

Innate intelligence: its origins and problems

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Animal Magnetism and Radionics were among several occult practices used during the 19th century for the treatment of disease. D.D. Palmer was exposed to these teachings and derived many of his ideas about health from the folk medicine practices of his time.

As a 'magnetic healer' Palmer believed he was correcting an undefined fifth force in the body that is otherwise unknown to science. Palmer believed he could influence this fifth force, termed Innate Intelligence, and that it was the explanation for the presence or absence of health.

Today, Innate Intelligence remains an untestable enigma that isolates chiropractic and impedes its acceptance as a legitimate health science. The concept of Innate is derived directly from the occult practices of another era. It carries a high penalty in divisiveness and lack of logical coherence.

The chiropractic profession must decide whether the concept of Innate should be retained.
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KEY WORDS: chiropractic, manipulation, innate.

Introduction

Historians have come to appreciate that most great men are a product of the events and circumstances of their times. The celebration of our first centennial provides an opportunity to look back to our beginnings, especially to our founder, D.D. Palmer. Palmer is noted not only for founding chiropractic, but also for his introduction of the

Au cours du dix-neuvième siècle, le magnétisme animal et la radioélectronique servaient, comme plusieurs autres pratiques occultes, à traiter différentes maladies. D.D. Palmer, qui s'était intéressé à ces méthodes, a tiré plusieurs de ses idées sur la santé des pratiques médicales folkloriques de son époque.

Palmer, qui se voyait comme un « guérisseur magnétique », croyait qu'il corrigeait une cinquième force non définie présente dans le corps, que la science ne connaissait pas. Il pensait pouvoir influencer cette cinquième force, appelée intelligence innée, à laquelle il attribuait la responsabilité de la bonne ou de la mauvaise santé.

De nos jours, l'intelligence innée demeure une énigme non résolue qui isole la chiropratique et l'empêche d'être acceptée en tant que science médicale légitime. Le concept de l'inné découle directement de pratiques occultes d'un autre âge. Cette origine pèse lourd, car elle provoque des dissensions et un manque de cohérence logique. La chiropratique doit décider si elle veut conserver le concept de l'inné.
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MOTS CLÉS : chiropratique, manipulation, inné.

concept of Innate Intelligence. This paper will examine some of the background contributing to Palmer's perceptions of health, healing and his understanding of what became known as Innate Intelligence. It will also explore some of the influences and consequences of those concepts on today's practice of chiropractic.

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Vitalism

Vitalism is presently defined as: “a doctrine that the functions of a living organism are due to a vital principle distinct from physiochemical forces.”¹

Numerous primitive, and not so primitive, societies have for countless centuries believed in a vital force or energy permeating the universe. It was held that all living things are dependent upon this universal life force for health and life. To the Hindus it is called *prana*, to the Chinese *qi*, to the Japanese *ki*, and to the Hawaiians *Mana*. Hippocrates referred to it as *Vis Medicatrix Naturae*. Galen called it *Pneuma*.² All of these represent attempts to express the concept of vitalism.

Although similar ideas likely preceded him, Aristotle is often credited with the first formal expression of vitalism. Aristotle established four precepts of vitalistic tradition: that the Life of an organism and its psyche are intertwined, the organism has purposive activity, there is organic unity, and, lastly, embryological development. As such, vitalism is considered a metaphysical doctrine.³

Metaphysics is here understood to be that study whose intent is to understand the meaning, structure, and principles of things. It seeks to define an ultimate reality as opposed to what is merely apparent. Vitalism defined as a metaphysical doctrine produces a certain vagueness that ultimately exempts it from being empirically refuted. In other words, vitalism is by nature irrefutable.^{3,4}

Aristotle's views on vitalism have been termed Critical Vitalism. The centuries following Aristotle, however, also saw a confusing mixture of Naïve Vitalism, characterized by random, poorly developed ideas on life forces, generative fluids, and animal heat.³

The Catholic theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274), provided the first modifications to Aristotle's ideas of vitalism. It was Aquinas who observed that men obtained their knowledge of reality from the sensory experience. He recognized the importance of the five senses, and that “A human being is an animated body in which the psychic principle (anima) is distinctive of the species and determines that the material is human. In other words, man's soul is his substantial form.”⁵

