

Peter Kuhn

Body of Qi – Body in Qi

A Paradox of Asia in Multi-Perspective Critical Consideration¹

Abstract

The objective of the study is to critically examine 氣 (qi) from the perspectives of various academic disciplines: philology, philosophy, religious studies, medicine, natural sciences, health and movement sciences with regard to their significance for martial arts. Hermeneutics is chosen as the method. It is based on an extensive literature search. The main finding is that 氣 is not a phenomenon, but a construct and as such a pre-enlightenment attempt to give a name to the – experienced, perceived, and observed – inexplicable. This happens in everyday-pragmatic and utilitarian regard, whereby humans can be imagined as “body of 氣” and “body in 氣”. Contextuality is seen as a promising approach to the understanding of 氣.

Zusammenfassung

Ziel der Studie ist eine kritische Betrachtung von 氣 (qi) aus den Perspektiven verschiedener wissenschaftlicher Disziplinen: Philologie, Philosophie, Religionswissenschaft, Medizin, Naturwissenschaft, Gesundheits- und Bewegungswissenschaft mit Blick auf die Bedeutung für die Kampfkunst. Als Methode wird die Hermeneutik gewählt. Grundlage ist eine weitreichende Literaturrecherche. Der Hauptbefund ist, dass 氣 kein Phänomen ist, sondern ein Konstrukt und als solches ein voraufklärerischer Versuch, dem – empfundenen, wahrgenommenen und beobachteten – Unerklärlichen einen Namen zu geben. Dies geschieht in alltagspragmatisch-utilitaristischer Hinsicht, wobei der Mensch als „Körper des 氣“ und „Körper im 氣“ vorgestellt werden kann. Kontextualität wird als vielversprechender Zugang zum Verstehen von 氣 betrachtet.

Keywords

qi; ki; 氣; philology; philosophy; religious studies; medicine; natural sciences; health sciences; movement sciences; martial arts; hermeneutics

Contact

Prof. Dr. Peter Kuhn

[University of Bayreuth](https://www.uni-bayreuth.de)

peter.kuhn@uni-bayreuth.de

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) and published in the [JOMAR | Journal of Martial Arts Research](https://www.jomar.com) (ISSN 2567-8221) on 2019-07-11
For more: [j-o-mar.com](https://www.j-o-mar.com)

¹ The author expressly thanks Petra Schmidt for her permission to use some passages from the long version of this essay in her book “Ki-Karate – Eine erfolgreiche Bewegung”, published 2017 by Kristkeitz, Heidelberg.

1 Problem and Epistemological Interest

In the West there are numerous esoteric ideas about 氣 (Kubny, 2002). Also, in the martial arts 氣 is dealt with. The philosophers Yamaguchi (1997) and Schmidt (2007), for instance, negotiate – each specific – appearance, modes of action and exercise methods of 氣. Their explanations stand in remarkable, partially rather contradictory, relationship to representations of critical researchers. Thinking, experiencing and training the body in the martial art can refer fundamentally to 氣 – if one believes in it. But an enlightened and profitable attitude towards 氣 can be developed only on the basis of a reflected and critical-scientifically arranged conception of 氣. Against this backdrop, the interest of this article is to show the perspectives of the humanities as well as the natural sciences concerning 氣.²

2 Objective and Method

The objective of the study is to critically examine 氣 from the perspectives of various scientific disciplines: philology, philosophy, religious studies, medicine, natural sciences, health and movement sciences with a view to their significance for martial arts. Hermeneutics is chosen as the method. It is based on an extensive literature search.

3 Findings

3.1 Linguistic approach

氣 is omnipresent in the everyday language of China, Japan and Korea (Yang, 2011). Countless composites and idioms with 氣 are used to express natural, individual and social states, attitudes and relationships (Pörtner, 1985). Man lives “in the cosmic-climatic Ki” (Yamaguchi, 1997, p. 65), which is boundlessly ambiguous. Nevertheless, “a Japanese person without recourse to this word can neither describe his mental state nor a climatic situation” (p. 58). Besides, 氣 is not reasonable. It works, for example, when you reach for a shot glass or a cigarette without wanting to, and it can also drive you into erotic entanglements (Pörtner, 1985).

The term 氣 “is suitable for a double sense, even COUNTER sense, as it is not rarely to be found in Asian concepts” (Pörtner, 1985, p. 215). This is why there is a tendency to “no longer describe the qi-term, but leave it untranslated in its original form” (Yang, 2011, p. 23).

We see the character in three different spellings – 氣, 氣 and 气 – and there are also three different pronunciations: in the Wade Giles system, which goes back to the first professors of Chinese at Cambridge University, 氣 and 气 are described as ch’i, in the hàn yǔ pīn yīn

² In this text I just use the character 氣 – unless the authors I quote write it 气, 氣, “ki”, “qi”, “qì” or “ch’i”; then I quote the spelling used.

fāng àn – short: Pinyin – the program for fixing the sounds in Chinese, as qì, and the Japanologists Bibiko³ and Apel⁴ describe 氣 as ki.⁵

Linck (2011) points out that the conceptual history of 氣 begins relatively late. It is mentioned for the first time in Zuo zhuan, a commentary on Chunqiu, the “Spring and Autumn” Annals of the State of Lu (p. 56, p. 64). The time of the spring and autumn annals denotes a period of Chinese history from 771 to 481 B.C. and the Zou zhuan contains above all historically interesting stories from this time. Philosophically significant early writings that use the character 氣 are Laozi’s Daode jing as well as the writings of Kongzi (Confucius), Zhuangzi, and Mengzi from the third to sixth century BC (Yang, 2011, pp. 53-65). According to Linck (2001), two characters on the oracle bones can be considered as the earliest forerunners: “first, the image of three clouds layered on top of each other”, and second, the character for “request, implore”. Later, a third character joined in, containing the graphic element for rice (p. 174f.). Rain, wind and storm were associated with clouds – phenomena that were not perceived as pure natural phenomena, but “as manifestations of gods and spirits” (p. 175).

Particularly Choe (1995), Kubny (2002, pp. 67-91) and Yang (2011, pp. 29-52) deal extensively with the etymological question. Choe calls 气 a “religious primordial word”, and regards 气 as the original sign (pp. 21-22). As such, it can bind three components: fire, breath and rice, of which 氣 is the most recent composite. The short form used in China today 气 would therefore be the original form (Choe, 1995, p. 21f.). Kubny (2002) first dissolves 氣 into the elements 气 and 米 mǐ rice. 气 contains the number three 三 sān and could stand for “haze”, “image of the clouds” or “rays of the sun” (p. 68). For Unschuld (2013), the “literal translation of the character Qi ... [is] ‘Food fumes’. Originally this meant the breathing air or the gases escaping from the rectum as well as the presumed streams of vapors in the body” (p. 17). Beyond Yang, Kubny works on the connection of 氣 with the sacrifice of animals, the intake of food and rice offered or given to guests (pp. 69-78, cf. Linck, 2011, pp. 64). Pörtner (1999) simplifies the discussion by committing himself to “the steam that comes out between the pot and the lid during rice cooking” (p. 216), and by that combining fire, water and rice.

