

A

Actinic force see *odic force*.

Acupressure is manual pressure treatment of the acupuncture points and meridians, intended to stimulate and correct the flow of *qi* (see this word). See also *acupuncture*.

Acupuncture (in Chinese *zhenjiu*) is a Chinese method, possibly originating already in the stone age, where needles are used to stimulate energy points and their meridians in the body (see the acupuncture doll image), in order to increase and correct the flow of *qi* (see this word) and thereby cure the patient. The oldest text mentioning acupuncture is *Huangdi Neijing* (Medical Classic of the Yellow Emperor) from around 500-200 BC. Acupuncture is traditionally used against a number of diseases, and to ease pain. A similar method of treatment is *moxibustion* (*zhongguo*), the burning of dried leaves from the moxa plant (wormwood) on acupuncture points. See also *acupressure*.



Air has always been a subject of much symbolism, because of its intangible nature, and its importance to our survival. Many ideas about a life energy are based on conceptions of the air, and often the term used for the life energy is similar or synonymous to the word for air, such as in the Chinese *qi*, the Hebrew *ruach*, or the Latin *spiritus* (see these words). It is one of the four Greek elements: air, earth, water, and fire – but not one of the Chinese five: metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. See *breath* and *oxygen*.



The alchemist. Woodcut by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1553.

Aither/Aether see *quintessence*.

Akasha/akasa is the Hindu concept for aether (sometimes translated 'space'), which among other things carries sound. It is not a life energy, which in Indian is *prana* (see this word). Theosophy uses the word akasha for its theory on *astral light* (see this expression).

Akashic records see *astral light*.

Akwalu ('a kind of light') is a concept among the Akawaio indians in Guyana for a spiritual quality in people. Its counterpart is *akwalupo* ('without light'). The word *akwa* means light, shine, life, and is used to describe spirituality.

Alam al-mithal is Arabic for the *World of Ideas* (see this expression).

Alchemy ('the chemistry', where the definite article 'al' is of Arabic origin) was, except for research into chemistry,

mainly during the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance also a complex teaching about the essence and internal truth about matter. Alchemists tried to transform common metals into gold, but also saw this as a symbol for human strife for completion. See *archaeus* and *telesma*.

Alexander technique is a massage technique developed by the Australian actor Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869-1955, see the portrait), where among other things neck massage is used to open for energy to flow through the spine and up to the head, which leads to improved posture, movement, thought, breathing, and speech.



Ambiroa see *andriamanitra*.

Amma see *mulungu*.

Anamorphosis is a distorted image that is seen correctly in a different form of viewing (see the next page). Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1901-1972, see the portrait) used it for his theory from around 1928 about nature's inherent strife for increasingly complex forms – especially in biological bodies. He took both the term and its use from the biologist Richard Woltereck (1877-1944). Although Bertalanffy saw energy flows in this, anamorphosis is far from the idea of a life energy.



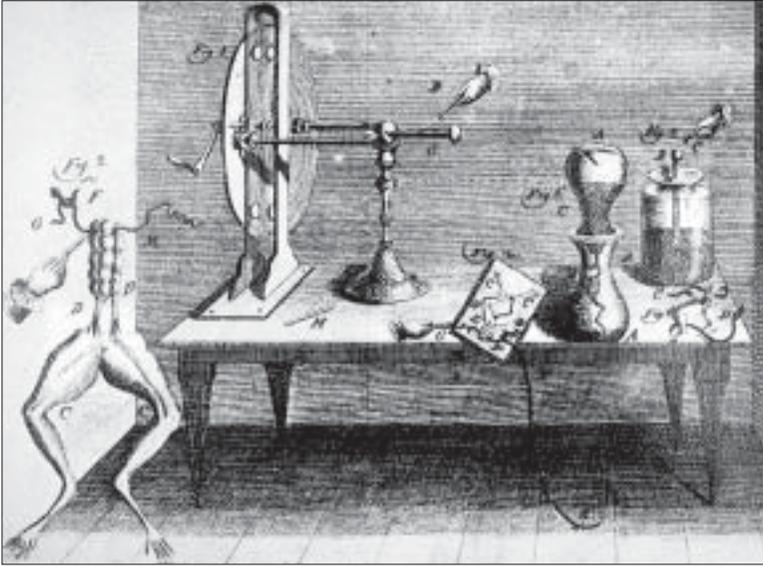
Andriamanitra is a concept in Madagascar for a deceased ruler who has become regarded as divine. The Christians of this culture also use this name for the Biblical God. It is sometimes mentioned as a life energy, which is misleading. The human spirit is called *avelo* or *ambiroa*. See also *hasina*.

Angin see *semangat*.



Anamorphosis by Hans Holbein the Younger, 1533. The strange object by the floor becomes a skull when seen in a certain angle. See Anamorphosis.





Galvani's laboratory and frog experiment. See Animal electricity.

Ani are evil spirits according to the people on the Pacific island Ponape. It is far from the idea of a life energy, although sometimes mentioned as such.

Anima see *soul*.

Anima mundi see *world soul*.

Animal electricity is a theory by the Italian physiologist Luigi Galvani (1737-98, see the portrait). In the 1780's he observed how electric impulses created muscle spasms in frogs, and drew the conclusion that there was a particular electricity within living creatures. He saw it as a liquid flowing from the brain. Thereby he was a precursor to electrophysiology, the role of electricity in living organisms. The word galvanization is from his name. See also *electricity*.



Animal gravitation see *animal magnetism*.

