Sport Philosophy and 'Ki' 氣
A New Dimension in the Philosophic Study of Sport and Physical Education

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Abstract

The first purpose of this study is to introduce the new concept of Ki to the field of the philosophy of Sport and Physical Education. Certain physical effects of Ki are striking. Utilizing it properly and effectively, one can throw another person without direct contact. These effects have been observed by many scholars and scientists, and are regarded as fact. The second purpose is to explain these phenomena in original way. The scientific studies have their own limitations. In order to pursue the Ki study, the inner situations of the producer of Ki must not be disregarded. The Ki study should be focused on various phenomena in the experience of the producer, from the viewpoint of producer-self, not from that of the outside observers. This study takes a viewpoint of producer, like a phenomenologist.

As a result of descriptions and interpretation, it was disclosed that these phenomena are clearly explained, using the paradigm of the 'Body Domain' and the 'Ki Domain'. Based on the description and interpretation, some speculations were made. Consequently it was concluded that the concept of Ki should be applied to the field of Sport and Physical Education.

Key Words : Ki, Kikoh, philosophy, sport, physical education

What is 'Ki'? Ki originally means breath or wind, but can also be explained as Life Energy which is closely related to one's breathing. Utilizing it properly and effectively, one can throw another person without direct contact. These effects have been observed by many scholars and scientists, and are regarded as fact, even if one cannot explain it scientifically. Although no scientific explanation of this phenomenon is accepted yet, many studies have been done for years in Japan and China.

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The purpose of this paper is to explain these phenomena in original way that will be shown later, and consider the significance of Ki in our field, i.e., Sport and Physical Education. After that it can be concluded that the concept of Ki could be applied to this field.

1. Current Research

1.1. Brief history

The founder of Kikoh research in the modern sense is thought to be the Chinese scholar, Liu Gui-zhen 呂貴珍 who studied
folk remedies or traditional medicine of Mainland China. He investigated many regimens and fitness and training methods of Ki in the old literature, organized them, and integrated them under the concept 'Kikoh', (気功) in 1954. In 1987, the Chinese Society of Human Body Science was established to study traditional Chinese medicine, Kikoh, and extra-sensory perception. Research on Ki was thus begun. The Japanese Society of Human Body Science was established in 1991 mainly for the study of Ki.

Researchers have focused on finding the substance of Ki using research methods of science. They have measured and analyzed the Ki projected from Kikoh specialists with sophisticated instruments. Ki has been found to contain extraordinary amounts of infrared light, low frequency vibrations, magnetism, etc. Brain wave studies of Kikoh specialists revealed some extraordinary waves that were not known before. Such new discoveries have encouraged researchers to study the substantiality and uniqueness of Ki.

However, such scientific studies have their own limitations. Their focus is on Ki itself after it is projected from the Kikoh specialists. It is important to note that Ki is controlled by the will (consciousness) of the Kikoh specialist, and Ki is closely associated with one's mind, not simply a separate physical object projected from the body. However, it is also obvious that without a body Ki cannot be projected. Ki is a phenomenon of both mind and body, so the study of Ki should include both entities. The study of Ki cannot disregard the producer of Ki. Thus, the study of Ki should include and perhaps focus on phenomena in the experience of the producer, from the viewpoint of the producer himself, as well as from that of outside observers.

1.2. Ki in Sport Philosophy

Although in Japan little formal Ki research in Sport Philosophy has been done, the phenomena of Ki and its effectiveness are well known in Japanese martial arts and traditional medicine(13,19). In those areas it is believed that Ki has a substantial influence on the health and power of human beings(14,16,18,22), because excellent athletes seem to produce some kind of Ki and project it as needed. But the knowledge and recognition of Ki is only anecdotal or experiential.

In the USA, George Leonard, Michael Murphy, and R.A.White have referred to Ki and other extraordinary phenomena in Sport. They introduced Ki and its world to Sport, pointed out and indicated the importance of Ki, and argued the relationship between Sport and Ki(4,8,9). But it seems that they tend to make mystical explanations of simple empirical phenomena. Perhaps this is because of the uncertainty of the concept of Ki that it is not yet established in academia. It is true, however, that Ki research has a lot of essential problems due to the mystic elements of Ki.

