



NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE ACADEMY

The Naturopathic Gathering

Closing Plenary

James S. Sensenig ND

May 21-23, 2004

Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine Tempe, Az.

Introduction – History of the Gathering

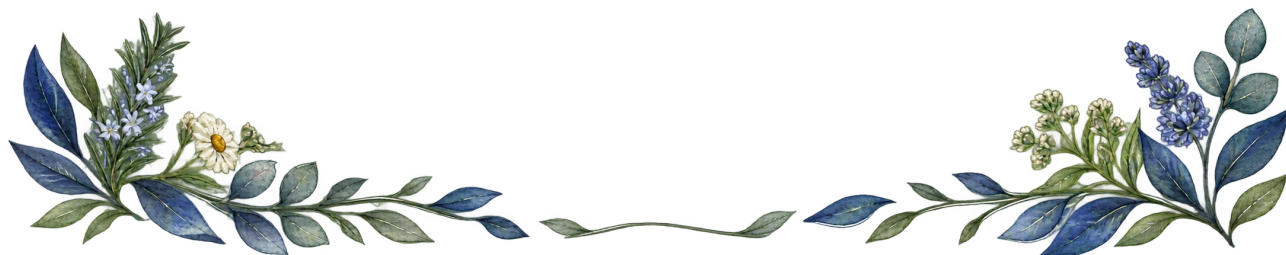
The Gathering began as a spark of inspiration and grew and evolved with each passing year taking on a life of its own. The first Gathering was conceived in the winter of 2002-2003 by 5 Naturopathic students at SCNM: Brendan McCarthy, Randy Spicer, John Robinson, Cristina Romero-Bosch, and Joe Holcomb. Joe decided to take the lead with the approval of the others, as he began, he met with Dr. Jim Sensenig for guidance and development. The project began to take shape after five months of work as a program and doctors were secured for speaking roles. At this point Joe received a great deal of help from Mary k Martin and Jaspreet Mundeir. Working together, the three of them organized all the details and the group of students that sacrificed so much to bring about the first Gathering. There was a group of about 20 students that literally sacrificed 100's of man-hours to pull it off. Every detail was taken care of and then added to.

The First Gathering occurred on May 21-23, 2004 and had as its speakers; Pamela Snider, Jared Zeff, Robert Broadwell, Leanna Standish, Bill Mitchell, and Jim Sensenig. Each speaker was asked to speak on Naturopathic philosophy and the practice of medicine. It was a once in a lifetime experience that will never have an equal.

Originally By Joe Holcomb and Luke Gonzales. Updated by Tim Ammons

Source and Editorial Note

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The Gathering Closing Plenary

The Gathering

May 23, 2004

James S. Sensenig ND

Unknown Introducer

I am honored to present our next speaker – as I was speaking to him last week, he shared with me that his idea of a good time is walking on the beach or lying on the grass looking at the stars meditating.

I thought that was great. I love doing that too. I can relate to that; he's so passionate about naturopathy and its philosophy that he gives his time to us and to the profession to help create the infrastructure that we have, that we are working with now.

Dr. Sensenig graduated from National College in 1978 and from there he was an assistant dean and then Dean of National College. Later he was Dean at Bridgeport University. He is the founding president of the AANP and was also involved in setting up the CNME and NPLEX and getting laws passed to license naturopathic doctors in other states. All of this happened while he had a family and was creating a practice. With everything else he does, he chooses to be an adjunct professor here at SCNM and teach the two philosophy classes that we have here. Our first class and our last class.

I'm personally grateful for his presence here. In my first class with him here, and I'm sure at other classes where he's spoken, he speaks to us in a way that shifts us from what we thought we knew about being a naturopathic physician to entering into being the question of the possibility of who we are. Out of this query have come a number of possibilities for us here at SCNM and for others. This weekend, and this conversation that we are having this weekend is one of these possibilities; we have made manifest here for us. This has been an incredible weekend of possibility. Please my fellow colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, help me welcome and thank Jim Sensenig for his vision and his passion.



Dr. Sensenig

Thank you – I’m not sure what I’m going to talk about – I didn’t prepare a formal talk because I knew that if I prepared it by this point I’d have thrown it away like Bill Mitchell did anyway, right? And I never was one, as probably most of you know about this computerized formal talk thing, or, you don’t know this about me, but I’m the last faculty member at **Southwest College [SCNM]** to get my notes, my handouts and my quizzes and everything else up on **Blackboard**.

