



The Heart of Naturopathic Medicine

Foundations of Naturopathic Medicine Project

A constellation of professional growth, innovation and dedication is revolving around the unfolding Foundations of Naturopathic Medicine Project (FNM), a project whose central collaborative effort to codify naturopathic knowledge through writing and publishing a definitive textbook, *The Healing Power of Nature: The Foundations of Naturopathic Medicine and the Ecology of Healing*. This profound effort is but the fulcrum in a broader effort to strengthen, deepen, unify and communicate the work of modern naturopathic physicians.

THE BOOK

The Healing Power of Nature: The Foundations of Naturopathic Medicine and the Ecology of Healing

*Primary Care for the Twenty-First
Century*

Section One

The Profession:

*The Vis Medicatrix Naturae
Throughout Time*

Section Two

Naturopathic Medicine:

*Philosophy, Principles, and
Clinical Theory*

Section Three

Clinical Applications:

Naturopathic Theory

Section Four

Science and Clinical Theory:

*Naturopathic Medicine, Traditional
Research, and the New Sciences*

Section Five

The Promise of Naturopathic Medicine:

Creating a Healthy World

Like most bursts of academic genius, FNM emerged out of philosophical discussions, passionate debates, research, practice and contemplative moments. FNM moved from the salon into public view in September of 2004 when the idea was presented to the American Association of Naturopathic Medical College's (AANMC) Dean's Council and the Institute for Natural Medicine Board.

Since FNM's conception, the enthusiasm within the profession continues to mount. What began among a handful of prominent naturopathic philosophy instructors - Pamela Snider, ND, Jared Zeff, ND, LAc, James Sensenig, ND and Joe Pizzorno, ND - now includes an established academic home at the National College of Natural Medicine (thanks to President William Keppler and his leadership team's appreciation of and vision for the project), 22 editors and section leaders; 150 contributors, faculty and leaders from nine colleges and six countries; and a committed publisher, Elsevier.

The profession is poised to provide a significant contribution to primary and specialty health care. FNM will provide a cohesive framework for defining and applying the conceptual basis of naturopathic medicine as it fully engages its role in local and global health care systems, distinguishing it from the emerging fields of integrative medicine, CAM fields, and other world medicines.

FNM will hold editorial retreats and symposia every five years, providing the forum for presentations of new ideas, exposure to leading thinkers from other disciplines, critical debate and inquiry. Symposia will assemble researchers, practitioners, scholars, faculty and editors to establish and standardize a cohesive and comprehensive body of knowledge.

The budget covering five years is \$590,000 or \$195,000 per annum. For information about sponsorship, contact Susan Hunter at NCNM, shunter@ncnm.edu, 503-552-1512. For more information about the project, read an interview with FNM executive/senior and associate editors, Pamela Snider, ND and David Schleich, PhD at www.ncnm.edu/news_events or the full version of this article at www.ndnr.com.

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* Although Dr. Mitchell passed away on January 23rd 2007; he is at the heart of the team in contributed work to date, inspiration, and in spirit.

SELECTED EXCERPTS from dialogues which took place on Dec 29, 2006 with: Pamela Snider, ND, Louise N. Edwards, ND & Emma Bezy, MSW, LCSW, and again, on Jan 15, 2007 with: Pamela Snider, ND, Joseph E. Pizzorno, ND, Jared Zeff, ND, James Sensenig, ND, & Emma Bezy, MSW, LCSW.

ON WHAT IS INSPIRING ABOUT THE FOUNDATIONS OF NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE PROJECT.....

Pamela Snider, ND (Executive Editor): There is a quote I heard Dan Church use once, the president of Bastyr University. It's an African proverb, *"If you want to travel fast, walk alone, but if you want to travel far, walk with many."* It is powerful to know that it is time in our profession to undertake this project. It is a natural outgrowth of a readiness in our field to revisit the heart of the medicine as a community through writing. There are so facets of this timely progression that inspire me. One that is particularly inspiring and strong for me is how within the team — editors, our community of naturopathic physicians, scientists, teachers, and the many others involved in the scholarship, writing, and research — a natural coherence has emerged. This body of wisdom has not yet been brought together in one piece of scholarship, where everyone understands the value of powerful and vital diversity. I am inspired by the maturity of the community as we bring our dialogue into the realm of scholarship with rigor and focus. Throughout this process we are making space for opposing points of view, but it is with the intentions of holding each as important perspectives while at the table of discovery of our medicine.

