Constructing a philosophy of chiropractic: evolving worldviews and premodern roots

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Abstract

Objective: The philosophy of chiropractic can be framed as an attempt to correct the problems inherited from the Western Enlightenment. Its origins can be found in the long tradition of Western philosophy. The purpose of this article is to describe in a broad context chiropractic’s roots in premodernity and establish the structural and hermeneutical differences between chiropractic’s original philosophical ideas and those of premodern philosophers.

Discussion: The worldview or cultural mindset the philosophy arose from must be situated in the context of its time, the birth of the unique postmodern worldview, aperspectival consciousness, and the modern sense of self. This is accomplished by exploring several metatheories about the development of the self through history, with an emphasis on the premodern roots to the chiropractic terms; Universal Intelligence and Innate Intelligence. By contextualizing the philosophy of chiropractic in terms of a structural genealogy of the self and of ideas, a new approach to philosophy in chiropractic emerges.

Conclusion: Without accounting for chiropractic’s origins as a reflection of the unique time, place, and culture, in terms of the evolution of worldviews through history, any approach to construct or reconstruct a philosophy of chiropractic will potentially miss the seminal feature of chiropractic’s emergence.

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Introduction

Chiropractic emerged from a unique worldview in the history of Western thought. It was a blend of 19th century American metaphysical culture. In that cultural milieu, metaphysics had to do with the individual and universe communing through energetic and spiritual harmony. Chiropractic combined this metaphysical religious cultural worldview with leading edge scientific thought. The combination of worldviews and the practices that went along with them are often described in terms of colliding worldviews such as vitalism vs mechanism or holism vs reductionism. The complexity of worldview development is not as simple as a polar dichotomy because worldviews are cultural/historical
artifacts and developmentally enacted in individuals.8-12 Thus, attempts in the literature to solve the philosophical impasses in the chiropractic profession through pluralism do not go far enough because they do not address the central problems of worldviews and how they evolve.7,13 Chiropractic was part of a new and evolving worldview, an embodied attempt to reconcile the fractures inherent to Western culture between mind and body, and spirit and nature. Such a paradigmatic approach to chiropractic’s origination has not been adequately addressed in the literature.5 By exploring how this new worldview emerged historically and culturally and how it was different from previous worldviews in human history, we can better understand chiropractic, including its philosophy, politics, science, morals, and practice. We can also begin to understand the role chiropractic has played in the history of worldview development and philosophy itself.

The most comprehensive way to explore the worldviews from which chiropractic emerged is to examine a history of Western philosophy with an emphasis on philosophical ideas that were precursors to chiropractic’s core philosophical concepts. This article will focus on selected major philosophers and some wider theories about the worldviews from which they came from, all in relation to 2 chiropractic concepts. The 2 concepts central to the philosophy of chiropractic are innate intelligence (II) and universal intelligence (UI). In a section called “Chiropractic Defined” in his book The Science, Art, and Philosophy of Chiropractic, the founder of chiropractic, DD Palmer, wrote:

The Philosophy of Chiropractic is founded upon the knowledge of the manner in which vital functions are performed by Innate in health and disease. When this controlling intelligence is able to transmit mental impulses to all parts of the body, free and unobstructed, we have normal action which is health.14(p457)

Innate refers to Innate Intelligence, which was central to DD Palmer’s definition of chiropractic. He extended this centrality to a moral vision, which included Universal Intelligence. Palmer continues:

Knowing that our physical health and the intellectual progress of Innate (the personified portion of Universal Intelligence) depend upon the proper alignment of the skeletal frame, we feel it our bounden duty to replace any displaced bones so that physical and spiritual health, happiness and the full fruition of earthly life may be fully enjoyed.14(p457-458)

The expression of intelligence through matter was at the core of the philosophy of chiropractic. DD Palmer’s son, BJ Palmer, led the Palmer school from 1906 to 1961 and expanded the concepts of II and UI in his voluminous writings to include an even wider conception of the role chiropractic played in the unification of the physical and spiritual aspects of reality.15,16 This article suggests that the way UI and II were defined and used in practice was a philosophical and embodied attempt to overcome the dualism between mind and body, and spirit and matter inherent to Western philosophy. By bringing together the metaphysical religious culture with science through a practice, chiropractic was a departure from the previous Cartesian worldview and its predecessors in premodernity. Chiropractic was a new paradigm and thus bound to face legal, social, linguistic, personal, scientific, and cultural challenges. Thus, one way of approaching a better understanding of chiropractic is to view it as a response to the fragmentation of consciousness in the modern era. By situating the philosophy of chiropractic in the lineage of Western philosophy and the development of self-identity (as in structures of consciousness through time), this argument can be more fully understood.

Two distinctions about these terms, II and UI, should be acknowledged at the outset. The first is linguistic, and the second is experiential. Linguistically, both DD Palmer and BJ Palmer used the same terminology such as II to represent very different categories of being such as life, soul, and Spirit. This confusing use of one term has led to many interpretations of their writings.17 In addition, the term Spirit was used in 2 ways. Spirit is written here with a capital “S” to represent the immanent and transcendent divine, as one whole permeating and comprising all matter. This usage is consistent with DD Palmer’s use of the term (Fig 1). Spirit with a lowercase “s” referred to the “spirit of man.”14(p19) The second distinction is experiential. The essence of II and UI was based on embodied experiences originally cultivated by both Palmer’s through the same types of altered states related to hypnotic trances and magnetic passes,18,19 which may have inspired William James, Sigmund Freud, and Henri Bergson. It is important, however, to keep the embodied and experiential nature of the philosophy of chiropractic at the forefront of any discussion of the worldviews from which it emerged, as such distinctions are not usually addressed in the literature. It is equally important to differentiate the different levels of linguistic definitions associated with terms like Innate Intelligence.

