

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

Journal of Acupuncture and Meridian Studies

journal homepage: www.jams-kpi.com

BOOK REVIEW

Energy Medicine East and West

Editors: David Mayor, Marc S. Micozzi
Publisher: Churchill-Livingstone, Elsevier
Year: 2011
Length: 393 pages
ISBN: 978-0-7020-3571-5

I'm not complaining, but I have to say *Energy Medicine East and West* (EMEW) has been a tough book to review, weighty as it is with the ink and thoughts of a whole bunch of interesting minds. A substantial contribution to the literature, EMEW consists of 25 chapters contributed by 30 authors each offering a completely different angle on the great big question-mark we sum up in the word *qi*.

The range of voices and perspectives means the style and content offered here is diverse. Mostly academic without being bone-crushingly so, EMEW covers much ground to create a veritable *smörgåsbord* of material and so inevitably the appeal of individual chapters will vary according to readers' beliefs and thinking style. My guess is that you will love some parts and reject others but, in the process, you will gain exposure to interesting ideas and ways of understanding *qi* that may not have occurred to you before. I take perverse pleasure in having my mental boundaries stretched and it was the research on healing that did this for me, so these are worth a mention.

No longer wide-eyed and fresh-faced, I find myself irritated by the tendency to invoke quantum physics and Einstein in support of all things alternative; there really is sufficient *niu shi* (牛屎 bovine excrement) in print on this subject. We don't practise acupuncture at the speed of light, in neutron stars, or on Schrödinger's cat. So it was wonderfully refreshing to find here some sensible, measured, and articulate discussions from quantum-minded EMEW contributors such as F. David Peat.

Another highpoint was the chapter by Ives and Jonas who report their laboratory studies on healing. Their experiments provide quite compelling (and scientifically baffling) evidence for a healer's ability to alter calcium ion influx into human T-lymphocytes. It's tricky to shout 'placebo!' here. The effects worked over distances of a few feet but not over long distances but, weirdly, lingered even after the healer had left the building. They also report results of systematic reviews of therapies such as Reiki and describe their work measuring photon emissions from people. This is rather baffling science conducted by people who seem pretty level headed and science-savvy. Interesting.

In sum, this book offers plenty of enjoyable and stimulating material—although one element was missing. It is a truism in oriental medicine that you properly understand things by going back to early sources and so—*qi* studies naturally begin with an appraisal of the term's original meaning, its early development and the way it was understood by the Daoist and *shi*-scholars of the Warring States and Han Dynasties. It was disappointing to find this dimension missing. Nevertheless, the editors of EMEW are to be congratulated for gathering together the thoughts of some great contributors. Much interesting stuff has been packed into *Energy Medicine East and West*, it is a significant contribution that delivers some wonderfully diverse writings by some fine thinkers on *qi*. I am not aware of any other text that fills this fascinating niche so well.

Charles Buck
 Northern College of Acupuncture,
 61 Micklegate, York YO1 6LJ, UK
 E-mail: chesterclinic@yahoo.co.uk

3 August 2012