Even in our diversity and points of disagreement, there is a natural harmony and an underlying coherence in the way we think about medicine, about how the philosophy and principles of naturopathic medicine relate to clinical practice. The great thing is that it's not dogmatic; there is a lot of debate. In the profession, we like to call it principle seven, which is 'Don't tell me what to think!' (Laughter). Every naturopath laughs when you say that — it's a definite laugh line, because we all see ourselves in that principle. What we hope to do in the book is honor our maverick natures, while simultaneously maintaining a level of scholarship, rigor and relevance. The people working on this project are amazing, and collaborating so well with each other. Everyone is brilliant.

Joseph E. Pizzorno, ND: I was recently asked what we as a profession hoped to accomplish with this project. The answer in my mind is to gather together

healers from all over the world and from many different disciplines to see what we can discover. The joy for me is to do just that, gather remarkable people together to see what we can learn about healing and medicine.

ON WHAT IS THE VIS MEDICATRIX NATURAE (HEALING POWER OF NATURE).....

UnifiedEnergetics™: A defining principle of naturopathic medicine is *vis medicatrix naturae* (the healing power of nature). It is, therefore, a core principle at the heart of the developing book, *The Healing Power of Nature: The Foundations of Naturopathic Medicine and the Ecology of Healing. Primary Care for the Twenty-First Century*. Let's begin these dialogues with the question, what is the *vis medicatrix naturae*?

Joseph E. Pizzorno, ND: The question, what is the *vis medicatrix naturae*, has always been a frustrating question for me, because I don't know what it is. I have been involved in naturopathic medicine for 35 years and I still can't answer that. What I can say is that you can definitely see it in people. We can see vitality in others; it's something we all sense. As a clinician, you can see the level of a patient's vitality increase or decrease. In terms of vitality, it is definitely present. What it is, however, has always been a frustrating question for me.

James Sensenig, ND: Joe's comments have me thinking about the historical roots of naturopathic medicine and this part of the foundations textbook. I am thinking of words or phrases that we have borrowed from our predecessors that we use interchangeably; *vis medicatrix naturae*, vitality, simple substance. Hahnemann talks about the dynamis and so on. We do that without differentiating one from the other. Unlike Chinese medicine, for example, where we have different kinds of qi - ancestral qi, kidney qi, and so forth - in the west we just throw around this idea of energy in this very ill-defined way. However, in

the discussions that I have been involved in so far, I see us moving in the direction of making a distinction.

This is principally Bill Mitchell's contribution, and others are coming on board. The distinction is between the *vis medicatrix naturae* and vitality. The *vis* is this tendency in nature towards organization, order and purpose. One might say towards the ideal or perfection. It might be what we call homeostasis or balance on the physical level, this tendency of living organisms to be ordered and orderly. Vitality, in this context, is the oomph, the battery, the juice, or the stuff within the individual organism that allows it to respond to or move in the direction of order. So, a possible distinction is that the *vis* is always there, because it describes the organizational tendency in nature, while vitality is something that you could presumably have or not have. Like Joe was saying, different people may have different levels of vitality. The astute physician, or the astute observer I guess, can look at somebody and talk to somebody and have some sense of their vitality.

A medical dictionary I have that was written in 1865 defines the *vis medicatrix naturae*; *vis* being force, *medicatrix* meaning medicine or healing, and *naturae* being nature. It is defined thusly: 'A power supposed to preside over the living body and to possess the faculty of resisting, to a certain extent the effects of disease and restoring health.' In vitalism, it is argued that there is this invisible, immeasurable force called the 'vital force.' In Dorland's Medical Dictionary, it is stated that 'Vitalism is the opinion that a force neither chemical nor physiological is responsible for life.' The materialist, of course, holds that the tendency towards balance and organization can be explained from a purely mechanistic point of view. The other night in a conversation with the editors, Leanna Standish raised a great question - "Is there a transcendent domain of organization that creates a self-organizing principle of living organisms and systems?" In other words, do we have to invoke this transcendent reality to explain the phenomena of orderliness and restoration in living systems, or can it be explained simply through the behavior of physical

