



Dr. Bill Mitchell, ND

Dr. Bill Mitchell studied pre-medicine at Marquette University and completed his BA at the University of Washington in 1971. He obtained his doctorate of naturopathic medicine in 1976, from the National College of Naturopathic Medicine. In 1978, he co-founded Bastyr University of Seattle Washington with Dr. Joe Pizzorno and Dr. Les Griffith. He has over twenty-nine years of clinical practice in Seattle and has taught extensively at Bastyr University. He is the author of two books: *Plant Medicine in Practice: Using the Teachings of John Bastyr*, and *Foundations of Natural Therapeutics: Biochemical Apologetics of Naturopathic Medicine*. Dr. Mitchell currently teaches integrative naturopathic therapeutics at Bastyr University and speaks widely at numerous professional conferences on natural medicine.

Nature's Miracles: An interview with Bill Mitchell, ND Part I

Interview by Matt Laughlin

UE (UnifiedEnergetics™): Let's begin years ago. How was your interest in healing and natural medicine sparked? How did this, your life's work, come to be?

BM (Bill Mitchell, ND): The beginning of my interest in natural medicine was when I was about nine or ten. I had a mystical experience, which was interesting. I was walking along a cobblestone road in a mining town in the middle of Illinois, and was sort of stopped in my tracks, overcome in a sense by a feeling of compassion and caring about the world and the people; as much as a nine or ten-year-old can. I have no idea where that comes from, but that's what happened.

I remember being absolutely stopped and filled with profound love and mesmerized by that. There was an aura or light; in a sense, I was in a light, a bubble of light. The vision that came to me was to be able to heal the world through love coming through my hands. I distinctly had a vision of holding people up over my head, including crippled, little, knarled-up people who were terribly diseased and having them bloom into their full selves. It's kind of an interesting vision, lasted maybe two, three minutes but seemed like a long time. I don't believe it was epileptic!

(Laughter) I haven't had a seizure since.... So I think it was a mystical event rather than an epileptic seizure. *(Laughter)*

UE Was there anyone to talk to about it?

BM No, but I remember after the experience, I had a sense that I wasn't a child anymore. I had a sense that I was an adult or thinking like an adult. My compassion was an adult compassion with an adult perspective. From that time on, I think my relationship with people and relatives and so on, was considered by them as a bit more profound, because I seemed to be more mature or deeper for my age. At any rate, I equated that mystical experience with wanting to be a doctor. Right or wrong, that was the equation. That experience equals healing and being involved in healing equals doctor.

So I went through my life, and went to Marquette University for a couple of years and studied pre-medicine, and then there was the Vietnam experience that I was involved in. When I finally got done with all of that, I was twenty-five or twenty-six, a little old for entering medical school, or entering pre-med really; I

still had two years of college left. I thought, well, gee wiz I'll be pushing thirty before I get to medical school; nobody is going to want me. I discarded the direction of being a doctor. Not the desire to heal, but the pragmatic expression of becoming a doctor was discarded. Instead, I left Chicago, where I was born and raised, to study oceanography and history at the University of Washington. When I graduated, I actually ended up almost a double degree, a bachelor of arts and a bachelor of science. The actual degree was a bachelor of arts in history, coupled with a lot of science courses, such as calculus, botany, physics, biochemistry and so on. Which brings me to a second miracle.

UE The first miracle was your mystical experience as a boy?

BM Actually, that was the second, lets say. So, first was my birth. (*Laughter*) A chance happening there – perhaps not. That vision at nine or ten. And the third miracle, I suppose, was how I went from studying oceanography at UW of Seattle, while actually living in Everett, a long way from Seattle, to end up studying naturopathic medicine. The third miracle was that I had, first of all, no knowledge of what naturopathic medicine was; I had no knowledge of what natural healing was. I'm not sure how much interest I had in it. I was interested in nature and loved it; but as I was growing up, our family lived next door to a medical doctor. Any contact with medical reality of any kind had been the standard allopathic approach to medicine.

When I graduated from the University of Washington, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I thought maybe the best thing for making money might be to become a substitute teacher, something like that might be the shortest route to using my degree. I had been making

money by teaching music, jazz theory, and jazz guitar since that's what I played. So, my life was involved in music: the study of, the playing of, and the teaching of. I thought, I want to do something else as well, and considered teaching.

At that time, in all the United States of America, there were eight students of naturopathic medicine and they were studying at the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Seattle. The teachers were the likes of Dr. Bastyr, Dr. Boucher, after whom the Boucher Institute of Naturopathic Medicine was named, and so on. Dr. Boucher ended up being one of my teachers. And it turns out, a hiking partner, and mentor to all of us as well. We used to go up to British Columbia to hike in the Garibaldi wilderness with him. He was a pathfinder and a trail maker; so, that was fun.

The unlikelihood of coming in contact with naturopathic medicine was very high. Number one, I didn't know what it was, so number two how would I have found out? I had no interest in it, nothing to drive me towards it. The universe, in its complexity and as it exists, had other ideas, probably as it did when I had my little miracle when I was nine or ten. The universe works that way. There's a synchronicity that is adhesive and it bonds people to their dreams.

So, I just happened to be living on Rockefeller Ave in Everett. A lot of people probably even know where that is, Colby and Rockefeller and all those famous streets. I happened to live across the street from a man named Les Griffith and his wife and children. We don't always get to know our neighbors either. Well, we happened to get to know them; my wife Roberta met his wife Karen and they got to talking. Roberta approached me one night and said 'Bill, there is somebody who is into a very interesting study of medicine; it's called naturopathic medicine and you might be



interested in it'.

I talked to Les and he invited me to a class to take a look, and I accepted. We got in his little Volkswagen bug, very uncomfortable passenger seat, and drove to NCM in Seattle. A one-room school house, literally, that's what it was! It had an upstairs sort of apartment library. There were eight students studying at the time. And I enrolled! (*Laughter*) Heaven only knows why. That made not much sense.

UE There was something in you that just knew to do that?

BM Well, the spark was igniting timber in me that had long lay fallow. It didn't take much. Just as the spark of a match doesn't look like much compared to an entire huge forest; but you know the power that match has. Well, that was basically the nuclear chain reaction inside of me of what my life might become. I studied for a year there, and really was about to drop out because the education was not of the quality I was accustomed to at the University of Washington, and certainly not of the quality of Market University. And low and behold, one day Dr. Boucher came down from British Columbia to teach a course and he was so inspiring, so completely dedicated to this medicine.

He was so on fire with what you could do simply with nutrition and change, so animated in his conversation, enough to really set the hook which I hadn't quite bitten on. That set the hook, and the fish was going to come all the way in at that point!

UE Dr. Bastyr was also an inspiration?

BM Definitely. I stayed and had the tremendous opportunity of studying with Dr. Bastyr for a number of courses. I hung around him, as we all did whenever possible. I went to him as a patient, I took patients to him, my family went to him and I learned from him every way I could. In fact, I wrote a book called "Plant Medicine in Practice, Using the Teachings of John Bastyr", a book about what I learned from him and my experiences in healing using botanical medicine over the last twenty-eight years. That's available from Churchill Livingston in hardback form.