氣 occurs in numerous bi- and trinomials, e.g. 气功 qìgōng, where gōng means work, performance, ability or merit acquired through effort and time. In this context we can see two common misconceptions which identify the ‘jí’ in ‘tài jí’ and the ‘ki’ in ‘kime’ with 氣. But, in tài jí and kime there is neither 氣 nor 气 or 气. The 极 or 極 jí in tài jí means as much as summit or extreme and the tài jí is therefore a typical Chinese double term: extremely extreme. Therefore, tài jí quán could also be translated as “ultimate martial art”. But since this tài jí is also the expression for the yīn-und-yáng monad ☯, the “martial art that realizes the relationship and interplay of yīn and yang” is more appropriate. The erroneous assumption that the ki in kime is 氣 goes back to the renowned martial artist and author Werner Lind who interprets kime as “use of the inner ki with in the outer technique” and as “focal point, concentration of force or center of force” (Lind, 2001, p. 327; 2004, p. 153). Instead, 決め

³ <https://mpi-lingweb.shh.mpg.de/kanji/index.html>

⁴ <http://www.wadoku.de>

⁵ Strictly speaking one would have to add the Korean Hangul character 기, but I leave that here, because 氣 also exists as Korean Hanja, i.e. as Chinese character in Korean script.

kime actually means “making a decision” (Schlatt, 2007, p. 166). It has nothing to do with energy, physical tension or even with the infamous “locking” of the technique at its end⁶, but it has to do with psychophysical determination, which stands at the beginning of the movement and is then expressed in a successful fighting action (Yamamoto, 2015, pp. 43-44). In jūdō or aikidō this can be characterized by elegance, suppleness and effortlessness. In this respect one cannot point out frequently and – to stay in the picture – decisively enough that the usual staccato in karate training has no relationship to kime.

In view of the fact that 氣 can be “everything” (Yang, 2011, p. 66) and appears in the most diverse manifestations – indeed: ultimately in every imaginable form –, the attempt to present the exuberant diversity of species, qualities, expressions, functions and meanings of 氣 here is of no use.⁷ For Kubny the term 氣 is “a central theorem of Chinese natural sciences and philosophy” (2002, p. 1) and “de facto the central term of all possible Chinese concepts ... that can be found within religious ideas, ancestor worship, philosophy, fortune-telling, geomancy, traditional alchemy. It also serves as a description of the means of expression in art, music and literature, and of course it is a fundamental theorem in any system of healing” (2002, p. 6). Kubny says he could

“describe the term Qi as a concept both material, spiritual, static, moving, psychical, emotional, neutral and unitary, numerous, and also primordial, biological and physiological, life-promoting and life-damaging, without getting into contradiction with any absolute truth of the Chinese world view” (2002, p. 7f.).

In this respect one could, following Kubny (2002) and “call the Qi concept a grid concept” (p. 41), which can provide information about certain variants of meaning only within a grid field.

The literary attempts to translate 氣, 氣 or 气 are similarly unmanageable. Rappe (1995, pp. 425-443) provides a comprehensive and critical overview. At the beginning, he states that, although the qì concept encompasses a broad spectrum of meanings, two basic positions emerge among the many translation possibilities, namely “energy” and “influence” or “influences” (p. 425). Similarly, Li and Zhao (2012) distinguish “two aspects: one is energy, power, or force; the other is conscious intelligence or information” (p. 81). They point to a fine difference in understanding between China and Japan. Chinese would assume that 氣 “is a ‘substance’ or ‘matter’ flowing in and through our bodies, and that it can be emitted from the body of a Qigong healer. In contrast, the Japanese consider that it is a form of energy” (Li & Zhao, 2012, p. 81).

According to Yamaguchi (1997), the term 氣 was originally developed in China as a basic concept of natural philosophy. The basic idea stems from the experience of living with nature, especially the experience necessary for survival with the growth of the grain, which was accompanied by the change and transformation phenomena such as sun, rain, wind, clouds, earth etc. “It supposes that in the dynamic transformation of nature in its various phenomena a universal primal element ‘Ch’i’ is at work” (p. 46). 氣 is difficult to translate. It corresponds, for instance, to the Greek term pneuma and the Indian prajña and means as

⁶ See, for example, the Wikipedia article <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kime> (accessed on 15.11.2016) and its basis (Lind, 2001, p. 327f.).

⁷ Interested readers are referred to the differentiated descriptions of Kubny (2002), Yamaguchi (1997) and Yang (2011).

much as haze, spirit, finest influence, breath of life, gaseous propagation, ether substance, a basic substance that is at first still unformed but can still be formed. 氣 is considered phenomenally in two opposing forms: yīn and yáng (literally: shady and sunny side of the mountain), that is dark, damp, heavy, feminine aspects and bright, dry, light, masculine aspects in dynamic interaction. Also, the “five elements” earth, wood, metal, fire and water, which are connected with the yīn and yáng, can be “by their nature ... understood as Ki” (Yamaguchi, 1997, p. 46).

In Japan, according to Yamaguchi (1997), the term 氣 has undergone a very interesting development. Before the introduction of the term 氣 from China, there had been the word ‘Ke’ in Japan, “which was used to express the spiritual effect of all beings ‘Mono no Ke’ (spiritual power of things) in the sense of animism” (p. 58). In this understanding, the Japanese have taken up 氣 in the sense of Chinese philosophy and was soon widespread in Japan. In the eighteenth century one could already find more than fifty expressions to represent mental states with the word 氣. These ways of application still exist today. “Today the word Ki is usually understood as ‘air-like, spirit, soul, mind or feeling’, depending on the context. This ambiguity illustrates that without recourse to this word a Japanese cannot describe either his mental state or a climatic situation” (Yamaguchi, 1997, p. 58). If one analyses the use of this word, one can find a very important characteristic: “the non-individualistic, interpersonal character. This means that the use of the word Ki shows that Ki does not find its space within an individual, a certain subject, but arises between people” (Yamaguchi, 1997, p. 58). For Pörtner (1985) it would even be possible “to formulate a phenomenology of human relationships or mutual perception or experience that was oriented only to the stimulus, reaction and response forms of the ki or, if you like, the interacting ki” (p. 226).

At this point I resist the temptation to further expand the variety of meanings and translation attempts of 氣 and instead rely on Landmann, who summarizes the situation as follows:

“The impossibility of unambiguously defining the term qi or the terms qi excludes ... a translation. ... The previous attempts to translate the term qi, at least in the medical field, mostly followed the respective zeitgeist. ... Translations commonly used today, such as ‘energy’ or ‘life force’, remain vague on the one hand and favor the danger of forcing Western concepts into a Chinese framework on the other” (Landmann, 2005, p. 86).

Excursus 1: 氣 as a “phenomenon”

For some the “chemistry is right”, others “cannot smell each other” – these are two well-known idioms of the German language.⁸ The experience associated with this is indeed a describable phenomenon and as such can be elucidated osphresiology.⁹ But is there perhaps more behind it?

As indicated above, “the phenomenon of ki” for Elberfeld (2008) is

“probably better understood from an olfactory situation where I find myself in an invisible olfactory field and this odor usually immediately puts me in a spe-

⁸ “Die Chemie stimmt.” vs. “Sie können sich nicht riechen.”

⁹ Osphresiology is the scientific study of smells.

cific mood. Ki is invisible and inaudible, but it is there, like a smell that completely surrounds me and takes me in. Since ki, however, does not fully correspond to any of the five senses, the question arises as to whether this is perhaps a 'sense' of its own” (p. 362).

