

# A.T. Still's Biogen

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Abstract

This article traces the appearance and frequency of use of the term biogen (vital force or life force) in the corpus of osteopathic literature from Andrew Taylor Still and the early days of the American School of Osteopathy (ASO) through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The meaning and use of biogen is placed within its historical context and contemporaneous philosophical influences are explored. Early definitions of osteopathy as both a bio-mechanical and a bio-energetic method of healing are revealed. The work of William Garner Sutherland is discussed in terms of his acceptance and use of bio-energetic terminology and concepts. The influence of Walter Russell on Sutherland's work is also discussed. Still's personal traits of imagination, memory and intuition are discussed as the foundation of his lived experience of osteopathy.

### Introduction

A.T. Still's second book was *The Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy*.<sup>1</sup> It was copyrighted in 1892 and first published in 1902, appearing some 5 years after the first edition of his autobiography. A quick glance at the table of contents shows an organization that Still repeated in subsequent works: some introductory and philosophical remarks, followed by chapters organized by body part or organ system including the application of osteopathic principles to that region. In addition, there are chapters on smallpox, fevers, obesity, convulsions, and obstetrics.

There is yet one other chapter oddly placed between Chapter X (Fevers) and Chapter XII (Smallpox), and that is Chapter XI: Biogen. The subsections of the Biogen chapter are as follows:

- Development and Progress
- The Origin of Action
- Forces Combined
- Matter in the Atom
- The Material and the Immaterial
- The Visible and the Invisible
- Man is Eternal
- The Survival of the Weakest
- Methods of Healing
- Primitive Mental Dwarfs
- The Appearance of Edema

In this clearly philosophical chapter, Still, as usual, intersperses some anatomy and physiology with the philosophy. However, the strange thing about this chapter is the use of the term biogen as if it

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were a commonly-used term in medicine or part of the intellectual lexicon of the day. It appears only a few times within the corpus of osteopathic literature. Still's discussion of the biogen is easier to follow if it is given in a series of short statements taken from the first two subsections of the Biogen chapter:

- Life cannot be known in its minutiae.
- Life is known by the visible action of forms.
- Motion is the first and only evidence of life.
- Life and matter are united in man.
- The osteopath's obligation is to remove any hindrance to free and absolute motion.
- All material bodies have terrestrial life; all space has spiritual life.
- The unity of spirit and matter form man.
- Terrestrial life has motion and power; celestial bodies have knowledge or wisdom.
- The Biogen is the life of the terrestrial and the celestial united in action.
- The Biogen gives motion and growth to all things.
- The celestial worlds of ether-life give forms in exchange for the use of material substance.
- Biogen or dual life means the eternal reciprocity between the terrestrial and the celestial.
- The Biogen permeates all nature.
- Human life is the result of conception by the terrestrial mother and the celestial father.
- Man is the union of mind (spirit) and matter.
- Human life is eternal, we have no proof otherwise.

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Of course, these are not the only words used by Still to describe the essence of life. In *Philosophy of Osteopathy* (p. 26) Still states:

...we are forced by reason to conclude there is a superior being who conducts the material man, sustains, supports and guards against danger...first the material body, second the spiritual body, third a being of mind which is far superior to all vital motions and material forms, whose duty is to manage this great engine of life.

In *Osteopathy Research and Practice*,<sup>2</sup> Still calls God the Architect and Builder and for him this vitalist perspective was beyond question (p. 11):

It is a known fact that human life is progressive and that it prepares to proceed with the labor of accumulation and practice of knowledge. It is reasonable to conclude that after what is known as physical death, the life is then and there qualified to enter the higher school to continue its mental development. In all this Nature had some great object in view. My conclusion is that immortality is the design or object of nature's God in the production of man.