So, the miracle I would say is what is the likelihood - of all the towns, and all the streets and all the cities in the United States of America, from Maine to LA - of living across from one of the naturopathic students, one of only eight students in the country? The



THE UNIVERSE, IN ITS COMPLEXITY AND AS IT EXISTS, HAD OTHER IDEAS, PROBABLY AS IT DID WHEN I HAD MY LITTLE MIRACLE WHEN I WAS NINE OR TEN. THE UNIVERSE WORKS THAT WAY. THERE'S A SYNCHRONICITY THAT IS ADHESIVE AND IT BONDS PEOPLE TO THEIR DREAMS.

likelihood is billions of a percent when you think about it. And there I was, placed directly where I could enter the door of all doors. To enter that door and to have closed that circle, is to me just as

huge a miracle as anything that's ever happened in my life.

To add a little more light to the miracle, after we graduated from the National College of Naturopathic Medicine, the college in Seattle then moved to Portland. We were the last class to have studied with Dr. Bastyr. So, had I waited one more year to move where I had moved, and so on, I would never had contacted anybody.

UE It seems as though the miracles didn't stop there. Not long after that, you and others went on to found a naturopathic college.

BM True. Let's call this the fourth miracle. I graduated in '76, and the following year started practicing in Seattle. In 1978, Joe Pizzorno and I were driving around on a Sunday morning to talk about the fate of

naturopathic medicine. We stopped off at my house and sat down at my kitchen table; probably had tea. Naturopathic medicine was going to be sunsetted in the state of Washington because nobody was taking the boards anymore. Everybody at NCNM in Portland was taking the boards for Oregon and nobody wanted to come up to Washington. So the lawmakers at the time said they were going to sunset naturopathic medicine, and Joe and I were bemoaning that possibility, wondering about our fate there; we said to each other, how can we do something about this?

The craziest idea came to our heads, which was to start a college of naturopathic medicine and train people to take the boards. Not only that, since we're going to start from scratch anyway, let's make it the best naturopathic college that we can. Let's make it the Harvard of naturopathic colleges! Let's have high intentions and high expectations. Soon after, Les joined us in this intention. From my viewpoint, intention is really the midwife of actualization or manifestation. The intention was so strong and the faith and persistence were so strong that, in essence, much like a wave of sunlight whose amplitude and frequency produces plant life, our intention and our idea produced a college.

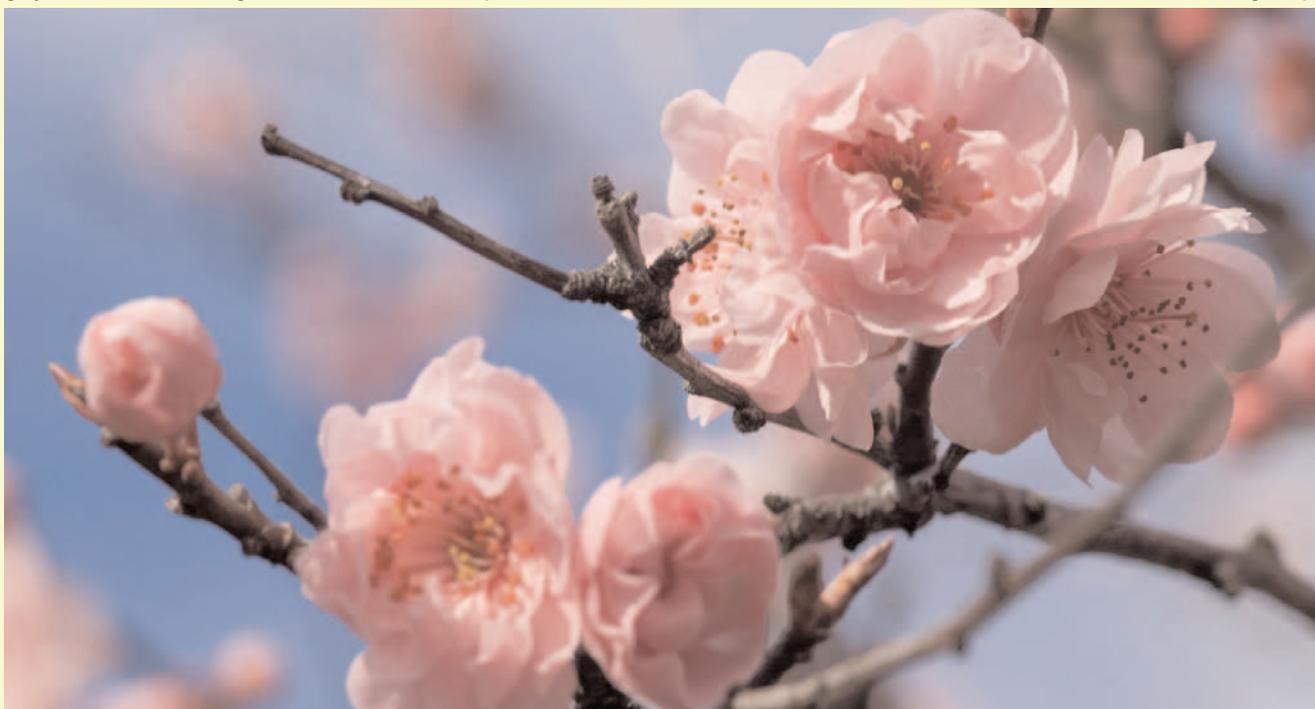
We had no money to start the university, so it started out in a broom closet on the third floor of the Seattle Central Community College. Now we're at the Bastyr University campus in Kenmore, on 50 beautiful acres of trees surrounded by another 300 acres of state park; it's really quite a beautiful campus. So, we came from a broom closet to where we are now.

The fourth miracle is, three guys who know nothing about how a college runs, really (*Laughter*); three guys with no college administrative experience, no

experience in admissions or procedures having to do with a college; none of us were teachers – other than me teaching some music. None of us had a whole lot of clinical experience because we had just graduated, and we're starting what would become Bastyr University. We had no college. We had absolutely no money. Zero. Not twenty-five cents. And we had no students.

Our goal, in March of 1978, our goal was to have a full complement of thirty-five students at a school in September of that year. My job as admissions director was to make that happen, and I did. I don't know how, but again I felt like I was in a bubble of light sort of, in the way that it was all very surreal. Students called to go to this university from completely out of the blue. The stories of how the students got to know of our place are worth an article in and of themselves because they are all magical stories.

So, folded into the fourth miracle, I would put all of these other miracles of admissions. So, the miracle is to be able to start a university with nothing, no experience and no place and no knowledge that it couldn't be done. We finally got \$200 dollars from Joe's receptionist's mother. We used the \$200 to produce some flyers proclaiming the greatness of us! (*Laughter*) We started to call people and contact people and see if Seattle Central Community College would rent us some classrooms and teach the basic science to us, speaking about the John Bastyr College of Naturopathic Medicine, as though it existed. (*Laughter*) They said yes. We hired Sheila Quinn very quickly thereafter, whom we consider a fourth founder because she actually had some experience having worked at the University of Washington in Education. And she knew how to dot i's and cross t's, and was a very careful woman in her transactions. As a result of this group,



this interesting group of people with this profound vision or idea, by September, we had thirty-five students enrolled in a broom closet.

UE That's amazing!