In fact, other scholars also call 氣 a “phenomenon”, but not always stringent. Yamaguchi (1997), for example, speaks on the one hand of the fact that 氣 can be viewed theoretically and determined in an empirical-objective space (p. 35f., p. 64, p. 67), but on the other hand of phenomena that can be traced back to 氣, or in which 氣 expresses itself, such as yīn yáng, atmosphere, natural phenomena (p. 46, p. 227). Li and Zhao (2012) state: “In fact, Qi is neither a paranormal nor para-psychological phenomenon but is a normal phenomenon. Since it is a normal phenomenon, Qi can be studied by modern scientific methodology” (p. 90; see Ohnishi, 2007, p. 291). The Korean scholar of religious studies Yang (2011), writes in a much more differentiated way “that in Qi healing Qi appears as (from a purely empirical-material point of view) >paranormal< moment, which in part cannot be explained by the currently prevailing paradigm of today's scientific standards” (p. 16). To explain the unexplainable, sometimes the idea of “subtle matter” is used. Unschuld (1985), for example, suggests translating 氣 as “finest matter influence” (p. 75). This approach is interesting insofar as “fine matter” is also attached to some ancient Greek concepts, e.g. λόγος or πνεύμα.¹⁰ Some authors also speak of “primordial matter” (Rappe, 1995, p. 439) – for Yamaguchi (1997) 氣 means “philosophically speaking, a material-spiritual, cosmic energy that forms the primordial matter and form of the world” (p. 82) – “basic matter” (Roetz, 1984, p. 154), “concrete matter” (Mazaheri, 1992, p. 52) or simply “matter” or “stuff”. Rappe (1995) explains this unmistakably: “The reduction of bodily-cosmic phenomena to a principle underlying them, which can be described in the broadest sense as ‘primordial matter’, does not mean to reduce the phenomena ‘physically’ to a certain atomic or energetic construction” (p. 436f.). And Linck (2011) makes it clear that such a characterization may be true in the broadest sense of the word, but it would be misleading to the extent that it could be understood as a “material substance” and would thus be “violent to the term substantially and atmospherically understood” (p. 237).¹¹

As far as I see, serious literature does not give any viable indication that 氣 is a physical – and as such measurable – “phenomenon”. I also think that the phenomena, which 氣 is

¹⁰ As an exception, I am referring here to a Wikipedia article – <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feinstofflichkeit> – because it was added to the list of articles worth reading on May 2, 2008.

¹¹ Incidentally, another term associated with 氣 is also – and above all – understood as a fine substance, namely 精 jīng. The character contains the component rice, which is present also in 氣, and means in the earliest texts ‘fine, pure rice’ and already in a sense derived from it ‘exquisite’, ‘excellent’, ‘essence’ and not least ‘male sperm’ (Linck, 2011, p. 85). With Kubny (2002, p. 403), ovulation fluid can be added here. “To explain it with a common saying: jing is what remains when ‘the chaff is separated from the wheat’” (Linck, 2011, p. 85). 精 jīng and 氣 qì are collectively referred to as 精氣 jīngqì as “the purest substance within the body”, with both being mutually dependent (Kubny, 2002, p. 403f.). In combination with 神 shén they form 三寶 sānbǎo, the “Three Treasures, Preciousness, Treasures or Entities of Life” or – prosaically – the concept of fine matter, qi and spirit (Kubny, 2002, p. 405-408) and as such the central idea in the so-called TCM and in 氣功養生 qìgōng yǎngshēng, the qìgōng for the care of life, even for the prolongation of life. 神 shén should be consolidated in order to collect 氣 qì, generate 精 jīng, melt 精 jīng and transform into 氣 qì, melt 氣 qì and transform into 神 shén, and finally melt 神 shén and lead it back into nothingness. Kubny finds it interesting that there is no direct development reference between 精 jīng and 神 shén – here it is always necessary to mediate through 氣 qì (Kubny, 2002, p. 157).

supposed to bring about, are detectable as such. If 氣 is “everything” (Flowers, 2006, p. 551; Kubny, 2002, p. 427; Yang, 2011, p. 66) or the “Thatness” (Möller, 2000, p. 71), to which everything owes its existence, but which itself is “certainly not a kind of thing” (Möller, 2000, p. 66), then it is philosophically trivial to attribute phenomena to 氣, and it is scientifically unfair to attribute measured phenomena to 氣 (Rappe, 1995, p. 428, p. 430, p. 436f.). To conclude this argument with Kubny (2002), one can assume that “there is nothing from the sort of a uniform truth in the sciences to Qi at all” (p. 421). Interpreting the differentiated explanations of Linck (2011, p. 251-257) and Rappe (1995, p. 430-443) in this context 氣 can be regarded as the origin of all phenomena and express itself phenomenally in everything. That would then be, translated into Western terminology, a form of pantheism or panentheism.¹² Is 氣, thus, at the end a question of faith? Yang (2011; see chapter 3.3) has a conclusive answer.

3.2 Cultural philosophy approach

From the point of view of cultural philosophy, 氣 is an ontological basic concept, ubiquitous, the basis of existence of everything and – ultimately – everything. But 氣 does not exist, i.e. it is nothing specific (Möller, 2000). In this respect, 氣 is paradoxical. This paradigmatic quality is expressed in the fact that 氣 is neither good nor bad in principle, but can be both – and at the same time (Kubny, 2002). This becomes comprehensible e.g. in the horizon of contextuality as a characteristic of Japanese world- and self-understanding. Herein space is given preference over time. Contents are detached from their historical contexts and placed in a quasi-timeless juxtaposition. Cultural elements are therefore spatially freely available and can be rearranged again and again (Pörtner, 1999, p. 25).

Excursus 2: Contextuality

Contextuality could be the key to understanding of 氣. In the Asian cultural area, everything – the human being, the things, the concepts – depends on the context that downright defines action, relationships and mutual understanding.

According to Pörtner (1999), due to the intensive maternal imprint in the typical Japanese family structure, individuals “have not produced images for ego-centered action and subject autonomy” (p. 26). The individual is expected to “always be just and exactly what the situation demands of them to be. ... The Self is nothing more than a ‘context-sensitive’ crystallization point” (p. 27). If an individual succeeds, according to Pörtner (1999), in determining his “place” in the respective context, they will be carried by “the prefabricated parameters of behavior and language” to the extent that they have them at their disposal. (p. 26).

At this point it becomes clear that in Asia the context practically defines action, relationships and mutual understanding. Now, of course, this is not an Asian unique selling point. Goffman (2014) in his book “The presentation of self in everyday life” shows how people adapt their role play to different social contexts – “front stages” (p. 100) – and how these social contexts are only constituted through the specific role play of the actors. And he also

¹² By pantheism the Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche understands the idea of God's unity of being or essence with all that is (Pfürtner, 1986b, p. 26). Panentheism means that “God as sole reality embraces the world reality as part or manifestation of himself” (Pfürtner, 1986a, p. 20).

refers to “places and location-determined behavior” (p. 99f.).¹³ It is interesting for our context that language is also contextual and with it the terms that we use to shape our verbal communication. This seems to be especially the case for Asian languages, which are based on logograms, i.e. on characters that represent a concept.¹⁴ Linck (2011) points out that

“the individual word in itself is not decisive for its understanding. In view of the ambiguity of Chinese words and signs, only the position in the sentence, the respective relationship to other sentence elements, is decisive for situational meaning. In other words: Not some fixed ‘substantial’ meaning of a word constitutes its meaning, but the relation, context, and not least atmosphere of the respective linguistic situation” (p. 141f.).

