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Past President, Michigan  
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Dr. Mark Burdell



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## LANGUAGE OF PHILOSOPHY

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versation about the nature of the term or the subject it was intended to describe. The term, in other words, has become sacrosanct, a symbol for attachment to a professional ideal. Having these sorts of terms is important for a profession; however the use of this particular term for this purpose in chiropractic is unfortunate, because their content is essential to understanding the unique approach to health care that is chiropractic's. The authoritarian approach to accept without question the term innate intelligence damages professional authority, both within and outside the chiropractic profession.

There is a gap in the literature between the dismissivists' approach of ridicule and hyperbole and the authoritarian approach of unquestioning acceptance of the term innate intelligence. The following section addresses that gap by providing a critique of the term innate intelligence in describing the notion of self-regulation of living organisms.

It is important to note that one of the hallmarks for the use of foundational terms in a discipline or profession is consistency and widespread agreement. For example, the medical term "Vis Medicatrix Naturae", is well understood in medicine to be the "healing power of nature." It is not a controversial term, not a lightning rod used to attach one segment of the medical profession. Rather, it is a widely accepted term that recognizes that living organisms have the potential ability to heal when injured or diseased.

In contrast, the term innate intelligence is neither consistently defined nor well-understood. There are many definitions of the term, and the differences among them are great. In some cases, chiropractic colleges subscribe to certain definitions and in other cases individual practitioners have widely divergent conceptualizations. Certain colleges advocate strongly for their definition. In other cases, institutions use definitions to attack the "innatists."

There are three primary classifications of definitions of innate intelligence. One deals with the elucidation of vitalistic notions of life and health (what I term the vitalistic definitions). The second deals with a description of the self-regulatory nature of living organisms (the homeostatic definitions). The third deals with a range of definitions that bridge the material and immaterial (the spiritual definitions)

The vitalistic definitions most often reference Stephenson (1927), "The localized or inborn intelligence of a "living thing" and "A finite portion of Universal Intelligence in a finite portion of matter, whose mission it is to keep the matter in active organization." This definition focuses on the physiological manifestations of living organisms, and in particular addresses the source of self-regulation. In other words, these definitions use innate intelligence to further the understanding of the ability of a living organism to adapt to its environment.

A less controversial series of definitions focus not on the source of self-regulation, but rather on clarifying the existence of the homeostatic processes itself. This approach expands the medical notion of vis medicatrix naturae to recognize that living organisms not only have the ability to heal themselves, but