethe’s participatory and dialogic way of studying nature, and highlighting its significance in the present and for the future. View the video at: [natureinstitute.org/videos-and-podcasts](http://natureinstitute.org/videos-and-podcasts).

- On **Nature Meditations**, a series of monthly programs hosted online by **Inayatiyya**, a global Sufi organization, Craig was the featured speaker in March. Promoting a transformative connection between person and planet, the live series was streamed in English, French, German, and Turkish to 500 participants worldwide. On the topic “The Beauty of Spring,” Craig spoke of how attending to the developing life of plants in spring can bring us closer to the creative forces of nature and also stimulate a transformation of our capacities to perceive and think in more nature-integrated ways.

- The pandemic has increased online demand for our staff to give presentations on Goethean science and education to various Waldorf schools and groups. In the past months, for example, we were asked to: teach plant and animal studies to participants in the Sound Circle Waldorf Teacher Training (in Seattle); mentor a group of 14 middle school Waldorf teachers in California on teaching science and math to distance learners; offer support to individual Waldorf teachers who reach out for help with lesson plans.



- On three Saturday afternoons in March/April, Craig and Henrike practiced Goethean methodology through light/color studies and through plant observations with participants of the local Alkion Center, a foundation course in Waldorf pedagogy.

- At an online symposium in April entitled, “**The Mind of Plants**,” Craig was one of several authors invited to share their experiences, perspectives, and various approaches to plants.

- At the end of April, Jon McAlice, Craig and Henrike taught a three-day course on Goethean methodology, plant observation, and the qualities of the four elements. Participants included those in the biodynamics training at the **Camphill Academy** in Camphill Copake, NY.

- In June, Steve Talbott will give an invited talk at an online conference sponsored by the Biological Journal of the **Linnean Society** in London. The conference includes a gathering of top-flight biologists, systems theorists, and philosophers of biology who will address the topic, “Evolution on Purpose: Teleonomy in Living Systems.” The public can register for the event at [linnean.org](http://linnean.org).

## Publications and Website

- This year Henrike will publish *Part 2 of To the Infinite and Back Again*, a *Workbook in Projective Geometry*, the companion to *Part 1*, released in 2019. Both volumes are meant for schools, self-study, and the lay-person. Part 2 focuses on duality in projective geometry and encourages a nimble thinking with exercises that allow the reader to shift perspective, to think in polarities and see things from both inside and outside.

- In a six-page feature interview with Craig in the October 2020 issue of *Acres* magazine (a national magazine in the U.S. that offers a comprehensive guide to sustainable agriculture), he discussed the ability “To Rescue the Whole: Seeing Nature as an Infinite Galaxy of Relationships.” In particular, Craig addressed how growers and farmers can benefit from Goethean approaches to observing field and crop phenomena. You can find the interview on our website, [natureinstitute.org/article/craig-holdrege/to-rescue-the-whole](http://natureinstitute.org/article/craig-holdrege/to-rescue-the-whole).



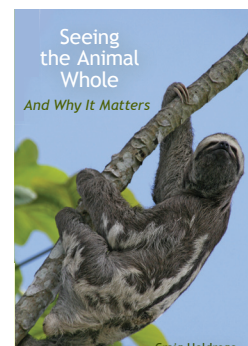
- In 2021, a new monograph written by Craig, *Living Perenniality: Plants, Agriculture, and the Evolution of Consciousness*, will be published by New Perennials Publishing. The monograph illustrates a contextual understanding of plants and explores the development of agriculture as it relates to the evolution of human consciousness.
- Steve Talbott will continue the development and online release of chapters for his work in progress, *Evolution As It Was Meant To Be: And the Living Narratives That Tell Its Story*, which can be freely accessed on our adjunctive website, [bwo.life](http://bwo.life). To date, 18 chapters of this groundbreaking work are available. Several new chapters are planned for 2021, including the latest: “How Our Genes Come to Expression.”

- In a new collection of essays, *The Seasons: Philosophical, Literary, and Environmental Perspectives*, published by SUNY Press, Craig contributed a section on “The Seasons Embodied.” His piece narrates the developmental dynamics of the skunk cabbage as a means of portraying the relational nature of the seasons. “I get to know the seasons,” he writes, “when I attend to rhythmical phenomena of life . . . the character and interweaving of the seasons show themselves in different ways depending upon my focus.” The hardcover book (\$95) is available at [sunypress.edu](http://sunypress.edu).

