

Seeing Nature Whole — A Goethean Approach

A Training in Two Modules

Dec. 3 - 15, 2022 and Dec. 2 - 14, 2023

with Craig Holdrege and Henrike Holdrege of The Nature Institute, Ghent, New York

If we want to attain a living understanding of nature, we must become as flexible and mobile as nature herself. - Goethe

Nature around us is whole and interconnected. Though we are part of nature, we do not yet fathom her depths, and our actions do not embody her wisdom. A fundamental shift in our way of viewing and interacting with the world is necessary if we would contribute to nature's unity rather than her dissolution. - from The Nature Institute's mission statement

Background and Overarching Goal

The Goethean approach to science presents us with the challenge and the opportunity to move beyond the static, object-like abstractions of contemporary thought to a fluid, transformative, and holistic way of knowing. This transformation begins when we become aware of our ingrained habits of thought, work to overcome these habits and start developing new ways of seeing and thinking. With the will to *learn from the phenomena*, we can develop what Goethe called “delicate empiricism,” which weds flexible thinking with careful observation. Then nature begins to show herself in surprising new ways, and we gain a deeper connection to her. We set out on a path of experiencing the world in a new way.

Much today stands in the way of this transformation. We form abstract concepts about the world that we take to be more real than the things themselves. Filled with our own predilections, we don't perceive carefully how the world actually appears and how we are interacting with it. And our experience is increasingly mediated by all sorts of instruments and gadgets, so we lose faith in our senses and in our ability to judge.

To develop this way of seeing and understanding, this course emphasizes immediate experience and practice. Participants will practice observation of natural phenomena and observation of thought processes. And this observing always involves doing—going out into nature, observing, and drawing plants, or drawing geometric forms that “track” a progression of thought. We will dedicate time to reflecting on our habits of thought and exploring the nature of knowing. By weaving together reflection with observation and science with art, we bring ourselves into inner movement and transformation begins. Our own process of knowing becomes more transparent and nature shows herself from new sides.

The work of The Nature Institute is rooted in the holistic phenomenological approach of J. W. von Goethe (1749 – 1832) and developed further by Rudolf Steiner. We also are inspired by other holistic thinkers such as Kurt Goldstein, Owen Barfield, and Henry David Thoreau.

Content

In the course we will cover the foundational elements of the Goethean approach to understanding nature. Philosophical and methodological considerations along with study of selected texts will be woven into the work with specific content in both modules:

First Module (Dec. 3 to Dec 15, 2022)

- Projective geometry
- Life, plants, and metamorphosis
- Nature observation and artistic exercises

Second Module (Dec. 2 to Dec 14, 2023)

- The Visual World: optics, color and light
- Animals, Humans and Evolution
- Nature observation and artistic exercises

Who is the course for?

The course is for people who seriously wish to apply the Goethean scientific methodology in their own work and carry it further: educators (especially science teachers), scientists, health professionals; biodynamic/organic farmers; university students who study science. The program is meant as a training, and not as a recreational event, even though this work brings that gift also. It is also not for getting a first taste of Goethean science. For that there are other offerings, and much is in print.

The cost of each module is \$730 USD (or R\$ 3.950,00 Brazilian Real). Participants should commit from the outset to the whole course (both 2-week modules) and should attend all sessions during each module.

Number of participants: maximum 25

Module 1, 2022: Saturday Dec. 3 (9 am begin) until Thursday Dec. 15 (12:30 pm)

Includes a 1 ½ day break in the middle: Thursday Dec. 8, following the 9 am to 12:30 pm class, the afternoon is free. Friday Dec. 9, whole day free.

Daily schedule (except Thursdays), 9 am to 5:30:

9:00 - 10:30 seminar / 10:30 - 11:00 coffee break / 11:00 - 12:30 seminar / 12:30 - 14:00 lunch break / 14:00 - 15:30 seminar / 15:30 - 16:00 coffee break / 16:00 to 17:30 seminar

Thursday schedule: 9:00 - 10:30 seminar / 10:30 - 11:00 coffee break / 11:00 - 12:30 seminar

Module 2, 2023: Saturday Dec. 2 (9 am begin) until Thursday Dec. 14 (12:30 pm)

Includes a 1 ½ day break in the middle: Thursday Dec. 7, following the 9 am to 12:30pm class, the afternoon is free. Friday Dec. 8, whole day free.

Daily schedule (except Thursdays), 9am to 5:30:

9:00 - 10:30 seminar / 10:30 - 11:00 coffee break / 11:00 - 12:30 seminar / 12:30 - 14:00 lunch break / 14:00 - 15:30 seminar / 15:30 - 16:00 coffee break / 16:00 to 17:30 seminar

Thursday schedule: 9:00 - 10:30 seminar / 10:30 - 11:00 coffee break / 11:00 - 12:30 seminar