This statement is consistent with the principles of the National Spiritualist Association of Churches as adopted in 1899.<sup>3</sup>

A.T. Still's spiritualist leanings are well documented in John Lewis's wonderful biography of Still, *A.T. Still: From The Dry Bone To The Living Man*.<sup>4</sup> On pages 303-307, Lewis recounts a more complete version of how Still came to receive the truths of osteopathy as revealed to him by three spirit guides. In the fall of 1874, a spiritualist circle was formed near Kirksville, Missouri by Mrs. Mott, wife of medium Harvey Mott (page 149).<sup>5</sup> Among its members were W.M. Gill, F.A. Grove, Miss Emma Coons, and S.M. Pickler. F.A. Grove was a Kirksville medical doctor who encouraged Still to pursue his new healing method (page 247).<sup>5</sup> Lewis also documents Still's visit to a Spiritualist camp meeting in Clinton, Iowa in 1903. His participation was reported in the American School of Osteopathy (ASO) student publication, *The Bulletin of the Atlas and Axis Clubs*. It was at this camp meeting that A.T. Still encountered D.D. Palmer, a spiritualist and the founder of chiropractic. Soon an angry argument ensued between the two men when Still accused Palmer of stealing osteopathy.<sup>4</sup> In 1894, A.T. Noe a homeopathic MD from Kirksville wrote a disparaging article in the *Kirksville Weekly Graphic*, in which Noe claimed that Still said that he received osteopathy from a trance medium named Mrs. Allred of Kirksville.<sup>6</sup> Still was known to have read and to have written a letter to the editor of a spiritualist publication called the *Banner of Light*.<sup>7</sup> E.R. Booth, Still's first biographer, describes Still's religion as follows: "Practically, Dr. Still is a Spiritualist" (page 16).<sup>8</sup>

## Elliott Coues

Given Still's spiritualist convictions, it will not come as a surprise that an exhaustive internet search for the word "biogen" yields only one literary reference: *Biogen – A Speculation on the Origin and Nature of Life*<sup>9</sup> by well-known spiritualist Elliot Coues (1842-1899), an army surgeon, historian, author, and ornithologist (Figure 1). He graduated from Columbian University, in Washington D.C. (now George Washington University) in 1861 and its medical school in 1863. As a spiritualist, he attended many séances and later in life became a theosophist, only to reject it after witnessing



Figure 1. Photograph of Elliott Coues. Licensed for use.

fraudulent activity associated with physical mediumship. Coues was a member of the National Academy of Sciences, The American Philosophical Society, and the Philosophical and Biological Societies of Washington, D.C. This work is a small, sixty-page book, a published version of his address to the Philosophical Society of Washington presented in 1882.

Coues' treatise begins with the nature of motion in protoplasm. He argues against the materialist perspective that all there is in the universe is matter. The typical materialist argument at the time (and today) is that what appears as life is just epigenetic or an epiphenomenon. As things evolved over time and achieved a certain level of molecular complexity, matter acquired characteristics such as motion which we associate with life. The origins of matter are not a concern, for everything is simply matter and matter has motion. Coues' counter argument is that life as a power or force exists *a priori*, that living beings are more than the sum of their parts and that a vital force is the cause of motion in protoplasm and not the result of it. For Coues, the biogen, or life-giver, is the vital force which exists apart and prior to matter. If life, or what appears alive, is merely a consequence of the organization of matter, then death should follow the decomposition of matter; however, what we see is death preceding decomposition of the body after the life force has been withdrawn from the body. Coues then goes on to define the

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soul as a quantity of spirit, and spirit as a self-conscious force, and concludes: “Life consists of the animation of matter by spirit; that life is God made consciously manifest.” For Coues, the biogen is alive; it is life itself. The biogen is spirit or “soul stuff” combined with the minimum amount of matter to make it manifest. The 6-page appendix to Coues’ talk contains a great amount of information and is likewise best presented in a list format:

- The soul is a substantial reality, a living being, of semi-material substance with recognizable qualities.
- Soul is the communication between Spirit and matter.
- Soul-stuff is animated “astral fluid”, universal ether modified by the vital force.
- The soul is semi-material, the “body” of the Spirit.
- One mode of the Biogen is galvanic current.
- Best examples of it are bodily sensations, movement, sensory nerve impulses.
- It dwells in a living physical body; it is the vehicle or envelope of the body.
- At death it withdraws from the physical body.
- Biogen is “soul substance” which serves to manifest the spirit in the physical.
- Biogen can be studied the way we study light, heat or electricity.
- Only under exceptional circumstances does it have tangibility or visibility.
- Confined to the limits of the physical body except for “faint excursions” beyond the body.
- Easier to leave the body during dreams, somnambulism, clairvoyance, clairaudience, religious ecstasy, catalepsy and some forms of epilepsy.
- Some persons can project their Biogen at will. Rarely, it may become visible (ectoplasm).
- At death, the Biogen withdraws from the physical body; at death Spirit continues to live in a body composed of the Biogen.
- The Biogen then becomes a spirit body.