ABOUT JOSEPH E. PIZZORNO, JR., ND



One of the world's leading authorities on science-based natural medicine. Appointed by President Clinton in 2000 to the White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Policy and by President Bush to the Medicare Coverage Advisory Committee in 2002. A physician, educator, researcher and expert spokesperson, Dr. Pizzorno is founding president (now emeritus) of Bastyr University; chair, board of directors, Institute for Functional Medicine; president of SaluGenecists, Inc.; and founding editor of *Integrative Medicine: A Clinicians Journal*. A naturopathic physician since 1975, he has been the recipient of numerous awards and honors for his academic, professional and public affairs leadership. Dr. Pizzorno is the co-author of the internationally acclaimed *Textbook of Natural Medicine*, the best-selling *Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine* and several other books.

matter? This is probably the question of all time. This is where science and religion have parted company.

UnifiedEnergetics™: It seems as though a challenge in this is to meaningfully explain or describe this principle, the *vis medicatrix naturae*, in two very different domains or paradigms: one being the linear, scientific paradigm of causality and measurability, and two being the nonlinear, intangible domain of spirituality. In other words, how to make it meaningful and comprehensible in both contexts?

James Sensenig, ND: That is a question that I've had as a teacher of naturopathic philosophy; is it necessary to be able to explain this in both domains? I know where I fall on this, but the rest of us have to answer it. Do we need to translate the philosophy of vitalism into the science of our day in order to explain it to those who live predominantly in that world, or to be credible? Or, can we continue to describe this model without alluding to today's science to explain it?

Emma Bezy, MSW, LCSW: I am grateful this point is coming up again, this idea of what it takes not to get stuck in the polarized, dualistic either/or model. I am thinking about when Bastyr University first came into being, its mission to be scientific and prove that natural medicine has a scientific basis was important. But I like the notion that comes out of Leanna's question that you were quoting, Jim: what is it like to really look at a very different mission for this time in the naturopathic profession, when there is a third possible position? A position that's not just "either you're scientific or you're not." How can we avoid getting hooked into this either/or attitude that life and health are either chemical and physiological realities, or they are not? This third position could be a both/and that says yes, there is this mysterious, transcendent, invisible reality AND it also has a measurable reflection in chemistry and physiology. It's not just one or the other. I think that is the big split we're still trying to get past. That is part of what I am hoping our ongoing dialogue in this

project does; helps build a bridge over that old split.

James Sensenig, ND: That is an interesting point, Emma. I think that most of the pure sciences are coming to the place where they are up against this question, about this organizational force in some other reality that is reflected in the physical. I think you make a really good point, which is we should be really careful about being stuck. The voice of the textbook, in my opinion, should not support or confirm the duality; we should stake out the position of a hierarchy, rather than a duality. That there is, as in Leanna's words, a 'transcendent reality,' or higher reality that is reflected in the physical.

After all, that is one of our doctrines, the doctrine of signatures. The physical form is an expression of a higher level of organization and intelligence. If we believe in the doctrine of signatures, the underlying idea that the physical reflects a higher level of intelligence, as taught by Lindlar, Hahnemann and Kent, the voice and position of the book should convey that without getting stuck in this duality. Whether you explain the *vis* from a material or mechanistic point of view or whether you invoke this transcendent reality doesn't matter. Because in both cases, there is still a fundamental, philosophically different paradigm at work in the kind of medicine we are talking about compared to the dominant school of medicine.

Joseph E. Pizzorno, ND: I appreciate that comment, Jim. I am going to make a philosophical statement - and this is something I don't do very often. When you look at the universe - and again, I have a strong background in physics - you find an overpowering force called entropy, and the universe is going from a point of disorder to heat. Life in this environment is illogical. There is no reason life should develop here, because that is not how the physics of it works, with everything going from disorder to heat. What is this power or force in the universe that is creating this highly structured entity we call life? My own personal, philosophical and religious perspective is that