You should have seen it, I would be sitting at home on my laptop and it would take me – you know, I was into like dial-up connections –it would take me forever just to get online, and once I did that I would get on the phone with Tammy Herring, so I’m sitting there at my laptop, I’m dialed up on one line, I’m on the cell phone with a headset on the other line– and she’s walking me through this whole thing.

I remember the first time we did that, she’d say *click on this, drag this down there, do this, do this*, then she has this one about you know, *click on this and open a window*. And I said, hang on a minute – so she says when I came back ‘what happened?’ I said, I opened a window! No, Dr. Sensenig, you don’t understand, I said, that’s why I’m talking to you! No, what a grueling experience to get that on **Blackboard**, and you know what? 2 weeks later, I get an email that says ‘**Southwest** has had a wonderful experience with Blackboard, but now we have found a new internet service’ so I get out here in February in a meeting with Tammy and I say to her – ‘ok, tell me how I can transfer everything I have on Blackboard to **Jenzebar**’ and she says ‘you can’t transfer it, you got to start all over’ so I just went and opened up all the windows.

Oh, I gotta tell you this story about public speaking, this is back in National College, talk about crazy professors – we had this – Dr. Broadwell probably doesn’t remember this, if he was there, I probably would have gotten kicked out of school, I wouldn’t be here – but, we had this really weird physiology teacher, I mean this guy was – I don’t know, he was from another insane asylum or something, and – this is a true story – none of my classmates are here right, so ok?

It’s a true story – we were all supposed to do a research project in this class and then the idea was to present it, and then the two ideas that we were supposed to learn is how to design a research project and how to speak publicly about this work, so this guy, for some reason that still eludes me, came to school one day and announced that he had somehow acquired hundreds of gerbils, and so we were



all going to do research on gerbils, you can do any kind of research you want, as long as you use gerbils as your experimental animals, so we paired off, but we had an odd number of people in our class, so I ended up in a group of 3 people. And we decided to do this experiment on birth control. After all, there were enough gerbils in the world, you know? So one of us had read somewhere, and actually I've seen this since, that high potencies of *Nat Mur* can prevent conception, so we decided to put that to the test. So we took 3 groups of gerbils, I don't know how many were in each group, but we had a control group, a placebo group and then we had another group that got *Nat Mur 200C* in their drinking water.

And in fact, it was a successful experiment and we wrote it up and we handed it in. We were aware of the fact that these presentations were made on a random basis, we'd be called, because it was supposed to be slightly impromptu, we'd be called randomly in a class to get up and give these presentations. So, in one of these classes (Broadwell is going to kill me when I tell him this story) we have these guests in the class who were on the **Kansas Board of Education** and I don't know, the **Department of Health**. I'm sitting there 'oh my God, don't call on us, don't call on us' – sure enough, they called on us. My partners are like, no, you do it, you do it, so we decided all three of us would get up together and present the data. The data went like this (I don't remember the exact outcome), but what we found is that in the control group which coupled pairs of the gerbils they had (I'm making this up), but they had something like 8.7 viable offspring. In the placebo group, they had, (I don't know), 8.5 viable offspring, and in the experimental group, they had no offspring – because in the experimental group, they gave birth to 8.7 offspring, but they ate them. So, they ate their babies, and we considered it a successful experiment, because.... That's probably why we're not in Kansas anymore, you know, we'll never get licensed in Kansas! If anyone wants to verify this story I'll give you the references, you know? We didn't publish it by the way.

So wow, what a weekend, you know everything I think I like to say about philosophy has already been said by people who can say it much more eloquently than I. I have been moved and I'm just in awe of the knowledge and talent that is in this room and not just the people who have been called idiots, but the rest of us. You know I don't really know what to say, although I've had some thoughts, so if you'll bear with me, I'll share those with you.

One thing I couldn't help but thinking is that there was so much more, and I was reminded of the line from Hamlet, 'there are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio than are dreamt of in your philosophy'. I want to remind you of the statement that I made when we opened. I was reading an



article by a fellow named Arturo Castlegione, who is – the article I am referring to is called the neo-Hippocratic tendencies in modern medicine, and he’s the guy that I quoted the first day as saying that every good physician, is a good philosopher – (by the way, I brought, see all my materials are my class materials that I just kind of dumped on the desk there), so Castaglionne says, ‘every good physician is a good philosopher’ – Coulter says at the beginning of his introduction to the Divided Legacy, something similar – he’s talked about, up until this point, he’s talked about two different poles of the philosophical dichotomy that we’ve talked about this weekend. And he says, not that every practitioner of medicine falls exclusively into one or the other tradition.

