

EXPLORING MULTIPLE MEANINGS OF SUBTLE ENERGY

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The concept Subtle Energy is often assumed to mean different forms of energy more subtle than conventional physical instruments can detect. In this sense, the concept comes from traditions that accept the human ability to see or feel forces that are not physically measurable. Subtle energy can also mean finding new understanding of how measurable forces produce effects; for example, processes in which electromagnetism can either produce profound changes with only tiny forces, or can register profound changes with only tiny forces. Using electromagnetism to register profound changes is demonstrated in this issue of our journal with the continuing series of studies of “Non-touch Energy Healing,” using the AMI (Apparatus for Meridian Identification), interpreting the energetic potentials of the acupuncture meridian systems.

The image on the cover of this issue shows layering in a piece of pink quartz crystal. This layering reminds me of the multiple layering of meaning and being we find with subtle energies.

In the first sense of the concept Subtle Energy, direct experience provides the primary impulse for studying these phenomena. The experience of feeling the energy of healing was important in shifting the direction of Bernard Grad’s work more than fifty years ago.

Lenore Wiand’s Memorial for Bernard Grad in this issue of our journal celebrates the life and career of one of the pioneers in our field. While studying biology at McGill University, Grad became interested in the work of Wilhelm Reich, especially Reich’s proposal of Orgone, a unique form of life energy. Grad came to consider Reich as one of his mentors. At about the time of Reich’s death, Grad met the Hungarian healer Estebany, and experienced “the felt sense of energy healing.” This experience added entirely new dimensions to Grad’s research, but he carried out his studies of hands on healing discretely, so not to threaten his academic position with controversy.

Mogens Ehrich proposes in his paper “The Borderline Between two Areas of Research,” that a perceptual and conceptual divide exists between people who sense subtle energy and those who do not, and he proposes that research into healing must adapt to this difference in experience.

Ehrich’s proposal grows out of his survey research observations in Denmark. He found that people who use Complementary and Alternative Medicine are people who accept the existence of an “alleged sensitivity to subtle energy.” Ehrich’s survey was published previously in this journal.¹

Ehrich's discussion raises interesting issues about how to shape research. He posits that subtle energy is nonphysical and cannot be directly measured by physical instruments, but it does contribute to direct experience, like what Bernard Grad observed with the healer Estebany. Ehrich accepts that practical healing processes are unique and non-repeatable, and proposes that research by people who do not sense subtle energy, using models that seek repeatability, will fail to correctly observe these phenomena.

Ehrich may be correct that traditional subtle energies such as Qi or Prana are nonphysical and unmeasurable, but we can also expect to continue to find more subtle behaviors of conventional forces in places where we have not previously looked.

Colin Ross's work presents us with examples of looking in new domains of conventional forces to find subtle processes. Previously Ross found simultaneous variation in the brain and heart electrical fields by using EEG instruments monitoring at the heart.² In this issue, Ross describes a method for measuring "ocular extramission," the emission of brain waves through the eye, using a high-impedance non-contact electrode housed inside electromagnetically insulated goggles.

The signals Ross detected are of greater amplitude than EEG signals emerging through the skull, and are similar to the waveforms of frontal brain recordings in overall structure, including the appearance of eye blink and muscle artifacts in the tracing, but with an absence of heart artifacts. Ross suggests some possible diagnostic uses of these signals. He also notes that at the Extreme Low Frequencies of EEG an electromagnetic signal is not attenuated as rapidly as expected by the inverse square law, and proposes that this "ocular extramission," might also be involved in ecologically significant signaling. The ability to sense when we are being stared at may have evolved through prey species developing a sensory system, based in the skin, for detecting a predator's gaze. Traditions of visual curses, such as "the evil eye," might be based in human interpretation of such a gaze sensory system.

In addition to finding new phenomena in uncharted domains, conventional forces can also be used to provide observations of measurable results that can be associated with the use of subtle energies, such as electrical measurements used to observe changes in the acupuncture meridian system.