3.3 Religious studies approach

From the perspective of religious studies, 氣 – as a “religious primeval word” (Choe, 1995) – attains divine status. 氣 is comparable with the Holy Spirit, and also brings salvation (Yang, 2011). For Yang (2011), God is “the divine Qi that remains in us”. Accordingly, faith is the “will function” of 氣 (p. 196). Man can be perceived as “body of 氣” (p. 305). Thus, 氣 becomes a question of faith and in this context can only be experienced mystically looking or retrospectively interpreting – as long as one would acknowledge things like that. The ambivalence of 氣 is ignored in this perspective.

Excursus 3: The healing effect of 氣 as a placebo effect or spontaneous remission

For Yang (2011), 氣 is divine and the self-realization of man happens as a discovery of the divine 氣 in one’s own body (p. 265, p. 305). In this context, the healing effect of 氣 corresponds to the placebo effect or spontaneous remission. With regard to the placebo effect, Yang refers to Huber (2000), who assumes that such effects are anything but imaginary and that they can be measured objectively in terms of heart rate, blood pressure, sleep quality or sexual reactions and can compete with any verum. According to Huber, the placebo effect is also explained under evolutionary signs: “Just as we trigger the alarm reaction preparing for flight or fight in the case of danger, our brain has also learned many health reactions or self-healing processes” (p. 3). On spontaneous remission Yang refers to Oda (2001), who in a qualitative study with 12 persons who have experienced a complete remission of their cancer, shows what role the individual attitude and individual action in relation to the disease – expressed in resources (certain healing method, belief in God, attachment to the spiritual self; pp. 194-196) in the sense of salutogenesis – can have for healing. Yang thus contradicts Unschuld (2013), who shows that there is no concept of “self-healing powers” in Chinese medicine (p. 70, p. 117).

¹³ Pages were derived from the German edition “Wir alle spielen Theater”.

¹⁴ Our language also knows the contextuality of terms. For example, fast can mean ‘moving rapidly’, as in ‘running fast’, or ‘fixed, unmoving,’ as in ‘holding fast’. This also shows that terms can even have opposing meanings.

3.4 Natural science approaches

By physical or chemical scientific approaches, 氣 is not to come by, because those who try do not know what to search for and what to measure with. Attempts to prove 氣 by the detour of certain phenomena – e.g., warmth, infrared radiation, cell changes, improvement of complaints – fail, because one must always conclude arbitrarily or circularly on 氣 and, in the long run, cannot show that it concerns actually 氣 effects. The same applies to the transmission of 氣 – tōate no jutsu, kiai jutsu –, which cannot be replicated under controlled laboratory conditions (Kuhn, 2017, pp. 200f., pp. 247f.). In this respect, 氣 is not some kind of “force” or “energy” and, therefore, neither “life force” nor “vital energy” (Landmann, 2005, p. 86, as quoted above).

Excursus 4: 氣 as “life force” and “energy”

For Kubny (2002), 氣 is not life force, because life force is 生命力 shēngmìnglì. 氣 however, can “have the meaning of life force” (p. 422) and for him plays a central role in the “science of life force” (生命力的科学 shēngmìnglì de kēxué; p. 55). According to Linck (2011), 神 shén “in Western literature is generally translated as spirit or soul. ... In the medical context, shén almost always refers to the life force. ... In philosophical contexts ‘consciousness’ is ... more appropriate” (p. 78f.). On the other hand, she also notes that “the qi collected in man ... is nothing but his life force, which is available to them for the duration of his existence in the world” (p. 65). However, 氣 is never really available to humans (Pörtner, 1985, pp. 221f., p. 229) and is “not controllable in a technical-instrumental sense” (Yamaguchi, 1997, p. 57). Following Thiel (1970, p. 48), Rappe (1995, p. 425) votes for the concretization as “bodily life force”.¹⁵ The bodily reference is

“of extreme relevance for the qi concept. ... Holistic impulses of the body together with the partial impulses, which not only make the human being feel alive, but also make them recognize as animated, form the basis of the various concepts of power” (p. 433).

The composite “life energy” is illegitimate because it links a qualitative concept with a quantitative one. Life force, on the other hand, if one understands force not in the physical but in the phenomenological sense, describes an – the author [PK] wants to add here: purely qualitative – impression that refers to holistic movements of the living body (Rappe, 1995, pp. 433f.).

This is reminiscent of the vitalism concept of the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941). He held the view that all life contains a life force which exceeds perceptible biological, physical and chemical processes and must therefore be superior to them. Moreover, every thing and being has a certain duration *durée*, within which the *élan* causes vital processes of creation and decay (cf. Kubny, 2002, pp. 20f.).

According to Plugge (2004), vitalism is about “idealistic modes of explanation that have in common that transcendent factors exist that bring the dead and immobile material to life” (p. 41). A romantically transfigured, immaterial agent of the “life force” functioned here as a core concept (Hristeva, 2008, p. 52). However, as Driesch (1922, p. 104, p. 147, p. 150f.)

¹⁵ This is interesting as Yamaguchi (1997) entitles his work 氣 as “bodily reason”.

and later Winter (1994, pp. 75-78) as well as Hristeva (2008, p. 52) show, the (natural) philosophers of the 19th century were neither clear nor agreed on the existence, meaning and use of the term “life force”. In the interpretation of what was to be understood by it, “much abuse” had been made (Winter, 1994, p. 78) and in part its existence had been completely denied. According to Plugge (2004), this may have led Driesch to found a new vitalism in the 20th century,

“in which he assumes a non-physical, spatial and teleological factor, which is not energy, not force, not intensity and not constancy, and which he calls the Aristotelian term ‘entelechy’. ... Aristotle ... understands the entelechy ... as the ‘form of the natural body which has life according to its possibility’” (pp. 41-44).

So, for 氣 in Western philosophy we easily find an analogy in the term “life force”. Nevertheless, the concept and its interpretation remain so controversial that we must use it – if at all – with greatest caution and restraint. We best adjust to the fact that 氣 is “certainly not a kind of thing”, no “energy” of any kind whatsoever and wherever and no “power” available to us (Möller, 2000, p. 224).

We owe the misleading notion that 氣 is “energy” to Porkert (1991, p. 139). “His enthusiasm ... all too quickly led him to attribute to TCM some peculiarities which are not or at best marginally legitimized by the historical facts” (Unschuld, 2013, p. 108). According to Unschuld (2013), a concept of an “energy” – in the strict physical or in the broader colloquial sense – is nowhere to be recognized in Chinese medical theory. Although many meanings have been associated with 氣 over time, to equate 氣 with “energy” is “a European projection, which was of course gladly accepted in China, since it made TCM appear to be anchored in modern science” (p. 107). This corresponds to Rappe’s (1995) view that there is “no physiological-anatomical substrate, no matter or substance qi definable in its composition from atoms or molecules” (p. 440). According to Möller (2000), we may associate it “even less with ‘air’, ‘electricity’ or another ‘fluid’ (qi). ‘Air’ or another ‘fluidum’ are certainly existing things, and what is called ‘energy’ in science is also an existing thing” (p. 224). 氣 however is not a thing, but the reason for the existence of things (Möller, 2000, p. 224). 氣, this becomes particularly clear here, is – even if this is repeatedly described and “sold” as such in esoteric scenes, events and publications – not a phenomenon, but a construct. And: 氣 is neither good nor bad. It has no “value”. Or, to put an Asian philosophical term on it: 氣 is “empty”:

“Do not listen with your ears, but listen with your heart. Do not listen with your heart, but listen with the 氣. Because the hearing ends with ears and the heart ends with the signs. But 氣 is empty and all things are in it” (Zhuangzi, 4).