BM And of course, their vision of the university was Seattle Central Community College. The reality was that it was a broom closet. *(Laughter)* The library, the records office, admissions department, all of the administrative offices, were in a room about eight feet by twelve, fifteen feet, with a just file cabinet and a desk, and Sheila's uncanny ability to organize everything in that space and in that way. So that's the fourth miracle, for the universe to have provided that particular point in time space for that experiment to bloom; that particular time in place and space and those particular people - nobody else in our graduating class showed an interest in doing anything like that. Anyway, we had many trials. For that full story you will eventually want to do an interview with Joe Pizzorno or Sheila Quinn. I'll just go on to another miracle.

UE This would be the fifth miracle.

BM Yes. The fifth miracle is coming to this current state of affairs where we do have a university and that the university, and profession at large that it supports, is impacting society. It could be something as

simple as spreading the word that margarine isn't very good for our bodies and that new perspective affecting the entire socioeconomic structure of agribusiness in the United States of America. Nobody cared about it before; now, gradually people are shying away from margarine. But naturopaths did care about it, and certainly some others.

As we practiced and got patients and moved our students to different states, this seed of healing has been planted all around. Our graduates have an appreciation of the balance of people and nature. That certainly could be considered a fifth miracle; the miracle is that nature produced for herself an immune system. And a piece of that immune system is Bastyr University. The immune system produces clone cells, which are cells which go out into society and replicate the



THE MIRACLE IS THAT NATURE PRODUCED FOR HERSELF AN IMMUNE SYSTEM. AND A PIECE OF THAT IMMUNE SYSTEM IS BASTYR UNIVERSITY. THE IMMUNE SYSTEM PRODUCES CLONE CELLS, WHICH ARE CELLS THAT GO OUT TO SOCIETY AND REPLICATE THE IDEAS INTO THE PATIENT POPULATION. IT ACTS EXACTLY LIKE AN IMMUNE SYSTEM, WHERE THERE IS AN INNATE INTELLIGENCE, AND THAT INTELLIGENCE DESIRES A BEAUTY AND FULLNESS AND WHOLENESS AND HEALING.

ideas into the patient population. It acts exactly like an immune system, where there is an innate intelligence, and that intelligence desires a beauty and fullness and wholeness and healing.

In the human body, if we cut

or hurt ourselves, there is an innate wisdom that knows exactly how to heal it if we get out its way, and if we provide the raw materials and the incentive to do that, the desire. By the same token, the universe, I think, perceiving the ecological and philosophical catastrophe confronting itself - the drugs and the environmental catastrophe, the sociological catastrophe of people living lives that are compartmentalized and unfull - all such catastrophes against the human spirit and against nature's spirit, compelled nature to devise for herself this immune system to heal. Because in nature, you burn down a forest and blacken an area, then the immune system of nature is going to heal that burned scar. In a hundred years, you have a big, dark forest again. It will heal it; nature will heal the skin of the earth.

UE And just as nature heals the skin of the earth, so too will it heal the human community?

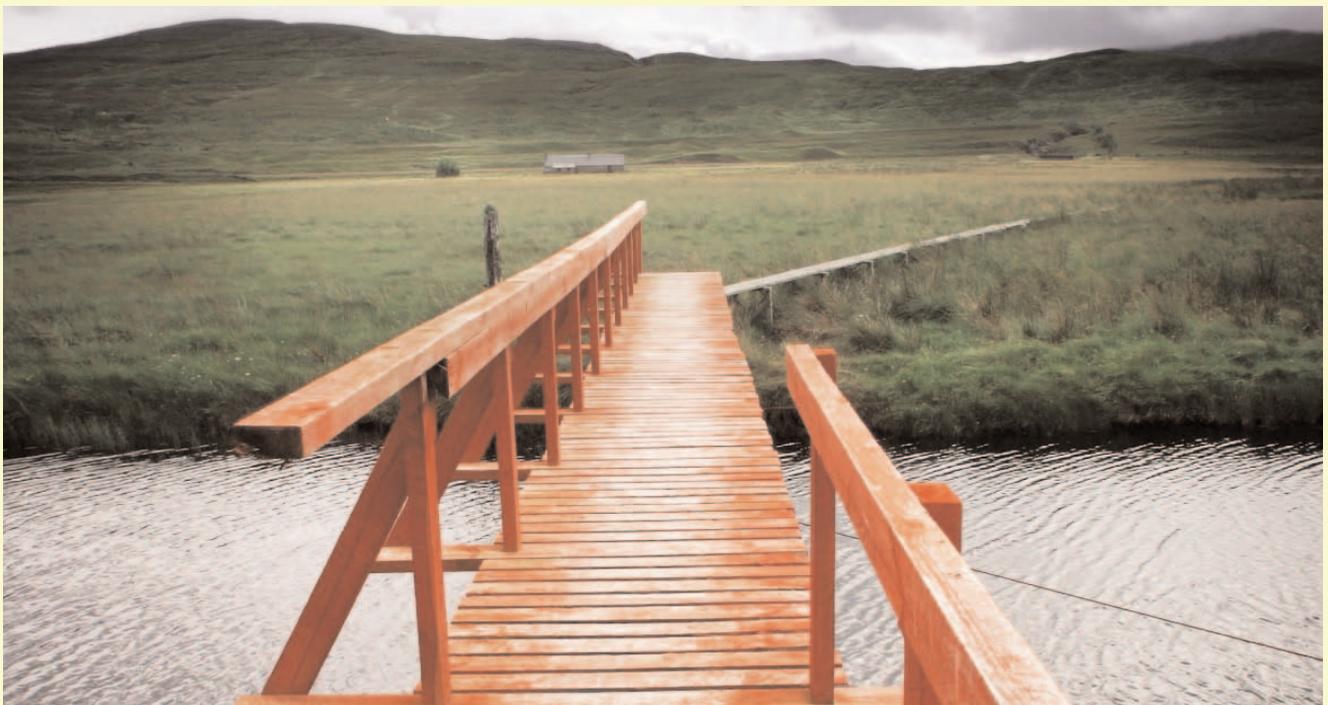
BM Exactly. Here, we have people going in the wrong direction, wrong economic directions, with lies, untruths, partial truths and perverted science – where experiments are used, and what is wanted is pulled out and what is not wanted is hidden. In response to all of those perversions of truth, nature has devised for herself an immune system. In my view point, naturopathic medicine is an essential part of that immune system. It literally goes out to teach people how to be well in body, mind, spirit and nature. How to connect with all of these things, how to appreciate nature, how to appreciate that health comes from nature. The fifth miracle is how, much like earth learned how to have a relationship with the sun and how to use light to make things, nature has produced a way for people to heal themselves. So that people can become what people really are, which is phenomenal, incredible, magnificent beings, who will probably eventually go everywhere in the universe. Who knows, I don't know.

Think about where earth is now, with its wars and overcrowding and challenges. To think there is a group of people constantly working for the health and well-being and integrity of those we serve is inspiring. And we're relentless about that. Our science is pure and true; we're not trying to push or sell a product. People aren't sad because they don't have enough Prozac. People don't have headaches because they don't have enough aspirin. The medication of the psyche of human beings by drugs and those kinds of things really is not getting to the underlying problem of why we are unhappy and sad to begin with.

UE This series of miracles you speak of seems to blossom in a way so as to increasingly benefit more and more people.

