

## **THE PROTEUS INITIATIVE**

collaborating with

## **THE NATURE INSTITUTE**

during the spring month of

**AUGUST 2011**

at both

**TOWERLAND WILDERNESS (SOUTHERN CAPE, SA), and  
CAPE TOWN (WESTERN CAPE, SA)**

## **“TOWARDS A THINKING WHICH IS AS ALIVE AS ITS SUBJECT MATTER”**

**BRINGING AN ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS TO SOCIAL PROCESS,  
AND A SOCIAL SENSIBILITY TO ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS**

The Proteus Initiative is privileged to host **Craig Holdrege and Henrike Holdrege** of **The Nature Institute** to participate and teach in three separate processes. While each process is different, each will attempt to bring our social and ecological strivings together within the broad framing of a Goethean phenomenology, deepening our practice and our thinking towards a genuinely holistic and living response to our world.

### **BUILDING LIVING THINKING INTO A NEW SOCIAL PRACTICE**

A meeting of social practitioners who have entered into some relationship with The Proteus Initiative's ideas before.

### **TOWARDS A THINKING WHICH IS ALIVE**

Relating processes of transformation and metamorphosis in nature to a deeper understanding and perception of these processes in ourselves and in our social context.

### **SEEING NATURE HOLISTICALLY**

Discovering how a genuinely holistic perspective affects our thinking with respect to every aspect of environmental concern.

**If any of these programmes interest you, please read on; details of the three programmes follow.**

**For more information on Craig Holdrege and Henrike Holdrege of The Nature Institute, and Allan Kaplan and Sue Davidoff of The Proteus Initiative, please scroll to the end of this brochure.**

### **BUILDING LIVING THINKING INTO A NEW SOCIAL PRACTICE**

(Residential, maximum 18 participants, Towerland Wilderness, 1 – 5 August 2011)

Allan Kaplan and Sue Davidoff have been working for some years towards introducing a Goethean approach of living thinking as the requisite underpinning of a genuinely facilitative social practice. We have done this sometimes alone, sometimes together as The Proteus Initiative, sometimes in collaboration with others. Over these years various practitioners have participated in various programmes, others have developed relationships of varying depths in various ways, and some have gone on to develop this practice further, integrating aspects of what they have discovered into their own practices, and deepening their appreciation of, and questions around, the application of a Goethean methodology to the social sphere. For some time we have wished to consolidate this process through starting to explore what this new approach might mean for those practitioners who have adopted aspects of it; where may all this work be headed?

This week at Towerland Wilderness will begin to explore the experiences, observations and questions that are living amongst those social development practitioners who choose to come. The week is open only to those who are prepared to bring aspects of their own practice, and to share these appreciatively, critically, responsively and enquiringly. As we will be learning together and exploring the parameters of this work through our own practice, participants would be expected to bring case studies of work that they are doing or have done that touches on this new way of working with social process.

The Proteus Initiative will facilitate this process, but Craig and Henrike of The Nature Institute will be present as participant observers, to assist in taking our discussions further, to provide insight and challenge, to question assumption and encourage development, as well as themselves to learn from this coming together of Goethean sensibility with social intervention. We hope to achieve four things through this week. First, the further development of each participant practitioner. Second, the further development of a new body of social practice informed by a living thinking. Third, the further development of the Goethean sensibility itself through including more of a social aspect within its usual slant towards nature. Fourth, the start of a loose but regular coming together of social practitioners working in some way within a Goethean understanding. (Perhaps a written document may even emerge, for wider dissemination.)

## TOWARDS A THINKING WHICH IS ALIVE

(Residential, maximum 18 participants, Towerland Wilderness, 8 – 11 August 2011)

Craig Holdrege and Henrike Holdrege are leading Goethean scholars, scientists, researchers, writers and teachers in the English-speaking world. Their work has taken their thinking in various directions, and they are masters at making accessible a practice and a body of knowledge that often may seem obscure and esoteric simply because the grasp of its leading ideas demands experience and the rigorous exercise of the twin faculties of imagination and observation. They are able to teach without being didactic, make comprehensible without simplifying or reducing, and encourage participants' own practice constantly. They have developed Goethe's ideas and practices into ways of thinking and being that enable engagement with living process on its own ground, and they have developed further the implications of what this may mean for a truly ecological sensibility.

During this week they will work with participants on developing the eyes (of the body) and the understanding (eyes of the mind) to really apprehend processes of transformation and metamorphosis as they occur in nature, thus stretching our thinking into places that herald a new and very different form of consciousness. Insights gained through these days will then engage with individual and cultural processes in order to build this new way of thinking into a foundation for a new 'ecological' consciousness that embraces living thinking.

Participants will include those interested from the week before as well as any social and environmental activists, facilitators and educators who are interested. For the most part Allan and Sue will be participants in this process but will also play a role in enabling Towerland Wilderness to yield some of its 'open secrets' towards further engagement with the implications of this new way of seeing.

