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SUBJECT: Modern Interpretation of Osteopathic Philosophy as Described by Andrew Taylor Still

SUBMITTED BY: James Keane DO

REFERRED TO:

Check one:

- Resolution is intended for Arizona Osteopathic Medical Association
- Resolution is for consideration of the American Osteopathic Association House of Delegates
- Resolution is intended for both the Arizona Osteopathic Medical Association and for consideration of the American Osteopathic Association House of Delegates

Whereas, the language used by Andrew Taylor (AT) Still to describe Osteopathic philosophy can be translated into modern scientific terminology, and

Whereas, Osteopathic philosophy is a form of inductive reasoning and therefore arranges existing factual knowledge to develop insights and create theories, rather than using deductive reasoning to establish new knowledge, and

Whereas, to describe Osteopathic philosophy AT Still wrote that:

“Life is matter in motion,”¹ and

“When all parts of the human body are in line we have health. When they are not the effect is disease. When the parts are readjusted disease gives place to health,”² now, therefore be it,

RESOLVED, that

The phrase, “... life is matter in motion,” can be translated as follows:

- The word “matter” can be substituted with the word “atoms,” leading to “... life is atoms in motion.”
- Per the laws of physics atoms cannot move themselves, being inert atoms only move as the result of an external force, leading to “... life expresses a force on atoms to put them in motion.”
- As organisms’ do not create matter or atoms to form their bodies, but rather pull preexisting atoms together from the Earth’s environment, the quote can be

further translated: "... life expresses a force on environmental atoms to put them in motion to aggregate an organism's body."

- When an organism dies, the force expressed on atoms by life is no longer present and the atoms that were aggregated to form an organism's body lose aggregated structure, fall apart, and return to the environment.
- Throughout an organism's life span, the atoms of which its body is composed do not change, are neither created nor destroyed, but are put into motion by the force of life to serve as building blocks of an organism's body.

Turning to the second AT Still quotation, the "parts of the human body" that must be "in line" to have health are the inert atoms that have been aggregated by the force expressed by life to form the body.

- If those atoms have been aggregated together into a functional structure to form the body from the molecular to the gross anatomical level, the body will work normally, is healthy.
- If the atoms that have been aggregated to form the body are not "in line", are not aggregated in a functional structure, the result is loss of function or pathology.
- When the atoms that compose an organism's body have been restored from a dysfunctional to a functional aggregated structure, when they have been put back "in line," the result is a return of function or healing.
- All forms of diagnosis evaluate the aggregated material structure of the body, and all forms of healing restore functional aggregated structure to the atoms forming the body.

Based on this translation of AT Still's historic language, the following summary can be outlined:

- "Life" expresses a force that absorbs, excretes and changes the molecular structure of atoms within the Earth's environment to form, or aggregate, an organism's body;
- "Health" is the state of normal physiologic function resulting from the appropriate aggregated material structure of the organism and its parts;
- "Pathology" is a loss of normal function due a loss of aggregated structure, or increased entropy, within the aggregated matter forming an organism's body, and;
- "Healing" is the restoration of the functional aggregated structure of the matter forming the organism resulting in a return to normal function.

References

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1. Still AT. The Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy. Kirksville, MO: Author, 1892. Then, Kansas City, MO: 1902. Reprinted, Kirksville, MO: Osteopathic Enterprises; 1986
2. Still AT. Osteopathy Research and Practice. Seattle, WA: Eastland Press; 1992. Originally published by the author; 1910.