BM In the spirit of talking about miracles, another comes to mind. We'll call it the sixth miracle. In 1985, I was approached by Rama Vernon to go to the Soviet Union, or present-day Russia, which at that time was the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. It was a communist situation, not very productive to human wellness, as I saw when I went over there. And of course, there was the cold war; everyone was very concerned about nuclear war, and the proliferation of these weapons, the accumulation of radioactive materials.

Nature, once again, did something very interesting, which a lot of people don't know about though this is an important story. The miracle is that seventy of us went over to the Soviet Union at that time; I was one of them, representing medicine. In the Soviet Union, a lot of the medicine was natural medicine. They used hydrotherapy, counseling and herbs. A lot of their hospitals were just cots in a big room. Not very much of the sophisticated, fancy, expensive medical stuff was there. I was one of several doctors who represented medicine, and I represented the kind of the medicine that they were interested in – physical adjustments, natural approaches, the plants. I visited some of their hospitals. I met the woman who would be the equivalent to our surgeon general, but of the Soviet Union. I spoke with Vladimir Schrenko, a pathologist of the University of Moscow. Talk about science really bringing people together. We talked about all sorts of scientific things. At that time, the



topic was leukotrienes, or slow reacting substances of anaphylaxis. We talked about allergies and asthma and some of the exciting findings we were making in prostaglandin chemistry.

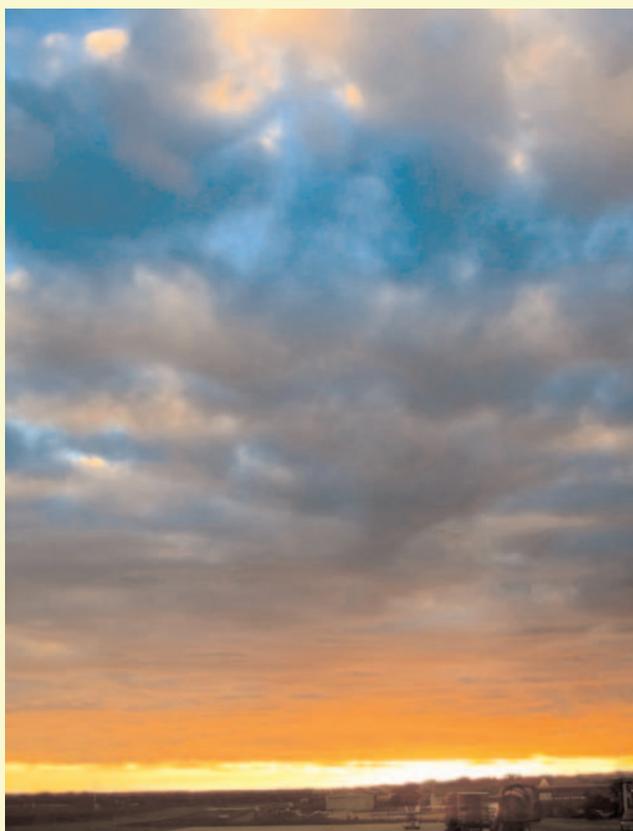
The seventy of us went over there to form bridges between our two countries; it was, in fact, called 'The Bridges Project'. There were some very interesting people in that group; Patch Adams, Swami Satchidananda, Mike Ferrell from the TV show MASH, the actor Dennis Weaver and his wife, Gerry. Shelley Fabares, who was Shelley on the Musketeers in the '50s and '60s was in that group. Barbara Marx Hubbard, was there, who had run for president of the United States. I can't tell you all, there were so many profound people. I'm sorry to leave them out.

So, we all got together over there with our hearts just completely filled with love and expectations to mend this rift between our two peoples. We visited some underground churches, we talked to their politicians; ultimately a later group talked to Gorbachev. We talked to their radio personalities and movie makers. We had moviemakers of our own as well, producers and directors. Dennis Weaver was very famous there; they knew him and played his shows on TV, translated into Russian. And, of course, they listened in on our rooms; the KGB listened into every room. We actually saw the main complex where all the rooms were wired up. It was kind of interesting; they didn't seem to have much to hide! (*Laughter*)

UE What did they find out about you?

BM They found out from us that - holy mackerel, here are people who love us for some reason or another. All they want is peace; they're the real deal. They're where America really is; these are the real and important people - not the government smoochers. These are the people who really want peace and harmony from their hearts, not politically, because we all were of different political orientations. As a result of that trip, subsequent trips, and other trips like it... You remember how the Iron Wall came down in Berlin? Remember how that came down? It wasn't slowly. There was one day it was and one day it wasn't. All of the countries that were under soviet domination were liberated, Latvia, Lithuania; all of those countries suddenly weren't communist anymore. They were free to have their own governments; it happened in a flash. That was sparked, I think, by these kinds of visits, where people really operated from a nonpolitical place; it came completely from Spirit. Only Spirit could end something that fast. It wasn't negotiations for years and years on end. It was cold war distrust into a new age of greater harmony. And, that's how it happened. We'll call that the sixth miracle.

On that trip, there was a real willingness to share,



a willingness to see the common humanity in our two countries, a willingness to see common goals. And that was the end of it; that was the end of the cold war, very shortly thereafter. There were many of these kinds of bridge visits, by the way. Ours was one of many, but it was a profound one. I think those visits resulted in, as much as anything, the end of the cold war and what we called the profound nuclear destructive age, and possibly the end of the threat to the earth of that kind of annihilation. You might think of it energetically; that Gaia, perceiving the unrest of her children, the fear, found a solution.

UE I was only eleven years old in 1985, but I do recall being very afraid and worried about a nuclear war.

BM And it wasn't safe. I was a boy in the '50s, in the McCarthy period, and all that stuff, when everybody was terrified. We were waiting almost in the car any minute for the nuclear war to begin; it was terrible. Cuba was one crisis, but it was like a crisis happened every day in the '50s. So, this is an example, again, of Gaia's innate healing capacity. I look at that time in the '80s as a healing moment in the collective consciousness of earth herself; earth perceiving a problem and finding a solution through various means. I am grateful to have been part of it. I see it as the same kind of energy that drove me to naturopathic medicine also led me to the former Soviet Union, to what is now Russia.

UE Is there a seventh miracle?

BM We're in the midst of it, and you can feel it happening. This is a miracle where we are all beginning to feel profoundly uncomfortable with social and medical and financial lies. They exist, and the earth is still being exploited and the rain forest is still being cut down; all of these things exist. But we don't have such a blithe attitude towards them anymore. People are beginning to be concerned about these things and frankly getting a little tired of it. We're tired of the lies and the manipulation of the political system. And the political system itself is becoming more transparent. In the '50s, it was like, whatever Uncle Sam wants, we do, boy; toe the line. Now, everybody is questioning leadership. What is President Bush doing? How does he think? How does the administration think? Where are we going ecologically? How dirty are we going to let the water get? Are we going to let submarines conduct their sonic wave experiments and deafen whales who then beach themselves? All of these destructive things - little and big things - people, en masse, are beginning to question. And I mean, beginning. Don't get me wrong; I am not under the illusion that we are there.

