

# The Martialist Issue Four Subscriber Content

## **Chi Power, Pyramids, and Silliness**

By Phil Elmore

One of the perennial debates in martial arts circles can be summed up with the often-used topic title, "Is chi real?"

Chi or ki, the life force that permeates our beings, which some say can be channeled to produce physical and mental benefits, is the basis for much Eastern lore. *Feng Shui*, for example, is the practice of helping the chi of a given space flow freely through that space without ebbing away, wasted, or pooling up, trapped.

The eclectic martial art I study, [Shanliang Li](#), is at its core a meditative art. One of the skills on which we focus is extending the awareness of the mind and body into the ethereal – meaning, beyond the body, to anticipate and counter strikes. My teacher David stresses very much the benefits of meditation. As a Pagan, I can relate to these concepts and to other ideas that would be considered *paranormal* in nature – existing outside the domain of pure logic and tapping certain subjective, emotional elements of our beings.

You may choose to believe that these things, these concepts, are literally real and physically accessible. You may choose to view them metaphorically. Chi, for example, is a superb metaphor for visualization and mental focus. That is how I tend to view it most of the time.

The benefits of positive visualization are widely known in martial arts circles. Chuck Norris, for example, in *The Secret of Inner Strength* and *The Secret Power Within*, writes of the gains he

achieved through visualization of success in competition.

What we must remember, however, is that there are certain things chi cannot do. There are certain martial arts myths and silliness out there that too many people seem willing to believe. When pressed, they will retreat to illogic, claiming that "simply because science hasn't proved something doesn't mean it isn't true."

That is, one supposes, true enough – but we must maintain a sense of perspective. Science hasn't *proven* that there isn't a unicorn living in my closet. In the absence of credible evidence to the contrary, however, the reasonable default position is one of skepticism. If am going to assert that there is a unicorn in my closet, claiming that unbelievers render the beast invisible is not sufficient to bolster my claims or excuse my lack of proof.



Photo by (and of) Phil Elmore. Beware my awesome powers!

**Chi power cannot be focused to knock you down without touching you.**

That is a *fact*. I challenge anyone who believes they can knock me down by focusing their chi and waving their hands at me, or perhaps by making other gestures accompanied by Sonny

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Chiba breathing noises, to drive to my city and do so on videotape.

No one will ever accept my challenge, because this cannot be done. This cannot be done *because nobody has ever done it on an uncooperative opponent*. I don't care if someone claims to have managed it, because *it isn't true no matter what they say*.

"What objectivity and the study of philosophy require is not an 'open mind' but an *active mind* – a mind able and eagerly willing to examine ideas, but to examine them *critically*. An active mind does not grant equal status to truth and falsehood."

- Ayn Rand

I bring this up because I've seen such claims made in the martial arts community. There are a lot of people out there who seem to think they can do a lot of posing and posturing and noisemaking and then bowl you over with the incredible power of their lifeforces. I even saw a video online from a notorious cultlike martial arts group in which people wave their hands, make funny sounds, and knock down groups of charging attackers from twenty paces. It's absurd. Yet there's no limit to what some people seem willing to believe.

I once witnessed, with my jaw dropped to my keyboard, a lengthy discussion at [bladeforums.com](http://bladeforums.com) in which countless individuals actually professed their belief that keeping one's razor blades under a pyramid would somehow magically keep those blades sharper. This mysterious "pyramid power" is not a new idea by any means, but it was as ridiculous then as it is now.

A pyramid does not possess the ability to make your razor blades sharper, preserve your dead cats, or shine and wax your apples and vegetables, respectively. It won't make your clothes brighter or your whites whiter. It's a geometrically fascinating structure that *possesses no magic by itself*.

Am I saying there is no such thing as magick? Absolutely not. I believe very strongly in the power of the mind. I also know that no amount of focus, meditation, and energy on my part is going to violate the laws of physics or create the impossible from the unknowable.

Just when I thought I'd seen everything, I witnessed *another* discussion online, this one in an Aikido forum, in which the participants wondered aloud if those of great development in the martial arts are or were capable of *projecting beams of light from their eyes and fingers*. When I stated how flatly absurd I found this notion – people cannot shoot light from their eyes no matter how "open" their minds might be – I was told that it was terribly rude of me not to keep an open mind!

It's time we dismissed ridiculous nonsense for what it is. There are plenty of "anomalies" out there that point to gaps in our knowledge of our world, and there are things we might call "paranormal" that defy explanation. *The laws of magick, however, never supersede the laws of ballistics*. That's a good slogan to remember whenever you're tempted to believe the unbelievable.

No-touch knockouts do not work and do not exist. Believe in chi or don't, but don't ask unrealistic things of it.