It is proposed that chiropractic was, in part, an attempt to unite matter, body, life, soul, and Spirit through contemplation, the chiropractic adjustment,
and worldview development. The main focus of this article is to situate these ideas in the context of a history of ideas, with an emphasis on the premodern worldview and the premodern sense of self.

An earlier article on the philosophy of chiropractic examined the attempts to critique and update the philosophy of chiropractic and categorized those approaches into 8 methodologies. The current article and its 2 companion articles use methodological families (hermeneutics and ethnomethodology) as a way to more fully situate chiropractic in a history of ideas and worldviews. This genealogical approach (observing how worldviews developed through time) may also hold an alternative view to how chiropractic thrived whereas other healing methods born of the same period withered. Finally, this approach offers completely new interpretations of the dichotomies, criticisms, and solutions to the philosophical problems proposed in the literature.

Constructing a philosophy of chiropractic requires a deep look at the history of ideas and worldviews they grew from to situate the complexity of these ideas in a comprehensive framework. This sets the tone for a construction rooted in a more accurate context. By taking this approach, we get a picture of the debates and traditional issues in the philosophy of chiropractic not fully painted before. This is a picture that explores the evolution of worldviews rather than only contrasting opposing views and determining how they may or may not fit together. It shows how complex the modern self actually is and how that complexity is essential to understand chiropractic and its philosophical ideas. By reframing chiropractic’s emergence in this genealogical way, many of the problems and critiques in the literature on the philosophy of chiropractic can be solved, dismissed, or integrated. This is an important step in constructing a philosophy of chiropractic.

Therefore, the current article uses the theoretical model of Integral Methodological Pluralism (IMP). I describe chiropractic situated in a history of philosophy with an emphasis on worldview development, perspective development, and development of self-identity across history, while focusing on premodernity. By looking at the different ways that individual philosophers viewed the world in the premodern, modern, and early postmodern era, we can contrast those worldviews to that of DD Palmer, founder of chiropractic.

We can do this in part by examining the roots, foundation, and core elements to the ideas of innate and universal intelligence. I argue that the roots of the philosophy of chiropractic can be found in premodern worldviews, the foundation of the philosophical ideas can be found in modern worldviews, but the core of the ideas is rooted in postmodern worldviews. Chiropractic developed from an early postmodern worldview with a unique and very modern sense of self at its foundation. By understanding this argument, the groundwork can be laid for the construction of a philosophy of chiropractic from an entirely new perspective, one that addresses the unique moment of chiropractic’s inception in terms of the history of ideas and of the self.

**Methods**

Integral Methodological Pluralism was developed by Ken Wilber. Integral Methodological Pluralism’s 8 methodological families described in the previous article are phenomenology, structuralism, autopoiesis theory, empiricism, social autopoiesis theory, systems theory, hermeneutics, and ethnomethodology. It has been proposed that any construction of a philosophy of chiropractic should include all 8 methodological families to be truly holistic. Ethnomethodology, hermeneutics, phenomenology, and developmental structuralism were shown to be the least addressed methodological families in the literature on the philosophy of chiropractic. The current article focuses on ethnomethodology and hermeneutics.

Wilber’s insights are important to any discussion about new worldviews emerging in the modern and postmodern eras. He argues that the postmodern consciousness is, in part, an attempt to heal the Cartesian dualism and the disassociations common to
Western culture between mind/body; matter/spirit; and, most notably, art, science, and morals. It is this argument I will build upon by emphasizing the structural development of worldviews over time.

Worldviews can be understood by using objective criteria to examine how societies, cultures, and individuals develop meaning. Applying structuralism to cultural worldviews is central to this argument. Structuralism traces invariant patterns of development over time. Studying cultural history and the evolution of worldviews through time is a useful way to contextualize the origination of any idea or philosophy. Common methods for this third-person view of interiors are cultural anthropology, cultural history, and ethnomethodology for collective worldview development. This approach to understanding worldviews has been explored by tracing patterns of perspective or meaning-making through cultures and history. Worldviews can also be approached hermeneutically by attempting to understand how individuals understand each other. Using these methodologies, chiropractic can be situated in a developmentally historical and cultural context.

**Chiropractic and historical philosophy in the literature**

The need for a genealogical approach to the philosophy of chiropractic becomes obvious when examining the literature linking the philosophy of chiropractic to the history of ideas and the “branches” of philosophy. Although they are important precursors to constructing a philosophy, these approaches are inadequate to do so on their own. Any critique or discussion of philosophy in chiropractic that does not account for worldview development will miss central elements at the heart of the philosophy. The only exceptions to this are historical approaches that emphasize cultural worldviews, yet these approaches rarely acknowledge the genealogical or structural aspect of worldview development. Thus, they too are limited.

Chiropractic historians have focused on retrospectively linking concepts and theories from chiropractic’s principles to the roots of the ideas in the past. For example, Jacelone wrote, “The fundamental philosophic principles, upon which chiropractic science and art are based ... have origins in ancient thought.” Although this is a valid and important approach to establishing the cultural authority of chiropractic, such approaches would have stronger validity claims were they to incorporate worldview development.