Yet, we are beginning to feel Gaia's movement towards healing. Think of the hundredth monkey theory, and how that works; we're going to get a certain amount of people seeded throughout the culture, curious enough and disenchanting enough with how we're running things to demand a new paradigm of how we live on planet earth. And that new paradigm is going to be profound.

We're in the midst, now, of a tremendous miracle that is happening and you can feel how Gaia works. It is not just naturopathic medicine, although we will continue to be an immune system, but in all kinds of systems as well. Even in industry they are beginning to say, hey, there is a limit to pollution; this thinking doesn't feel right in my soul anymore. We're not there

yet, but there is a limited number of people we can put on the earth per acre and still have a quality of life that blends human and nonhuman nature together into something that works, what you call a sustainable cosmology. Because if we don't attain that, then people are going to be destroyed on Gaia. And its only 100 or 200 years from now that that will happen if we don't change. But you can feel the change; you can feel the consciousness beginning to change. You can feel Gaia is starting to make some new systems. Even in allopathic medicine now, for example, we are seeing people interested in CAM, (complementary and alternative medicine), prevention, holism and so on. Those are not freaky terms anymore; they are mainstream terms. There is a department of complementary and alternative medicine in the National Institute of Health; that didn't exist just sixteen years ago.

UE This shift in consciousness you are speaking to brings to mind an image of a rising to the surface that which is not aligned with integrity, that which is not in accord with beauty, health and wellness. And though there seems to be more conflict, it actually may be understood to be a reflection of a deeper healing taking place.

BM Exactly right. There are all kinds of medical models for that. Injury or disease that is down deep inside of us, coming out towards the surface; that kind of medical idea has existed in natural medicine for so long. Yes, we are seeing that change in consciousness happen politically and sociologically as well. Even now, for example, they are having quite a bit of trouble getting that drilling going in that pristine wilderness of the Artic Wildlife Refuge. They can't just go in and do it so easily. By gosh, if this was in the '50s or '60s, you wouldn't have heard about it; it would have been done. You would not have had much of a say in it. Today is different. The consciousness of the planet is evolving; and that, in and of itself, is a miracle.

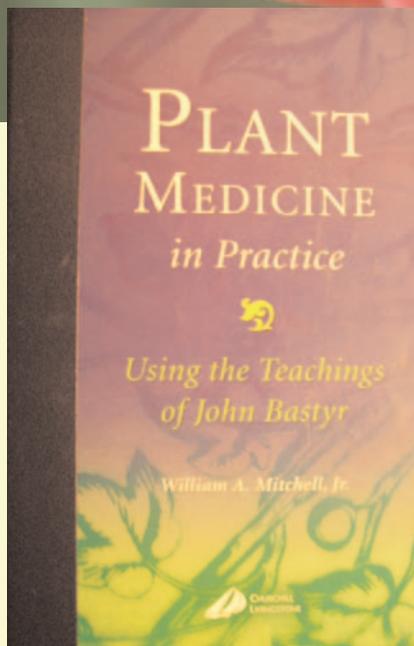


next issue spotlight

* Join us again in our summer issue of *UnifiedEnergetics*™ for “*The Equations of the Vis Medicatrix Naturae*,” part II of this interview in which Dr. Mitchell speaks about several topics on natural medicine. Dr. Mitchell shares his view of the science of natural medicine, including both evidenced-based and traditional approaches. The reader is guided through various levels of the healing power of plant medicinals, from isolated constituents, to an integral whole of various constituents, to the energetic relationships between plants and humans. Finally, Dr. Mitchell speaks to the healing potential of the “equations” of the *vis medicatrix naturae*, including remarkable examples witnessed in patients at his clinical practice in Seattle.

Introducing

Dr. Bill Mitchell's new book release.....



Plant Medicine in Practice: Using the Teachings of John Bastyr

This unique book is derived from the teachings of the great eclectic naturopathic physician, John Bastyr - recognized by his peers as one of the greatest natural healers in the world. Through practical advice and insight drawn from Dr. Bastyr's notes, lectures, and writings, as well as the author's own clinical experiments with plants during 25 years of practice, this carefully compiled volume provides a distinctive picture of the man and his medicine.

Based on the teachings of Dr. John Bastyr, text presents plant medicines formatted by physiologic systems. Includes suggestions on the use of the medicines and doses based on author's actual experience with patients. Emphasis is placed on plant medicines in the clinical environment and applications in a wide-variety of categories.

- * Discussions of the author's actual experience with plants recount real-world findings in a clinical environment.
- * Accurate doses for herbal therapies are provided, disputing many of the "accepted" doses that are often too conservative to be effective.
- * Eclectic herbalism, a highly effective form of medicine, is introduced and taught so that the practitioner can adopt it in practice.
- * The preservation of Dr. Bastyr's knowledge and work occupies an important historical niche, providing unique and practical insight into the work of a key figure in the development of herbal medicine and the naturopathic tradition.
- * Simple language and easy-to-understand discussions break down complex medicine into concepts that can be applied to practice.
- * Only clinically tried-and-true applications of the plant medicine are given, making this book concise, to-the-point, and relevant.
- * The use of lesser known plants provides coverage of remedies not commonly considered in recent studies.
- * An alphabetical organization according to physiological categories makes it easy to locate all the plants in a wide variety of categories, such as alternatives, skin remedies, astringents, diuretics, etc.
- * Anecdotal evidence based on the author's and Dr. Bastyr's findings show specific examples of the results that might be expected from the use of certain plants.
- * Practical advice is offered, comprehensively capturing a key piece of the tradition of herbal medicine.

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The Equations of the *Vis Medicatrix Naturae*: An interview with Bill Mitchell, ND

Part II

Interview by Matt Laughlin

UE (UnifiedEnergetics™) Though holistic approaches to health and wellness are increasingly valued as we discussed in the first part of this interview, it seems that healthcare professionals often make an artificial separation between ‘evidenced based’ medicine and ‘natural’ forms of medicine. Science based approaches and natural approaches to medicine seem to be interpreted as though they are separate or in opposition to one another. Would you speak to this perception?

BM (Bill Mitchell, ND): Science is used every single day in the pursuit of natural medicine, demonstrating that natural medicine works. I don’t know why natural medicine has been perceived to be excluded from the scientific idea. I think that is artificial. Natural medicine is constantly being probed and looked at by very solid scientific methodology. We have experimentation going on in the immune system, how it works and what enhances it. We have a tremendous amount of research going on in nutrition, as well as botanical medicine and plant medicine, and how the plants work.

The National Cancer Institute is interested in looking at plants.

Note that two major chemotherapeutic groups, taxanes and camptothecins, are both oncological agents derived from nature, from plants and from ideas in nature. All of the molecules on earth are nature. If we alter them a little bit, we’re still nature. People are nature; we are not apart from nature. All of these experiments we are doing with drugs and so on are really taking natural molecules and adding a methyl group here, a carbon there, but those basic building blocks still exist in nature. The majority of pharmacological agents are derived from plant sources. So everything we do in science is nature in the ultimate sense. However, to what degree our clinical practices are aligned with the laws and overall context of nature is an ongoing question, and a constant study.