The run of the mill physician concerns himself with the technical problems of applying given therapeutic rules and given his patient’s needs. He does not question the postulates and the assumptions behind the rules that he has learned because he is not aware of them.

His practice is eclectic and an inconsistent mixture of the two bodies of doctrine, but the greatest thinkers of all fall into one or the other end of the spectrum of doctrinal thought. And they are great precisely because they have examined the underlying assumptions of their medicine. It seems to me that is the sum of what we have been doing here.

Castaglionne also makes a very interesting statement in this wonderful essay in which he says that medicine is articulated and elaborated in 3 places: first, he says, in the temple of God the healer, second, in the secular practice of the physician, and thirdly, in the minds of philosophers.

It occurs to me then, that sometimes, we talk about classical naturopathy, or the old Nature Cure ways, or going back to the elders or going back in history, but you know, when you go back to the elders, you don’t go back to see necessarily how they did things, you go back to see what was true for them – what are the truths that we can tease out of our collective human experience? What are those principles that have survived all time?

Not all technologies, or all cultures, but through all time, because there’s some kernel of truth to that, and this is not unimportant because Coulter says in this introduction of Divided Legacy that you know, the facts are the facts, are the facts, you don’t quarrel with the facts, but facts are seldom self-interpreting. What facts mean depend on your view of the world, your model of the world. Your paradigm is the thing we kick around. You know, a fever is a fever is a fever – but what a fever means in a mechanistic, materialistic, allopathic paradigm and what a fever means in a more



holistic, naturopathic, homeopathic vitalistic paradigm are two different things. It's the old blind men and the elephant – they are both looking at the same thing and the interpretation of what that means is completely opposite. And that ain't no small thing, because it is that framework, that philosophy or that paradigm, or I should say it this way perhaps, our understanding of what symptoms are that guide our therapeutic interventions and therefore, our effectiveness as physicians.

And central to that question then, to that paradigm, is this question about this thing that we've talked about every minute of every lecture this weekend –the vital force, the physicist, the logos – the word –the vix medicatrix naturae – Doctor Snider was telling us that Pellegrino and Neuberger say that this is the central question in medical philosophy.

Castlegione says that the problem in life - in its real essence - has haunted the mind of physicians and students of the natural sciences since the most remote of epics.

And so it is that that question that was also raised by Dr. Standish, what is this thing, where is it, how is it, even, is it, is a central point of this whole discussion and something that needs to be looked at more closely. Interestingly though, this is not a new conversation, and it's not new in naturopathic medicine.

Lindlhar addresses this succinctly in the chapter called 'what is life', chapter 4, some of you have probably heard me talk about this before and may have it committed to memory at this point. I think that this is one thing that can't be easily abbreviated, so let me bore you with reading this in its entirety, this one page –

“In our study of the cause and the character of disease we must endeavor to begin at the beginning and that is life itself. For the processes of health, disease and cure are manifestations of that which we call life vitality, life elements – while endeavoring to fathom the mystery of life, if we soon realize that we are dealing with an ultimate, which no human mind is capable of solving, or explaining, we can study and understand life only in its manifestations, not in its origin or in its real essence. There are two widely differing conceptions of the nature of life or vital force – the material and the vital. The former looks upon life and vital force with all its physical, mental and psychical phenomenon as manifestations of the electric, magnetic and physiochemical activities of the physical material elements composing the human organism.”

Precisely the question that Dr. Standish was talking about.



'From this viewpoint, life is sort of a spontaneous combustion, whereas a scientist expresses it as succession of fermentations or chemical changes. The vitalistic conception of life on the other hand, regards vital force as the primary force of all forces. Coming from the great central source of all life. This force which permeates, heats, and animates the entire created universe is an expression of Divine intelligence and will. The logos, the word of the great creative intelligence, it is Divine energy which sets in motion the worlds and the ether, the electric corpuscles that make up the atoms, and the elements of matter. These electrons are positive and negative forms of electricity. And electricity is a form of energy.' Remember that this was written in 1914. *'this is intelligent energy, otherwise it could not act in its wonderful precision as in the electrons of the atoms and the suns and the planets of this ideal universe. This intelligent energy can have but one source, the will and the intelligence of the Creator'* or as Swedenberg expresses it, the great central sun of the universe. *'If this supreme intelligence withdraws its creative energy, the electric charges and forms of energy and with it the atoms, the elements, the entire material universe would disappear in the flash of a moment'.*

And right to the heart of the question, that was raised yesterday, Lindlhar says, *'from this, it appears that crude matter instead of being the source of all life, and all of its complicated phenomena, which assumption on the face of it is absurd, is but an expression of the life force itself, a manifestation of the great creative intelligence which some call God, others Nature, Brahma, Prana, the Great Spirit, etc, each according to his best understanding'* You can thank Henry Lindlhar for that one.