It is instructive to see how Still adopts and adapts philosophical concepts. Clearly, Still read Coues’ treatise, and, as a spiritualist, was quite familiar with many of the concepts expressed by Coues.<sup>10</sup> Still leaves out notions such as ectoplasm and astral fluid, foundational concepts in the science of spiritualism. By using the term “biogen,” Still let his audience know that he was a spiritualist or at least had spiritualist convictions, but keeping it vague allowed him to lessen criticism from his family and other religionists at the time. Still had to navigate treacherous conceptual straits to protect his precious osteopathy from fatal criticism. However quaint, unique or allegorical Still’s style was, some of his students like E.E. Tucker, Turner Hulett, and C.P. McConnell knew that *The Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy* lacked standard textbook clarity with diagrams and photos; it required *a priori* an understanding of osteopathic principles and demanded much reading between the lines.<sup>11</sup>

## This Vital Energy

Osteopathic literature contains but a few references to the term “biogen.” The earliest are from Still himself. In a lecture<sup>12</sup> circa 1900, Still states:

In this lecture to the class we will speak of biogen, the terrestrial also the celestial bodies with the vital forces. To bring this subject within the comprehension of the student that he may know why the arterial or celestial force should be brought to act with full force upon the terrestrial or the substances of the body, he has only to think for a moment that man has in his physical organization all chemical substances that belong to the earth and that these substances are put into growing motion, first by the living force or nourishment obtained from the soil...

For Still, the “biogen” was the vital force and for him it was present in the soil, vegetation and animal life. It is through human blood that this force, gathered from these various terrestrial sources, is delivered throughout the human body. One goal of osteopathy was to help deliver unhindered, this vital force to every cell in the body. For Still, the purpose of mechanical manipulation was to assure the distribution of this *Biogen*, this vital energy. The rule of the artery had an energetic component to it from the very beginning of the osteopathic concept. For Still, the biogen was not only a feature of human life but of all earthly existence. It is terrestrial and natural as well as extraterrestrial and supernatural.

There is another Still reference from an undated lecture.<sup>13</sup> Also entitled “*Biogen*,” it is a 2-page fragment of what may have been a much longer lecture. In this second biogen lecture, Still states:

Biogen is the two essential father and mother principles, the basis of all manifestations called life. Two beings must and shall appear in conjunction, endowed with and containing separate and well defined individualized forces commonly known and called by the term father and mother.....All substances have magnetic and electric forces in abundance as shown in the construction of animals, beings, plants, stones, and minerals....All earth substances have component parts found in the soil, from center to surface. All the substances found in animal forms are elements of the earth, and easily found and classified by the chemist. All is terrestrial in the physical body. But another principles known as life occupies the whole physical being...

A third reference can be found in an article written for the Journal of Osteopathy in 1898.<sup>14</sup> In his regular feature entitled *Dr. Still’s Department*, Still discusses digestion in relation to the energetic purity of oxygen (gas) and the work of the lungs in conveying vital energy to the body. He continues his discussion with “Mr. Measles” and asks rhetorically:

In what part of the body he intends to deposit the seed of death? His answer seems to be given about thus and so: “by the action of the lungs and the elements of the air I ride in the air into the lungs and deposit an egg, believing that a living principle commonly known as biogen, welcomes and assists me in the development of measles”...

Here we can get a sense that the biogen, the vital force or principle, is also involved in the development of disease.