Let’s start with this concept you mentioned of ‘evidenced based’. We now have a group of people who believe in natural medicine if it is evidenced based, evidence meaning there have been double-blind clinical

trials on a given substance. That's perfectly fine and I am certainly in favor of running clinical trials on individual medicines. Whether it's belladonna, chamomile, ginkgo or echinacea, or whatever you're going to run it on. That kind of science is happening in natural medicine right now. So, if there are a lot of research papers on a particular plant that says that it is doing what it is supposed to do, if the research shows that it is doing that, we call it 'evidence based.' Therefore, a lot of people won't have any trouble using ginkgo, for example, to enhance mental sharpness. The same goes for coffee; a small amount of coffee is demonstrated to enhance mental sharpness. The research is in, the evidence is there and we can use it. We call that evidence based medicine.

However, natural medicine - which involves a holistic view of human beings, body, mind and spirit - can never be adequately investigated by the double-blind trial methodology. It is erroneous to think that science includes only double-blind, crossover methodology. That is just one method of investigative science. Einstein's equation of $E=mc^2$ was not determined by a double-blind trial. There wasn't a false equation thrown in for a bunch of scientists to look at to see which worked. And yet, $E=mc^2$ is an aspect of science. Hard physics is a foundational aspect of science, yet it will never be double-blind tested like a pill.

It's very important to understand that the double-blind crossover trial to investigate individual pharmaceutical agents is a scientific methodology designed to test those agents. While the payoff is a lot of money, there is nothing wrong with that scientific method, and it is clearly a well-accepted way of investigating a single material. As I mentioned, however, in that tradition there is no good way of investigating how we get well when we are sick - because there are so many systems involved in the body. There are so many different aspects of healing - nutritional, botanical, pharmaceutical and everything else that can be involved in the study of how we really get well. There is so much influencing how somebody goes from being ill - whether depressed, physically ill, mentally ill, spiritually ill - to arriving to a better state of being. This is also true with psychology and psychiatry; the counseling process varies from individual to individual, and cannot be understood exclusively by double-blind studies.

UE In other words, there is an important difference between provability in a limited, double-blind context and verifying or observing efficacy in other ways.

BM Precisely. We might ask, is experience over years and years evidence? That is my question - is experience a form of evidence? Let's take hawthorn berry. Hawthorn berry has been used by the Greeks as far back as 500 years BC. It has been used by the Romans, the Europeans, the Americans, the Native

Americans and probably the Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures. In all cases, as far back as we know, hawthorn berry has been used for making the heart stronger, for helping circulation. Naturopaths have been using it for 100 years, since the inception of naturopathy as a word. And natural medicine, which is the heart of naturopathy, is thousands of years old. I would suggest that so much experience with hawthorn berry qualifies as evidenced based. Fifty million grandfathers and grandmothers can't be wrong! (Laughter) I would call such long-observed traditional experience very good science: investigational, observational, empirical and verifiable.

In contrast, consider some of the psychotropic drugs initially considered very scientific. Who would have predicted that teenagers would have been committing suicide at such alarming rates while taking Prozac? And that's observational science. I don't think science has sufficiently shown why these people are committing suicide, yet it's certainly a critical aspect of that particular medicine that occurs sometimes. That isn't to say that Prozac is a bad drug; it's most definitely therapeutic in certain contexts. It is to say that when we produce these molecules and thrust them on the market after only a couple years of intensive investigation, God knoweth what's going to happen five years later, especially regarding how it affects the nervous system and the psyche. I feel much more comfortable giving hawthorn berry tea or other such medicinals. And



now there is a lot of additional science around hawthorn berry, close and thorough investigation of how it works.

UE That brings to mind a question regarding the difference between utilizing isolated constituents of a given plant and/or utilizing plant medicines as integral wholes. What are your thoughts regarding such seemingly different approaches, such as with hawthorn berry or other botanicals?

BM Well, I would say, how far down the rabbit hole do you want to go? (Laughter) Let's go three levels. The first level would be that hawthorn berry doesn't just contain the bioflavonoids and related compounds which help the integrity of blood vessels and therefore circulation, and therefore, the integrity of the tissue itself. Hawthorn berry also contains a certain amount of carotenes and minerals and all kinds of other compounds that are good for the body. So, when we are taking the whole plant we are taking a whole bunch of constituents.

At this level, then, what is the total effect of the plant versus the isolated medicinal material's effect? We frequently find in nature that the secondary constituents of the plant, besides the identified medicinal constituents, further support the medicinal constituent or modify the actions of medicinal constituents. There is this whole level in which if we take the whole plant, we get vitamins, minerals, carotenes, flavonoids and other compounds in addition to the identified medicinal constituent.

The second level to consider is when we use the whole plant in a way which I will call - and here we get into metaphysics - respectfully using the plant. That is to say when we gather it in a way in which we are trying to get a good, useful specimen, we do so respectfully. We're conscious of the propagation of the species, and we take care not to wipe out our whole supply. We ensure the soil in which the plant grew was good or indigenous. Later, we make our medicine carefully. This way we are going to get more medicinal constituents in that plant, and especially, a lot more secondary constituents like the minerals and many other compounds we know are nourishing for the body. So, the manner in which it is harvested and the fact that we use the whole plant as tea or as a powdered capsule, or whatever, gives a lot more benefit than simply isolating the medicinal constituent alone.

The third level we can go to, and we are getting further down the rabbit hole now, recognizes the plants as living entities. They have a consciousness. They are conscious of what's around them. They have therefore made things for their own immune system to protect them from bacteria and viruses and other potential harm. We don't see many plants in nature that are infected by things. We do, but not often. The plants



have an innate mechanism for survival, learned over many, many years. And when we take that intelligence into our bodies, our bodies use some of those materials in the same way. The flavonoids and the carotenes used for protection from the sun are also antioxidants that offer protection to humans. So, in essence, we're taking in the intelligence of the plant. That would be a third level of using the whole plant.

UE Can we go farther down the rabbit hole? What other healing levels are there to consider?

BM We could go down to a fourth level, and I'll just speak to this briefly. At this level, we recognize plants have a relationship with us. There is a personality that they have which interacts with our personalities. The ancients explored this by what they called doctrine of signatures. If a plant looked like a kidney, for instance, we might use it to treat the kidney. The shape of the plant and the shape of the kidney somehow relate to one another. We think of ginseng root as shaped like a man. And, it turns out ginseng is very beneficial to men. There are many other doctrines of signatures. Intuitively, human beings have looked at the anthropomorphism of plants, how plants are kind of like us, how their story is like our story and so we take them in energetically to help that aspect of ourselves. At the level of energetics, we see that the life force of plants, the healing power of plants, the story that the plant contains, shares itself with the human story. So that when we take in a medicine, the body is imbued with, if you

will, an entire story of that plant's existence, its evolution from cell one to now.

Going farther down the rabbit hole, we have to look at the fact that human beings have carrot DNA type stuff, eagle DNA type stuff. In other words, we have in our gene pool not just what we call the human genetic genome. There are genes that are shared, these kinds of gene structures that are shared with other things on the planet as we all evolved. Let us say that as life emerged from the earth, and we were emerging with it and became a species, the DNA and the memories and all of that history goes along with us. So, if we take in a carrot there is a certain aspect of the human being that remembers its 'carrotness,' if you will. If we take in an algae, we certainly remember our 'algaeness' when we were algae - which we were, it's just a matter of years.