3.5 Chinese medicine approach

Volkmar (2007) describes the so-called Traditional Chinese Medicine as a “systemic art product” (p. VI) whose logical foundations are adapted to Western thinking and which has little in common with historical Chinese medicine (Unschuld, 2013, p. 92, p. 99). In the course of the renewal efforts of Chinese medicine initiated by Mao Zedong in 1950 and delegated to

physicians from the West, the brand name “TCM” was created solely for foreign countries (p. 89). For Unschuld, TCM is a myth based “on the idea of a medicine that has been so completely different for millennia and apparently still applicable today in unbroken tradition”. According to Unschuld, this is “simply incorrect” (p. 97). Age data, up to 10.000 years (p. 101), and the philosophical background of the TCM mainly served the self-promotion of the respective Western providers. Unschuld ironically writes:

“Daoism is anchored more attractively in the collective emotional world of those people in the West who can get enthusiastic about alternative life plans than Confucianism. Consequently, TCM must be connected to Daoism” (p. 102)

According to Unschuld (2013), the assumption that Chinese medicine does not think in linear cause-effect contexts can confidently be described as a pure invention (p. 104). Unschuld assigns the beginnings of myth and legend formation to a self-appointed nobleman named George Soulié de Morant (1878-1955), whose invention of the so-called “meridians” would have decisively influenced TCM in Germany (p. 106). The meeting of China’s opening to the West, the “energy crisis” in the West (p. 107) and Porkert’s enthusiasm for “energy” (see above) are regarded as catalysts of further development. From then on, the triumph of the magical energy 氣 could no longer be stopped over here.

As we saw, in Chinese medicine 氣 is first of all everything that moves into the body, within the body and out of the body in the form of gases. Over the centuries, this has led to the development of a confusing, sometimes mysterious variety of 氣, which nevertheless does not cover all illnesses – and therapy of which is often based on shaky feet (Unschuld, 2013, p. 90-98). Nowadays, in ‘TCM’ 氣 is a relatively pragmatic term for the neuro-vegetative functional readiness of an organ, which can be influenced by measures such as medication, acupuncture or massage (Greten, 2007, p. 22). To put it very simply, it is all about multiplying and collecting ‘good’ 氣 and reducing and getting rid of ‘bad’ 氣.

Excursus 5: Acupuncture

The fact that the reorganization of Chinese medicine outlined above had a political rather than a scientific driving force became particularly evident in acupuncture.

“The question of whether the ‘pathways’ described for two millennia, in which the vapors (qi) and the blood flow, actually exist, and the question of the location of the puncture points for the needles were ultimately decided at the green table” (Unschuld, 2013, p. 92).

The data available for acupuncture is very extensive, but the latest meta-analyses show an inconsistent picture.¹⁶ Most authors criticize the quality of the studies with regard to randomization, blinding and placebo control. Many authors state that there are no consistent significant differences between acupuncture and comparative therapies. It is often stated in the conclusions that the data are encouraging, but of limited significance. Interesting is the review study by Cao, Bouchier, and Liu (2012), which shows that it makes no significant

¹⁶ To estimate the effect of acupuncture the author [PK] searched pubmed and Google scholar by the tag ‘acupuncture meta-analysis’[Title] and allintitle: acupuncture meta-analysis in the years 2010-2016 for open-access articles. In addition, all available Cochrane Reviews on acupuncture (2002-2016) based on their abstracts were analyzed. The search resulted in a total of 143 articles.

difference with regard to the effect of acupuncture whether a diagnosis is made beforehand according to the so-called “Eight Criteria” of TCM or not (Chen, Chien, & Liu, 2013). Nor does it seem to make any difference in certain clinical pictures *where* the needles are inserted (Chen et al., 2013), but, *how many* needles and *how often* (MacPherson et al., 2013). On the other hand, placebo acupuncture also has non-specific effects that overlay the specific ones (Linde, Niemann, Schneider, & Meissner, 2010) and there are culture-specific preferences (Manheimer et al., 2012). In this respect, studies that try to determine which reactions acupuncture triggers in the brain seem to make sense (Huang et al., 2012).¹⁷ Acupuncture is considered to be relatively promising in pain therapy, especially as a flanking or element of multimodal therapy. In addition, there is reason to consider acupuncture as helpful in preoperative anxiety, postoperative nausea and vomiting, irritable bowel syndrome (only in Chinese patients), (postoperative) digestive disorders, obesity (only Acupoint Catgut Embedding), sleep disorders, sleep apnea, menstrual disorders, sciatica, herniated disc (only “heat-sensitive” moxibustion), chronic prostatitis, sensorineural hearing loss, cancer-induced fatigue, rheumatoid and gouty arthritis, osteoarthritis, hypertension, various symptoms in stroke rehabilitation (ischemic and hemorrhagic), asthma (only pharmacopuncture), amblyopia (functional visual impairment), dry eye syndrome, itching, hearing loss, migraine (only additive), tension headache, and Alzheimer’s disease (see e.g. Zhou et al., 2015).

3.6 Health science approach

In my view – according to “Western” systemic health science – 氣 is conceivable as a collective term for physical and psychosocial “resources” (Antonovsky, 1997; Becker, 2006) that can be strengthened through personal initiative and external influence, as well as for risk factors, thus creating an individual and social potential that one can learn to use. 氣 exercise in body and relationship then covers everything that a person can aim at through action. Whether such an exercise must always be explicitly qìgōng remains to be seen. Yoga, Kneipp, Pilates, Autogenic Training and presumably even dancing may bring comparable effects.

Excursus 6: Qìgōng

Meta-analyses dealing with the effects of internal qìgōng 內(氣)功 nèi(qì)gōng¹⁸ provide some indications that these and similar forms of therapy (as concomitant therapy) can have a positive moderating effect on the following (psycho-) medical questions: Neck and back pain, depression and anxiety, Parkinson’s disease, sleep disorders, stress, high blood pressure, fibromyalgia, osteoporosis, cardiovascular diseases, fitness in old age, quality of life,

¹⁷ It can be plausibly assumed that the insertion of needles into the body is also perceived by the organism as an “attack” and stimulates the production of “fight-or-flight” hormones – adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol – of which noradrenaline is also involved in pain perception (Delaney, Crane, & Sah, 2007). According to Greten (2007), acupuncture influences “the entire vegetative regulation via the representation of tissues in the CNS” (p. 327).

¹⁸ There are hardly any reviews concerning the external Qigong 外(氣)功 wài(qì)gōng. The assessment of efficacy is also inconsistent. Lee, Pittler and Ernst (2007) assume that external qigong has a positive effect on pain and cite the evidence as encouraging, although they consider further studies necessary. On the other hand, a more recent meta-analysis (Bai et al., 2015) finds no difference between external qigong and other forms of therapy for chronic pain.

self-efficacy. However, all authors demand higher quality studies in order to be able to make more clearly defined statements.¹⁹

內(氣)功 nèi(qì)gōng seems to be more effective in terms of health than 外(氣)功 wài(qì)gōng. Thus, in the medical context, self-cultivation beats external manipulation. However, the data situation is still not very reliable. This should be respected if we address the context of martial arts and the question of the potential handling and effect of 氣 in martial arts.

3.7 Martial arts approach

In the martial arts, 氣 on the one hand functions as a catalyst of the perfect movement in the respective requirement context (Kammer, 2007). Since 氣 is often located between ‘imagination’ and ‘heart/spirit’, i.e. action planning, and ‘body’, i.e. visible action (Landmann, 2005, p. 92, p. 97), it can be assumed that 氣 is the pre-scientific collective term for efferent and reafferent neuronal impulses (Kuhn, 2017, p. 284). On the other hand, it functions as attention and perception – possibly also of the intentions of my partner or opponent (Yamaguchi, 1997). Understood in this way, 氣 is also accessible for practice.

