

THE ANALECTS OF A. T. STILL

An Overview

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These are a few of my favorite quotes from Andrew Taylor Still, the First Osteopath. I have presented them in subject categories for easier access. Other versions of “The Analects” will cover themes in greater depth. Future versions will have updated references with page numbers.

1. The Foundation Stone

Is God an Architect? If so why not be governed by the plan, specification, building and engineering of that Architect in our work as healers? When we conform to and work by the laws and specifications of this Architect, we get the results required. This is the foundation stone on which Osteopathy stands.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

God is the Father of Osteopathy, and I am not ashamed of the child of His mind.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

In this work we must depend upon the absolute law of Deity for results. If you object to that, all right; you may take guesswork, if you choose, I will not lose my hold on Deity.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

I quote no authors but God and experience.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

I find in man a miniature universe.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

I have proven that the laws of the Infinite are all-sufficient when properly applied.

Autobiography of A. T. Still, page 200

2. Nature: The Laws of Life

He has placed all the principles of motion, life, and all its remedies to be used in sickness inside of the human body. He has placed them somewhere in the structure if He knew how, or He has left His machinery of life at the very point wherein His skill should execute its most important work.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

We can do no more than to deed and trust the laws of life as Nature gives them to man.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

I am simply trying to teach you what you are; to get you to realize your right to health, and when you see the cures wrought here, after all other means have failed, you can but know that the foundation of my work is laid on nature's rock.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

Osteopathy is to me a very sacred science. It is sacred because it is a healing power through all nature.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

The Osteopath who succeeds best does so because he looks to Nature for knowledge and obeys her teachings . . .

Osteopathy Research and Practice

Nature has no apology to offer. It does the work if you know how to line up the parts; then food and rest that is required.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

Health is Nature.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

When we take up the principles, we get down to Nature. It is ever willing, self-caring, self-feeding and self-protecting.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

Osteopaths are the champions of natural law . . .

Autobiography of A. T. Still

You as Osteopathic machinists can go no further than to adjust the abnormal condition, in which you find the afflicted. Nature will do the rest.

Philosophy of Osteopathy

3. Attributes of Life: Is Life a Substance?

One of the greatest questions, if not the greatest, that has ever presented itself to any philosopher in any age is, what is life? Is life a substance? If so what are its attributes?

Osteopathy Research and Practice

Is life a substance? Is it a being above electricity, oxygen and other invisible substances, which is endowed with powers of mind to plan and use the forces of the elements in its work? If so, we have a reason why life never fails to produce the perfect in all its work.

Osteopathy Research and Practice, page 318-319

4. Health: The Object of the Doctor

To find health should be the object of the doctor. Anyone can find disease.

Philosophy of Osteopathy

Health holds dominion over the body by laws as immutable as the laws of gravity.

Attributed to Andrew Taylor Still, quoted in *Life in Motion: The Osteopathic Vision of Rollin E. Becker, DO*

The Osteopath should find health.

Philosophy of Osteopathy

When you have adjusted the physical to its normal demands, Nature universally supplies the remainder. I think I have said enough of the importance of the truly normal in form and functions of the organs of the body to take up and make special application of this philosophical guide to a careful search for the true cause of any variation from the healthy condition.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

If health is perfect, it only proves perfect harmony in the physiological action of the body in all its parts and functions. Any variation from perfect health marks a degree of functional derangement in the physiological department of man.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

This life is law and Osteopathy its latest clause that teaches us its magnitude, and doth direct and guide creation's crowning work—the living man—unto his perfect right, unchanging health.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

5. Normal: The All Absorbing First Question

An Osteopath reasons from his knowledge of anatomy. He compares the work of the abnormal body with the work of the normal body.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

You will find cause for a man to reason that when they are all in their normal position that every part is in proper condition for health.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

Therefore we have a natural admonition to give the subject a deep and thorough investigation for mechanical variations from the true and normal.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

One asks how we may know the normal. Surely we know when the hat fits the head and the pants the legs. We should know the normal places of all bones, and their uses; how one is attached to another; where blood and nerve supply come from and how. If we do not, we must learn or we will blunder and fail, because no variation will be allowed if we get health.

