

Innate intelligence: its origins and problems. JCCA 1998; 42(1):35–41.

To the Editor:

Congratulations to Dr. L. Morgan for his superb article, “Innate Intelligence: Its origins and problems”, JCCA 1998; 42(1):35–41.

The article was well researched and presented in a clear and concise way exposing the concept of Innate Intelligence for what it is: A 1900’s metaphysical concept born out of a magnetic healer’s mind in search of a new form of healing. Such a concept was excusable in the 1900’s when scientific knowledge about human physiology was still in its infancy; it is inexcusable in the 1990’s for a healing profession which pretends to have some of its basis in science.

Dr. Morgan’s article also delighted me for another reason. I predicted that the next issue of the JCCA would be filled with letters to the editor from “faithful disciples” attacking this dreadful heretic Dr. Morgan for having the audacity to question the validity of this “sacred edict”. I was right. Dr. Morgan’s reply to these disciples is a gem, but I would like to add a few reflections of my own.

I am always surprised when somebody who advocates philosophy to be at the core of his/her belief system, automatically rejects somebody else’s opinion on any topic being discussed, as being an attack or a threat to his/her belief. Philosophers (and scientists) have always cherished debate as a way to advance knowledge in the search for that often elusive truth.

Why view a colleague’s opinion as an attack not worthy of being printed in the JCCA? Intransigence seems a common trait of the “BJ disciples” when one disagrees with them. Not a healthy scholarly attitude, but quite in line with the guru they worship. Why ask the editor to censor what they view as chiropractic heresy? Censorship usually means fear. Fear of the other’s idea. Then, whose insecurity are we talking about? Those who are not afraid to speak or those who don’t want to listen.

David Hume’s (1711–1766) greatest philosophical work, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*,¹ is a classic in skeptical analysis. One form of skepticism, which he named “consequent”, recognizes the consequences of our fallible senses but corrects them through reason. Hume goes on to conclude, “A wise man proportions his belief to the evidence.”

What scientific evidence(s) (arrived at by the hypothetico-deductive method) can the “protectors of the faith” offer to support their hypothesized physiological role of Innate Intelligence?

None, as Dr. Morgan demonstrated in his article. How can a metaphysical concept be measured or even tested? Logic, one of the five fields of study and discourse in philosophy,² would reason that you cannot test what is untestable.

It is interesting, however, to see how most of the letter writers who disagreed with Dr. Morgan tried to bring their concept of “science” to rationalize their belief. Unfortunately they are confusing science and pseudo-science. At a peak time for New Age craziness (New York Times #1 bestseller non-fiction book is James Van Praagh, *Talking to Heaven. A medium’s message of life after death*), may I suggest a reading of Michael Shermer’s book, *Why People Believe in Weird Things*³ to help them understand the ten most common errors in pseudo-scientific thinking?

But could a “BJ follower” accept that the pseudo-scientific explanation of Innate Intelligence is wrong? Would an increase in scientific knowledge and reasoning help him or her realize where and how their thinking goes wrong?

Apparently not, according to social scientist Jay Stuart Snelson.⁴ He calls it an ideological immune system: “... educated, intelligent and successful adults rarely change their most fundamental presuppositions.” According to him, the more knowledge individuals have accumulated, and the more well founded their theories have become (in their opinion), the greater the confidence in their ideologies. Add, in the case of chiropractic, the minority syndrome (we, defenders of the faith, holders of the BIG IDEA are fighting a just cause against them, allopathic medicine and their lackeys, the drug companies), the cult of personality (BJ) and you can see the ideological impossibility of a paradigm shift.

Compare this to what happens in the world of science.

In the 1980’s, a pathologist named J.R. Warren noticed a large number of curved and spiral shaped bacteria in the stomach biopsies of patients.⁵ He went on to prove (using the scientific method) that these bacteria were the cause of gastritis, peptic and duodenal ulcers. He published his results in peer reviewed journals. Initially, the scientific world resisted the discovery, holding onto the old paradigm. But you cannot suppress an idea forever in the world of science. Other labs around the world reproduced War-

ren's experiment. The evidence came in. He was right. Out with the old paradigm (symptom based H2-receptor blockers), in with the new paradigm (caused based on a bacteria called *Helicobacter-pylori*).