So, if we already know this, or believe this, it brings up another question that came up for me yesterday, which was, what about – this is to me where science comes in, see when you – I think we're at the point, just judging by your reaction, you see, most people in the room are nodding – you know, most of you are on the same page, which happens to be page 23 by the way, most of you are on the same page, but as Leanna Standish was saying, is this a belief, or is this knowledge? Do you really know this? And what does it take to know, and what is this science thing all about, and you know, I found myself asking her a question, I wasn't really asking her, I was asking me the question, which is, can we really get to knowing that part of reality through a cognitive exercise, can we have an intellectual, analytical - Dr. Turska would say, a five senses Aristotelian analysis of something that is non-Aristotelian, it doesn't appeal to our five senses. And how do we do that?

But it raised a larger question for me, which was the question I asked her, and put her on the spot – but I think I was asking myself and all of us the question – is this the way we give ourselves



permission to believe what we already know in a culture that says believing these things is not ok unless we can prove it in a certain way.

And then of course we have to ask questions like who are we trying to prove it to, and to what end? For what purpose, and perhaps the most philosophical question of all, does it really matter? So how we are going to answer that question, I don't know, but I think it is incumbent on this profession because of our professed belief and understanding of something called a vital force that we need to know what we are talking about here- what do we mean by that really, and I don't think we really know, I think that in our minds, we sort of think that there is some kind of force inside the body that keeps us in balance, you know, this thing we sometimes call homeostasis, or maybe we call it by other names, I don't know, but that there's some kind of force that brings us back to balance, brings us back to perfection, is the right-seeking, God-seeking heart seeking part of us or something, but is there really? Or is it outside of us? Or is there no force at all? And is it really something else?

Some of you have heard me talk before about the book *The Physics of Immortality* that was written by Frank Tipler, now in Tipler's book, he takes a megapoint theory which is a pure physics theory that works with mathematics, and in doing this, he decides, he tells us this in the introduction of the book, that we now have the tools available, some of you have heard me say this before, he now says we now have the modern science to prove once and for all that we don't have to invoke the idea of a supernatural or a heaven, or God or whatever to explain any phenomena that occurs in the physical universe. What he does is that he takes a megapoint theory and he applies that to this question because he, as a physicist, wants to put this question to rest for all time, so we can put this nonsense of dealing with God and the life hereafter. And he works this through, and he says, this is pure mathematics, you can read the introduction where he says that at no point, "do I appeal to faith or belief, this is pure science" and the conclusion that he comes to, is that there is a God, there's life after death in a place that resembles what religions call Nirvana and so on, and another conclusion which I'll tell you about later.

But, he also said something that got my attention, which was, 'we do not have to invoke the concept of vital force or vitalism in order to explain how physical matter reaches this endpoint'. I'm like, there goes everything I believe and all my life in that one sentence! – but that doesn't change the fact for me, that he just demonstrated that we're all going to the same place, we're all going in the same direction, we are all going towards God and Heaven and life after death, whatever that means, so



isn't that the same thing that we mean by vital force? Isn't that the same thing we mean by great creative intelligence? And so, what is this?

And we talk about taking leadership as it were, in this discussion about vitalism. I don't know if vitalism is dead, I really don't know if vitalism is dead. But what I do know is that the challenge for us as doctors who understand this movement in the physical material world need to look towards ways to express that so in other words, so we don't look like idiots.

Or so what we understand more clearly what we are talking about. If we can't do that, then, we might as well give it up, because that's the central theme again and that's the thing that distinguishes us from every other kind of medical practice in our conventional system, and without being able to articulate that in a way that fits with the knowledge that we now have, we're going to be stuck – talk about research project, who cares if Echinacea cures the common cold? I want to know if there is a vital force, how to describe it, and how to get my arms around it – now one of the things that you see in ALL vitalistic systems, one of the things that run through all vitalistic systems are 3 principles, and one of them is this principle of the physicist [physis?], is the vital force, or this power, or this energy, or whatever it is, pulls us forward, pulls us back, makes us whole, and so on, and it's redundant to say this, that when the physician's high and only mission is to restore the sick to health, then what we want to do, is to work with the physicist [physis], is to work with the vital force – Paracelsus said, the physician is the servant of nature, not her master and therefore it behooves the physician to follow the way of nature.