Animal magnetism is a concept used by the Swiss physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815, see the portrait), who treated his patients with magnetism from specifically designed tubs (see the image). He developed his theory when he was in his forties, after earlier speculations about *animal gravitation*, where he supposed the celestial bodies to influence people's health. He has given his name to *mesmerism*, which nowadays refers to hypnosis. His theory about magnetism does not come that close to the concept of a life energy, especially since the former is a power outside the body, and outside the control of the will. See also *magnetism* and *electricity*.



Animatism (from *anima*, Latin for 'soul') is a concept used by the English social anthropologist Robert Ranulph Marett (1866-1943) for the belief in a supernatural force independent of a soul or will, like *mana* (see this word), which he studied in Melanesia. He also called it *preanimism*, because he believed – in opposition to Edward Tylor (see *animism*) – that prehistoric people were too primitive to imagine a world with souls or spirits. See also *soul*.

Animism (from *anima*, Latin for 'soul') is the theory that all animal life is created and filled by a soul of life energy. The term was introduced by the German physician and chemist Georg Ernst Stahl (1660-1734). The English anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917, see the portrait) used the word for a theory about the birth of reli-



gions, which he presented in 1871. Tylor thought that through sleep and dreams, primeval people had gotten the impression of a world soul, and the worship of that soul was the source of religion. See also *animatism* and *soul*.

Ankh is the old Egyptian name for life, or life spirit. The concept also included the idea of eternal life through this force. Its hieroglyph is a picture of one particular part of a sandal, which is pronounced with the same consonant sound as ankh. See the image. See also *sekhem*.



Antigravity is a name for theories on isolating gravity, so that travel between celestial bodies can be done with minimal power. See also *electrogravity*. It has little to do with life energy, although it is sometimes mentioned as such.

Anut is a concept from the island Kusaie (Kosrae) in Micronesia, which seems to refer to spirits and medial ability, but is not a life energy. The priesthood was called *tomon anut*.

Apana see *prana*.

Archaeus was by the Neoplatonic Paracelsus (1493-1541, see the portrait) and the alchemists regarded as an ordering life-principle, similar to what Aristotle (384-322 BC) called *entelechy* (see this word). Archaeus really means 'the oldest principle' or 'the oldest'. Paracelsus thought of archaeus as evenly spread in the human body, a *spiritus vitae* (life spirit) that nourished from *spiritus mundi* (world spirit). Paracelsus also spoke about *mumia* (see this word), a healing "balm" of the body, attached to the blood. See also *spirit*.



Arealoha is sometimes mentioned as a life energy, and was introduced by Francis Nixon. But the concept she used was *vivaxis* (see this word).

Arunquiltha is a concept used by the Australian Aborigine. It is sometimes mentioned as a life energy, but they seem rather to have used the term *churinga* (see this word).

Astral body is the expression for a part of the human being, which is supposed to be able to leave the body in *astral projection* or *astral travel*, where the mind senses places and perspectives far away from where the body is (see the illustration from an astral projection website). The expression astral body is used among many movements within New Age, and occultism of the last centuries. See also *astral light* and *life ether*. It is comparable to the soul, since the personality is included in it, or follows on its travel.



Astral light is the Theosophy concept for a cosmic ether of light, which is an ordering principle for the universe. The Theosophists also use the Indian term *akasha* (see this word). The concept may have been invented by Helena P. Blavatsky (1831-1891, see the portrait), one of the founders of Theosophy. Theosophists also regard this ether as a kind of catalogue of everything that has happened, a complete history of the universe and all its creatures. They call this the *akashic records*.



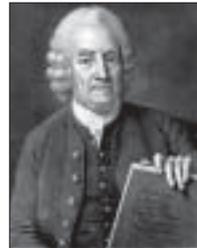
Astral projection see *astral body*.

Astral travel see *astral body*.

Ata see *atua*.

Atua is the word for spirits or ghosts among the Maori on Easter Island. It is far from the concept of life energy. Atua is also used about the traditional deities. Spirit is called *ata*. The Maori concept that is the closest to ideas about life energy is *ha* (see this word).

Aura (Latin for air or wind, Greek for breeze – the meaning charisma or halo appeared later) is frequently used within New Age. One example is Kirlian photography, where lights in different colors are said to radiate from living beings, varying in brilliance and proportions according to mood and health (see also *HEF*). See the Kirlian photograph of a hand on the next page. The first claim to have documented such color radiation came from the London physician Walter Kilner (1847-1920) in 1911. He also introduced the term aura for this. Kirlian photography was commenced in 1939 by the Russian electrician Semyon Davidovich Kirlian (1900-1980). In Antique Greece, Aura was the goddess of the morning wind. Ideas about a body of light, and the light's effects on man, existed already with the Greek philosopher Pythagoras (c.582-500 f.Kr.), who also claimed that this energy could have a healing effect. The Swedish mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772, see the portrait) regarded each human being as surrounded by a spiritual sphere.



Autocracy see *dynamis*.

Avelo see *andriamanitra*.

Axé/asé/aché is a magical force behind all movement and change in the universe, according to African traditions in Brazil. This force is everywhere and can be handled with rituals. In the martial art *capoeira*, the term is used for energy developed through training.

Ayik is the name of a subterranean spirit that creates fear, in the African tribe Elgonyi. They call spirit and breath *rono*. The psychoanalyst C. G. Jung (1875-1961) studied the tribe in 1925 and wrote about ayik, which is sometimes mistakenly mentioned as a life energy, whereas rono seems to be more accurate.



Kirlian photo of a hand. See Aura.