ABOUT PAMELA SNIDER, ND



Pamela Snider, ND, received her degree from Bastyr University and has practiced naturopathic medicine in Seattle and Grimsby, Ontario. She served on the faculties of Bastyr University and Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine. In academic administration, healthcare and public policy, she leads initiatives to advance professional formation and integrated healthcare across diverse disciplines and now directs the Foundations of Naturopathic Medicine Project as executive editor. Dr. Snider was named AANP Physician of the Year for work with Dr. Jared Zeff on the Definition of Naturopathic Medicine. Other positions have included associate dean, Bastyr University; executive director, Academic Consortium for Complementary and Alternative Health Care; CMS Medicare Coverage Advisory Committee; staff to White House Commissioner on CAM Policy and working with establishing NCCAM. She is currently associate professor at National College of Natural Medicine.

there is this force throughout the universe that moves toward organization, moves toward life, and empowers all living things. I think the degree to which a person might manifest that life-performing function of the universe is the degree to which they are manifesting their vitality. That is totally philosophical, and there is no research support for it, but that is how I would look at it.

ON THE CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VIS MEDICATRIX NATURAE.....

Jared Zeff, ND: The fundamental question for me isn't what you might call the spiritual vs. material question with regard to the *vis medicatrix naturae*. The important question is, what is the clinical relevance of the *vis*? To me, it has clinical relevance. Therefore, my explanation of what is the *vis* focuses on the clinical experience and clinical reality, and the interpretation of the principle into a clinical task or function. To answer the question, "is the *vis* a useful or valid concept?" The answer is yes, because it leads to a particular, clinical context and clinical process that one would not move toward without it. This is a process that doesn't focus fundamentally on pathology, or what we might call the 19th century medical model of pathophysiology. Instead, this clinical process focuses on a different thing, and that is awakening, stimulating, enhancing and moving this concept. It tells me how to approach my clinical work.

By understanding there is this thing, this force that self organizes and self heals, then my task as a clinician isn't to heal. My task is to work with the wisdom of that force which leads me to tenets like, do not suppress. That leads me to acupuncture, hydrotherapy and homeopathy as opposed to drugs as a primary first choice of medicine. That leads me to understanding a healing reaction not as pathology, but instead as an awakening of this healing force and something to be celebrated and worked with rather than something to be suppressed. So at one level, that is how it informs my work. By understanding that there is this thing we call the *vis medicatrix naturae*

makes me a naturopath, rather than the kind of doctor who sees their principle function as only targeting pathology.

Pamela Snider, ND: This reminds me of a wonderful quote by Dr. Edmund Pellegrino in his article "Medicine, Science, Art: An Old Controversy Revisited," which appeared in 1979. He says something that really captures the significance of what Jared just shared:

"What physicians think medicine is profoundly shapes what they do, how they behave in doing it, and the reasons they use to justify that behavior, whether conscious of it or not. Every physician has an answer to what he or she thinks medicine is with real consequences for all whom he or she attends. And the outcome is hardly trivial. It dictates, after all, how we approach patients and how we make clinical judgments."

This is one of the most grounding quotes I have read and captures why we're doing this project. We need to understand the environment of our world in the broader universe or larger cosmology and how that is relevant to healing and what we do with our patients every day. If there is order in Gaia, and if there is order in the ecology of this planet and beyond this planet, then doesn't that translate in some way to how our patients get sick and how they heal, and how they live and die, and therefore what we do to help them? It is helpful to remember that this is the whole purpose of the project — the wellbeing of patients.

James Sensenig, ND: You know, I couldn't agree more. I am thinking of Kent's lectures, lecture eight, Simple Substance, which gets right into the idea that if you are a physician and if you are going to interact with someone who is seeking your help, you have just opened up a whole can of worms about a whole bunch of questions. What is the role of a physician, what does health mean, and most importantly, what is your rationale for intervening - the so-called thera-

ABOUT EMMA BEZY, MSW, LCSW



Emma Bezy, MSW/LCSW, is founder/director of the Center for Spirit & Health in Seattle, WA. The Center offers training and education programs for professionals and the public, as well as individual and group psychotherapy services. Her specialty is the interface between health, spirituality and creativity. She has presented at thirty-five regional and national conferences, served on the faculties of seven universities, and was chair of the Department of Spirituality, Health & Medicine at Bastyr University.

peutic rationale? What we do, and how we intervene depends on what we think sickness is, or what we think disease is, and that's what drives clinical practice. Here we are back to the significance of the cosmology. Another quote that comes to mind, perhaps for the beginning of the textbook, is one from Paracelsus; he says, "The physician is only the servant of nature, not her master. Therefore, it behooves medicine to follow the will of nature." Then of course the question is, what is the will of nature?