The centuries following Aristotle saw the emergence of the shaman, a village leader who served as physician, priest and wise man. The shaman operated on supernatural methods of spiritually intervening in human life processes. Using supernatural methods he would arrive at a

diagnosis of a patient's illness and apply a suitable treatment. The shaman's success depended upon suggestive therapy and the fact that many illnesses heal naturally in a supportive environment.⁶

Animal (mammal) magnetism

In 1766 F.A. Mesmer proposed the existence of a fluid or force that filled the entire universe but was concentrated in animal nervous systems and in magnets. This animal magnetism was not considered to be the same as conventional ‘magnetism’, but had certain similarities.⁷

Mesmer's ideas were not original, but he added some distinctive concepts. He surmised the planets and stars produced fluctuations of this cosmic fluid in the body leading to disease. A therapist's hand, or a magnet, passing over a patient's body would quiet these fluctuations and have a curative effect. This fluid, or force, could even be stored in glasses or bottled water. Health was likened to a vase connected to an endless supply of this fluid. Sickness resulted when contact with this fluid, or force, was obstructed or interfered with.⁷

It was further observed that certain patients could be placed in a ‘somnambulist’ state wherein they appeared to be asleep, but were exceptionally responsive to instructions. These ‘mesmerized’ patients could, after having been kept in a dark room, perceive lights coming from magnets, crystals, the human body, and other objects. It was postulated that a cosmic fluid, designated ‘Od’, was responsible for this phenomenon. Mesmer began using the *baquet*, a large, covered tub filled with water, from which iron rods projected. Patients were tied together in a circle. They would then have the iron rod applied to afflicted areas of their bodies, whereupon they would fall into convulsions, vomiting, and crying – and were declared cured.⁷

Later practitioners, including one J.P.F. Deleuze, taught that Mesmer's magnetic fluid was analogous to nerve-force. By 1850 Buchanan had produced maps of the phrenological areas of the head, believing they revealed the nature of the person, and had developed a theory of ‘nerve-aura.’⁷

Various forms of Mesmerism and Magnetic Healing enjoyed fluctuating periods of popular acceptance throughout much of the 19th century. Hypnotism eventually branched off from Mesmerism as a separate entity. From these same origins the Christian Scientist, Mary

Baker Eddy, developed her version of mental healing in the 1870s and 1880s.^{7,8}

Radionics and radiesthesia

The 19th century also saw the widespread adoption of dowsing (water witching). Dowsing relied on the use of a rod or pendulum to find water, buried treasure, and to diagnose and treat disease. The pendulum often took the form of a plumb bob that would first be suspended over a healthy part of the body and its movements noted. The bob would then be moved over a unhealthy part and any changes in its movements noted to determine the presence of disease.

It was thought that all matter 'radiated' at certain wavelengths. Living things in particular emitted energy at wavelengths and intensities that reflected their vitality and state of health. By properly measuring this 'radiation' the practitioner of Radiesthesia could arrive at both a diagnosis and a treatment plan.^{9,10}

The great pioneer of Radiesthesia was Albert Abrams, MD (1863–1924), a contemporary of D.D. Palmer. He eventually became director of the Medical Department at Cooper Medical College (later, Stanford University). Abrams claimed to detect electromagnetic waves being emitted by the human body while studying spinal reflexes by means of percussion. By facing the patient in an east or west direction, and then percussing their spines he could detect the presence of organic disease. He furthered this process by attaching a wire from a patient's spinal lesion to a healthy person's cervical vertebra. Then, when he percussed the spine of the healthy person, he could diagnose the ailments of the sick individual on the other end of the wire.¹⁰

Abrams deduced that every disease had its own characteristic wavelength. He devised a rheostat to interpose in the wire, which was then connected to another person or to a test tube containing a selected specimen. He found, for example, that a setting of 32 ohms equated to malaria. Further efforts eventually produced the Oscilloclast, better known as 'The Black Box.' With this instrument Abrams claimed to first be able to diagnose a disease, then to treat it by means of measured vibrations. An American chiropractor, Dr. Ruth Drown, became a follower of Abrams and went on to invent a radionic camera with which she claimed to photograph the interior of patient's bodies at long distances. Although prohibited in the US

under the 1976 Pure Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, radionic treatment with 'Black Boxes' has a steady following in numerous countries.⁹