Unfortunately, many historians downplay DD Palmer’s philosophical insights while emphasizing other scientific or philosophical roots. For example, Donahue links the concept of wellness and treating the whole body to the ancient Greek followers of Hippocrates, the Coans from Cos. He suggests that we should get rid of DD Palmer’s personal beliefs about spirituality and stick to these ancient wellness concepts. Donahue writes, “If we discard Dr. Palmer’s mystical Innate philosophy, we are still left with a usable ‘Coan’ perspective.” Religious historians and scholars take issue with this approach, and for good reason. Robert Fuller writes:

I think that Donahue, as well as other current historians seeking to show chiropractic’s early commitment to scientific research, minimizes the metaphysical dimensions that Palmer had injected into the movement in its early days.

On a similar and more recent note, Gunther Brown writes:

Chiropractic historians who feel uncomfortable with the Palmers’ religious views, embarrassed by their anti-medical statements, and eager for the profession to achieve scientific legitimacy have (unjustifiably in Moore’s view) minimized the ongoing influence of harmonial chiropractic. Gunther Brown is referring to another historian, Stuart Moore, and his book *Chiropractic in America*. Moore pointed out that the harmonial tradition goes far back in Western philosophy and chiropractic can be viewed as part of that tradition. Moore’s approach is illustrative of one of the exceptions noted above. Moore acknowledges the cultural and historical aspects to the philosophy of chiropractic but does not include a structural or genealogical approach to how these ideas emerged. This leaves the analysis of the philosophy incomplete and could lead to a false equivalence between premodern ideas and DD Palmer’s ideas.

Another approach to the philosophy of chiropractic is relating it to the classic “branches” of philosophy. One of the biggest problems with this approach centers on the use of the term *metaphysics*. Metaphysics is the “branch” of philosophy established by Aristotle’s book by that title. Catherine Albanese has noted that Palmer’s tradition was born of the “American metaphysical religion,” which is a different usage of the term than the classical one. Metaphysics is often used in different ways in the literature, in the classical sense as a branch of philosophy and in the cultural religious sense, usually
as in the shelf in the new-age bookstores. These definitions are often blurred. For example, Phillips and Leach write:

While the branch of philosophy dealing with metaphysics (i.e., beyond the physical world; religion, ghosts, magic, the transcendental, and anything that we cannot physically measure, see, touch, or define) may not be essential for chiropractic science, or for any science, there are chiropractic philosophers who believe it need not be abandoned. 

In the above quote, the authors confuse philosophical metaphysics with metaphysical religiosity, include a host of attributes to such religiosity (ghosts, magic, etc), and then suggest that philosophers of chiropractic that include metaphysics accept all of that. Metaphysics as a branch of philosophy deals with philosophical questions such as first causes, Ideal Forms, and the mind/body problem. The second definition of metaphysics deals with the full spectrum from contemplative and energetic experiences associated with meditation practices and alternative and complementary medicine, to religious experiences associated with a communion between the spiritual realm and the physical realm, to magical belief systems. When using the term metaphysics in regards to the philosophy of chiropractic, a distinction should be made as to exactly how the term is being applied and defined. I have suggested, as has Gunther Brown, that Albanese’s distinction of definition be used when discussing chiropractic’s origins. This is a useful approach because Albanese has captured how the term was used during DD Palmer’s time and in relation to Palmer and similar healing traditions specifically. Albanese writes:

In this context, metaphysical forms of religion have privileged the mind in forms that include reason but move beyond it to intuition, clairvoyance, and its relative such as “revelation” and “higher guidance.” Here versions of a theory of correspondence between worlds prevail. The human world and mind replicate either ideally, formerly, or actually—a larger, often more whole and integrated universe, so that the material world is organically linked to a spiritual one. In this vision of “as above, so below,” metaphysicians find a stream of energy flowing from above to below—so powerful and constitutive of their reality that they discover themselves to be, in some sense, made of the same “stuff.” If there are differences, they are of degree and not of kind. Moreover, the influx of energy (let us now call it “divine”) that enlivens their world is a healing salve for all its ills and in the strongest statement of their view—renders them divine and limitless.  

Albanese explicitly applies this to Palmer. Fuller even suggests that DD Palmer made advances to the various approaches of the day by creating specific terminology (II and UI) and pathways through which these energies can heal and enlighten the world (chiropractic). Fuller writes, “Palmer’s claim to originality lies in his interest in discovering the precise physiological routes through which the individualized segment of divine spirit, Innate, directs the life process within the individual.” Thus, DD Palmer’s metaphysical religious outlook should not be described as a branch of philosophy. Metaphysics as a branch of philosophy can however be applied to interpreting aspects of Palmer’s philosophy.

The “branches” of philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, ontology, ethics, etc) will play an important role in constructing a philosophy of chiropractic in the future. In that regard, it will be important to draw from the literature in Integral Theory, not only from IMP, but also from Integral Post Metaphysics, Integral Epistemological Pluralism, and Integral Ontological Pluralism, as well as from Integral Situational Ethical Pluralism. These approaches will naturally situate the philosophy in the type of holistic picture described in the first article.

The main problem with Albanese’s overall approach, which can be said for most approaches that capture the interior and cultural elements behind chiropractic’s origins, is the lack of structural genealogy. Among the many historical approaches linking chiropractic’s origins to the history of philosophy, Albanese, Moore, Gaucher-Pelshe, and Fuller come the closest to capturing the interiors of the culture underlying Palmer’s worldview. They do not however situate that knowledge within an evolution of worldviews. By adding the structural and genealogical aspect of worldview development, we can truly understand Palmer in an entirely new light, construct a philosophy of chiropractic, and make new sense of the many debates in the profession for more than the last 100 years.