The second thing that all these vitalistic things have in common is the concept of what I call humoral pathology – I don't mean, breaking your funny bone, I mean the idea of the 4 humors of Hippocrates, the idea in all vitalist systems of finding balance, the concept that when things are in balance, one enjoys health, or as Hahnemann describes it, unbounded sway of the vital force or the dynamos. Lindlhar tells us that health is the normal harmonious vibration of all the parts of the human organism and again, Hahnemann tells us that this is where the vital force or the dynamos rules in its unbounded sway affects all sensations and functions, paragraph 9, Organon, which you have all committed to memory I think.

And there's a third part of this which is that all of these traditions teach that every person is an individual, and therefore there are as many diseases as there are people, no two people ever have the same problem, affliction, disease, no two people react the same way to the negative, noxious influences in their environment, and therefore, your therapeutic intervention is never the same for



any two patients if they have the same problem because it is not possible to have the same problem, but the extension of that individualism is that then we are also responsible for our actions, but we are also responsible for ourselves as individuals, as it was pointed out yesterday by Dr. Standish, for our thoughts.

Now, if we buy all of what I just mentioned, I think that we might answer the question that was raised in Dr. Standish's lecture. One of the things that she asked us about is this whole thing about human consciousness – is there consciousness after death? Death is, which we didn't define – biological death is what you said, right? – and the question is then, is there life after death, or is there consciousness after death? And what does that mean as far as what medicine does. She told us that the role of medicine in a culture that believes in death as an endpoint, is to save us from the endpoint, for as long as possible. That maybe why we spend the bulk of our healthcare dollars in those last few months of life. But as she was telling us that, I was thinking that we live in a world where the idea is not to treat disease, but is to simply restore health, then we're not really concerned with that question – we don't define health necessarily as not dying, we define health as Hahnemman defined health for us – in a roundabout way, what he said of course as you all know and I'll read it to you once more, is in paragraph 9 of the Organon– what Hahnemman says is that 'in the healthy condition of man, the spiritual vital force rules with unbounded sway and retains all the parts of the organism in admirable, harmonious, vital operation as regards both sensations and functions so that our indwelling, reason-gifted mind, can freely employ this living healthy instrument for the higher purpose of our existence'.

Our goal is not to prevent death, our goal as a physician is to help our fellow beings enjoy the point in their life where their dynamis rules with unbounded sway so that they can use their reason gifted mind to freely employ this healthy living instrument for the higher purposes of our existence. So how do we do that? We've been talking about creating a future – but I noticed that there was something that didn't come up in this whole discussion, and I'm as guilty as anybody else, because I was asking questions like where do you see us in 50 years, and what do you see in 100 years?

My personal opinion is, well, let me say it this way, all of us have tried, correct me if I'm wrong – to imagine a future which is an extrapolation of our past, you're all imagining a future along a linear extension of what we have known so far – somehow, I know that that ain't gonna happen. What we are doing to this planet at this point in time is unsustainable. It's almost unbelievable, and in some ways, unforgivable and it cannot go on like this, and I know that it will NOT go on like this. There



will be a change in the not too distant future which will take us into a new direction that will be so completely radically different that trying to extrapolate the future from where we are now is an exercise in futility. Some of the great religions predicted through various means and methods – shamanism, astrology and everything else, that that tremendous shift is in the very near future in terms of our sidereal time, we are talking a decade. We've talked a couple of times this weekend, several speakers have mentioned the idea of the 100th monkey – and my guess is that we are at about the 99th monkey. We're just about there.

And what's gonna happen when that shift comes, you're not going to be practicing medicine, anyone of you, or anyone of us in the model that we've been accustomed to. I think there are going to be dramatic changes in the planet, dramatic changes in our economic system, our political system, in our health care system, so that they will be unrecognizable, and the interesting thing is that the medicine and the methods that will survive that shift is the medicine and the methods that you are learning. I had a classmate, Tom Stohl, God rest his soul, who said that naturopathic medicine is the medicine for when the lights go out. And the lights are about to go out, and you, as healers and physicians, are going to be better prepared than many on the planet to deal with those changes, which maybe catastrophic, but we'll also be a rebirth, it will be the healing crisis that we've been waiting for a very very long time.

