

# Spooky action

## Examples of PK in dowsing

by Nick Haywood

**J**ust what it is that activates the dowser's device? The BSD journals with their many accounts of dowser's experiences, do perhaps provide some clues. Here we find many claims that reactions are caused by unconscious muscular movements within the dowser himself. A nice illustration of this is in issue No242, p346, in which Dr N. Eastwood described his "...rare and valuable faculty of being able to hear dowsing signals if I point at them." This was caused by a reflex action involving the contraction of a muscle in his middle ear. However, other accounts seem to point to another mode of action, in which some unknown force, originating either from within the dowser, or perhaps externally, appears to act. This is more akin to psychokinesis (PK). Here I will recount some of these claims, and let the reader decide.

Let us begin with the traditional Y shaped dowsing rod. There are many accounts which give the impression of violent action, often shattering the rod. For example, in No12, Eleanor Peele, an experienced water diviner, found that when standing over an underground spring, her hazel rod, "...breaks into many pieces, and often cuts my fingers by the sudden action.". Then there are the eccentric movements of the rod. In No44, p5, Guy Underwood, wrote a review of dowsing practices, and described a particularly characteristic motion of the Y rod. "Most dowsers have experienced rotations of the rod when using the old-fashioned twig, held in the fists. It is more likely to occur with a smooth twig held 'palms down' and if we help it a little! Also, the more sensitive the dowser the more likely it is to happen.... [a 'village dowser'] told me that it would go on for ever as long as he was over a stream and that if he stopped it he would die! ... The rotation of the rod is recorded in descriptions of the work of practically every well-known dowser."

Though less common, the rod could show other curious movement independent of the dowser. In his letter in No45, p74, Mr Thomas described working with a

whalebone rod. Holding "the ends of the rod between the tips of the first fingers and thumbs, and get over or in line with an emanation. The rod being flat it does not turn in my fingers at all, but simply bends towards the influence, the elasticity of the whalebone allowing this. Anyone can see at once you are not making the rod work, by any motion of the hands."

A measure of the considerable forces which may be involved is indicated in the following. In No11, p158, Mrs Helen Pim, a water diviner, wrote that when she walked over a line of subterranean water, her "[Y-] rod will turn on any of these lines, the motion increasing as one reaches the cross or real spring. Then the force is so great that it is almost impossible to hold the rod down; the more I try to hold it down the more it seems to want to go up. ... An engineer, anxious to test the actual force, got a large meat scales and tied one end of it to the end of my rod and put his foot on the other end of the scales, while I held the rod down. When I let go the scales registered 40lb. [the scale's maximum]". And this was despite her being described as "elderly and frail".

Theodore Besterman, in his book *Water Divining*, described Mrs Pim's abilities through her husband's words. If a Y rod is held at points A, B and the apex is C, one might agree with Mr Pim, "I started with the assumption ... that possibly some force acted on C". But not so, it was more like a deforming action. "Then I got a short broomstick... Mrs. Pim held the ends and the stick turned round. [i.e. the shaft of the stick rotated]... I tried a smooth office ruler which creeps round. [i.e. the ruler began to twist around its long axis]. ... Gradually Mrs Pim gets to hold the round stick tighter, when it lifts up her hands and arms, seeming not to be able to turn around ". Furthermore, a doctor examined Mrs Pim but could see "no muscular movement whatever when the rod turned".

Now to pendulums, the action of which has been the subject of long enquiry. Some of the earliest experiments were conducted by the Englishman J. O. N. Rutter. In *Journal* No88, p194, Henri Mager (he of the Mager disk) refers to Rutter's work, which the latter published in his book *Water diviners and*