One very important way this new approach can be used to further the philosophy of chiropractic is by dispelling the misleading historical interpretation that chiropractic’s philosophy only exists because of legal survival. This was most recently applied to chiropractic in terms of the history of philosophy by Phillips. The argument that philosophy in chiropractic emerged solely for legal purposes was initiated by Lerner,
expanded upon and clarified by Rehm,\(^{46}\) and vigorously promoted by Keating and his colleagues.\(^{36,47,53}\) Although based on facts, this interpretation of chiropractic’s embrace of philosophy strictly because of the need to demonstrate it was a separate and distinct profession overemphasizes the legal/social over the cultural and personal influences on the philosophy and limits a more robust view of the development of philosophy.\(^5,6,15\) Solely focusing on the legal viewpoint fails to recognize the early importance of Palmer’s philosophy of innate. A genealogical approach to the history of ideas and consciousness and Palmer’s place in that milieu remedies this limited interpretation. Hopefully, the alternate approach offered in this article will create a more complete context for the emergence of chiropractic and its philosophical ideas without a political agenda, which is so obvious in the legal argument.\(^{20,21,54}\)

### Premodern worldviews: chiropractic’s roots

There are 3 important ways to look at premodern worldviews and their impact on chiropractic’s philosophical roots: structures of consciousness, self-identity, and ideas. Each one of these is interwoven, as they complement, reinforce, and help to shape each other. Structures of consciousness and self-identity are best understood using the methodologies of cultural anthropology, ethnomethodology, hermeneutics, structuralism, and phenomenology. As previously described,\(^{20}\) none of these are well represented in the literature on chiropractic’s philosophy. This is very important because the chiropractic concepts of II and UI are very similar to premodern conceptions of the soul, the body, and God.\(^5,6\) But without taking into account the worldview that those ancient conceptions arose from and the self-identities of the individuals who espoused such early formulations of these ideas, a very obvious error could be committed by equating chiropractic’s ideas with premodern ideas.

#### Defining II and UI

**Innate intelligence** is defined as the inner organizing force of all living systems.\(^{55,56}\) It is a piece of universal intelligence, the inherent organizing force of all matter. DD Palmer writes of Innate:

> It continues to care for and direct the organic functions of the body as long as the soul holds body and spirit together.

Innate is embodied as a personified part of Universal Intelligence; therefore, co-eternal with the all-creative force. This indwelling portion of the Eternal is in our care for improvement. The intellectual expansion of Innate is in proportion to the normal transmission of impulses over the nervous system; for this reason the body functions should be kept in the condition of tone.\(^{14(p19)}\)

Innate was also referred to as spirit, whereas Palmer wrote, “the body as an organism, is directed by an intelligence known as spirit.”\(^{14(p33)}\) Innate intelligence was also described as the director of the *soul*, which was defined as “intelligent life” and “the product from uniting intelligence and material, spirit and body; the result of a combination of the immaterial with the material.”\(^{14(p31)}\) The *soul* was defined as the link between spirit (Innate) and matter.\(^{55-57}\) In his later years, BJ Palmer developed the concept of II to include a hierarchy of personal development. He believed II could be developed biologically, mentally, and spiritually as a deep intuition and connection to the cosmos.\(^{15-17}\) For example, BJ Palmer wrote, “Innate communicates with you and when Innate is in contact you are in tune with the infinite.”\(^{57(p55)}\) These 2 levels of the definition, biological and psycho/spiritual, have led to a great deal of debate, criticism, and revision to the philosophy of chiropractic.

**Universal intelligence** was defined by DD Palmer as the organizing wisdom at the heart of all matter, also referred to as “God, the Eternal, the All-Wise” and “the Infinite Source of all intelligence.”\(^{14(p257)}\) It was later described by BJ Palmer as the first principle of the philosophy of chiropractic,\(^{58,59}\) “the great I AM that I AM,”\(^{60(p92)}\) “the GREAT UNKOWN SOURCE,”\(^{61(p13)}\) and “the resident life principle.”\(^{59(p116)}\) Having such explicit references to God and Spirit as central to the philosophy of chiropractic has caused many philosophical problems in terms of further developing the philosophy, science, and art of chiropractic. By sorting out these ideas from the haze of premodern worldviews, locating their foundation in the modern identity, and also teasing out the newer elements from postmodern perspectives, we can more adequately deal with these philosophical questions in their proper context.

#### Approaching structures of consciousness

Cultural historian Jean Gebser is one of the most important scholars of culture from the last century because he was able to explain the chaos of modern
times in relation to the evolution of consciousness and the emergence of a new worldview. His magnum opus, *The Ever Present Origin*, was first published in 1949. Gebser examined language, art, science, religion, architecture, poetry, as well as social practices and correlated 5 major structural developments or “mutations” in human consciousness throughout the course of human history: Archaic, Magic, Mythic, Mental, and Integral. His emphasis was on Western consciousness and the development of perspective through time. Gebser’s book was translated into English in 1985.

There is a move in academia to dismiss structural approaches to the history of ideas or consciousness mainly because such approaches were used in the past to assert social and cultural superiority in various ways. This unfortunate bias mixes good scholarship with bad interpretations or bad scholarship. Gebser’s objective approach, as well as the other approaches I will draw from in this article, should not be equated with what Riane Eisler refers to as “domination hierarchy”; rather, it should be understood for what it is, a cultural and historic anthropology, which tracks the development of perspectives over time, what Eisler defines as “actualization hierarchy.”