Orgone energy

In the 20th century Dr. Wilhelm Reich discovered Orgone Energy. According to Reich, Orgone permeated all things and was the basis of sexual and psychosomatic neuroses. Reich invented the Orgone Box, a small box covered on all sides by aluminum foil. Under the foil was placed multiple alternating layers of organic and inorganic material. The more layers the more orgone energy would accumulate. Reich claimed his box thus resembled cells of the human body. With the Orgone Box healing forces of the human body could be released, toxic energy eliminated, the atmosphere cleansed and plants stimulated to grow. Dr. Reich was eventually convicted for his activities and sent to jail where he died. Also prohibited under the 1976 Pure Food and Drug act, Orgone therapy still has a steady present day following of adherents.¹¹

Spiritualism

Spiritualism, which developed in this country in the 1840s, had become widely known during Palmer's time. Numerous research societies were formed, and one author on the principles of spiritualism stated: "... the phenomenon of nature, both physical and spiritual, are the expression of Infinite Intelligence." During the 1870s Palmer is known to have had personal involvement with the spiritualist movement.¹²

D.D. Palmer

The views, or beliefs, that most strongly influenced Palmer's philosophy were spiritualism and vitalism. He coupled these with personal experience to create a philosophy that formed his approach to health care. By the time D.D. Palmer began his career as a Magnetic Healer in Burlington, Iowa in 1886, he had already been exposed to numerous similar ideas regarding 'life forces' within the body. In many ways his views were a restatement of similar views widely held at the time.

Palmer also professed an interest in "Christian Science, Faith Cure, Mind Cure, Metaphysics, Magnetic and Osteopathy", having studied all of these. According to one source, he further studied, and demonstrated, phrenology. The local Caster family's Magnetic Healing Clinic and

Infirmity in Burlington likely also influenced him. He felt he had a special gift for Magnetic Healing, pouring his own "vital magnetism" into an afflicted person to effect a cure. One observer described D.D. Palmer's approach at the time as: "He heals the sick, the halt, the lame, and those paralyzed, through the medium of his potent magnetic fingers placed upon the organ or organs diseased ..." Looking back on this Palmer declared: "During that time I had developed much which afterwards became a part of the science of Chiropractic".¹³

Palmer appears to have blended these various beliefs into his first view of Innate as "... a segment of that Intelligence which fills the universe, this universe, all wise, is metamerized, divided into metemeres as needed by individual being." Palmer felt that Innate had always existed. It is distinct and separate from the soul and bonds with the body at the moment of birth with the first breath of life. The fetus thus has no innate of its own, but must rely on the mother's during its early development.¹⁴

Palmer further saw Innate as a dual entity, having both a physical and a spiritual part, but was considered as still being separate from the mind. Innate was eternal, while the mind existed only during life. Further, Innate's attributes were dispensed and directed through the body via the sympathetic nervous system.¹⁴

According to Palmer, Innate runs the body's physiological functions with a perfect knowledge of how to do so. Using the nervous system it sends controlling mental or nerve impulses to the tissues, but the impulses themselves are not innate. The vital force comes in three forms that Innate controls: 'thot force,' 'bathism' or growth force, and 'phrenism,' or mind force. Human disease is the result of interference with this flow of Innate, generally by vertebral subluxations.¹⁴

By 1897 his views had shifted to emphasizing a broad mechanical explanation of health. He declared: "The human body is a machine run by the unseen force called life, and that it may be run harmoniously it is necessary that there be liberty of blood, nerves and arteries ...".¹³

Shortly after the turn of the century, in 1903, he was teaching that the body was heated, not by blood, but by 'calorific nerves.' By 1906 he had introduced Innate Intelligence as a distinct personality inhabiting the body along with Educated Intelligence. This doctrine taught that 'two persons' both occupied the same body, unaware of each other. Innate inhabited all parts of the body and communi-

cated with the body through nerve ganglia. Innate was somehow considered the superior of the two Intelligences.¹³