Excursus 7: 氣 as a concept in the “Tengu-geijutsu-ron”

天狗芸術 Tengu-geijutsu, the ‘Art of the mountain demons’ written by [Sh]Issai Chozan (1659-1741)²⁰, deals with leading the sword in harmony of principle, form, technique, heart – and: 氣. It is said that one practices the technique through 氣. 氣 determines the form through the heart or, in other words: the form follows the 氣 and 氣 follows the heart (心 kokoro or shin). In doing so it is necessary that 氣 is lively and uninhibited, powerful and unbent (Kammer, 2007, p. 16). Because if 氣 is in harmony and peaceful, then it is lively and freely mobile and without firm form (p. 19). On the other hand, we read: If the heart is unmoved, also the fluidum does not move, and if the heart is peaceful and by nothing is irritated, then also the fluidum is in harmony and follows it in it and becomes completely naturally fair the technology (Kammer, 2007). Here again the double and antithesis of Asian concepts mentioned by Pörtner is expressed (1985, p. 215). Issai is aware of this and writes several times: “Heart and 氣 are basically one unit” (Kammer, 2007, p. 62). As an example, he uses the fish (heart) in water (氣) (p. 68).

Following Issai, through practice, 氣 becomes harmonious and balanced, technique and principle coincide, 氣 is collected, the mind is calm, the actions take place unhindered and with time one attains freedom (Kammer, 2007, p. 64-67). However, if you attach your heart to

¹⁹ For this purpose, 19 meta-analyses from the years 2008-2016 were found and evaluated on pubmed, Google Scholar and Cochrane with the title keywords ‘qigong meta analysis’. Nine of these also included studies with other forms of exercise and therapy. Of particular note is the study by Jahnke, Larkey, Rogers, Etnier and Fang (2010), which deals with numerous different clinical pictures.

²⁰ Here cited in Kammer’s translation into German of 2007. Quotations translated into English by PK. There are two transcriptions of the author’s name: Shissai and Issai. „Issai Chozan (1659-1741) was the pen name of Niwa Jurozaemo Tadaaki. Relatively little is known about him, but he was a prolific writer known for his collection of stories *Inaka Soji* (1727) (*Rustic Zhuangzi*), in which *The Mysterious Skills of the Old Cat* originally appeared. Though avowedly not a master of the sword himself, it is thought he pursued studies in the martial as well literary arts, and both *The Mysterious Skills of the Old Cat* and his other work on swordmanship *Tengu Geijitsuron* have been included in anthologies of martial arts writing since the 18th century” (Hellman, 2010, S. 14).

the technique, 氣 is inhibited and is not harmonious and balanced (p. 17). Therefore, one should not force anything: “Sword art is natural reaction of the heart, in walking without form and in coming without trace” (p. 19). In addition, it is necessary not to think, because as soon as one begins to think, 氣 takes form and this becomes the goal for the opponent. If instead the heart is free of irritations, then 氣 is in harmony and peaceful, and in this state, it is lively and agile and without fixed form (p. 19). All this does not come of itself – one must test oneself in the technique, train one’s 氣 and practice one’s heart (p. 25). Attention is to be paid to balance between 氣 and technique. Too much 氣 – speak: exuberance – can lead to the fact that one walks into the trap of an opponent versed in the technique. On the other hand, it is necessary to free the heart from doubts (S. 26). But if one engages its heart too much in the technique, 氣 is bound and loses its harmony and balance. Therefore, one exercises the technique from 氣 and 氣 from the heart (p. 29). At the same time, from practicing 氣 the knowledge comes through the heart completely by itself (p. 37). With the practice of the technique one also practices 氣 (S. 31) and highest perfection is caused by 氣 (S. 36). It goes without saying that this does not happen overnight (p. 35).

For Issai, the heart is probably also superior to 氣 because it carries 禮 ĭ within it. However, the heart only functions through 氣 (Kammer, 2007, p. 38). Here, again paradoxically, conceptions of hierarchy and coequality overlap – an alleged contradiction, as we have encountered already. As an example, Issai uses the boat (氣), which drifts downstream following the current (禮 ĭ). 氣 is still in motion – but unintentionally (pp. 38, p. 53f.). A fighter who aligns his 氣 with 禮 ĭ is free in his reactions (p. 39). And if his or her thoughts are unmoved, the clarity extends to 氣, it is lively and mobile, reaches in such a way over on the heart, which – now in its working without restraint and restriction – can order freely and unhindered over the respective form (p. 39f.). By the way Issai sings the praise of practice: If one understood the principle of the sword art only in theory, experienced it, however, not in exercise with one’s own body, then 氣 and heart remain “bare rumors” and do not step into function (Kammer, 2007, p. 62).

It is important to point out that ‘harmonious and peaceful’ or ‘lively and freely movable’ 氣 ‘without a fixed form’ is not ‘a good thing’ or ‘a bad thing’. It is merely something functional in terms of success in combat.

4 Discussion and Conclusions

To put it in a nutshell, 氣 is not a phenomenon, but a construct and as such a pre-enlightenment attempt to give a name to the – experienced, perceived, and observed – inexplicable. This happens in everyday-pragmatic and utilitarian regard, where the human being can, quite naturally, be imagined as ‘body of 氣’ and ‘body in 氣’. Terms such as ‘life force’ or ‘vital energy’ are misleading because 氣 is not good per se, but can only be understood as ambivalent and paradoxical. 氣 is nothing specific, so it can’t be ‘created’, ‘collected’, ‘transformed’ or even controlled or applied – that’s all hokum. 氣 is, if you like, ‘everything’ and maybe even ‘divine’ and thus possibly the basis of everything – if you want to believe in it. Whatever the case may be and if one might speak of 氣 as such, every human being is

and has a stake in 氣 in the sense of risks and resources, and can, within the scope of their possibilities, work on it. So, what?

“But why does one do so mysteriously with it”, Issai asks (Kammer, 2007, p. 74). “It” refers to the art of sword fighting. And the question aims at connecting mystery to art. The answer given at that time is highly revealing for the context of martial arts today:

“If one does mysteriously about it, it is done for the beginner. If one does not do mysteriously with it, then the beginner has no confidence. This is merely a pedagogical trick. Therefore, all secrecy is not essential, it is not the core of the matter” (Kammer, 2007, p. 74).

Thus, is 氣 in the end nothing more than a marketing instrument? This is where martial arts research can start and, e.g., deal with questions of esoterically upgrading course offers by 氣, the reception of course offers dressed up with 氣 by target groups, the biomechanical analysis of so-called 氣 exercises etc. There are two colleagues doing remarkable explanatory work within this context: Paul Bowman and Sixt Wetzler. Concluding my paper, I’ll present some of their findings which crystallize in the term ‘myth’.

Following Palmer (2007), Bowman (2015) shows that qìgōng is an invented tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). As I, according to Unschuld (2013), pointed out in chapter 3.5, the term TCM was invented by the Chinese government in 1950 for generation meaning of Chinese medicine in the world – invented on the basis of the myth of a centuries-long unbroken tradition. And so was qìgōng.