Recently, Munzinger, a legal history scholar, critiqued the chiropractic profession on the way it writes its own history. Munzinger made the important point that when we look to the past, we should never assume that our predecessors held the same worldview as we. He writes, “While it is true that we have much in common with people of the past, basic perceptions and worldviews do change over time, sometimes drastically, and it is misleading to examine our predecessors from a presentist perspective.” Munzinger also concludes we should not assume that there was one simple path through history to get us to this point. That type of false teleology is important to note in this context. Gebser’s work does trace the history of consciousness in a seemingly progressive route to the latest advances in perspective. It flies in the face of Munzinger’s admonition against teleology. And yet, Gebser and other similarly minded theorists like Wilber, Combs, and Taylor are not suggesting that the latest developments in consciousness were inevitable and that history’s purpose was to get us to this point. Nonetheless, there is an advance in consciousness being studied in all of their theories; and thus, to understand the philosophy of chiropractic from this perspective, we need to set aside judgment of this approach in the spirit of open-minded scholarship and pluralism.

**Magic and Mythic structures**

Gebser’s 5 structures of consciousness, Archaic, Magic, Mythic, Mental, and Integral, are a useful way for us to explore the evolution of worldviews over time. This is especially important because of Gebser’s emphasis on what he called the *Integral aiperspectival Structure*, which began around the turn of the 20th century, the time of chiropractic’s emergence. According to Combs, Gebser’s 5 levels referred to the worldviews that were implicit in the structures of consciousness. These were complete experiential ways of understanding and relating to the world, as well as ways of perceiving and knowing. These 5 worldviews originated in the Stone Age Paleolithic humans. Hallmarks of this structure are early cave paintings, shamans, cyclical time, as well as the interchangeability of space and time, and the one-dimensional point. This ancient Magic structure is still with us today in positive forms in the deep resonances we feel when in love and the dreaminess we feel from music. Negative forms are evident in mass movements such as Nazi Germany or other lessened forms such as repression and projection. Mickunas, one of Gebser’s translators, relates the Magic structure to the vital region of humans including vitality of consciousness and the miraculous in healing by prayer. This is why Gebser considered vitalism to be a regression to the Magic structure.

The Mythic structure began around 10,000 years ago with the Neolithic humans, the late Stone Age with overlap into the next Mental Structure. The Mythic gave rise to gods and goddesses, and mythic imagination; space was viewed as 2-dimensional, and time was not yet linear as we understand it today. Gebser referred to time in the Mythic as “temporicity” such as “long ago and far away...” It is the differing conceptions of space and time that help to define each structure of consciousness.

**Mental structure and perspective**

The Mental structure began in the premodern era before the ancient Greeks and has dominated the 20th
century in much of the world. Feuerstein suggests that the transition from Mythic to Mental lasted from 10,000 to 500 BCE. Based on his analysis of Wilber’s writings, Reynolds depicts 3 phases of the Mental Era: Early (2500-500 BCE), Middle (500 BCE-1500 CE), and Late (1500-present). In the next articles, we will explore the Middle and Late eras in detail in terms of philosophy and the emergence of the modern self-identity. Understanding the difference between the premodern and modern sense of self will help us to draw distinctions around DD Palmer’s concepts of Innate and Universal Intelligence from similar concepts in history and also help us to situate chiropractic in a postmodern or postconventional worldview, what Gebser referred to as Integral aperspectival.

The hallmark of the Mental structure is the use of rationality and also the development of perspective. Perspectival consciousness developed as a worldview during the Renaissance in the architecture of Brunelleschi and the art of da Vinci. It was a new way of viewing the world, one that situated the viewer in the point of view of the artist. Before this, art did not capture the perspective of the artist. For the first time, 3 dimensions are captured in art. By looking at the art, you are able to view the spatial depths from the artist’s 3-dimensional perspective. The Magic and Mythic structures were marked by 2-dimensional and preperspectival consciousness, such as cave paintings, where the images were dreamy; Egyptian paintings, with 2-dimensional beings; or Medieval tapestries, where the figures were floating with no ground or perspective. In those examples, there is an unreal quality and no third dimension is captured. Just by looking at perspectival art, like the Mona Lisa, a mutation of consciousness spread; and the world was never the same.25

Once an individual grasps the world in a new and more authentic way, such as from a 2-dimensional perspective to a 3-dimensional perspective, his or her worldview is forever changed. The only modern analogy is childhood development. It is well documented that young children cannot take another person’s point of view. The child views the world from an egocentric position. The whole world revolves around them. As they grow and develop, they can begin to put themselves in another’s shoes. Once this ability develops, an individual does not regress except perhaps in cases of brain injury. Individuals can still retain remnants of that previous level of egocentric perspective such as narcissism, but they now have the ability at least to see the world from another’s perspective. In the past, such development was not yet a fully realized worldview for adults. These mutations of consciousness that Gebser points out are the moments in history when these new worldviews emerged. Today, we take them for granted as the course of normal development.

This new perspective or 3-dimensional worldview soon translated to the microscopic, the telescopic, and the geographic. Combs notes how the big change occurred when people began to take “their own point of view” with them into daily life. This Mental structure was referred to by Gebser as “ratio” or division. It not only brings one’s point of view to the world, but tends to divide up, split up, and cause arguments over small matters. The Mental structure is not a structure complex enough for the 21st century!

Categorical errors in chiropractic ideas

_Innate Intelligence_ was defined as both a biological category and a spiritual category. A category mistake is when 2 categories or levels are defined by one term. This philosophical distinction was first made by Gilbert Ryle. Ryle gave an example of a man touring Cambridge University. After viewing all the buildings, libraries, dorms, etc, he asked, “Where is the University?” He was mistaking one category with another. The original definition of Innate Intelligence did something similar; it used the same term to describe the eternal spirit and the director of biological organization. For example, DD Palmer wrote:

That which I named Innate (born with) is a segment of that Intelligence which fills the universe. This universal, All Wise, is metamerized, divided into metameres as needed by each individualized being. This somatome of the whole, never sleeps nor tires, recognizes neither darkness nor distance, and is not subject to material laws or conditions. It continues to care for and direct the functions of the body as long as the soul holds body and spirit together.