By 1910 Palmer's views on Innate had evolved to the belief that: "The cause of nearly all diseases is an oversupply of nerve force; therefore we have fever." Palmer came to believe that subluxations, rather than pinching a nerve, caused an increase in nerve tension. This increased vibrational impulses to the organs and caused inflammation. Too slack nerve tension, however, produced hard tumors. He further declared that "... the cause of disease is any variation of tone - nerves too tense or too slack." Palmer went through numerous revisions in his chiropractic hypotheses, going from vital magnetism, to machine metaphors, to a later strong re-identification with spiritualism.¹³

D.D. Palmer might be described as a 'borrower and expander' of the ideas of others. His ideas had their origin in concepts derived from the folk medicine, mysticism and occult practices of his time. Palmer borrowed freely from the Magnetic Healing and other concepts he was exposed to. He was even accused of plagiarizing the terms 'Fountainhead' and 'Find it, Fix it, and Forget it' from the osteopaths, along with some of their treatment approaches.¹⁵

Current views of innate intelligence

Some chiropractors feel that holding to, even reviving, Innate philosophy is essential to chiropractic's survival. They view Innate as the fundamental identifying principle of chiropractic, that which separates us from medicine. Innate thus serves as a guide to keep us from suffering the perceived fate of the osteopaths. To tamper with this bedrock legacy from the Palmers runs the risk of fracturing the very foundation of chiropractic.

Other chiropractors view the concept of Innate as just an expression of chiro-theology. As such, it is seen as something that started as an explanatory metaphor that became converted into incontrovertible and unarguable doctrine.

Yet other chiropractors attempt to blend the two views in an uncomfortable combination. On one hand desiring the verification of science, on the other hand not wanting to be 'untrue' to their chiropractic heritage. Sometimes Innate is viewed as just another term for homeostasis.

Innate intelligence: a problem finding it

Science recognizes the existence of four forces: the Weak Nuclear Force, the Strong Nuclear Force, the Electromagnetic Force, and the Gravitational Force. The existence of these forces is universally accepted by the scientific community and forms the basis for our understanding of quantum mechanics.¹⁶

A common theme running throughout the history of recorded civilization is a folk medicine belief that a fifth force exists in nature holding the keys to health and vitality. This fifth force, has been declared measurable, capturable, adjustable, and useable by those 'in the know.'

Numerous crude devices have been developed to measure this purported fifth force and its effects. The assortment of devices includes Black Boxes, Orgone Boxes, Kirlian Photography, pendulums, dowsing sticks, Drown's Cameras, Accumulators, pendants, Toftness detectors, and Neurocalometers. The proponents claim the devices provide unique abilities to detect this fifth force or its effects. This enigmatic, vitalistic, fifth force is described as a cosmic fluid, as Ether, Chi, Elan Vital, Orgone, Od, Om, Animal Magnetism, Ki, Qi, Entelechy or Innate Intelligence.

The scientific community, however, does not admit to the existence of this fifth force, by whatever name, and has never accepted any of the purported detection devices as being credible.

Innate intelligence: a problem in healing

Palmer held that death was the absence of Innate Intelligence. We might ask 'What happens then to living matter when removed from the presence of Innate Intelligence'? Every day blood is donated, bone marrow and organs are transplanted, and severed limbs are surgically reattached. Under Palmer's philosophy, these tissues should be 'dead' after being separated from their source of Innate and no longer usable. Further problematic: Stephenson held that 'if a nerve is severed, the tissue cell loses function and dies.' However, many cells, such as circulating blood cells, have no nerve supply, never did, but they are still living. Countless individuals have experienced deep tissue cuts, severing nerves and separating the supplied tissue from their source of life-giving Innate in the process. This 'innateless' tissue still went on to eventually repair itself.¹⁷

Nansel and Slazak have persuasively argued that "... there just isn't any scientific evidence at all to support

the view that autonomic nerves have the capability, much less the propensity, for inducing frank tissue pathology in any of their innervated organs." And: "Nor, for that matter is there the slightest bit of clinical evidence of which we are aware that patients with broken necks or broken backs, or patients with entire hips or shoulders blown apart by shotgun blasts, or even patients with mechanical neck or low back dysfunction subsequently go on to develop higher incidences of any segmentally or regionally related internal organ disease."¹⁸

Dramatic disruption of Innate Intelligence produces no observable disease process in man. It is further observable that mammals, like man, with the highest level of neurological development, and presumably with the *highest* level of potential Innate Intelligence, have the *lowest* regenerative capability. Lower animals, with their more primitive nervous systems and limited Innate Intelligence, still have the ability to grow new limbs that have been severed, and they have never even had their spines adjusted! The most thoroughly adjusted chiropractic patient on earth will never have such regenerative capability!

