



Writings of Polarity Therapy founder Randolph Stone, DO, DC, ND (1890-1981) have been digitized, indexed and made searchable in this new free resource for Polarity students, practitioners and teachers.

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### Autonomic Nervous System Terminology - by John Chitty

While Dr. Stone deserves great respect for his ahead-of-his-time<sup>1</sup> identification of the Autonomic Nervous System as a central factor in health conditions, his terminology is often confusing for a modern reader. In his time, the terms "Vegetative" and "Sympathetic" were used for "Autonomic." The reasoning behind these terms was that the primary categorizations of the overall nervous system were between Voluntary and Involuntary action. The voluntary nerve groups operated for conscious volitional movements, while the involuntary nerve groups operated for actions that have little or no voluntary control, such as essential visceral functions. In an earlier era, the voluntary groups were considered "Antipathetic" in that a separate-from-body witness consciousness is the operator. The involuntary ("Autonomic") groups were considered "Sympathetic" because there is no apparent separate control consciousness, and "Vegetative" because they regulate more primitive functioning.

Within the involuntary category ("Sympathetic," "Vegetative," or "Autonomic" in Dr. Stone's era), further subdivision is recognized in three further distinct branches (of which only two were known to Dr. Stone - the third was identified anatomically and physiologically in 1995 by Stephen Porges, PhD). These three branches are known in modern times as "Parasympathetic," "Ortho-Sympathetic"<sup>2</sup> (or just "Sympathetic," today's common term which continues the confusion), and "Social." Porges has developed state-of-the-art understanding of these three in their actions and interactions, far beyond what was commonly known in Dr. Stone's time.

Sub-category	Main Action	Stress response	Phylogenic order	Anatomical components
Parasympathetic	Baseline metabolism	Freeze	Oldest	Vagus Nerve, Sacral Plexus
Ortho-Sympathetic	Mobilization	Fight or Flight	Newer	Sympathetic chain (thoraco-lumbar)
Social	Bonding, Communication	Group behavior	Newest	Cranial nerves V, VII, IX, X, XI, Corticobulbar Tract

Within DigitalDrStone, the editors attempt to give [in brackets]<sup>3</sup> unified updated language interpreting what Dr. Stone meant when he used the various nervous system terms, based on modern understanding. It should be recognized that there is openness, indeed eagerness, for further scholarly debate about the correctness of these interpretations.

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<sup>1</sup> "...40 to 60 percent of all diseases have a psychosomatic origin..." Stone, Polarity Therapy, [Vol. I, Book 2 Chart 44](#)

<sup>2</sup> This antique European term, rarely used, is suggested by embryology expert Jaap van der Wal, PhD, MD as a way to repair the multiple meaning terminology problem relating to the term "Sympathetic."

<sup>3</sup> and footnotes

[American Polarity Therapy Association](#)

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