So, that's an awful long answer to your original question, and I'm sure we've gotten into five other questions. I'll end by saying that the role of plant medicine and natural healing in human health has many, many, many levels. All the way into homeopathic medicines, which is another whole story, a story of very small amounts of something triggering very large events in our body, helping us remember ways of healing.

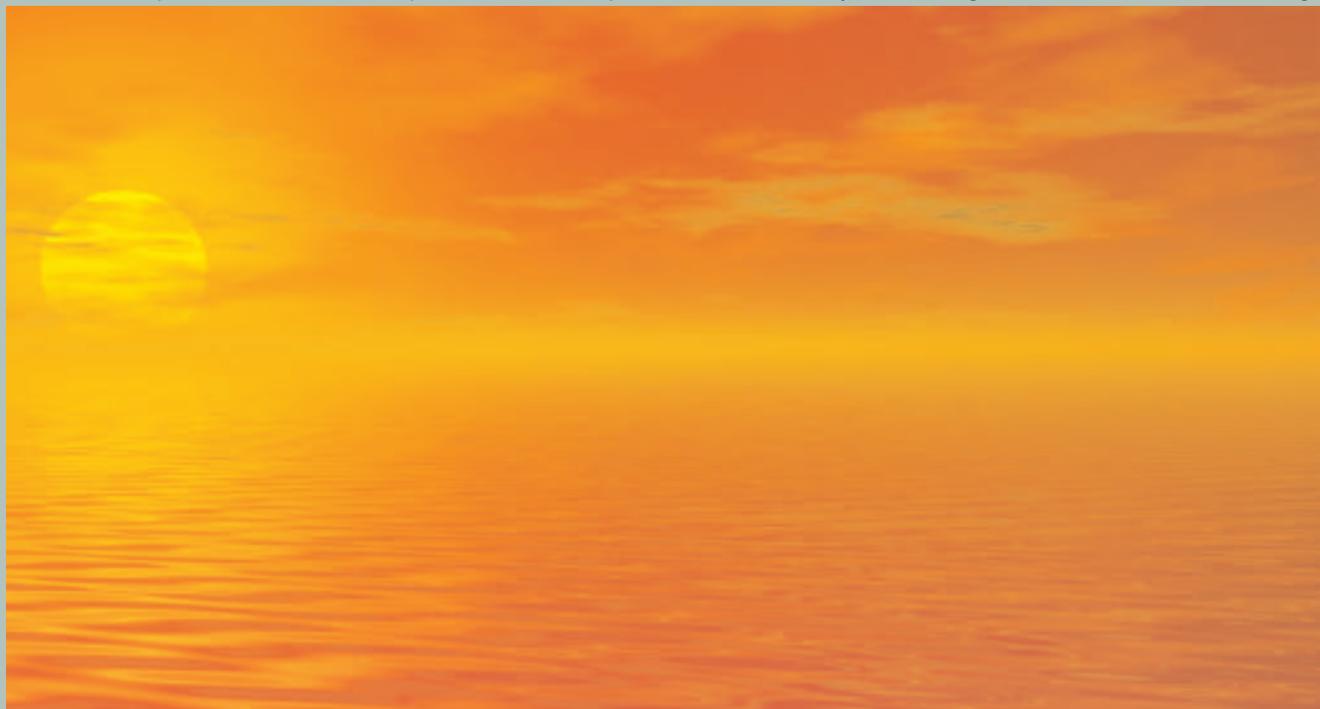
UE Another question that comes to mind in what you shared is to ask, what is your understanding of the *vis medicatrix naturae*?

BM The *vis medicatrix naturae* might translate into something such as 'the healing power of nature.' I would like to answer it by saying the *vis medicatrix naturae* is an equation, a series of equations which equal

health, and then let you and the reader play with it in your own minds. Like any equation, we can plug in values and get various answers. The values we plug in can be higher or lower; however, the equation stays. An equation of the *vis medicatrix naturae* might be, $AB + CD = X + N$; and that sits there. We can plug in values; let's say exercise, plus food, plus air, plus water equals N, where N is the value of health. If we plug in less water and poorer air and so on, we're going to get N changing. Yet, the equation is basic and remains. The *vis medicatrix naturae* is really a vast set of equations for an equally vast set of contexts and scenarios.

The equations remain and they allow us to be healthy or not healthy, depending on the values we plug in. If you cut yourself, the healing power of nature as an equation having to do with healing a cut will come into play. The equation exists, and the body is going to try and figure out how to heal. However, we can make that healing slower or faster depending on what values we plug into the equation. For example, if a wound requires being free of dirt and we provide that, we're adding something to the equation. If air is needed to heal a wound and we plug this wound up with an air free film so air can't get to it, the wound will probably heal a lot more slowly and there may be infection underneath. The equation for healing the wound still stands, but we've given air a very low value, a very low number and this will affect the rate and quality of healing.

So, think of the *vis medicatrix naturae* as a series of equations. Many of them; thousands of them. Some have to do with the spleen, others with the liver and detoxification - they are all equations and they sit there ready to be plugged into. What we put into them has to do with vitality, knowledge and so on. If we do things



such as breathe better air, drink adequate, clean water and many other things, we are going to make the collective organism more vital. In a sense, we are more vital because we are plugging larger values into those equations which just sit there all the time ready to be filled, constantly being solved. As we change a value, we get a new answer to the equation.

This is really important because a lot of people think of the *vis medicatrix naturae* as some kind of very abstract thing. It's not; it's practical and it's very, very scientific. If we have enough selenium to make an enzyme system go, it's going to go. If we don't have enough selenium, the enzyme system may not function very well. The equation to make the enzyme system go exists; that's the *vis*. If we don't put enough selenium in there, that equation is just going to have a very slow solution.

UE Such a perspective ultimately seems like a very empowering view of healing.

BM This is true. The *vis medicatrix naturae* is in alignment with the organization of the universe in human beings, in alignment with how things tend to move towards sustainability, life and wellness, not death. How we live determines how optimally the *vis medicatrix naturae* works, in so far as what values we are plugging into those equations, and that's empowering. Those equations can run real strong when a lot of optimal values are plugged in. Therefore, we do have a choice in how we want to support these equations, and how to live more vitally. We have a choice, whether we smoke or not, whether we exercise or not. All these are going to affect the outcome of the equations of the *vis*.

The naturopathic physician holds that the human being has the capability of healing all things, because the equations are there for healing. Knowing what to plug in and what those equations are is a constant study of naturopathic medicine. We are studying what the *vis* is, what all these equations are. Once we know the equation, we study how to best plug in the most optimal values. Once we learn, for example, that selenium, plus fatty acids, plus zinc and saw palmetto berries and whatever else, equals good prostate health then we know how to best cultivate prostate health because now we know this equation and how to work with it most effectively. So, in essence, naturopathic medicine is the study of the laws of nature, the study of the equations of the *vis medicatrix naturae*. It's the study of vitality, of how we can plug the best values into those equations, to make the number that comes out positive to life, rather than negative or destructive.

UE The image of the *vis* your answer evoked for me is of an infinite field of potentiality. How you relate to it contributes to the outcome. Yet, regardless of our



actions, the field of the *vis medicatrix naturae* is always there, ever-present and unscathed.