Osteopathy Research and Practice, page 38

When you know the differences between the normal and the abnormal structure you have learned the all-absorbing first question, that you must take your abnormal case back to the normal, lay it down, and be satisfied to leave it. Never leave your case until you have obtained such results. Thus it is far better to familiarize your eye and your hand with the normal before you can approach the abnormal intelligently.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

The work of the Osteopath is to adjust the body from the abnormal to the normal; then the abnormal condition gives place to the normal and health is the result of the normal condition . . .

Osteopathy Research and Practice

If health is perfect, it only proves perfect harmony in the physiological action of the body in all its parts and functions. Any variation from perfect health marks a degree of functional derangement in the physiological department of man. Efforts at restoration from the diseased to the healthy condition should present but one object to the mind, and that is to explore minutely and seek the variation from normal.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

6. Holism

We know that if we ever know the whole, we must first know the parts.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

I feel that twenty-five years of constant study on the parts of man, separated and combined, has prepared me fairly well to enter the higher classes as a beginner to study the active laws of life-- to inquire into the hows and whys of the workings and failures of the whole being.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

We look at the body in health as meaning perfection and harmony, not in one part, but in the whole.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

7. Anatomy: The Architecture of the God of Nature

An Osteopath must know the shape and position of every bone in the body, as well as that part to which every ligament and muscle is attached. He must know the blood and the nerve supply. He must comprehend the human system as an anatomist, and also from a physiological standpoint. He must understand the form of the body and the workings of it. That is a short way to tell what an Osteopath must know. Of course you can have a little knowledge of Osteopathy and do some things, but not know how it is done. Before you can go out in the world and fight the fight, you must master human anatomy and physical laws.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

A knowledge of anatomy is only a dead weight if we do not know how to apply that knowledge with successful skill.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

An up-to-date osteopath must have a masterful knowledge of anatomy and physiology.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

The osteopath must remember that his first lesson is anatomy, his last lesson is anatomy, and all his lessons are anatomy.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

A knowledge of anatomy is only a dead weight if we do not know how to apply that knowledge with successful skill. That is all there is to the question why our knowledge of anatomy should be more perfect than it is with any other school of the healing art. The osteopath should be

thoroughly educated by books and by drill, and in my reference to books I mean those that are essential to a complete knowledge of anatomy.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

In early life I began the study of anatomy, believing it to be the “alpha and omega,” the beginning and the end, of all forms and the laws that give forms, by selection and the association of the elements, kinds and quantities, to the human body.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

The more we know of the architecture of the God of Nature, and the closer we follow it, the better we will be pleased with the results of our work.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

You begin with anatomy, and you end with anatomy, a knowledge of anatomy is all you want or need . . .

Philosophy of Osteopathy

Oh Lord! Give me more anatomy each day I live, because experience has taught me the unavoidable demands when in the “sick room.”

Philosophy of Osteopathy

8. Mechanical Principles = Biomechanics

Before you can go out in the world and fight the fight, you must master human anatomy and physical laws.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

The mechanical osteopath who is well versed in the anatomy of this region, its blood supply, its drainage and the functioning processes of the nervous system sees nothing whatever in this definition that is satisfactory or beneficial regarding the cause which has produced this condition.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

The mechanical principles on which Osteopathy is based are as old as the universe.

Philosophy of Osteopathy

Before you can go out in the world and fight the fight, you must master human anatomy and physical laws.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

All patterns for the mechanic to imitate in all his inventions are found in man.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

The mechanical osteopath who is well versed in the anatomy of this region, its blood supply, its drainage and the functioning processes of the nervous system sees nothing whatever in this definition that is satisfactory or beneficial regarding the cause which has produced this condition.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

9. Equilibrium of Form and Function

Osteopathy is that science which consists of such exact, exhaustive, and verifiable knowledge of the structure and functions of the human mechanism, anatomical, physiological, and psychological, including the chemistry and physics of its known elements, as has made discoverable certain organic laws and remedial resources, within the body itself, by which nature under the scientific treatment peculiar to osteopathic practice, apart from all ordinary methods of extraneous, artificial, or medicinal stimulation, and in harmonious accord with its own mechanical principles, molecular activities, and metabolic processes, may recover from displacements, disorganizations, derangements, and consequent disease, and regain its normal equilibrium of form and function in health and strength.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

. . . [T]he body itself . . . may recover from displacements, disorganizations, derangements, and consequent disease, and regain its normal equilibrium of form and function in health and strength.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

Let us reason that blood has a great and universal duty to perform, if it constructs, nourishes, and keeps the whole nerve system normal in form and function.