Nevertheless, no matter how difficult Ki research might be, it should be pursued and developed in sports, as George Leonard said in 'The Ultimate Athlete'.

1.3 Methodology of this study

In order to study Ki from the viewpoint of its producer, it is necessary for the researcher to observe and study himself as a test subject. So I have practiced Kikoh
for seven years. (Perhaps I should mention that for the first three years of my work in Kikoh, I did not believe in it as a real entity.) As a result of this training, I came to be able to feel Ki in my body, to project it and to throw another person without direct contact, although in a limited way.

This research into Ki has been guided by the following considerations:
1) Avoiding any preconceptions about Ki.
2) Avoiding a world view based on conventional science and analytical thinking.
3) Accepting what is experienced rather than what is thought (Like the anthropologist who attempts to record all he has observed in a detached way.)
4) Separating the description of direct experience and the interpretation of this description.

The rest of this paper will follow the plan of item 4. Also in the following discussion, when the experiences and feelings are referred, although the words like 'I' or 'my' are used, they are referring to the phenomenological self, rather than the ordinary mental or physical self, as subject.

2. Description of Kikoh
   —What 'I' have felt in Kikoh Practice—

2.1. One-man Kikoh and the Circulation of Ki
A-1) In first stage, 'I' cannot feel Ki as a substantial entity. It exists only in my imagination. 'I' produce an image that Ki is coming into my body from the soles of my feet, circulating throughout my body. Following its movement, 'I' draw in a thin, long and slow breath.

Fig. 1 The circulation of Ki in 'one-man Kikoh'

A-2) Continuing at stage A-1 for a while, an impression sometimes emerges that something is tracing the image of the Ki. It might be fleeting, and disappears when 'I' cease to imagine.

A-3) The 'something' of A-2 becomes a substantial entity, and covers the image described in A-1. As a result, whenever 'I' imagine Ki, 'I' will also get some substantial feeling in my body.

A-4) The 'something' leaves the image behind, or the 'something' is experienced first and the image seems to follow it, thus reversing their original places.

2.2 Two-man Kikoh
   —Three types of two-man Kikoh—

B-1) Circulation —'I' and my partner circulate Ki to each other—
When 'I' circulate Ki with my partner through our touched palms and through our arms to our bodies, 'I' feel that 'something' (perhaps Ki) circulates between our bodies. After practicing for a while, 'I' realize that more Ki circulates in my body than 'I' had expected.

B-2) Pushing — 'I' and my partner push each other —

'I' feel the other's Ki as a pressure in my (Tanden) * (丹田). Still later, 'I' feel that we push against each other not directly, but as if we are each in a balloon and the two balloons are pushing against each other as we push within them.

*Tanden is the center of Ki, about one inch below the navel. This center has been regarded since ancient times in Asia as the center of one's Life Energy.

B-3) Fusion — 'I' and my partner remove our body's shell (the apparent separation)

When 'I' practice two-man Kikoh intimately with the other person, 'I' gradually begin to feel that the sense of my own body is lessened and a unified feeling with the other is enlarged. At last, 'I' feel as if we are in chaos, and are a single life or being.

3. Interpretation — Two kinds of body —

In the first stage of practicing Ki...
breathing, 'I' simply recognized the 'Domain of the Body' (Physical Body) which is very much like my ordinary body. In other words, 'I' was not able to feel and think about anything but my own body. In later stages, however, 'I' gradually felt Ki, the stream of Ki and the spatial extension of Ki like a balloon, and eventually recognized the 'Domain of Ki' (Ki body). The 'Domain of Ki', once recognized by the test subject, is transformable in various ways by the person's own consciousness. Sometimes 'I' have felt that the 'Domain of Ki' began to envelop the 'Domain of the Body'.

In order to clarify the relationship between the two domains, 'I' have developed a model. In this model, the state of the ordinary body is illustrated in Figure 6. Figure 7 illustrates the relationships between the two bodies and their Ki in two-man Kikoh. Figure 8 illustrates B-1, figure 9 illustrates B-2 and figure 10 illustrates B-3.