BM That's correct, it's always present. What is evoked by the Spirit out of the heart of what you just said to me is: What is the potential of human experience? What is the potential of human health? For which the *vis* already exists, but we don't know it. Where can we go in human health? Do the equations exist for different kinds of sensory systems? Is the soul an emerging sensory system which allows us to be connected with everything? Is the ultimate fate of human consciousness to be everywhere in the universe? Is that part of the *vis*? Is that our healthiest self? Is that where the equations really want us to go, and what is it that wants us to go?

As we are studying quantum physics, more and more we are learning that we have an energetic self as well as a particulate self. And the energetic self seems to be interconnected with energy everywhere, which is curious. A quote I've heard many times, though I don't recall who said it, is that the best scientists in the world hold that if you study quantum physics and are not completely amazed, flabbergasted and blown out of the water, then you do not understand the significance of quantum physics. The soul, what we call the soul, might be an emerging sensory system which can feel and be a continuous part of things that are all over the place energetically, not limited to the more corporal, physical realm that we currently identify with. According to quantum physics, we are both in that realm and

in another realm which is infinitely vast. Perhaps the vis is that aspect of our nature that is driving us to a more and more complete self, that aspect of curiosity which drives us to realize our visions, to become more than what we are now.

So, from your comment, my question then is: What is the potential of human beings? What is wellness, really? Are we sad because we are ultimately frustrated that there is so much potential underneath yearning to emerge and develop? There are all of these wonderfully complicated questions that have to do with human health. A lot of people come in to see me in my practice profoundly sad because they have forgotten how to dream any dreams, have any fun, and learn new things. They are not learning any more, and they end up sick. They are spiritually and physically sick. We might say that the number of equations they are taking advantage of in the vis are very few and the values they are plugging in are very low.

UE Can you think of a patient or two that you have worked with in your practice that captures this potential inherent in the vis?

BM Sure, let me tell you about one that comes to mind. This is going to blow you away, and I hope it will blow the readers away because it blows me away to think about it. This is a true story; once upon a time, an eighty-one year old man came into my practice with leukemia. He was helped in through the doors of the practice by his wife on one arm and a cane on the other arm, going inch by inch, white as a sheet from leukemia. Eighty-one, this pale piece of paper, he came into my office and I looked at him and I thought to myself, how can I help him? What can I do?

There is a lot of biochemistry, all of which probably wouldn't work very well. Taking a pill isn't going to do much for an eighty-one year old who has very little life force. Yet the *vis medicatrix naturae* is there; all of the equations are there. Some of them have zero values. When you plug zero plus zero it's going to equal zero; forty-three times zero divided by the square root of zero is going to equal zero. It doesn't matter how complicated the equation is, its going to equal zero if the value is zero. Well, we've got zero coming in the door, practically.

To make a very long story very short, what we ended up doing was put him on a machine called gravity guidance. It's like a bed on a fulcrum so you can turn yourself upside down of your own volition by laying on this flat platform and putting your hands up over your head. As you put your hands up over your head, it slants you down more and more so your head is more toward the floor and your feet are up in the air. And if you put your hands down to your side, then you're laying with your feet just slightly lower than your head. I hooked this guy up onto that, God knoweth why!



(Laughter) The last thing in the world any doctor in the United States of America is going to do is make a trapeze artist out of this character (Laughter).

We put him on there, hooked his feet up in the boots and adjusted the machine so when his hands were down at his side, he was laying almost parallel to the ground, his head slightly higher than his feet, very comfortable for him. Then we said okay, now if you take your hands and slowly begin to bring them over your head then you'll slowly tilt this machine down. And then when you are uncomfortable with that, slowly bring your hands back down to your side and you're back to normal. He started very slowly, he was afraid; slowly down, and then a little more. And all of a sudden what clicked in for him is that he had some control over things he could never ask his body to do in any other way. He couldn't do a handstand, he could hardly get down or up and off the floor and here he is able to flip all the way around by his own power.

Pretty soon he began to get his hands to where he would be tilted maybe ten degrees with his head lower than his feet, then come back up. He would come, visit after visit, and pretty soon it was thirty and forty degrees; then all of a sudden during one of the visits he is almost all the way vertical and then all the way horizontal, then all the way vertical and he's just moving his hands like this - absolutely blissed out at the experience of movement that he had forgotten probably forty years ago.

What happened from this? You'll notice number

one, no medicine was given in pill form; his diet wasn't changed. Nothing was changed in this man except his sense of personal power; his perception of his personal power and his ability to have some fun changed. Physically, in terms of vascularity and circulation, his body was suddenly in motion internally in a way that it never thought it could be; pressure being taken off the spine in places, the liver moving slightly, the intestines moving slightly as he is going up and down, up and down, all of this pumping and circulation.

What happened was, the leukemia went away. He had no more leukemia. His blood tests were normal. He was able to walk a dog without his wife, just using a cane because he was used to it; almost as a defense in case somebody came up, to smack them on the noggin (Laughter) or knock an apple out of the tree if he wanted to eat. (Laughter) And he lived to be ninety-two. After his wife died, he lost his will to live. Gravity guidance, nothing, could bring that back. And by the way, this gravity guidance, turning upside down, backswinging thing, lasted two or three years; that was all it took. He didn't even use that any more; he didn't need it.

In terms of the vis, in terms of these formulae, in a sense you could multiply some of the results by multiplicands such as the desire to be well, or other spiritual and energetic factors. This man's life was completely changed by a physical tool that he used. Somehow, this equation, $x + y + z + b + n = \text{no leukemia}$, had enough values plugged into it that the answer was no leukemia. Such an equation is not in the medical model of using chemotherapy. Chemotherapy would have killed him right away; he was too weak for that. Yet, he got well. I didn't even talk to him about curing leukemia; I talked to him about vitality. I talked to him about living and so on; I completely forgot about the disease. I was interested in him as an energetic being and what would happen with his energy and his life. And that's what happened.

That's just one story of thousands of patients who have come in, and I mean thousands, because I have been practicing for close to thirty years now. Some of their stories still give me goose bumps. I'll just shake my head and realize I know nothing about the vis, even though I study it all the time. I can't predict the healing power of nature.

UE Even in the most seemingly difficult of situations, there exists this potential.

BM Exactly. I am reminded of a second very brief story of a woman with breast cancer in great pain, the cancer completely metastasized into the bones, with lymph nodes the size of baseballs, and her breast completely eaten away with inflammatory cancer. I sent her home with vitamins and herbs and some eating advice. She came back six months later for a physical - com-

pletely healed. I asked her what happened? And her answer was "Well, I got an herb book, and I read if you took three tablespoons of clover and three tablespoons of chaparral, make tea out of it and drink that each day it could cure breast cancer. So I did that for the last four or five months because I knew you weren't going to help me. It didn't come across that you had much confidence" - *which is true, I didn't have much confidence* - "But this book was so sure, and it spoke of it so highly, I completely trusted it and did this." And all her lymph nodes were normal; no pain in the back. The breast was completely gone, nothing was left of the breast, just healed over skin - and she came in totally healed of cancer.

While a botanical was used in this case, I think most significantly she used the healing power of expectation, faith and intention. This is why naturopathic medicine speaks of the body, mind, spirit and nature as tools of healing. This is why holism is worth studying, and learning about, because we never cease learning more about the remarkable equations of the *vis medicatrix naturae*.