Philosophy of Osteopathy

When you have adjusted the physical to its normal demands, Nature universally supplies the remainder. I think I have said enough of the importance of the truly normal in form and functions of the organs of the body to take up and make special application of this philosophical guide to a careful search for the true cause of any variation from the healthy condition.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

10. Cause and Effect

I have but one object in writing on this subject, which is to present the truth as nearly as possible and assist and aid the Osteopath to reason from the effect he sees to the cause which, in many cases, is unseen. He should never dally with the effects but ever go back to the cause which when corrected results in a disappearance of the effect.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

I want it understood that I look upon the treating of effects as being as unwarranted as it would be for the fireman of a city to fight the smoke and pay no attention to the cause that produces it.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

Does not Nature, with a knowledge of the machinery, offer a more reliable system of locating cause by adjusting that machinery so that it can remove the cause and change effect?

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

11. Disease: From an Osteopathic Perspective

The fundamental principles of osteopathy are different from those of any other system and the cause of disease is considered from one standpoint, viz.: disease is the result of anatomical abnormalities followed by physiological discord. To cure disease the abnormal parts must be adjusted to the normal; therefore other methods that are entirely different in principle have no place in the osteopathic system.

Osteopathy Research and Practice, page 20

We say disease when we should say effect; for disease is the effect of a change in the parts of the physical body. Disease in an abnormal body is just as natural as is health when all the parts are in place.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

When we use the word "disease," we mean anything that makes an unnatural showing in the body.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

I want to say that when an Osteopath explores the human body for the cause of disease he knows he is dealing with complicated perfection.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

Sickness is an effect caused by the stoppage of some supply of fluid or quality of life.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

To cure disease the abnormal parts must be admitted to the normal.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

The fundamental principles of osteopathy are different from those of any other system and the cause of disease is considered from one standpoint, viz.: disease is the result of anatomical abnormalities followed by physiological discord. To cure disease the abnormal parts must be adjusted to the normal; therefore other methods that are entirely different in principle have no place in the osteopathic system.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

Osteopathy is based on the perfection of Nature's work. When all parts of the human body are in line we have health. When they are not the effect is disease.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

12. Fascia: The Connecting Substance

I write at length of the universality of the fascia to impress the reader with the idea that this connecting substance must be free at all parts to receive and discharge all fluids, and to appropriate and use them in sustaining animal life, and eject all impurities, that health may not be impaired by dead and poisonous fluids. A knowledge of the universal extent of the fascia is imperative, and is one of the greatest aids to the person who seeks the cause of disease.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

I know of no part of the body that equals the fascia as a hunting-ground. I believe that more rich golden thoughts will appear to the mind's eye as the study of the fascia is pursued than of any other division of the body.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

13. Fluids

Sickness is caused by the stopping of some supply of fluid or quality of life.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

If you allow yourself to reason at all, you must know that sensation must be normal and always on guard to give notice by local or general misery of unnatural accumulation of the circulating fluids.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

Perfect health is the natural result of pure blood. By it no deformities are constructed.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

He cures by the correction of all hindering causes to the normal flow of blood and other fluids.

Osteopathy Research and Practice, page 10

If a thousand kinds of fluids exist in our bodies, a thousand uses require them, or they would not appear. To know how and why they exist is the economy of life is the study of the man who acts only when he knows at what places each must appear and fill the part and use for which it is designed. If the demand for a substance is absolute, its chance to act and answer that call and obey the command must not be hindered while in preparation, nor on its journey to its destination, for upon its power all action may depend.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

When matter ceases to be divisible, it then becomes a fluid of life . . .