“The choice of the term qigong by Party cadres in 1949 reflected an ideological project: to extract Chinese body cultivation techniques from their ‘feudal’ and religious setting, to standardise them, and to put them to the service of the construction of a secular, modern state.” (Palmer 2007, loc. 98)

The mythical 氣 played the decisive role in that project being “the very essence of Chinese-ness” (Bowman, 2015, p. 183). Regarded as not only “ancient” – which would almost be enough for convincing the West of qìgōng’s potential – but “eternal” 氣 functioned as the perfect ambassador. According to Wetzler (2014, p. 2) myths have three functions: laying foundation, creating legitimation, and forming the world. Being fully aware of these functions and using a sophisticated framework of medial dissemination (Bowman, 2015, pp. 181-186), the Chinese government succeeded in establishing “qi as both a signifier and an ingredient of bodily practices” (p. 188) all over the world – and mostly in the Western hemisphere. Fascinating to watch, “the very act of using the word ... produces social solidarity, enhances the speaker’s status, and evokes a shared image of an exoticized Chinese Other that supports a larger transnational discourse about qi” (Frank, 2006, p. 220). Speaking the word 氣, ‘exercising’ 氣, ‘cultivating’ 氣 allows us to dive into a mythical, mystical, magical world of timeless truth and dignity. And woe betide anyone who would criticize, deny or just doubt! They would smile at you as an ignorant, blame you as a runner-down, or even marginalize you from the believers’ community. Thus, while Chinese Party cadres at mid twentieth century were aiming at separating body cultivation from religious context, a quasi-religion developed in the West based on a new myth: Being able to become body of 氣 and body in 氣 through qìgōng or tàijíquán appears as a promise of salvation in a culture seeking orientation – another facet of the paradox of Asia 氣.

Bibliography

- Antonovsky, A. (1997). *Salutogenese. Zur Entmystifizierung der Gesundheit [Unravelling the Mystery of Health]*. Tübingen: dgvt.
- Bai, Z., Guan, Z., Fan, Y., Liu, C., Yang, K., Ma, B., & Wu, B. (2015). The effects of qigong for adults with chronic pain: systematic review and meta-analysis. *The American Journal of Chinese Medicine*, 43(8), 1525-1539. doi: 10.1142/S0192415X15500871
- Becker, P. (2006). Gesundheit und Gesundheitsmodelle [Health and health models]. In K. Bös, & W. Brehm (Eds.), *Handbuch Gesundheitssport* (2nd ed., p. 31-41). Schorndorf: Hofmann.
- Bowman, P. (2015). *The circulation of qi – in media and culture*. Derived 2019-06-22 from https://www.academia.edu/9777824/The_Circulation_of_Qi_-_in_Media_and_Culture.
- Cao, H., Burchier, S., & Liu, J. (2012). Does syndrome differentiation matter? A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials in Cochrane reviews of acupuncture. *Medical Acupuncture*, 24(2), 68-76. doi: 10.1089/acu.2011.0846
- Chen, M.-N., Chien, L.-W., & Liu, C.-F. (2013). Acupuncture or acupressure at the Sanyinjiao (SP6) acupoint for the treatment of primary dysmenorrhea: a meta-analysis. *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 493038. doi: 10.1155/2013/493038
- Choe, C.-S. (1995). *Qi, ein religiöses Urwort in China – Von den Knocheninschriften bis zur heutigen Feng-shui-Praxis [Qi, a religious primeval word in China – From the bone inscriptions to today's Feng-shui practice]*. Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang.
- Delaney, A. J., Crane, J. W., & Sah, P. (2007). Noradrenaline modulates transmission at a central synapse by a presynaptic mechanism. *Neuron*, 56(5), 880-892. doi: 10.1016/j.neuron.2007.10.022
- Driesch, H. (1922). *Geschichte des Vitalismus [History of Vitalism]*. Leipzig: Barth.
- Elberfeld, R. (2008). Phänomenologie sinnlicher Erfahrung in interkultureller Perspektive. Zur Bedeutung des "Bewegungssinns" [Phenomenology of sensory experience in an intercultural perspective. On the meaning of the "sense of movement"]. In R. Schulz (Ed.), *Zukunft ermöglichen – Denkanstöße aus fünfzehn Jahren Karl Jaspers Vorlesungen zu Fragen der Zeit – Zu Ehren des Initiators Rudolf zur Lippe* (pp. 357-376). Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- Flowers, J. (2006). What is qi? *Evidence-based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 3(4), 551-552. doi: 10.1093/ecam/nel074
- Frank, A. (2006). *Taijiquan and the search for the little old Chinese man: Understanding identity through martial arts*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Goffman, E. (2014). *Wir alle spielen Theater [The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life]* (14th ed.). München: Piper.
- Greten, H. J. (2007). *Kursbuch Traditionelle Chinesische Medizin. TCM verstehen und richtig anwenden [Course book Traditional Chinese Medicine. Understanding and using TCM correctly]* (2nd ed.). Stuttgart: Thieme.
- Hellman, C. (2010). *The Samurai mind: Lessons from Japan's master warriors*. North Clarendon: Tuttle Publishing.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. & Ranger, T. O. (1983). *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hristeva, G. (2008). *Georg Groddeck – Präsentationsformen psychoanalytischen Wissens [Georg Groddeck – Forms of presentation of psychoanalytic knowledge]*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- Huang, W., Pach, D., Napadow, V., Park, K., Long, X., Neumann, J., . . . Witt, C. M. (2012). Characterizing acupuncture stimuli using brain imaging with fMRI – a systematic review and meta-analysis of the literature. *PLOS ONE*, 7(4). doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0032960
- Huber, A. (2000). Vom Mythos zur Medizin der Zukunft? *Psychologie heute*, 27(5), 1-10.
- Jahnke, R., Larkey, L., Rogers, C., Etnier, J., & Lin, F. (2010). A comprehensive review of health benefits of qigong and tai chi. *American journal of health promotion : AJHP*, 24(6), e1-e25. doi:10.4278/ajhp.081013-LIT-248
- Kammer, R. (2007). *Zen in der Kunst das Schwert zu führen. Eine Einführung in die altjapanische Fechtkunst [Zen in the art of leading the sword. An introduction to the art of fencing in ancient Japan]*. Frankfurt/M.: O. W. Barth.
- Kubny, M. (2002). *Qi – Lebenskraftkonzepte in China. Definition, Theorien und Grundlagen [Qi – Vitality concepts in China. Definition, theories and basics]* (2nd ed.). Heidelberg: Haug.
- Kuhn, P. (2017). 氣 – Versuch der wissenschaftlichen Annäherung an ein Paradoxon Asiens [Attempt at a scientific approach to an Asian paradox]. In P. Schmidt (Ed.), *Ki-Karate. Eine erfolgreiche Bewegung* (pp. 182-299). Heidelberg: Kristkeitz.
- Landmann, R. (2005). *TAIJIQUAN – Konzepte und Prinzipien einer Bewegungskunst. Analyse anhand der frühen Schriften [TAIJIQUAN – Concepts and principles of an art of movement. Analysis on the basis of early writings]* (3rd ed.). Hamburg: Selbstverlag.
- Lee, M. S., Pittler, M. H., & Ernst, E. (2007). External qigong for pain conditions: a systematic review of randomized clinical trials. *The Journal of Pain*, 8(11), 827-831. doi: 10.1016/j.jpain.2007.05.016
- Li, X.-T., & Zhao, J. (2012). An approach to the nature of qi in TCM – qi and bioenergy. In H. Kuang (Ed.), *Recent Advances in Theories and Practice of Chinese Medicine* (pp. 79-108). Rijeka: InTech.
- Linck, G. (2001). Qi. Zur Geschichte eines Begriffs – von numinöser Atmosphäre zu Materie/Energie [Qi. The history of a term – from numinous atmosphere to matter/energy]. *Studia religiosa Helvetica*, 6, 173-189.
- Kuhn, P. (2019). Body of Qi – Body in Qi. A Paradox of Asia in Multi-Perspective Critical Consideration. *Journal of Martial Arts Research*, 2 (2).