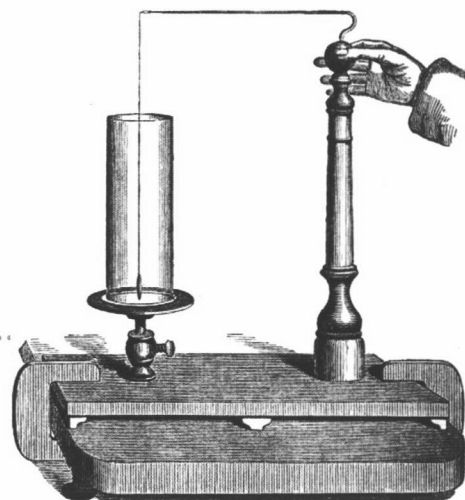


Figure 1 - Rutter's magnetoscope

*their methods*. Rutter's "magnetoscope" essentially consisted of a pendulum suspended from a fixed arm, the pendulum was protected from air movements by a glass cylinder, Figure 1. By merely touching the upright as shown, the pendulum would execute several types of oscillation and gyrations, dependent on the person.

In his article on radiesthesia research, No87, p136, Martin Parkinson reviewed a number of such "automatic pendulums" from 1838 to 1953. One of the most famous was the Baron von Reichenbach, formulator of the "Odic theory", or a "nerve force", which seemed to operate over distance; what we might now call PK. Mention is also made of an experiment by Dr Charles Russ, reported in the *Lancet* 1921 (a feat, probably impossible today). This studied the effect of simply looking at a pendulum, in the absence of any physical contact. The apparatus comprised a closed metal box, the wall at one end having a narrow glass slit, through which a subject would peer. A cylinder hung by a delicate thread from the end of a long glass tube in the roof of the box, Figure 2. The subject, looking at either end of the tube, could usually make it rotate away from them, but looking at the centre they had no effect. Sight alone then seemed sufficient to induce this PK effect.

Finally, Parkinson describes what to him, was the only truly automatic pendulum. Originating in Switzerland, "... The pendulum, attached to a special emitter of radiation, is suspended above the original photograph which emits human radiations of a living being, and this photograph can thus be examined by the auto-energised emitter, independent of all personal influence. The apparatus is free from all human influence and exactitude can only be maintained on this basis". It was claimed that this pendulum could be used to find missing people and discover whether they were alive. The account is very

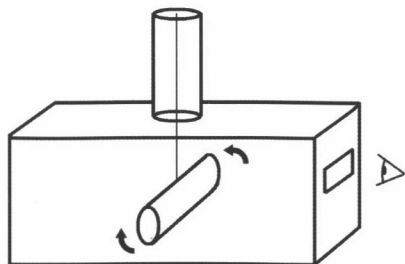


Figure 2 - Charles Russ' pendulum experiment

intriguing, but sadly I have found no more about this device. Today, it seems near impossible to claim that it was free from all human influence. For instance, we know of the psi-mediated "experimenter effect", in which an experimenter, can unconsciously and mysteriously affect the experimental outcome. Who knows the limits of such an effect?

With handheld pendulums, sceptics point to the ideomotor effect as cause of its motion. Indeed, this can make it difficult to separate motion caused by unconscious muscular movements, from any PK effect. But what about the following for example? In No244, p74, Lucy Pringle, of the Centre for Crop Circle Studies recounted the following about a particular crop circle: *"[The former comic] Michael Bentine told me to experiment and see if my pendulum were drawn off the perpendicular in the middle of a formation. One day I asked my son Angus (who has been a sensitive since birth) to pass his pendulum very slowly over the centre of the crop circle, and even he who is accustomed to 'out of the ordinary' happenings was surprised by the 'pull' dragging his pendulum about fifteen to twenty degrees off ninety degrees. I find that the energy increases as I go towards the perimeter of a circle, and the strength of the energy is such that I have broken three pendulums in three years. The chain snapped with the first two, so my jeweller kindly soldered the chain onto the pendulum; this year the pendulum itself fractured as the chain could not break."* Clearly then, as seen with the Y rod, relatively large and eccentric forces can also affect a pendulum.