Koji Tsuchiya and his colleagues at the California Institute of Human Sciences are continuing their series of studies of "Non-touch Energy Healing," using the AMI (Aparatus for Meridian Identification). They previously reported on the Pranic Healing protocol for working with cancer.³ In this second paper in the series they observe the use of Reconnective Healing with a person suffering from emaciated lower limbs. The electrical measurements of the AMI are interpreted as showing Qi deficiencies and imbalances in the client's lower body before the healing session. The deficiency and imbalances as assessed with the AMI were corrected during the healing session, apparently by redistributing the person's Qi.

The AMI was developed in Japan by Hiroshi Motoyama, and is one among many methods for using electrical measurements to assess the flow of Qi in the meridians.^{4,5} The Ryodoraku method, also developed in Japan, by Yoshio Nakatani, is a similar system using electrical conductance measurements at acupuncture points.^{6,7,8}

Alberto Mazzocchi and Roberto Maglione have used the Ryodoraku method for their research reported in "A Preliminary Study of the Reich Orgone Accumulator Effects on Human Physiology." They found the reported small but significant body temperature increase traditionally associated with using the Orgone Accumulator

(ORAC), and suggest that a typical response may be a slight healing fever. Buhl and Fischer have previously suggested this healing fever response to using the ORAC.⁹

Mazzocchi and Maglione interpret the Ryodoraku measurements to reveal parasympathetic nervous system activation, consistent with increased peripheral blood circulation to dissipate the slight heat increase, and consistent with Reich's hypothesis that the ORAC could decrease sympathetic nervous system activity and improve the parasympathetic functioning.

It is fitting to include research on Wilhelm Reich's controversial work when we are celebrating the life of Bernard Grad, who considered Reich to be his mentor. James DeMeo has previously reported in this journal on physical temperature anomalies associated with the ORAC.¹⁰ In this issue, we are reprinting a little known earlier paper by DeMeo, "Report on Orgone Accumulator Stimulation of Sprouting Mung Beans."

DeMeo reports significant increases in seed germination rate, and a 34% growth increase in seedlings kept in an ORAC, compared to seeds kept in a similar enclosure, but not constructed with the layered ORAC composition. The ORAC treated sprouts were longer, but also contained less sugar and appeared more spindly than the control sprouts. The ORAC treated group appeared to be expending more of its sugars in growing to greater lengths. DeMeo discusses the implications of this appearance of spindly growth in comparison to some prior orgone seed growth experiments that had used shorter exposure times in the ORAC. A wide range of experience with the ORAC supports the concept of possible detrimentally overcharge with the accumulator.

To test the possible effect of the slight temperature increases often associated with the ORAC, DeMeo compared controlled enclosures not constructed like an ORAC and kept at a slightly higher temperature (1.5oC). The slightly elevated temperature contributed to only a 6% increase in growth compared to seeds grown in a similar enclosure at the slightly lower temperature. DeMeo concludes that temperature alone is not the sole basis of the ORAC contribution to the increase in seed growth.

DeMeo also provides an extended discussion of possible processes by which the ORAC might contribute to the observed effects. In this discussion he reviews a wide range of serious research, supporting his observation that the continuing hostile and derogatory rejection of Reich's work is inappropriate and untenable.

The controversy associated with Wilhelm Reich has persisted long after his death, and Reich's work continues to be misinterpreted. Richard Blasband provides a review of Christopher Turner's book *Adventures in the Orgasmatron, How the Sexual Revolution Came to America*. We have published Blasband's critical assessment of Turner's book because of the intense focus Turner gives to Wilhelm Reich. Blasband gives an extended synopsis of Reich's life and work, to provide the context for his criticisms of Turner's depiction of Reich. Blasband notes that the popular press has embraced and celebrated Turner's book, but he characterizes the work as muckraking with "much alleged with little evidence." Reich's work was complex, and Blasband provides an insightful overview. His criticisms of Turner's interpretation of Reich's work are also complex and bear thoughtful reading and reflection.

REFERENCES & NOTES

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