

An Introduction to the Analects of A. T. Still

By Steve Paulus, DO, MS

When I was an Osteopathic medical student in the early 1980's we had very little exposure to the direct writings of A. T. Still. There was no portion of our curriculum devoted to studying the four books written by Still. *Research and Practice* had been out of print since 1910 and our library carried only one tattered copy that was always checked out, or stolen. As a student, I longed for a teacher who would help me to appreciate, understand, and interpret what the founder of Osteopathy recorded. Over the years, I purchased reprinted copies of the *Autobiography of A. T. Still*, *Philosophy of Osteopathy*, *Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy*, and ultimately republished version of *Research and Practice*. I read them cover-to-cover. The joy of reading Still's authentic written works was exciting and stimulated my growth as an Osteopath. While reading certain passages, I became inspired knowing that William Sutherland, DO and J. Martin Littlejohn, DO, MD had read the same words and expanded the teachings of Still beyond the confines of time, proving that Osteopathy is a living science and art based upon a rich history.

My copies of Still's publications are dog eared, underlined, and highlighted with notes in the margins demonstrating their workbook like function. While reading George Webster's *Sage Sayings of Still*, a thought struck me that a new version of "sage sayings" was needed. Yet, I questioned the proper name to call a collection of Still's thoughts, ideas, and inspirations.

While studying Hippocrates, I was impressed by the title and organization of the *Aphorisms of Hippocrates*—the first known "medical textbook" in the western world. The writings which now go by the name of the "Hippocrates Collection" were not written by Hippocrates, but were brought together by different generations of his students. Hippocrates himself was not known to have left any direct written teachings. In fact, much of what we know of the historical Hippocrates is completely dependent upon Plato.

However, after exploring the meaning of aphorism, I was not satisfied this word would fit as a title leading a collection of Still's condensed yet undiluted teachings. Aphorism is defined as a succinct saying expressing a general truth or opinion. It can be taken as a maxim, proverb or cliché.

It was the work of Confucius that gave me the idea for the title of a "new" excerpted version of Still's work. The *Analects of Confucius* is a classic Chinese text containing a patchwork of concise statements and stories compiled by successive generations of disciples over 75 years after the death of the master teacher, philosopher, statesman, and scholar.

Analects, as a word, fit perfectly as the heading for a concise expression of Still's work. Analects are defined as brief selected passages or quotations, published as a collection, from the writings of one or more authors.

It is certainly true that Still expressed generalized truths or opinions consistent with aphorisms. But he was much more directed and less casual in his writing style. Still was a unique physician. He combined the qualities of a philosopher and reformer with that of a clinician devoted to helping his fellow human being. Like Confucius and Hippocrates, Andrew Taylor Still was a dedicated and fervent teacher passing on his wisdom to students through the oral tradition and by giving opportunities for individual direct perceptual experiences.

Unlike the followers of Confucius or Hippocrates, we are left with a small selection of Still's immediate and unbroken teachings recorded in his four books and in dozens of journal articles. Thus, as students of Osteopathy, we are blessed with having unadulterated words from our founder.

Presented to every modern day Osteopath, student, and "Osteophile" are these selected passages organized in categories to offer greater accessibility. Use these direct, unabridged teachings as a stepping stone for appreciating the timeless instructions of a modern day master.