ON SPIRITUALITY AND THE VIS MEDICATRIX NATURAE.....

Louise N. Edwards, ND: Regarding the sections on spirituality and the healing power of nature in the textbook, I find it very exciting to observe the increasing recognition in the larger scientific and spiritual communities of the intersection of science and spirituality. In recent years, so much really solid science has emerged on the influence of prayer, intention and energetic medicine in healing. There is also a lot of exciting information from the perspective of quantum physics offering explanations of otherwise inexplicable spiritual phenomena. I used to have this internal schism between my spiritual life and my intellectual or scientific life. Now, with the increasing investigation of the intersection of science and spirituality that schism is gone.

Emma Bezy, MSW, LCSW: Speaking to the *vis* and spirituality, I am writing a chapter about what is common between the roots of naturopathic philosophy and philosophies of the major world religions. Talk about being humbled; part of the challenge of that process was to try to figure out what you can say about a world religion in four or five pages without dishonoring it. Yet, it really does a service to give people a brief summary of the basic principles. One realizes all of the great world religions have very similar core values. So, regarding the impact and scope of the project, you can see how the principles being explored go well beyond the practice of medicine

alone, and extend to the peace of the world.

Naturopathic medicine inherently lends itself to addressing the spiritual aspects of health and the person. Yet, this does not suggest that everybody who is a naturopathic physician necessarily has a spiritual life or orientation. I am also wary of professional arrogance, of not making spirituality seem unique to naturopathy, which would not be true. Many allopathic physicians are approaching medicine spiritually as well. What is specifically inspiring to me in this project is how the process of finding meaning in life circumstances and life crises, which religions help with, is being brought to the fore as a powerful influence on health and disease.

Conceptually, the *vis* is broader than something like qi. For me, the *vis* is that mysterious aspect in each of us, no matter what our race or religion, that when activated and supported brings about healing and when ignored, brings about illness. Attempting to answer the question "What is the *vis*?" reminds me of one of my favorite lines from the film, "A Thousand Clowns," when Jason Robards' character is talking to his nephew about the essence of life and says 'it's what makes a human a human and not a chair.' (Laughter)

Louise N. Edwards, ND: The challenge of defining the *vis medicatrix naturae* and what that means in terms of spirituality has been one of the center points of my thinking. I am into my third year of teaching about spirituality and healing, and every time I teach, it makes me go deeper into this question. For me, there are two key thoughts or observations to offer. These came to me when I first started practicing years ago.

The first influential experience for me in practice was to simply observe the miracle of self-healing. There really is this remarkable self-ordering that has evolved in life forms on the planet over the last three billion years. I don't like to use the term homeostasis to describe this process, because to me stasis implies a fixed point. I prefer the term homeodynamic, because it is always changing. The basic idea is

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Dr. Zeff is considered a traditionalist, practicing a classical form of naturopathic medicine. He maintains a private practice and teaches at Bastyr University. He graduated from National College of Naturopathic Medicine in 1979, and began private practice in McMinnville, OR. Pursuing a dual career in clinical practice and academics, he taught at National College where he was awarded the first full professorship ever granted. He graduated from the Emperor's College of Traditional Oriental Medicine in 1987. He served as academic dean at National College from 1988 until 1993. He was named "Naturopathic Physician of the Year" in 1989 for his contribution to the development of naturopathic clinical theory. In 2002, he was given the first Lifetime Achievement Award of the Northwest Naturopathic Physicians Association for his contributions to naturopathic medical education.

that both the body and the being that occupies it have the remarkable ability to return to and maintain a healthy state. And what is it that directs that? Do we call it the spirit, qi, prana or energy? Do we call it the *vis medicatrix naturae*? I personally don't distinguish between the spirit and the *vis*. I think they are both different names for manifestations of the same matrix or fundamental field, a field which essentially directs the self-ordering healing process.