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

14. Lymphatics: The Source of Life and Death

We strike at the source of life and death when we go to the lymphatics.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

No space is so small that it is out of connection with the lymphatics, with their nerves, secretory and excretory ducts. The system of lymphatics is complete and universal in the whole body.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

15. Vascular System

If we can come to the rescue by producing better drainage through the veins and excretory channels, we prove our ability as surgeons by using Nature's knife in place of the surgical knife of steel.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

The rule of the artery is absolute, universal, and must be unobstructed or disease will result.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

16. Cerebrospinal Fluid: The Great River of Life

A thought strikes him that the cerebrospinal fluid is the highest known element in the human body and unless the brain furnishes this fluid in abundance a disabled condition of the body will remain. He who is able to reason will see that this great river of life must be tapped and the withering field irrigated at once, or the harvest of health be forever lost.

Philosophy of Osteopathy, page 39

Another period of observation appears to the philosopher. We find partial or universal discord from the lowest to the highest in action and death . . . We continue our investigation, but the results obtained are not satisfactory, and another leaf is opened and the question appears, why and where is the mystery, what quality and element of force and vitality has been withheld? A thought strikes him that the cerebro-spinal fluid is one of the highest known elements that are contained in the body, and unless the brain furnishes this fluid in abundance, a disabled condition of the body will remain. He who is able to reason will see that this great river of life must be tapped and the withering field irrigated at once, or the harvest of health be forever lost.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

The fluids of the brain are of a finer order than any fluids supplying the whole viscera.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

17. Motion

The Osteopath finds here the field in which he can dwell forever. His duties as a philosopher admonish him, that life and matter can be united, and that union cannot continue with any hindrance to the free and absolute motion. Therefore his duty is to keep away from the track all that will hinder the complete passage of the forces of the nervous system, that by that power the blood may be delivered and adjusted, to keep the system in normal condition. Here is your duty; do it well, if you wish to succeed.

Philosophy of Osteopathy

He has placed all the principles of motion, life, and all its remedies to be used in sickness inside of the human body. He has placed them somewhere in the structure if He knew how, or He has left His machinery of life at the very point wherein His skill should execute its most important work.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

When perfect harmony is not found in forms and function, then we lack speed in the magnetic motion, and get by such inaction an electric action which only enters to conduct the actions of compounding the elements of active destruction by electricity as generated by the motor nerves of death. In this you have death by electricity with all its active powers, self-armed from the laboratory of nature, which is both the action of life by magnetism and death by the eternal motor power of all worlds and atoms.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

Life and matter can be united, and that union cannot continue with any hindrance to the free and absolute motion.

Philosophy of Osteopathy

[The unerring Architect] has placed all the principles of motion, life, and all its remedies to be used in sickness inside of the human body. He has placed them somewhere in the structure . . .

Autobiography of A. T. Still

First the material body, second the spiritual being, third a being of mind which is far superior to all vital motions and material forms, whose duty is to wisely manage this great engine of life.

Philosophy of Osteopathy

[The] processes of Life must be kept in motion.

Philosophy of Osteopathy

We speak of life, but know of it only as we see bodies move by life back of the visible matter. Does Nature have a finer matter that is invisible and that moves all that is visible to us? Life surely is a very finely prepared substance, which is the all-moving force of Nature, or that force that moves all nature from worlds to atoms. It seems to be a substance that contains all the principles of construction and motion, with the power to endow that which it constructs with the attributes necessary to the object it has formulated from matter and sent forth as a the incomprehensible, appears with man as the crowning effort of the wisdom of an all-wise chemist, be he known as God, Nature, the Unknowable, or the ever-living Genius of the universe.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

18. Stagnation

Local shocks affect the whole system, the nerve and blood supply to every part of the body.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

If the arterial gates are open and the venous are closed, a variation from normal venous drainage results, and the detained venous blood becomes stagnant.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

Venous blood, as the student well knows, should not be tolerated to remain long enough for stagnation, fermentation and inflammation, because when it is detained by any sort of ligation, pressure or constriction, it loses its vitality and is in a condition that allows it to set tip the process of decomposition. Thus we have the irritation caused by a venous congestion in the parts, which soon passes on to inflammation . . .

Osteopathy Research and Practice

We conclude that when the fluids of the body are stopped in the fascia, organs and other parts of the system, stagnation, fermentation, heat and general confusion will follow . . .