What about L-rods? Here is an experience of someone attempting dowsing for the first time. *"Without warning the two rods slammed across my chest. I use the word 'slammed' quite deliberately, since that is exactly what happened. I stepped back a pace, and they opened out quite smoothly and deliberately, but not as rapidly as they had closed. I repeated the manoeuvre two or three times, and it was quite consistent. I could see no movement of my hands at any time, nor was there any accompanying feeling in them, or any detectable feeling*

*in my body or mind. I stood with the rods crossed and tried to 'open' them by twisting my wrists outwards. I found I had to turn them at least 30° or more before they would respond, and then they moved and swung erratically, as if balanced between two strong forces - quite different from their normal steady state".* Clearly this author did not believe the ideomotor effect caused his rods to close.

Neither too in the following. In No262, p176, Dan Wilson, in a letter passing comment on a member of his local dowsing group, *"We even have a TV producer tying her L-rods to a chair and getting responses by psychokinesis 'so as to be sure I'm not influencing them'."*

Dowsers have used a variety of other types of devices and practices. Some of these exhibit very interesting behaviours. In no77, p289, M. Wilson writes of his experiences as a "country dowser" and how he could influence his own dowsing instrument using his mind. *"I have a length of piano wire four feet long, ... I hold it in a horizontal position and after a short time I get the wire to rise up to touch my head without apparent movement of hands or fingers. Further, I can get the side held in either hand to lead in this rise, that is, I can nominate the right or left side to rise in advance of the other side."*

Then there is this very singular approach to dowsing. In No197, p330, a letter from a G. L. Menders recounted the following. *"An experienced driller friend assured me that a man he knew dowsed holding a glass of water on which floated a lump of charcoal. The charcoal would bob up and down in the water as the dowser walked over minor underground streams. When he crossed a major stream suitable for drilling the charcoal would sink to the bottom of the glass like a stone. The boreholes sited with this method were successful."*

One of the more extraordinary lectures delivered to a BSD audience, was that given by Lord Dowding, (who commanded RAF Fighter Command). In his retirement, Dowding became interested in Spiritualism. In No48, p171, he described his experiments in which a little paper cylinder, about 2 inches (5cm) in diameter,

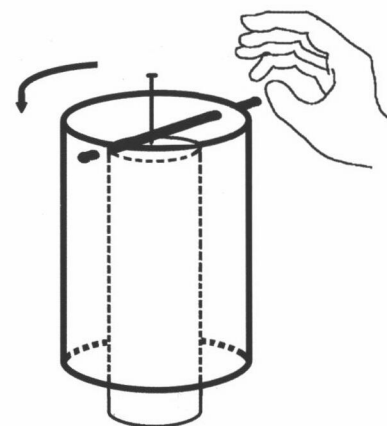


Figure 3 - Lord Dowding's rotating cylinder

rotating horizontally on a near frictionless needle Figure 3. He could make this rotate when his hands were cupped round it, sometimes as much as 40 revolutions per minute. This lecture prompted Cecil Maby, the self-appointed scientist to the BSD, based in his Cotswolds dowsing laboratory, to conduct several years of research into the actions of the cylinder, which he named the "Radio-Electrometer". His results appeared in several issues of the journal, for instance, No49, No53, No54, No71 and culminated in the development of a device for field dowsing, but it never seemed to achieve a successful spin-off.

Finally, we end with "Water-divining in Malabar", by M. K. Krishnaswami, in No10, p125, (reprinted in No332) in which he describes a rather wonderful dowsing demonstration using a coconut. After building a house, the 80-year-old head carpenter divined the location of a well for its occupants. *"The [coco]nut was placed in the middle of a plank laid flat on the ground. The 'dowser' next called for a boy from among the audience and asked him to squat on the nut. The youngster perched himself with both feet on the coconut and his hands resting on the plank on either side. The old carpenter then threw some sacred ashes on the nut and urged it to move. Presently, to the astonishment of all present, the coconut began to spin slowly in a clockwise direction, the boy, of course, moving with it! When the nut had turned halfway round, it spun back counter-clockwise direction, reached its original position, and remained still."* These movements apparently had a definite meaning for the dowser, who interpreted them in relation to the presence or otherwise of water.

Does PK move your dowsing device? I think Dan Wilson summed it up well, *"Once you put into people's heads that anything goes, it does!"*