## SEEING NATURE HOLISTICALLY

(Non-residential, maximum 18 participants, Cape Town, 15 – 17 August 2011)

In the heart of Cape Town, Craig Holdrege will work with botanists, environmentalists, environmental educators and activists to achieve a real grasp of the meaning of 'holistic', and what it may imply to work holistically with respect to nature, the environment or our culture itself. Craig's grasp of the nature of living process, of living ways of thinking and seeing, and of the nature of both holism and the importance of context, yields new possibilities for thinking about ecology and ecological responses to our current environmental challenges and dilemmas. Craig's mastery works across and unites the boundaries of the natural sciences, offering an interdisciplinary, rigorous and living way of seeing the kingdom of Nature each time as if for the first time.

Cape Town offers a magnificent variety of possibilities for this process. The workshop will be held at Kirstenbosch, as well as on various walks on the Cape Peninsula, where we will be able to observe plants *in context*.

## **TOWARDS PARTICIPATING ON ANY OR ALL OF THESE PROGRAMMES**

Should you have any queries or should you wish to participate please write to [people@proteusinitiative.org](mailto:people@proteusinitiative.org) or [lukejode@gmail.com](mailto:lukejode@gmail.com) with **August Towerland** as the subject line.

(Should you wish to participate please include a brief narrative description of who you are, where you are situated, why you wish to participate and which programme/s you would like to apply for.)

**Costs:** (Please note that funding for this entire event is severely limited, and we are all largely having to pay our own way.)

**Building Living Thinking into a New Social Practice** – (ZA) R7950, all residential costs included.

**Towards a Thinking Which is Alive** – (ZA) R7950, all residential costs included.

**Seeing Nature Holistically** – (ZA) R1950, venue and lunch arrangements to be confirmed closer to the time.

### The Nature Institute

(Craig Holdrege and Henrike Holdrege)

“Modern biology has increasingly moved out of nature and into the laboratory, driven by a desire to find an underlying mechanistic basis of life. Despite all its success, this approach is one-sided and urgently calls for a counterbalancing movement toward nature. Only if we find ways of transforming our propensity to reduce the world to parts and mechanisms, will we be able to see, value, and protect the integrity of nature and the interconnectedness of all things. This demands a new way of seeing. Our methodology is inspired by integrative thinkers and scientists, such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Rudolf Steiner, and Kurt Goldstein.

We develop ways of thinking and perception that integrate self-reflective and critical thought, imagination, and careful, detailed observation of the phenomena. The Nature Institute promotes a truly ecological understanding of the living world.”

Craig Holdrege is the author of *Genetics and the Manipulation of Life: The Forgotten Factor of Context* and *Beyond Biotechnology: The Barren Promise of Genetic Engineering*, as well as many articles. Henrike Holdrege is a mathematician, biologist, and a principle instructor in the Institute’s adult education programs. She teaches projective geometry towards flexible thinking, and leads phenomenological studies in astronomy and optics. She has a special interest in creating experiential pathways into the realm of human thought and to understanding sensory phenomena without models. Both Craig and Henrike, together with colleagues, hold the Nature Institute, based in Upstate New York, USA, and produce a bi-annual (and very influential) newsletter called *In Context*.

([www.natureinstitute.org](http://www.natureinstitute.org))

### The Proteus Initiative

(Allan Kaplan and Sue Davidoff)

After many years of working in the social realm across many different countries, regions and situations, we have together founded The Proteus Initiative as a vehicle for developing the organic and holistic methods of JW von Goethe into a new understanding and approach to the sphere of social renewal. Our work is an attempt to realise the consequences of true participation, of socio-ecological complexity, and of an emerging consciousness which holds freedom and responsibility as a generative polarity in the quest for wholeness. We seek to develop an agile, flexible, alert consciousness in social practitioners. Proteus is about an inner path of social change, enhancing the faculties needed to hold and nurture our emerging future.

Allan Kaplan is the author of *The Development Practitioner's Handbook* and *Artists of the Invisible: Development Practitioners and Social Process*. Sue Davidoff is the author of *Learning School* and *The Courage to Lead*.

[www.proteusinitiative.org](http://www.proteusinitiative.org)

Towerland Wilderness  
(Southern Cape, South Africa)

Towerland is nestled in the Langeberg Mountains which form a borderland between the dry interior and the more watered coastal plains, and is really a *wilderness* retreat, which means that we have tried to keep it as unadorned and unobtrusive as possible. The rooms are simple and private, yet situated within a community or 'village' (as we like to call it) comprising these modest and exquisite rooms, each hand-built from natural materials. There is no electricity, the emphasis being on the encompassing presence of the mountains themselves. This is a truly inspiring and wonderful venue to explore nature, conversation and human unfolding, and we will be using the remarkable indoor and outdoor spaces that it offers to illuminate our understanding, precisely because such wild spaces are not readily accessible in a more urban setting.

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