Innate’s existence and consciousness are not dependent upon its body, no more than we on the house we live in. It is invincible, cannot be injured or destroyed by material changes. It is invulnerable, is not subject to traumatic or toxic injuries, is not subordinate to material substance.

Biological functions are one category. In modern times, biology as a discipline has its roots in the Mental structure of consciousness. The soul, which “holds the body and spirit together,” comes from the Mythic structure of consciousness. The invulnerable and
invincible spirit is the spiritual category and has its roots in the premodern Magic and Mythic structures. Palmer thus combined 3 levels: body, soul, and spirit or Mental, Mythic, and Magic. The category error can be corrected by viewing these levels as emerging from different structures of consciousness and Palmer’s attempt to unite them as a new and emergent structure.

Nowhere is the need for such a correction more evident than with the critiques of II, which are based on II’s premodern roots. For example, Donahue writes, “The whole concept of innate of course rests on accepting on faith the basic premises without hope of any concrete proof.”73 (p35) Faith comes from a premodern worldview. Concrete proof comes from a modern worldview. If accepting II on faith was the only claim to its validity, it would represent a premodern concept and Donahue would be correct. He is not. Incorporated into the definition of II is an empirical approach from the Mental structure of consciousness, the modern worldview. DD Palmer may not have been trained in the scientific method; but he did distinguish faith, belief, and knowledge in regards to science. Palmer wrote:

Science is accepted, accumulated knowledge, systematized and formulated with reference to the existence of general facts—the operation of general laws concerning one subject. Chiropractic is the name of a classified, indexed knowledge of successive sense impressions of biology—the science of life—which science I created out of principles which have existed as long as the vertebrate.

Science is the knowledge of knowing. Scientific religion embraces a systematic knowledge of facts which can be verified by conscious cerebration. Knowledge is superior to faith and belief. Faith is an inward acceptance of some personal act; we believe thon is trustworthy, therefore, we have faith. Faith is a union of belief and trust. Belief is an intellectual process, the acceptance of some thing as true on other grounds than personal observation and experience.14 (p10)

DD Palmer’s extension of empirical knowledge to interior apprehension, or “conscious cerebration,” in regards to “scientific religion” is an example of combining the premodern reliance on internal experience with the modern requirement of establishing repeatable and verifiable facts, or “observation and experience.” Using Gebser’s structures as our scaffolding, we can begin to explore the history of the self and its ideas through time. This will allow us to separate these categories or levels and distinguish appropriate language for each, whether we are comparing premodern to postmodern, preconventional to postconventional, or just body to mind to soul to spirit.

Premodern self-identity

Examining how “self-identity” developed throughout the mental structure can be viewed through arguments from Charles Taylor’s Sources of the Self.26 Taylor was interested in how the self forms through time as a moral agent. His goal was to better understand the modern self-identity and its sources of morality. Taylor’s examination of the history of philosophy in search of how and where the modern self emerged can help us understand how DD Palmer’s sense of self, for instance, was distinct from that of previous philosophers from Socrates to Augustine and Descartes to Kant. Taylor’s insights have been applied to the philosophy of chiropractic in 2 instances: the first was by Smith,74 who applied these ideas to the development of psychosomatic medicine from the history of ideas; and the second was a precursor to this article by the author.5 It is one thing to acknowledge that the people of the past held different worldviews; it is quite another to determine just how they were different. Using Taylor’s approach to the development of the self gives us yet another way to understand how DD Palmer’s worldview was very different from the premodern or the modern worldview. This is because we can now understand more precisely not just the worldview but the self within that worldview. As Taylor has shown, one of the most comprehensive ways to do so is to study the development of ideas through the history of Western thought.

Innate and universal in the Greeks

According to Taylor,26 the ancient self of the Greeks was an “ontic logos”; that is, knowledge was not in the individual or subject; it was located in outside reality.5,26 In the pre-Socratics such as Thales (625-546 BCE), Anaximander (610-546 BCE), and Anaximenes (546-578 BCE), we find the earliest attempts to locate the individual in regards to a universal order. In Pythagoras (572-497 BCE), we find an emphasis on the structure of a thing to define its causes of behavior.75 These attempts provide us with the earliest roots of II and UI, the search for the individual in the cosmos and for the sources of the structure and form of things.
It is in the philosophies of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle that we can see the most explicit premodern roots to chiropractic’s philosophy. In the teachings of Socrates, teacher of Plato, we find the first turning within to point reason to the soul instead of just the universe.\(^75\) We can see DD Palmer’s debt to Plato in the ascent of the philosopher to know the Ideal Forms as described in *The Republic*.\(^76\) The Ideal Forms existed in a timeless plane and represented the perfected form of each thing in the world. To say that Innate Intelligence is an aspect of Universal Intelligence is rooted in this idea. In Plato’s *Timaeus*, however,\(^77\) comes the idea that the many emanate from the one, the Good. The Good can be viewed as the ultimate source of all the Ideal Forms. In terms of Palmer’s approach, we can now locate individual Innates, as many coming from the one universal, an even deeper debt to Plato. And yet, we might say that Palmer’s view of Innate is closer to Aristotle, who expanded upon Plato’s theory of forms. Aristotle brought the Ideal Forms down into the world as things striving to express their ideal. His word for this was *entelechy*.\(^78\) Palmer’s concept that the eternal Innate can be expressed in the form of the body’s functions can be traced to this idea.