## McConnell, Stark, and Lee

The next osteopathic reference comes from Carl P. McConnell, DO, who published a 3-part article on the teachings of A.T. Still in the Journal of the AOA in 1915.<sup>15</sup> In part three, subtitled “Mechanics and Mathematics,” McConnell attempts to explicate Still’s philosophy including the concept of the biogen. It is a somewhat contradictory article as McConnell places Still on a par with da Vinci and Descartes, and characterizes Still at one and the same time as analytical/experimental/materialist and yet metaphysical. McConnell believed that the concept of the biogen was a metaphysical one and “... not germane to the science of osteopathy...” He then goes on to state that metaphysics matters little and that Still’s physiology is based on vitalism. McConnell seems to miss the point that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, vitalism was considered metaphysical! Clearly, McConnell was a zealous supporter of Still and osteopathy, however, his article contributes little to our understanding of the biogen and how it formed the very basis of Still’s work.

In 2006, Jane Stark, a Canadian osteopath, published her 2003 doctoral dissertation on Still’s *Fascia*.<sup>16</sup> She used two qualitative methods for her dissertation: literature research and personal interviews. The transcript of those interviews contained a question about the term biogen. Of the 37 osteopaths interviewed, only 4 had the slightest idea of what the term biogen meant, and only 1 of the 4 could place the term in the proper historical context. We can also find recent mention of the term in Zachary Comeaux’s book about Robert Fulford, DO.<sup>17</sup> The term is discussed relative to Dr. Fulford’s appreciation of the vitalist perspective in medicine and how the concept of the *Life Force* or *Biogenic Life* runs throughout osteopathy beginning with Still.

The most recent and thorough exposition of the biogen concept is found in *Interface: Mechanisms of Spirit in Osteopathy*, by R. Paul Lee, DO.<sup>18</sup> In his book Lee, mentions G.D. Hulett DO, a student of Still and professor of Principals and Practice of Osteopathy at the American School of Osteopathy (ASO). Hulett authored a book in 1903, *Principles of Osteopathy*,<sup>19</sup> in which he mentions the vital force multiple times but he does so in relation to protoplasm. The vital force is seen as dwelling in the protoplasm; as being the structural basis of the vital force; and as a part of life individualized in an aggregation of molecules (page 21). The term biogen does not appear until the 5<sup>th</sup> edition published in 1922, when its meaning was reduced to a complex molecule. The 5<sup>th</sup> edition was rewritten and revised by the American Osteopathic Association House of Delegates. Lee also mentions that E.R. Booth, a student and biographer of Still, uses the word, “protoplasm” in several places in his book.<sup>20</sup> On page 394, Booth states:

All knowledge pertaining to protoplasm, to the cell, to all varieties of tissues as to structure and function, to that all important element of the life principle, etc., is involved in the fundamental principles enunciated, and is valuable to the osteopath. No attempt is made here to discuss these profound subjects in relation to osteopathy. Only a few of the gross facts, as it were, are given.

Without delving into the profundity of the subject it is difficult for anyone to see that for Coues and Still, the biogen exists *a priori* to any physical cellular manifestation.

Lee does a fine job of comparing Still’s vitalism to the work of the 18<sup>th</sup> century mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg and to the vitalist perspectives of Traditional Chinese Medicine’s chi or qi, Ayurvedic Medicine’s prana, and Native American philosophy. In addition, Lee points out the similarity between Still’s philosophy and the work of Rupert Sheldrake (morphic fields), Benoit Mandelbrot (fractal geometry), Max Planck (quantum mechanics), Larry Dossey (energy medicine), David Bohm (implicate order), and William Tiller (particulate/wave spaces).

## Vitalism

These are the only references to the biogen in the osteopathic literature; however, these are not the only mention of the vital force concept. In an article *The Prophylactic and Curative Value of the Science of Osteopathy*<sup>21</sup> published in 1900, Martin J. Littlejohn mentions the vital force no fewer than 36 times. In a subsequent article published in the Journal of the American Osteopathic Association in 1902, *The Physiological Basis of the Therapeutic Law*,<sup>22</sup> Littlejohn stated that, “the theory of our therapeutics depends on, the vital force, which represents the sum of all vital activities and processes in the body organism, the cosmic energy in man, the energy of understanding and will...” For Littlejohn, the vital force was: “That which lies behind the matter of the structure and the material functional of the body organism.” Echoing Still and other Spiritualists, he mentions that the vital force: “is a force that originates and remains in the body as the result of the union of spirit or simple substance with matter.”