Well, how do we do that? Well, to go back to Lindlhar again, Lindlhar, would agree with some of the things that Dr. Standish told us about what modern research is telling us – in the chapter about microzymes, he says that thought forms are the soul of things and matter convolutes to these soul patterns – this is Lindlhar, 1914 – thought forms are the soul of things and matter convolutes to these soul patterns – he also says every thought, every emotion, has direct effect on the physical constituents of the body – the mental, emotional vibrations and structures, so what are we going to create? What are we going to think?

I'm reminded of Walsh's book on the conversations with God, and one of the things I learned from that that just kind of turned my life around was that he says, we're not here to learn anything, at this time on the earth at this time – we already know everything- we just need to remember. So then the question comes up, what are we doing then? He says, you're here for one reason and one reason alone, to create– to create what? To create yourself in the image of God. And how do you do that? Everything you think, everything you say, everything you do, either brings you closer to your god-



ness or not and that's your conscious choice, your free will, to move in that direction, or that direction.

I heard a lecture a couple of years ago on Han, the famous Zen Buddhist master, and somebody asked him a question about suffering, and he said, suffering is good – but it's not enough, what you are here to do, is not to suffer, but to learn to be happy and to create your own happy Buddha in yourself, your own God-like inner being. And how do you create that? In the same lecture, he said, it is as easy as changing channels – and what he means by that is by changing your thoughts – if you want the suffering channel, put on the suffering channel, put on the Buddha channel, put on the creativity channel, right, the only person who can change the channel is you, and all you have to do is do it.

And then we go back to Tippler and the physics of immortality, Tippler not only says that there's a God and there's life after death, but get this, from that same mathematical extrapolation of the behavior of physical matter he comes to the conclusion that man is not an accident of the universe, but is actually creating the universe. I'm not making this up, we're not talking about faith or belief, he says, I appeal nowhere to belief, he says, I show this with mathematical models, in fact, he challenges his readers to tell him where he went wrong in the math. And think about that for a minute – you talk about scientific materialism, talk about reductionism - you take reductionism to its endpoint, you take materialism to its end point, and what happens? The whole thing comes full circle. Some of you have heard me talk about this before – it's not a matter of us and them, scientific materialism and vitalism – it's two sides of the same coin, two parts to the same whole - because when you take either of them far enough, guess what? You can see the other one.

Which reminds me of this great line from one of Rumi's poems, Moses and the Shepherd, how many people know Moses and the Shepherd? The context is that Moses is walking along and he hears a shepherd praying and he ends up chastising the shepherd for the way and the terms he is using to talk to God, and the shepherd gets kind of crazy from this criticism and tears off his clothes and as the shepherd runs off in Rumi's poem, Moses hears a voice of God, which essentially says to him, did you come here to unite or to sever, you have just separated me from one of my own and he goes onto say, you know, you don't get it, I gave every being a separate and unique way of seeing and knowing and saying these things. And he goes on to say, it's all praise and it's all right.



The other thing that I learned this weekend, or maybe had reinforced for me this weekend, in this regard then, is on the one hand, each person has a unique and separate way of seeing and knowing and saying these things, and yet, on the same wavelength, we can change the things that really matter. Dr. Standish showed us that when a whole lot of people are thinking the same thing, our scientific methodology shows us what some of us or most of us already know, which is that when a lot of people are thinking the same thing there's a disturbance in the force – so we learn from that of course, that we can disturb the force for ill or for good I suppose, and so what it comes down to, is the same conclusion we've all come to in these last three four days, which is, if we set our intentions, and if we think the thoughts, then we will be taking the action to change things and not only that, we learned, I learned something new I didn't know before, although I must say I Kind of suspected it but, Dr. Standish told me that there is now research that shows that conscious observation can alter events in the past – that's what I think she said. that shows that conscious observation can alter events in the past- so look at what we have been doing, look at what we've been talking about, look at the history that we've talked about, look at some of the frustration, and anger and upset that we have about what we are doing in our lives, in the school, in the profession, on the planet and so on. We are now at a point where we have an understanding, those of us in this room, to think the thoughts that will change the past and have us choose from all those probable futures that are out there. So I ask you, what kind of future, will we choose? Thank you!