According to Wilber,\(^11\) the tone for Western philosophy was set by this dialectic tension between the *ascent* to the One and the *descent* from the One to the many. Building upon Alfred North Whitehead’s famous observation that all of Western philosophy is footnotes to Plato,\(^79\) Wilber points out that the footnotes are fractured because most philosophers have chosen one or the other path and there is no real way to integrate the two. Wilber writes:

> For, as we will see, while Plato emphasized both movements, Western civilization has been a battle royale between these two movements, between those who wanted only to live in “this world” of Manyness and those who wanted to live only in the “other world” of transcendent Oneness—both of them equally and catastrophically forgetting the unifying Heart, the unspoken Word, that integrates both Ascent and Descent and finds Spirit both Transcending the Many and embracing the Many.\(^{11}(p320)\)

The split in philosophy between spirit and matter really began with the emergence of the Mental structure as exemplified in Plato and the attempt to reconcile this split by Aristotle. Wilber brings this point to the forefront. We can now see that the attempt to heal the split between mind and body that chiropractic represents goes further back in history than previously supposed with the Cartesian dualism. And the first real attempt to overcome it was by Plotinus, the inspiration to generations of philosophers, including the philosophical lineage of DD Palmer.

For Plotinus (204/5-270), the One overflowed with the Good to create the Many. The many is another term for the separateness between things or forms in the world. All individuals are parts of the many and the One. In the “Introduction” to his translation of Plotinus, Elmer O’Brien writes, “The One, therefore, transcendent to all differentiation and form, is the source of all.”\(^80(p20)\) Through meditation and philosophical contemplation of the One, the individual might unify with it.\(^81\)

This movement toward integration with the One may also be found in the works of both DD Palmer and BJ Palmer. For Plotinus, the ascent went from matter to life to mind to soul and then to the One.\(^11,81\) For both DD Palmer and BJ Palmer, there was a similar hierarchy from matter to life to educated intelligence (EI), to innate intelligence, and to universal intelligence. DD Palmer considered Innate to be the creator of thought and life. His hierarchy emphasized the descent and went from UI to II to intelligent life (soul), which was the link to matter. Innate created living functions and thought (EI). For him, the progression and perfection of II (the ascent) extended to life and beyond.\(^55,57,59\) BJ Palmer took his father’s philosophical insights even further and described a psychospiritual awakening process similar to Plotinus’ philosophical contemplation. In his midlife, BJ Palmer described the descent from the One to the many. He wrote:

> My Innate Intelligence is not God, but for want of better I shall refer to it as an emanation. This supply of superior force is being supplied constantly, but it is not *Innate in me* until it passes thru transitions. This sunbeam, as it were, must pass thru a sieve called mental. What remains passes onward, thru the mind.

Each step brings it nearer to a physical, utilizable level. Having passed thru the two ethereal processes, let us now make of it a practical substance by proceeding thru the brain, converting it to a reality—mental impulse—physical power—life.\(^82(p45)\)

In his later life, after more than 60 years of developing chiropractic, its philosophy, and his own self, BJ Palmer wrote of the ascent to Universal or the infinite. The process of ascent started through the
healthy function of biological expression of the intelligence (as a result of the chiropractic adjustment) and was then evolved further by the EI’s acceptance of II as a wiser intelligence, which could ultimately result in a total sublimation to UI in the form of infinite awareness. BJ Palmer wrote:

Should that time come when his finite mind could and did know the infinite mind WITHIN, then his external finite mind would cease to be, because it would then be infinite in scope, understanding, and application.60(p18)

Again, we can find the roots to these ideas here but not their essence because the ontic self of Plotinus was far from the perspectival (modern) and aperspectival (postmodern) selves of the Palmers.

**The invention of “I”**

According to Taylor,26 St Augustine (354-430 CE) makes the next major discovery in terms of the relationship between the subjective self and the universal other. Augustine inverts Plotinus’ ascent to the One or ascent to Plato’s Ideal Forms and ascends by going within. Augustine began what Taylor called “radical reflexivity,” the development of first-person perspective and the first search for God within. He discovered the first “interior” or “I” in the West.11 This radical notion forever changed Western thought.

For Wilber, this represented an “arrested ascent” that would freeze European thought for 1000 years.11 The problem for Wilber was that Augustine did not believe he could ever fully merge with God within. His ascent was frozen. Wilber considered this a holdover of the Mythic structure holding back the Mental structure. The philosophers of the West were stuck, according to Wilber. They could not go fully within nor could they fully explore the outer world, as Goodness was now to be found on the interior, where God was, and not in the exterior, where sin was. The “ontic logos” of the Greeks was transformed into “radical reflexivity.”26 The source of the Good was now found within, and the look without was halted. According to Wilber, the West would wait until Boehme and then Bruno to find the goodness outside in nature, enough so that exploring nature would be akin to exploring God’s Goodness.11

Future philosophers of Western culture, would have to overcome this “arrested ascent” to establish a fully modern sense of self, DD Palmer included. The very notion of II as an individualized portion of UI, as the expression of living form and thus of nature, is dependent on overcoming this medieval approach to “I.” Without the ability to overcome this block, the philosophy of II would indeed be a throwback to a Magic/Mythic worldview as critics such as Donahue and Keating have suggested.53 But it is not. It is a philosophy that grew out of this tradition and drew from the developments that came after Augustine.