Terms like “the vital force” or “vital fluid” or “vitalizing process” can be found in the Journal of Osteopathy as far back as 1896. Between 1896 and 1900 there are at least 20 articles containing these terms. In fact, an early definition of osteopathy printed in the Journal of Osteopathy in 1896 lists the following principles: “1<sup>st</sup> - That health is natural; disease and death between the time of birth and old age, unnatural. 2<sup>nd</sup> - That all bodily disorders are the result of mechanical obstruction to the free circulation of vital fluids and forces.” By 1899 the definition of osteopathy, printed on the inside cover of some issues of The Journal of Osteopathy, featured the following:

...Osteopathy is based on accurate knowledge of the anatomical structure and physiological functions of the body organism. Nature has placed within the body certain vital forces, vitalized fluids, and vitalizing processes and activities which, in harmonious accord with one another, maintain the normal equilibrium of the body mechanism...

It is fair to say that early osteopathy was as much bio-energetic as it was biomechanical, at least as long as Still, Hulett, and Littlejohn were involved in the educational program of the ASO.

The vital force is a foundational concept in the philosophy of vitalism which posits that all living beings are permeated by an

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organizing and energizing principle or force. This concept dates back to ancient Egypt. In ancient Greece, it was called pneuma. In Eastern philosophies, it is known as chi, qi, or prana. Vitalism as a paradigm continued well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century until biologists considered the matter settled when urea was synthesized in a lab from inorganic compounds. Previously, the vital force concept was bolstered by the presumption that organic substances such as urea could not be created in a laboratory because such a synthesis was missing the vital energy component. Spiritualism, while strictly speaking is not vitalism, does accept the notion of unseen energies or forces influencing human life and so Still was well acquainted with the concept.

Spiritualism and 19<sup>th</sup> century biology were not the only subjects inclusive of the vital force concept. By far the most popular and widespread system to express the concept in western medicine is homeopathy. Homeopathy was founded by Samuel Hahnemann in 1796 and the term vital force or “dynamis” was introduced in his seminal work, *The Organon of Medicine*, published in 1810.<sup>23</sup> Hahnemann likened the dynamis to the gravitational force between the earth and the moon. It is an unseen, immaterial, “spirit-like” influence perhaps better described these days as a bio-electromagnetic field phenomenon. The “untunement” of this force is the cause of disease and is ultimately expressed as symptoms. It maintains the sensations and activities of the living organism (homeostasis), and animates the material body. Upon withdrawal, the body dies and decomposes reverting back to its chemical constituents. Littlejohn’s 1902 article appeared in the JAOA about 2 years after his departure from the ASO. At that time, he had just completed an MD degree at the Dunham Homeopathic College in Chicago where his professor of Materia Medica was none other than James Tyler Kent, MD, the most famous American homeopath of his day. At the time of the publication of his JAOA article, Littlejohn was the president of the American College of Osteopathic Medicine and Surgery in Chicago.

This biogen, or vital force concept, despite its history and universality of use, is ultimately unknowable. The most we can do is know it by its effects like knowing the wind in the trees by the motion of the leaves. While it can never be made totally explicit, the vital force can be likened to other concepts or aspects of living systems such as: *vix mediatrix naturae*, animal magnetism, the unconscious mind, the autonomic nervous system, human instincts, intuition, and creativity. Terms such as the Breath of Life, Liquid Light and the Potency within the Potency attest to its ineffability.

## William Garner Sutherland

The next landmark to come along in the expression of the energetic concept in osteopathy is the work of William Garner Sutherland. Sutherland was a student at the ASO from 1898 to 1900 when Littlejohn was the physiology professor there. In 1899, Littlejohn introduced one of the first courses in psychology to be offered at an American medical school. Littlejohn copyrighted and published his lecture and the ATSU Osteopathic Museum has archived this lecture entitled *Psychophysiology*.<sup>24</sup> The term “vital force” is

mentioned 3 times in the 66-page lecture and no doubt Sutherland was in attendance. Many years later Sutherland’s student Harold Magoun described the cerebral spinal fluid in *Osteopathy in the Cranial Field* as more than just a liquid. It is: “...the ‘Highest Known Element’ in the human body and as such is the recipient of the life principle.” Dr. Sutherland variously describes this invisible element as “the fluid within the fluid,” “the liquid light,” the “juice in the electric battery,” or “the sheet lightning in the cloud...”<sup>25</sup> In *Contributions of Thought*,<sup>26</sup> Sutherland discusses the fundamental principle of the cranial concept as the Breath of Life, an Invisible Element and the brilliancy of lightning as it illuminates the clouds.