On the other hand, when Stanley Pons and Martin Fleischman announced through a press conference in 1989 that they had "discovered" cold fusion there was no paradigm shift. No labs anywhere in the world could obtain their results. Both vanished into obscurity.

So if we have established that most of the BJ followers and other self proclaimed chiropractic "inventors" will not allow the possibility that they could be wrong and therefore modify their approach, why engage in a dialogue?

Because the chiropractors of the 21st century are in and will go to school. Most of these students have known the scientific method at university and are well educated. (BJ would not be happy about this level of education. To quote him: "I would rather train a plumber to be a chiropractor than a 'college man'. Education equals constipation."⁶) They must be informed as to the traps of cult and ideological following. They must feel proud to doubt and question. They must feel secure that by rejecting chiropractic "innatology" they will not only be great chiropractors but they will advance the cause and perhaps the scope of practice, of the profession in the new century. This is why the voice of science and reason must be heard in all chiropractic schools.

Luke Boudreau should be commended for having the courage to come out in writing about his commitment to critical thinking at a time, when in some chiropractic schools, the students' agenda seems to be under the control of "BJ cronies". "If you don't 'believe' you're not a 'principled' chiropractor, you're a traitor to the 'CAUSE'."

I shall remind Luke and all other students of chiropractic of the words of another of my favourite chiropractic debunkers, Dr. J.H. Donahue, "Certainly there are many good researchers, instructors and philosophers of chiropractic building up the profession. But they can and are often being negated by unscrupulous practice builders and chiropractic 'philosophers' ready to cash in on the ignorance, confusion and fear of decent chiropractors. Don't let chiropractic go to them without a battle. Confront these mystics with sound ideas and reason and they will scurry for cover."⁷

Not enough said ... but until next time ...

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References

- 1 Hume D. [1758] *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Great Books of the Western World, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952.
- 2 Durant W. *The Story of Philosophy*, Washington Square Press, 1961.
- 3 Shermer M. *Why people believe weird things. Pseudoscience, superstition and other confusions of our time*, W.H. Freeman and Company, New York, 1997.
- 4 Snelson JS. "The Ideological Immune System", *Skeptic* 1, No. 4, 44–55, 1993.
- 5 Blaser JM. "The Bacteria Behind Ulcers", *Scientific American*, February 1996, pp 104–107.
- 6 Keating JC. B.J. of Davenport: The Early Years of Chiropractic, Association for the History of Chiropractic, Davenport, Iowa, 1997.
- 7 Donahue JH. "Why the Average Chiropractor doesn't support research." *AJCM*, Vol 3, No. 3, September, 1990.

To the Editor:

Judging from the avalanche of letters triggered by Dr. Lon Morgan's article (*Innate intelligence: its origins and problems*. *JCCA* 1998; 42(1):35–41.), the term "Innate Intelligence" does not seem likely to disappear from the chiropractic lexicon. But perhaps it could be understood as an attempt to describe in metaphorical terms the sum total of the body's internal control mechanisms, including the capacity for tissue repair following injury or disease.

Metaphors are not meant to be taken literally, or included in scientific definitions, and should not be barriers to scientific study. For chiropractic, the field of study would seem to be the relationship between structure and function in the human body, especially as that relationship may affect the maintenance and restoration of health.

In his book *The Structural Approach to Chiropractic*, Dr. Mortimer Levine refers to Willard Carver's "Biologic Law" as a prime target of every scientist critic of chiropractic and then mentions the futility of the quarrel between the vitalists and the mechanists. He concludes: "It behooves us to formulate chiropractic theory strictly in terms of the concrete". For those who are unfamiliar with this book, it should be noted that Dr. Levine considers the scope of chiropractic to be much greater than "treating people for musculoskeletal symptoms" (to borrow a phrase from one of the previous letters to the Editor).

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