

From the Introduction to Modernized Chiropractic (1906)
by Simon A. Senzon

Defining Subluxation, Chiropractic, and The Vital Machine

This first chiropractic textbook is comprised of two volumes. Volume one is three hundred and forty-eight pages, and volume two is three hundred and fifty-nine pages. It is primarily an adjusting and analysis manual. The philosophy has more to do with the body's ability to self-regulate and the importance of Spontaneity, which occurs after the dynamic chiropractic thrust to correct subluxations is completed. Even in the very important places where the authors introduce philosophical concepts it is limited to physiological discussions. And finally after about six hundred pages they actually discuss philosophy explicitly, in the appendix of volume two, where the focus is still on the hard facts of biology by distinguishing man as a dual-part machine. The outer machine is comprised of protective shielding for the inner machine, which is comprised of the vital components of the body.

The text does introduce some incredibly important concepts as noted above. The authors do not mention D.D. Palmer in the entire book and thus it is very difficult to determine which concepts come directly from him. They do say that others have discussed subluxation but such explanations were vague. They then go on to show how their approach to the topic is the most comprehensive. An interesting study would be to examine Palmer's writings on chiropractic prior to this text and try to determine his influence. Until his tome in 1910 and posthumous book in 1914, there was very little written except for the book mentioned above coauthored with B.J. and in subsequent editions B.J. is listed as the sole author.

Of Chiropractic's definition Smith, Langworthy, and Paxson wrote,

“We may define Chiropractic as a system of manual adjustment recognizing the cause of disease to be structural impairment and displacement, and proclaiming the irrefutable truth that the unique movement known as the Chiropractic Thrust is by far the best agency known for producing Spontaneity in impaired tissue which is the most essential factor in making replacement permanent and thus securing normal position, normal tonicity, and normal tension.”

So they clearly describe many of the components that have become the cornerstones of chiropractic's definition. They do not mention the nervous system. Their explanation of Spontaneity is very close to the doctrine of Innate Adjustments as described by B.J. Palmer in later years. This is the idea that the chiropractic adjustment introduces a force and the innate intelligence completes the adjustment. They also mention tone. It is difficult to say whether their meaning and D.D. Palmer's are the same. Tone was at the center of D.D.'s concept of chiropractic.

Much of the book discusses the mechanics of subluxations. Toward the end of volume 2, in a section called, Initial Subluxations, the authors wrote,

“While the initial subluxation may have been so slight as to cause no symptoms of disease, it will be seen from the above that the initial subluxation was directly accountable for the increased subluxation which later may have been followed by alarming and serious results. It is therefore, apparent that initial subluxations be they ever so slight, are of the utmost importance. Many a child at play sustains them and when they are allowed to remain uncorrected, they act later in life as veritable breeders of disease.” (342, v. 2)

This quote is reminiscent of B.J. Palmer’s famous story about a fall early in life that can have nonlinear and global implications later in life on many orders of magnitude even impacting society as a whole. This also makes a very early case for pediatric adjusting of subluxations in non-symptomatic patients.

In the explanation of the inner or vital machine of man, they acknowledged that, “the human body is self-regulating” under normal conditions. This self-regulating process follows specific paths, which can be blocked. They wrote,

“One of the main objects of Pathology from a Chiropractic standpoint and in fact from any scientific standpoint is to determine the obstruction which block the normal action of the influences which pass over these paths...There are a number of possible conditions which may be detrimental to the free passage of Nature’s forces over these paths...we have proven beyond a doubt that the condition of abnormal mechanical pressure is in 95% of cases the one condition which is accountable for the interference to the passage of life’s forces over these self regulating paths.” (315, v. 2).

Another philosophical concept that is seen again and again in the writings of the Palmers is about the connecting link. For example, in 1910 D.D. Palmer wrote,

“The life directed by intelligence is the soul (the life) of the body. The soul (the life) is the symphysis, which unites Spirit and Body. Without the connecting link, the Spiritual and Physical are separate and distinct from each other.” (p. 673)

This concept of the connecting link between matter and spirit is mentioned Smith, Langworthy, and Paxson, as the Vital Energy. They write,

“to us that what is called vital energy is the connecting link between things living and things dead. Vital energy explains the ability for the physical and chemical properties to adapt themselves to the environment in the way mentioned.” (300, v2)

They go on to acknowledge that much that was once attributed to vital energy has been found to be physical or chemical and yet they maintain that vital energy plays an important role in all actions of living organisms. This explanation of the connecting link is different than Palmer's definition as his is rooted in a much broader conception. For D.D., this link is not merely describing the difference between organic and inorganic matter, but commenting on the soul and spirit and how they are expressed in life and matter. The contrast is evident and harkens us back to the depth of Palmer's insight as opposed to the more surface conception of these authors. Even in their more mechanical approach to vitalism, their writings were still remarkable.

The Chiropractic Thrust and Spontaneity

The key to chiropractic they maintain is the Chiropractic Thrust, which produces Spontaneity. "Thrust then is the Gibraltar upon which Chiropractic adjustment is founded."