



## PHILOSOPHY

### Language of the Philosophy of Chiropractic as Barrier to Understanding

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It is important for any profession to have a well-defined lexicon for defining core concepts and foundational elements. Having clear and widespread agreement on the meaning of core terms is essential to advancing understanding of a profession's core focus, and for allowing intraprofessional communication and understanding. Consistent with other professions, chiropractic has developed a series of terms that have provided that necessary linguistic support.

Several of these terms are well-defined, and have been very useful in defining the profession's identity (e.g. "subluxation", "adjustment"). However, two of chiropractic's terms have been problematic, serving to create confusion rather than clarity, and to serve as lightning rods for those critical of the profession to attack chiropractic's fundamental tenets. These terms are "innate intelligence" and "universal intelligence."

This paper presents a thesis that

these terms should be reconsidered in a structured format, in order to ensure that the concepts they represent are well-presented and adequately express the complex content they represent. Language is important in establishing a profession's identity. The history of chiropractic's polemic can be traced in part to carelessness in selection of terms. In fact, jargon has been used by many to drive a wedge through the chiropractic profession (e.g. Donahue 1992, Seaman 1998, Winterstein 1991).

This paper proposes that the profession revisits these important terms, and develops verbiage that is accurate and conforms to best practices in use of language (clarity, utility, simplicity, parsimony, etc.) In this way, language can be used to create clarity and unity, rather than the confusion and acrimony that have characterized the profession's history to date.

#### Innate Intelligence

The term innate intelligence has a number of meanings in chiropractic

writings. To some, it simply refers to the notion that living matter is organized (Koch 2004). To others it refers to the source of that organization, and to others a more spiritual or even religious connotation (e.g. Palmer 1955, Senzon 2004)

The term innate intelligence has been a lightning rod for the chiropractic profession for decades. There is a group within the profession who dismiss the philosophy of chiropractic as, at best, misplaced and at worst, useless (e.g. Donahue 1992, Seaman 1998). For example, Keating (1992B) states, "... Innate Intelligence ... has been advanced as an incontrovertible tenet of chiropractic, and has spawned a rigidity of thought." I have named this group of writers, "dismissivists" (McAulay, in press) to describe the highly critical approach they bring to the philosophy of chiropractic and to argue that the core concepts of chiropractic ought to be expunged from the profession. These attacks continue. A recently published article's title implied that support for "innate" approaches had a religious fundamentalism approach, although the article failed to make the connection, leaving the only mention of the word "innate" in the title of the article (Philips 2004).

The dismissivists have used a consistently derogatory approach in their attacks. Donahue, states, for example, "... Innatists live in another world from his/her (sic) more sober colleagues" (1992, 23). He goes on to say, "By closing off their critical faculties, II (innate intelligence) philosophy can allow the doctor a comfortable little world to live in" (p. 23), and "These doctors (i.e. the

"Innatists"), lest they lose their grip, must view any criticism of their beliefs, however accurate or legitimate, as professional treason" (p. 24). Wardwell (1992, p. 7) states, "Some of BJ's followers indulged in even more egregious flights of ideological fancy."

A second group of people interested in the philosophy of chiropractic (although less prolific, at least in peer-reviewed journals), for which I term the "authoritarians" (McAulay, in press), bring a defensive approach to the use of the term "innate intelligence" (e.g. Strauss 1994). Dismissivists (Donahue 1992) use the derogatory term "innatists" to label this group.

There is a sense from the authoritarians that the term innate intelligence has an important role because of its historical connection to the roots of chiropractic. In other words, the term innate intelligence has taken on a heightened meaning above and beyond the objective content of its meaning. The term has become a way of wrapping the entire traditional professional zeitgeist into two words, a type of shorthand for identification with a traditional acceptance of the profession.

I argue that both the dismissivist and authoritarian approaches are misplaced. The danger in the authoritarian position is that to follow their suggestion, to remove the use of the term innate intelligence from consideration in professional discourse, is to discard the foundational notions contained within it. Taking their lead would, in effect, "throw the baby out with the bathwater."

The authoritarian approach, on the other hand, disallows constructive con-

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