Osteopathy Research and Practice

19. Remedies: God's Drugstore

Has not nature's God been thoughtful enough to place in man all the elements and principles that the word "remedy" means?

Autobiography of A. T. Still

The body of man [is] God's drug-store and [has] in it all liquids, drugs, lubricating oils, opiates, acids, and anti-acids, and every sort of drug that the wisdom of God thought necessary for human happiness and health.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

20. Solvents

The doctor of osteopathy has much to think about when he consults natural remedies, and how they are supplied and administered, and as disease is the effect of tardy deposits in some or all parts of the body, reason would bring us to a search for a solvent of such deposits, which hinder the natural motion of blood and other fluids in functional works, and with that solvent we are to keep the body pure from any substance that would check vital action.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

Nature, at will, can and does produce solvents, necessary to melt down deposits of fiber, bone, or any fluid or solid found in the human body.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

The solvent powers of life dissolve all fluids and solids from blood to bone.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

21. Truth: The Complete Work of Nature

We often speak of truth. We say “great truths,” and use many other qualifying expressions. But no one truth is greater than any other truth. Each has a sphere of usefulness peculiar to itself. Thus we should treat with respect and reverence all truths, great and small. A truth is the complete work of Nature, which can only be demonstrated by the vital principle belonging to that class of truths. Each truth or division, as we see it, can only be made known to us by the self-evident fact which this truth is able to demonstrate by its action.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

Truth has no cause to fear opinions. It wants no flattery. It neither loves nor hates. It is food and comfort.

Osteopathy Research and Practice

22. Transformation

By reason we arrive at the conclusion that the duties of nature are perpetual labor, through the vast cycles of eternity, conducted by the skillful plan of God, with the power to transpose and transform all substances, uniting them in such proportions and endowing them with such qualities and conditions as will make perfect work.

Autobiography of A. T. Still

23. Tempo: Traveling in Harmony with Nature’s Truths

To obtain good results, we must blend ourselves with and travel in harmony with Nature’s truths.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

Blood, albumin, gall, acids, alkalies, oils, brain-fluid, and other substances, formed by associations while in physiological processes of formation, must be on time, in place, and measured abundantly, that the biogenic laws of Nature can have full power and time to act.

Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy

24. Expanding the Reach of Osteopathic Principles and Practice

DO means Dig On.

Andrew Taylor Still, personal papers

This is a war not for conquest, popularity, or power. It is an aggressive campaign for love, truth, and humanity.

Autobiography of A. T. Still, page 315-316

I feel that twenty-five years of constant study on the parts of man, separated and combined, has prepared me fairly well to enter the higher classes in the study of the active laws of life—to inquire into the “hows and whys” of the workings or failures of the whole being (man).

Autobiography of A. T. Still, page 193

25. Exploration

We are not enrolled under the banner of a theorist. We are traveling over the plains and mountains as explorers, and will report only the truth, and never that until we find the fact standing right behind the truth as its indorser.

Autobiography of A. T. Still, page CHECK THIS

As explorers we are now ready to report . . .

Autobiography of A. T. Still, page 163

26. Hope

Should you find any hope for his recovery and make that your report, like a thrill of lightning dipped in the sea of love, his vitality dances with joy. He is warmed up soul and body. But if you should be indiscreet enough in your report to remove every ray of hope, you have chilled the vital energy, you have silenced it, and the vegetable energies take possession of your patient and drag him with lightning speed to the valley of death. If you have any generalship you will evade anything like reporting that there is no hope for your patient. If you should analyze his substances and by your analysis see that there is no hope, be careful. Tell your patient that he is in such a condition that you wish to observe his case for a few days, weeks or months; that while man is alive he is not dead, and you hope to do him some good, though you and he both know his case is serious. Then if the patient concludes to stay and take a few days treatment always come to him as though you wanted to do him all the good in your power, then he will be satisfied, and not break down in despair. This advice I offer to the young graduates. I think from

long experience it is good, and wish you would govern yourselves accordingly. I am giving you the advice that is based upon my experience of many years.

Osteopathy Research and Practice, page 253

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