- Linck, G. (2011). *Leib oder Körper: Mensch, Welt und Leben in der chinesischen Philosophie [Body or body: Man, world and life in Chinese philosophy]*. Freiburg: Alber.
- Lind, W. (2001). *Das Lexikon der Kampfkünste [The dictionary of martial arts]*. Berlin: Sportverlag.
- Lind, W. (2004). *Budo – Der geistige Weg der Kampfkünste [Budo – The spiritual way of martial arts]*. Bern: O.W. Barth.
- Linde, K., Niemann, K., Schneider, A., & Meissner, K. (2010). How large are the nonspecific effects of acupuncture? A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *BMC Medicine*, 8:75. doi: 10.1186/1741-7015-8-75
- MacPherson, H., Maschino, A. C., Lewith, G., Foster, N. E., Witt, C., & Vickers, A. J. (2013). Characteristics of Acupuncture Treatment Associated with Outcome: An Individual Patient Meta-Analysis of 17,922 Patients with Chronic Pain in Randomised Controlled Trials. *PLOS ONE*, 8(10). doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0077438
- Manheimer, E., Cheng, K., Wieland, L. S., Min, L. S., Shen, X., Berman, B. M., & Lao, L. (2012). Acupuncture for treatment of irritable bowel syndrome (Review). *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, 5:CD005111. doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD005111.pub3
- Mazaheri, S. (1992). *Anfänge metaphysischer Spekulation im alten China und im alten Griechenland [Beginnings of metaphysical speculation in ancient China and Greece]*. Frankfurt/M.: Univ. Diss.
- Möller, H.-G. (2000). *Die philosophischste Philosophie – Feng Youlans Neue Metaphysik [The most philosophical philosophy – Feng Youlan's new metaphysics]*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz.
- Oda, H. (2001). *Spontanremissionen bei Krebserkrankungen aus der Sicht der Erlebenden [Spontaneous remissions in cancer diseases from the perspective of those experiencing them]*. Weinheim: Beltz.
- Ohnishi, S. T. (2007). Ki: A Key to Transform the Century of Death to the Century of Life. *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 4 (3), 287-292.
- Palmer, D. A. (2007). *Qigong Fever: Body, Science and Utopia in China*. [Kindle Edition] London: Hurst & Co..
- Pförtner, S. (1986a). Pantheismus [Pantheism]. In J. Höfer, & K. Rahner (Eds.), *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (3rd ed., Vol. 8, pp. 20-21). Freiburg: Herder.
- Pförtner, S. (1986b). Pantheismus [Pantheism]. In J. Höfer, & K. Rahner (Eds.), *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (3rd ed., Vol. 8, pp. 25-30). Freiburg: Herder.
- Plugge, R. (2004). *Metaphysik des Einen – Ansätze und Kontroversen einer holistischen Ethik als Beitrag zur aktuellen Diskussion praktischer Natur- und Umweltphilosophie [Metaphysics of the One – Approaches and controversies of holistic ethics as a contribution to the current discussion of practical philosophy of nature and the environment]*. London: Tunhare.
- Porkert, M. (1991). *Die theoretischen Grundlagen der chinesischen Medizin [The theoretical fundamentals of Chinese medicine]* (3rd ed.). Basel: Chinese Medicine Publications.
- Pörtner, P. (1985). Notizen zum Begriff des Ki [Notes on the concept of Ki]. In G. Dombrady, & F. Ehmke (Eds.), *Referate des IV. Deutschen Japanologentages in Köln, 12.-14. April 1984* (pp. 225-254). Hamburg: Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens.
- Pörtner, P. (1999). Die Macht der schönen Formen. Präliminarien zur Sozialästhetik der Gewalt am Beispiel Japans [The power of beautiful forms. Preliminaries on the social aesthetics of violence using Japan as an example]. In K. Barck, & R. Faber (Eds.), *Ästhetik des Politischen – Politik des Ästhetischen* (pp. 13-34). Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- Rappe, G. (1995). *Archaische Leiberfahrung – Der Leib in der frühgriechischen Philosophie und in außereuropäischen Kulturen [Archaic body experience – The body in early Greek philosophy and in non-european cultures]*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Roetz, H. (1984). *Mensch und Natur im Alten China [Man and nature in ancient China]*. Frankfurt/M.: Lang.
- Schlatt (2007). *Enzyklopädie des Shotokan-Karate [Encyclopedia of Shotokan karate]* (3rd ed.). Lauda-Königshofen: schlatt-books.
- Schmidt, P. (2007). *Ki-Karate. Zur Philosophie von Ki, Karate und Kampfkunst [Ki karate. The philosophy of ki, karate and martial arts]*. Heidelberg: Kristkeitz.
- Thiel, P. J. (1970). Das Erkenntnisproblem bei Chuang-tzu [The knowledge problem in Chuang-tzu]. *Sinologica*, 11, 1-89.
- Unschuld, P. U. (1985). *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas*. Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press.
- Unschuld, P. U. (2013). *Traditionelle Chinesische Medizin [Traditional Chinese Medicine]*. München: Beck.
- Volkmar, B. (2007). *Die Fallgeschichten des Arztes Wan Quan (1500-1585?) – Medizinisches Denken und Handeln in der Ming-Zeit [The case stories of the doctor Wan Quan (1500-1585?) – Medical thinking and acting in the Ming dynasty]*. München: Elsevier, Urban & Fischer.
- Wetzler, S. (2014). Myths of the Martial Arts. *JOMEC Journal*, 5. doi:10.18573/j.2014.10276
- Winter, H. (1994). *Naturwissenschaft und Ästhetik – Untersuchungen zum Frühwerk Heinrich Manns [Natural science and aesthetics – Studies on Heinrich Mann's early work]*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- Yamaguchi, I. (1997). *Ki als leibhaftige Vernunft – Beitrag zur interkulturellen Phänomenologie der Leiblichkeit*. München: Wilhelm Fink.
- Yamamoto, S. (2015). Probleme in der Rezeption traditioneller Kampfkunst in der westlichen Welt - am Beispiel des Karate [Problems in the reception of traditional martial arts in the Western world – the example of karate]. In A. Marquardt & P. Kuhn (eds.), *„Von Kämpfern und Kämpferinnen – Kampfkunst und Kampf-*

- sport aus der Genderperspektive“ – Kampfkunst und Kampfsport in Forschung und Lehre 2014. 4. Internationales Symposium und Jahrestagung der dvs-Kommission „Kampfkunst und Kampfsport“ vom 9.-11.10.2014 in Ludwigsburg (pp. 38-46). Hamburg: Czwalina.*
- Yang, T.-Z. (2011). *Das ostasiatische Qi (氣)-Konzept als Denkparadigma zwischen Religion und Wissenschaft [The East Asian qi (氣) concept as paradigm of thought between religion and science]*. Marburg: Tectum.
- Zhou, J., Peng, W., Xu, M., Li, W. & Liu, Z. (2015). The effectiveness and safety of acupuncture for patients with Alzheimer disease: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Medicine*, 94(22):e933. doi: 10.1097/MD.0000000000000933