The other observation that caught my attention early in practice is the importance of spiritual health. Whether I was working with somebody who was atheist, Christian, Buddhist, or from any other spiritual tradition, I started noticing that the fundamental shift which seemed to bring about the ultimate restoration of their health was in coming right with their spirit which was reflected in their mental/emotional state. This was especially so in the complex chronic cases. So often this fundamental imbalance or block in the domain of spirituality or consciousness is actually the greatest obstacle to cure. I was shy about discussing this with patients early on in my practice. However, once I observed how fundamental it is, I started going there as soon as was appropriate. I have since held the belief that spirit, or consciousness, or whatever you call this animating energy, is ultimately what leads the healing process.

A final thought on this relates to the concepts emerging in systems theories. The main concept is that simple systems are nested within increasingly more complex systems. With increasing complexity at each level there are new properties that emerge that could not be predicted by understanding the previous levels of organization. These are called "emergent properties"... very simply, if you start with cells, they coalesce into tissues. Yet, by understanding the properties of cells you wouldn't understand the properties of tissues. Likewise, looking at tissues you wouldn't understand the properties of organs, similarly for organs and the whole person. As you expand out from there, you come to the planet, the biosphere and more emerging properties. One of the things that scientists and philosophers are exploring in this work is the proposition that at the largest, unifying level of complexity among sentient beings, con-

sciousness is an emergent property.

This inquiry keeps leading to a study of consciousness. It is inspiring to observe over the last 30 years the mounting evidence for the powerful effect of human consciousness on physical form and human health. It's exciting, too, to look at the *vis medicatrix naturae* in this context.

Pamela Snider, ND: In the Foundations Project, I see three windows or lenses through which we are exploring what we mean by the healing power of nature, the *vis medicatrix naturae*. One of those lenses is spirituality. What, if anything, distinguishes spirituality from the *vis*? Are they the same? Just as Emma and Louise have articulated, these questions and this kind of dialogue are forming the platform for that window of exploration. The second lens is the ecology of healing, which includes much of the old nature doctor tradition. The third lens really centers around whole person or complex systems ideas with regard to healing and medicine. I imagine, as everybody is thinking about these elements as we talk about this here, is that they all come together to create meaning. That's why I like to think of them as lenses, because ultimately each of the lenses leads into the other areas. We are inviting our authors to write through whichever lens they are comfortable with, and where their clinical experience or expertise lies. The intention is to create a synthesis chapter out of all of those areas to begin to answer the question, "what is the healing power of nature?"

Because spirituality is such a profoundly important area within our field of medicine, we made a special co-lead arrangement where the work of Emma and Louise permeates the text. Their work builds out of the *vis medicatrix naturae* section with the underlying intention of creating coherence throughout the text linking the significance of spirituality to naturopathic principles, to clinical theory and application, to scientific research, and to public policy. They range throughout the whole text, which is actually a beautiful way to mirror how spirit works; you can't contain it.

Louise N. Edwards, ND: One thought that occurs to me regarding this process really goes back to humil-

ABOUT LOUISE N. EDWARDS, ND, LAc



Louise N. Edwards, ND, LAc is a graduate of the National College of Naturopathic Medicine and the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine. Dr. Edwards has had a life-long interest in spirituality, studied many spiritual traditions and integrated that interest into her naturopathic medical practice. Currently, her focus is on teaching and writing a book on naturopathic principles and the laws of ecology. She teaches at Bastyr University and National University of Health Sciences.

ity, and recognizing how much we do not know or understand in this exploration of spirituality and healing. It is just beginning to emerge and take off in some respects. As we all try to work this out together, it's important to remember how much of this is speculation and theoretical.

That said, there is an increasingly held belief, based on some solid evidence, that there is no real separation between the body - our biochemistry and physiology - and the mind, emotions and spirit. Instead of separating them, there is a lot of investigation underway around the influence of Spirit and the cascading effects on the state of the mind, and consequently, our bodies.

One set of research in this area - and there has not been enough research to confirm what this is suggesting as yet - came out of a group in Oregon called Spindrift. They compared the efficacy of directed and undirected prayer. Directed prayer, in the context of the study, means you pray for something specifically; undirected prayer means you pray for the highest good. Based on their research, the undirected prayer worked better than the directed prayer. In other words, the study points to the idea that we can pray for the best to happen and the outcome will be better than if we try to direct it ourselves by specifying a particular outcome. This raises another fascinating aspect in this conversation regarding how to work with the *vis*.

