



## ***F.M. Alexander: The life of Fredrick Matthias Founder of the Alexander Technique***

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Many osteopaths will be and all should be, familiar with the wonderful quality of touch that Alexander Teachers have developed to be able to convey to their pupils a new way of using themselves and inhibiting the old, previously unconscious, dysfunctional, patterns of use.

Osteopaths, with their own particular highly developed kinaesthetic senses, are in an excellent position to appreciate and value Alexander's rather unique discovery. However to describe and define it is more difficult. As Michael Block writes in his prologue;

"It is notoriously difficult to describe the Alexander Technique: to attempt to do so has been likened to trying to describe a colour to a blind man. Even writers of great talent who were amongst his followers, such as the American philosopher John Dewey and the English novelist Aldous Huxley, struggled to express it in words. In essence, it is based on the notion that we develop bad habits in our posture which we are often quite unaware of, but which account for much of what goes wrong with us in every department."

Alexander was an extraordinary man. His contribution was unique, all the more so because he seem to have arrived at his discoveries and skills unaided and in isolation.

Block takes us from his early humble beginnings, through his now famous difficulties with his own voice and his subsequent discoveries, from Tasmania to fame and fortune in London and New York. We learn of his struggles, successes, idiosyncrasies and followers.

Osteopaths familiar with the parallel struggles for acceptance and recognition of pioneer osteopaths newly arrived in London at, remarkably, the same time, may also recognise the idiosyncrasy that seems to occur and even be required, for those who swim so strongly against the tide. Alexander was able to introduce his ideas to the great and the good of three continents, but at a price of a certain exclusivity of focus and messianic intolerance.

Block's book is a fascinating journey through a unique and particular life. He manages to portray, both the stream of Alexander's life and work, while also giving us a flavour of the man and his foibles that make the whole thing so recognisable and human.

For anyone curious about the Alexander Technique; there is no substitute for direct experience. Go out and try a lesson. However for the experienced this book will be a fascinating, easy and rewarding read.

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