Using the Two-domains model of Figure 6, such questions as, "Why is the person thrown without being touched?" can be answered as followed: It is true that 'I' didn't touch the body of the person, but it is the 'Domain of Body' (Physical Body) that 'I' didn't touch. Rather, 'I' touched the 'Domain of Ki' (Ki Body) of the person and pushed it with my Ki Body. This is illustrated in Figure 11.
4. Speculation —Consciousness, Body and Ki —

Based on the above description and interpretation, some speculations will be needed on the relationship between the consciousness, the Ki and the body in Kikoh, and on the significance of Kikoh itself.

In the case of two-man Kikoh, it is quite apparent for me that the other person sends his Ki to me. His body's Ki is sent into my body. This is illustrated in Figure 3, based on the paradigm of the 'Body Domain' and the 'Ki Domain'. Among specialists of Ki, Ki is interpreted as 'Life Energy', therefore they often say that illness can be cured through Ki\(^{10}^{14}^{16}\). In fact, in Japan many patients are cured by Ki specialists, even some who were abandoned by modern medicine\(^{20}\). In such cases, the circulation of Ki between two persons is a circulation of Life Energy, and the exchange of Ki between two persons means an exchange of Life Energy. After finishing two-man Kikoh practice, both persons feel refreshed and active in their minds and bodies. This phenomenon has been interpreted to mean that they have exchanged and shared their Life Energy. If so, two-man Kikoh can be regarded as a type of wordless, and fundamentally the most essential, communication between human beings.

As explained in section 2.1, 'I' feel that Ki comes into my body from the soles of my feet and is circulated in my body. All these effects occur with a substantial feeling in my body. This leads us to a vital question. If Ki is received from outside of body, does this mean that the outer world is filled with Ki? I myself cannot give a definitive answer because 'I' barely
feel Ki in my body, and have had no ability to feel Ki that exists outside of my body. However, traditional schools of Kikoh, various methods of breathing, and Chinese training methods for ascetic recluse all claim that the cosmos is filled with Ki. And it should be said that there is no reason to think differently. If the cosmos is filled with Ki, one-man Kikoh can be regarded as a type of wordless and fundamental communication between human being and Being itself.

If Ki is not only the Life Energy in our body but also a substantial being, our body can be regarded as a small boat in the ocean of Ki, and so can be recognized as a good means to sail in the world. Of course we are 'being -in -the -world', but understanding Ki gives us another insight. Our physical body exists in the physical world, and our Ki body exists as intermediate being between the physical body and the world. Therefore, as Merleau Ponty suggested, the body is ambiguous - we are being in the world but inseparable from the body.

In this context, Kikoh is an important medium of communication between our boat, i.e. ourselves, and the world. From the viewpoint of cosmic communication, our individual selves may be the media of the cosmos. It does not mean that the self is expanded cosmically simply in the imagination, but that our consciousness can be expanded with substantial feeling by Ki Body substantially through the body -the medium of communication- and Kikoh helps to develop this ability to communicate.

Again, it should be repeated that these ideas are the speculations emerging from personal experience. They may never be confirmed by contemporary science. As Yuasa, a Japanese scholar of Ki and of Asian philosophy, stated, "The development of Ki study has to be left to creative efforts in the future."(Yuasa p. 7) On his account, the present can be regarded as the time of preparation for the future. However, there is no evidence to disprove above-mentioned ideas. From the speeches and activities of famous philosophers, martial art specialists and missionaries through history, it seems true that they devoted themselves to achieving such a goal. It might be possible and worthwhile to re-examine the educational methods, and the value of physical education from the viewpoint of these seekers after the truth concerning Kikoh.

Leaving these speculations, some expectations should be proposed concerning the possibility and importance of Ki Study in the area of the philosophy of Sport and of Physical Education.

Ki Study in such field will have substantial and fundamental influence, as in the following examples:

The concept of Ki can help to explain the phenomena of 'flow experience' and 'peak experience' in sports. These experiences include the phenomena of 'feeling of losing oneself' or 'fusion with the world' that can be explained by Ki, as illustrated in Figure 12.
Also, it will be effective in study of sport communication, for example, basketball players can sometimes know the movement of players without seeing, and Japanese martial arts specialist can know when the opposite attacks him. The concept of Ki can help to explain those phenomena, as in Figure 13.

Figure 13

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