That is the picture I want you to see as the “highest known element” in the cerebral spinal fluid. An INVISIBLE ELEMENT. Something that may be illustrated in the potency that lights up the film in taking an X-Ray picture. Something you do not see, but it lights up the X-Ray film. It is not visible. You merely see the spark from the positive and negative poles: it jumps from one pole to the other...

We think that Sutherland is speaking metaphorically here, attempting to put into words that which can be experienced but not well described. However, this is not the case. Sutherland was being quite literal about the potency that lights up x-ray film. Sutherland conducted that experiment in an effort to help Walter Russell.<sup>27</sup>

## Walter Russell

Russell (1871-1963) was a mystic, a portrait artist, a sculptor, a landscape architect, a professional ice skater, a builder and real estate investor among other things (Figure 2). Since the age of 7, Russell had regular periods of altered states of consciousness. At age 14, he had a near death experience accompanied by a flash of internal light and temporary blindness. At age 49, he experienced a 39-day interval of altered consciousness accompanied by blindness. During that time, he experienced a complete severance of normal mental functioning and yet transcribed over 40,000 words of “cosmic instructions.” Russell is easy to dismiss as just another crazy crank except for the fact that after this illumination or enlightenment experience, Russell developed a cosmological theory that accurately predicted the existence of several new elements of the periodic table. He subsequently created the Walter Russell Foundation (now the University of Science and Philosophy) with his wife Lao to disseminate his message to the world via several books and a home study course.

Russell believed that he had experienced some kind of short circuit between the two hemispheres of his brain and his pineal gland, causing the blinding light. His wife relates the following:

My late husband based his belief on the short circuit conclusion partly upon the fact that his optic nerve was so affected by each of his experiences that he was blinded for a long time, much as a man would be if forced to look directly at the sun....To verify his belief that the light was a physical effect of short circuit, he consulted the late Dr. William Sutherland, a noted cranial specialist, who attached a specially prepared negative to the brain of a dying man. At the instant of death, a light flash was recorded on the negative which proved that the light was what my husband believed it to be.<sup>28</sup>

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Figure 2. Photograph of Walter Russell. Photo courtesy of The University of Science and Philosophy, [www.Philosophy.org](http://www.Philosophy.org).

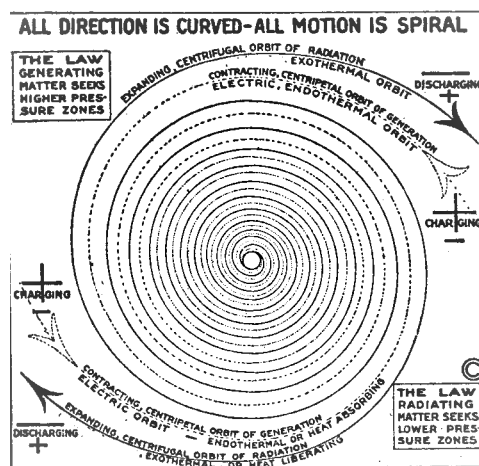


Figure 3. Russell's cosmological theory. Photo courtesy of The University of Science and Philosophy, [www.Philosophy.org](http://www.Philosophy.org).

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The University of Science and Philosophy<sup>29</sup> (USP) archives contain correspondence between Adah Sutherland and Lao Russell. The letters, dated from 1947 to 1954, clearly indicate that a friendship had developed between these two women. Will and Adah had attended a Russell lecture series and were both practicing a kind of centering that Adah called “the fulcrum.” Both Ann Wales and her husband, Chester Handy, are mentioned as having read a Russell book entitled *The Secret of Light*. Meetings of the Osteopathic Cranial Association are mentioned several times in the letters. In one letter Adah tells Lao how some of Russell’s concepts have influenced cranial osteopathic terminology. She states:

In speaking of the training of the osteopathic fingers it has been customary to say, quoting Dr. Still, “thinking, feeling, seeing fingers.” To which as we have told you before Will has since added “knowing” after hearing you in Grand Rapids. In lecturing and demonstrating cranial technique as applied to the potency of the cerebro-spinal-fluid and the bringing of it to a “fulcrum” point of balance there comes about a “rhythmic balance interchange” of all the fluids of the body. All based upon the wave, of course.