**Some vitalistic philosophers**

There were several notable vitalistic philosophers and physicians before the Western Enlightenment whose systems could also be viewed as roots of DD Palmer’s II, UI, and conception of chiropractic. Some historians have objectively noted this connection in their writings.1,4 Others have made such comparisons in relation to dismissing Palmer’s ideas as prerational.41,53,73 We can view the prerational argument in terms of Gebser’s idea of regression, whereas vitalism is viewed as a return to magical thinking and also in terms of Wilber’s concept of the pre/trans fallacy.83 Confusing the prerational with the postrational or what Gebser calls arational29(p362) is a common error. By acknowledging a difference between DD Palmer’s prerational and postrational ideas, a gigantic leap forward is made toward establishing a discipline of philosophy in chiropractic. Wilber’s pre/trans fallacy can also be applied to BJ Palmer’s concept that enlightenment (postrational) can be achieved through the body’s expression of intelligence (prerational). Structuralism as it is applied to individuals and cultures is the key to making these distinctions between pre and post.

Paracelsus (1493-1541) sought to create harmony between man and nature, and microcosm and macrocosm by using herbs, plants, and minerals to assist the body’s natural powers to heal. He referred to this power as archeus, a vital principle. His follower, von Helmont (1577-1644), created a hierarchy with the soul directing the main archeus, which then directed the archeus of each organ. Boehme (1575-1624) had a similar notion to Paracelsus’ archeus, which he called primus. Boehme mixed the magical views of Paracelsus with mystical views of Meister Eckart and Plotinus, combined with Augustine’s interior. Boehme described the world’s flourishing, the “life giving sap,” as God’s expression through the world and through the divine spark of life. This paved the way for modern science and an embrace of the world as good rather than sinful. Boehme also had a great influence on Swedenborg, Schelling, as well as several early spiritual communities in America.1,84 We can view DD Palmer as part of this lineage but even more so than chiropractic
historians have allowed, as this type of analysis includes not just the similarity of ideas that were precursor to his, such as primus, archeus, and their closeness to II, but the worldview and self that were bequeathed through such ideas. The conception of nature by these vitalistic philosophers was not yet modern and so not really representative of Palmer, his worldview, or his self.

**Brunonian revolution**

With the life of Giordano Bruno (1548-1600),85 we can see the beginning of the Modern world.11 The split between religion and science becomes inevitable. Bruno was a true martyr to the modern self because he was burned at the stake by the Inquisition because of his beliefs. Bruno combined Plotinian philosophy with the findings of Copernicus. He reasoned that if the universe overflowed with the Good of God and if earth revolved around the sun (as his contemporary Copernicus espoused), then stars were filled with planets teeming with life as an expression of God’s goodness. The universe was divine life. As noted above, more than 400 years later, BJ Palmer would refer to Universal Intelligence as the “life principle”59; and DD Palmer would write of chiropractic principles, “They originate in Divinity, the Universal Intelligence, and constitute the essential qualities of life....”14 (p12) The notion of a cosmos made of Divine life did more than just decenter the earth from the center of the Cosmos; Bruno decentered man, especially with respect to the biblical accounts of man’s special place in God’s universe. For this, Wilber refers to the true birth of the Modern age as The Brunonian Revolution rather than the Copernican Revolution.11 It was that step into the modern world that would set the tone for all future Western philosophy, including the philosophy of chiropractic.

**From premodern to modern**

Chiropractic’s most basic concepts of II and UI have their roots in premodern worldviews. Such structures are represented by Magic, Mythic, and early Mental-Rational structures of consciousness. These structures are characterized by an evolution of the sense of self from the Greek’s ontic logos to the Augustinian radical reflexivity and the invention of the “I” to the embrace of nature as an emanation of the One and God’s goodness, the Divine life of the cosmos. The development of these worldviews is also characterized by the development of perspective through time. The advent of the modern worldview coincided not only with the development of a unique sense of self but also with the 3-dimensional perspective as characterized by the Renaissance art, spatial awareness, and individual-ized consciousness. All of these developments can be explained as precursors to the concepts of II and UI; and thus, these concepts are not equivalent to premodern ideas. None of the premodern ideas can truly be equated with DD Palmer, BJ Palmer, or the philosophy of chiropractic because they grew from worldviews so foreign to the way DD Palmer viewed the world. The Greeks, St Augustine, the vitalists, and even Bruno considered life from a different perspective from either of the Palmers. Thus, roots to the ideas that are central to chiropractic can be found in premodern philosophy, the premodern worldview, and the self associated with those eras; but that was only the beginning.

**Conclusions**

By understanding how the elements of chiropractic’s philosophical theories come from premodern worldviews, magic, mythic, and early-mental structures of consciousness, and the history of the self, we can more accurately contextualize and develop a philosophy of chiropractic. Much of the criticism of the philosophy of chiropractic has been aimed at the premodern roots to the philosophy. An adequate context using ethnomethodology to understand the development of cultural worldviews and hermeneutics to interpret the meaning individuals gave to their ideas over time opens up the interpretations of chiropractic’s ideas in a new way. DD Palmer, the founder of the chiropractic, was a modern individual at the turn of the 20th century, fully steeped in the metaphysical religious culture of his time and the current state of scientific knowledge of his time. As an individual, he embodied a worldview and a sense of self that could never be equated to the worldviews or selves of philosophers of premodern times. For this reason, it is very important when developing a philosophy of chiropractic to acknowledge the importance that philosophers of the past and worldviews of the past may have played in planting chiropractic’s roots; but that is all they will ever be. Roots of the ideas and roots of the self are not the ideas or the self, no matter how similar they may sound to modern and postmodern ears or interpreted through today’s worldviews. Thus, chiropractic can be more fully
understood as a unique attempt in a particular time, place, and culture to come to grips with all that has come before, which included an attempt to honor certain premodern truths from a modern worldview, which may imply a new and emergent worldview, one that bridges the gap between modern and premodern; for now, let us call it postmodern. Gebser referred to it as Integral aperspectival.

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