James Sensenig, ND: When talking about the *vis medicatrix naturae* and spirituality, I often invoke a book published in 1994 called *The Physics of Immortality*, by Frank J. Tipler, a celebrated physicist and one of Steven Hawking's contemporaries. As I understand his work, he asserts that you can use Omega point theory to extrapolate the behavior of matter to the end point, and thereby know where we are going in the material world. He does so without invoking any kind of funny ideas, like vital force, or magical substances and so on. When he works the mathematical equations to extrapolate the behavior of physical matter, he comes to the conclusion, in

contrast to what Joe said, that at the end point the physical universe is ordered, intelligent and purposeful. He goes so far as to say that there is a God; there is life after death in a place that closely resembles the heavens of the great religions; and that human life, far from being insignificant, is actually the source of the universe itself. He purports to demonstrate this with pure physics. He keeps saying over and over in his book, this is pure physics. This does not require your faith; it requires your understanding of physics and mathematics. Providing his equations, he invites any detractors to show him where he is wrong.

He says in his introduction that his purpose in undertaking the exercise was to put to rest, once and for all, the argument about the existence of God and spirituality; that in the 20th century we simply don't have to resort to such silly concepts as God because we know better. He set out to demonstrate that that was the case. He ended up coming to the opposite conclusion. He writes that "because I am a scientist I have to accept the conclusion. I advanced a hypothesis, I set out to prove it, and I proved myself wrong, and I actually proved the opposite. And I challenge anyone to show me where I went wrong." Once again, he is telling us in his work that the universe is orderly and purposeful, that humans are not an accident of the universe, but are co-creating the universe. This is supposedly the stuff of religious doctrine. He is demonstrating it from a mathematical or physical point of view. But he is talking about the same thing we are talking about, which is an ordered, intelligent universe.

Pamela Snider, ND: I must confess my personal belief that there is a clear spiritual reality, and that each human being has a spirit. While I am not going to explain my personal cosmology in this interview, I do think it is an important element of discussion within the context of the textbook. It is important that we address possible spiritual aspects of the healing power of nature, and the many ways of looking at that. I'm excited that people with a strong under-

ABOUT JAMES S. SENSENIG, ND



James S. Sensenig, ND, has been practicing naturopathic medicine for nearly thirty years and is well-known for helping thousands of people regain their health. Dr. Sensenig graduated from the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, OR where he later served as dean of education. He was the founding president of the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians, the chairman of its Government Affairs Committee for a decade, and the founding dean of the College of Naturopathic Medicine at the University of Bridgeport (CT). Dr. Sensenig has consulted for a number of government agencies, insurances companies, colleges and natural products companies. He is on the faculty of the Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine in Tempe, AZ and the University of

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standing of spirituality are exploring this issue. It assures we don't lose sight of it, while elevating its relevance in the textbook.

I question whether or not the healing power of nature is different than the force or the energetic systems of spirit. Are they one and the same? I know from the definition process that the profession undertook in the 1980s that this issue of spirit and the life force, and what that means to us, was incredibly important as a unifying idea. Despite disagreements at that time, in the end we came together as a profession and field of study, in part, through the unifying agreement that spiritual health is part of total health. By most, it has been deeply held in the practice of naturopathic medicine that spirit is a vital aspect of health and wellbeing for our patients. The question in front of me right now is this: is spirit, or what we might describe as a spiritual reality, including a higher or divine being — for those of us who believe that — different from the healing power of nature? Or is the *vis* derived from that spiritual reality, that self-organizing principle of the universe which Joe referred to? What keeps all that entropy from flying apart is incredibly intriguing, and points, for me, toward a concept of God. But is that different from the healing power of nature or the vital force? And the only way that we're going to get closer to the answer as a profession is to continue to hone this down, much like the Japanese wood carver, who doesn't have a form in mind before beginning to carve. The form emerges as one carves. Hopefully, we'll understand the form better as we develop the discipline to carve together, so to speak.