- Furthering research that our staff started with the advent of the pandemic (see “Viruses in the Dynamics of Life” on the home page of our website), we will continue to examine the history and phenomena of viruses, particularly within the larger context of life and societal narratives.

- As of this writing, the first episodes of The Nature Institute’s new podcast is in development. Produced and hosted by John Gouldthorpe, who teaches in our Foundation Course, the episodes are intended for a general audience and will highlight conversations with our staff and special guests about phenomenological practice and experiences in the natural world. “My intention,” says John, “is to develop this dialogue between practice and insights, as understood in Goethean science, and its inherent metamorphic potential to change the way we encounter ourselves, one another and the more-than-human-world.”

- Craig Holdrege’s new 348-page book, *Seeing the Animal Whole, And Why It Matters* (Lindisfarne Books; \$25) is now available at our online bookstore ([natureinstitute.org/store](http://natureinstitute.org/store)). In vivid portrayals of nine different animals, Craig provides a nuanced sense for what it means to be a sentient living being. His work demonstrates a unique integrative practice of viewing animals and nature.



## Spring Matching Grant!

This spring, one of our generous supporters has offered to match all donations for The Nature Institute up to \$5000. With your help and this matching grant, we can raise significant funding to support our education programs, provide scholarships to our courses, and reduce fees for upcoming programs. Every dollar we receive by June 19 will be doubled, up to \$5000. You can make a gift by check or credit card, using the enclosed envelope, or by credit card through our website (<http://natureinstitute.org/friend>). Thank you for your support.

## Staff/Faculty News



This year **Jon McAlice** joined the staff of The Nature Institute. Although he's been one of the educators in our Foundation Year program since its inception and for many years an adjunct

teacher in science education programs, Jon's new commitment reflects the expanding scope of our work. Requests for our staff to facilitate live online classes, lectures, mentoring, and meetings have surged while we're also creating podcasts and pursuing new research relevant to our mission of phenomenological inquiry. Jon steps in to all this activity with a depth of experience in contextual research, program development, publishing, lecturing, and organization. Currently continuing his work online with our two cohorts of Foundation Course students—an ongoing “striving to be awake,” as Jon says—he is also collaborating with Craig on a new study of scientific and social responses to viruses. “It involves studying a lot of the literature,” he shares, “and stripping away paradigmatic limitations so we can engage in the virus as phenomenon . . . it's been very surprising.” Jon and Craig hope to produce a publication with the results of their virus research.



**John Gouldthorpe** is a core faculty member in our foundation course who comes to us with experience as both a graduate teacher in psychology and a radio broadcaster. He has helped us develop a collection of foundational readings

for our yearlong Foundation Course and then intensively explored its contents online with students in our two cohorts. That process inspired John's latest project: producing The Nature Institute's new podcast, now in development. Through a guided encounter with specific texts, thematic presentations, and conversations, John will lead an exploration of treasures from our work (and occasionally the works of others) that bring awareness to a mode of engagement with the natural world that is whole and experiential.



In addition to managing Outreach and Development for the institute, **Elaine Khosrova** is now also editor of publications, and, along with Seth Jordan, co-editor of our website. Before coming to the institute,

Elaine spent many years as an editor and writer for several national magazines. She has contributed to the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, and is the author of *Butter: A Rich History* (Algonquin Books). She welcomes comments, suggestions, and queries at [elaine@natureinstitute.org](mailto:elaine@natureinstitute.org).

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## From our Mailbox



Students in Foundation Course, 2019

*“My experience with The Nature Institute has been wonderful so far, in the literal sense of full of wonder. Through the intensive, year-long program, I have found friends, peers, and mentors who have come together to explore nature anew in a warm and supportive atmosphere. These exploratory practices take a variety of forms but what they have in common is a sweet spot between playfulness and rigor that I find deeply rewarding. This is especially true when these practices become habitual . . . I will always be grateful to the faculty and staff at the Nature Institute for the people they have brought together, the practices they preach, and the haven they have created.” - Danial Qaurooni*