Innate intelligence: a problem in logic

D.D. Palmer held the metaphysical view that we are born with this vitalistic principle, that it controls body function, monitors the preservation of the body, and is expressed through the nervous system. He felt the seat of Innate Intelligence is in the brain with the nervous system serving as a communication channel for it. But as Coulter notes: "... empirically unverified metaphysical views do stand in need of, and are meant to have, rational support, at least in the field of science. They also must be logically consistent, have some conceptual coherence and some problem-solving capacity."¹⁹

Is the concept of Innate Intelligence logically consistent and conceptually coherent? Chiropractic's dilemma is that it cannot satisfactorily demonstrate to the scientific community that Innate Intelligence even exists, much less describe its characteristics. Nor can chiropractic show that Innate differs from Orgone, Od, Om, or other esoteric fifth force designators. Nor can chiropractic show that its description of Innate is any more measurable, beneficial, or meaningful than these other designators, which often use treatment approaches that are radically different from chiropractic's. It is readily apparent that the chiropractic concept of Innate Intelligence fails to provide either logi-

cal consistency or conceptual coherence.

We can ask: "What problem-solving capacity does Innate Intelligence provide"? We are again left without a rational reply. The concept of Innate Intelligence lacks any ability to predict what health events will, or will not occur, to what extent, in which patients, and under what realistic time frame.

Other science disciplines, from genetics to microbiology to psychology, have added tremendously to our understanding of mankind. What has Innate added to this knowledge base? As one author noted: "Explaining an unknown (life) with an unknowable (Innate) is absurd. One can only learn about an unknowable in terms of the known."²⁰

Further, those benefits of chiropractic care that can be objectively measured are fully understandable with current scientific concepts, and do not require the presence of Innate for explanation. Not only has Innate not been tested or measured, it is fundamentally untestable, unmeasurable.

Innate intelligence: a problem of cost

Unfortunately, Innate presents the average chiropractor with a divisive choice. He/she can 'get the big idea,' and be considered chiropractically lobotomized, or reject it, and be thought of as a medical fool.²⁰

The severe divisiveness of Innate within chiropractic has been profound. By instilling in doctors the notion that nothing else is needed, the concept of Innate discourages thoughtful analysis, serious scholarship, and research. It further impedes our professional development and societal acceptance.

Other penalties include isolation from the scientific community and a loss of critical thinking ability by our practitioners. Many chiropractors are quite ignorant of developments in other health care fields, which could have a significant impact on how we might approach clinical practice. This lack of awareness leads to a false sense of security that nothing else is required. As a result chiropractors remain professionally isolated and permanently confined to treating less than 10% of the general population.

Innate intelligence: a problem of worth

Innate Intelligence clearly has its origins in borrowed mystical and occult practices of a bygone era. It remains

untestable and unverifiable and has an unacceptably high penalty/benefit ratio for the chiropractic profession. The chiropractic concept of Innate Intelligence is an anachronistic holdover from a time when insufficient scientific understanding existed to explain human physiological processes. It is clearly religious in nature and must be considered harmful to normal scientific activity.

The only supposed benefits to retaining Innate are the sense of connection it provides to our past; the easy-to-learn, if simplistic health explanations it offers to patients and doctors alike; and a sense of community with other like-minded practitioners.

Setting aside Innate would open opportunities for scientific and academic inclusion. It would enhance credibility with government entities and third party payors, and expand our patient base. Most important of all: it would bring a sense of objective, scientific honesty to chiropractic practice.

Chiropractors must carefully consider whether Innate is worth the price we currently pay.

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