Fulcrum, rhythmic-balanced interchange and the wave are fundamental concepts in Russell’s cosmology.

Perhaps the clearest indication of the influence of Russell’s work on the cranial concept is the virtual duplication of the Russell diagram of the centripetal/centrifugal or charging/discharging forces<sup>30</sup> (Figure 3) and the diagram of electrical potential of the cerebrospinal fluid (The Ground Swell) in the first edition of *Osteopathy in the Cranial Field*<sup>31</sup> (Figure 4). Sutherland described the potency of the CSF as a constantly charging and discharging electrical potential suggesting a rhythmicity of function. This is similar to Russell’s concept, except that for Russell, the charging/discharging phenomena is always happening simultaneously but appearing sequentially.

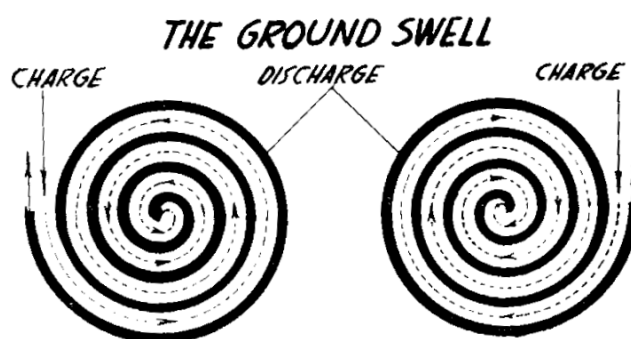


Figure 4. The Ground Swell. Photo from *Osteopathy In the Cranial Field*, 1st edition, public domain.

The energetic nature of osteopathic work does continue to this day and is best illustrated in the Biodynamic osteopathic concept as taught by Jim Jealous, DO. Biodynamic students are given an opportunity to experience the many subtleties of cranial work and can develop an intimate and direct experience with the Biogen (The Mechanism/The Vital Force/ The Potency within The Potency). Sutherland said of Dr. Still:

....Besides that he recognized a highest known element in the cerebrospinal fluid. You might say he was like an X-Ray; he could look right through you and see things, and tell you things, without even putting hands upon the body. I have seen him do that! Time and again. When some of the early teachers had a clinic up before class, hunting for the lesion, in would come the Old Doctor from the rear, ‘Here’s your lesion’. How did he do it?<sup>32</sup>

How indeed! There are many references to Still’s psychic abilities.<sup>33</sup> He could see the human aura and used it as a diagnostic aid. He strove to train his intuitive powers so his mind operated in a way that interwove thought, imagination, memory, intuition and clairvoyance.<sup>34</sup> During an interview in 1997, Ann Wales mentioned that Dr. Still acted as a trance medium and invited sympathetic students to his séances.<sup>35</sup> He suggested that the most successful osteopathic students were not the ones with the best scholastic records but those who worked for their intuitive consciousness. Still believed that with the right training, universal mind could be accessed by the human senses. And it is in this sense that

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osteopathic education can be improved. Still's approach was to impart his knowledge based on a biomechanical model well-informed by anatomy and physiology but also to share, with a few interested students, the importance of what Still called psychology. For Still, psychology was precisely those traits of imagination, memory, intuition and clairvoyance which formed the basis of his lived experience of osteopathy.<sup>36</sup> This thread of subtle life energy runs through all of osteopathy to this day, yet it remains hidden. What we are missing is a description of Still's lived experience of his osteopathy. What we lack is a formal description of what was behind the seeing, feeling, thinking, and knowing fingers. What is needed now is for current and future osteopathic teachers to share personal stories of their intuitive work and their training in accessing universal mind. In so doing, we might preserve and progress the heart of osteopathy, make visible the invisible, and perhaps come to a consensus on how best to teach these subtle skills, thus advancing our post-graduate educational programs.

## Acknowledgement

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