Jared Zeff, ND: I don't think it's necessary to propose or require that the *vis medicatrix naturae* be defined or include a spiritual concept to be valid or viable. Some in our profession argue cogently that it does not. While I think it does, and others think it doesn't, we're all still naturopaths. I would be very happy to have a long discussion about my particular views of the universe, its meaning and its creation and all of the rest of that. However, in the context of my profession, and our textbook, we run into a wall. The wall is that our consensus definition of the *vis medicatrix naturae* at this time uses the word spirit twice. However, we never define spirit. We define the *vis medicatrix naturae*. This definition could be expanded, and that is part of what we are talking about at this point. And that is the thing; what does spirit mean? I think those from a materialistic viewpoint would agree they could define spirit operationally, but it wouldn't be the same kind of definition as mine. That is okay for me; it's okay for my profession. It's okay for our book at this point in time. Because I

think that is where we are. What we're going to present in this textbook and many other places is the fact that we don't have total agreement on everything, and this is one of those areas.

Pamela Snider, ND: Again, this is a great reminder of what we lovingly call principle seven in the profession. That is, this profession so values the diversity of discussion, and what we're doing at this juncture in its evolution is bringing focus to the diversity of ideas. Our requirement is that all contributors to the textbook present their views in a rigorous way, so that we can grow our understanding out of the dialogue itself. We're investigating our theoretical frameworks with the intention of advancing them further. For example, it is important that the purely materialistic perspective, which appears to be a minority viewpoint, is brought forward to invigorate and challenge our dialogue. By making space at the table for the diversity, we come into greater coherence on important points, because the diversity itself brings clarity. That is what I love about this process. I don't necessarily agree with most of the physical or mechanistic explanations of the *vis medicatrix naturae*, but I am moved by it to delve deeper and think more clearly about my own perspective.

ON DEATH AND THE VIS MEDICATRIX NATURAE.....

UnifiedEnergetics™: This raises some thoughts regarding death and vitality, or death and this vital force being discussed. I can picture someone days before dying of a terminal illness, who, in the physical domain has very low measures of vitality, with their organ systems failing, and so forth. Yet, from a nonphysical standpoint, a spiritual standpoint, they may be quite peaceful and strong with a love and gratitude in their eyes, though the physical measures of vitality may suggest they are depleted.

Joseph E. Pizzorno, ND: I'm not sure I agree that someone on their death bed has a depleted vitality. I haven't watched a lot of people die, so I have a pretty limited personal experience data base on that. But, some people just seem to wither away and disappear while others are strong, present entities until the end.

James Sensenig, ND: Again, this also depends on our definition of vitality; whether we're talking about physical vitality or something different than that.

UnifiedEnergetics™: That's what I was getting at, this distinction between the physical and nonphysical. One's organ systems are falling apart and yet there

is something else still quite vital.

James Sensenig, ND: And that brings up the question of whether or not you see death as an end or just a transition. Maybe death is a more vital place than here, and so on and so forth.

Pamela Snider, ND: We recently had a dear friend die. He probably should have been laying down over a month ago, as he had a fast and aggressive metastatic cancer. But through the strength of his vital force, he stood up, and stayed standing and walking until several days before he died. It was not his body or his organ systems that were supporting his standing. It was someone deciding that every cell they had left was going to live, in every possible way, for every moment. It was a magnificent expression of his vital force. Watching his vital force lift him up that way deeply affected me. There seems to be something quite distinguishable between people's expression of vital force, even as their bodies are going. What is that other force, or energy, that keeps the person alive and as fully present as the remaining elements of their physical system will allow? Whatever it is, I question whether it is explainable from the materialistic view, which holds that the

physiological systems are the actual source or creator of vital energy.

Joseph E. Pizzorno, ND: I had an interesting experience this last month. As some of you know, my mother passed away. My mother and I did not get along very well, so I think this is a reasonable and objective observation. She was such an incredibly strong-willed person and lived many years beyond what she was expected to live. It was fascinating, because she had a condition where basically she was well past the point that her body could function. From my perspective, it appeared there was an incredible life force or manifestation of the will to live, independent of the physical body dying down.

Pamela Snider, ND: Explaining life force in this context and how it relates to the *vis medicatrix naturae* is evidence of its mystery and greatness, and its value for deep contemplation as a foundation for naturopathic medicine.



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