

## **Dowsing asks BIG questions**

**Nigel Twinn (March 2015)**

Dowsing works for most people at least some of the time. It is a 'real' phenomenon, within the bounds of human perception.

Dowsing can be enlightening, but also challenging. It can be inspiring, but also disconcerting. Dowsing is not for the insecure or the faint-hearted – scientifically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually or philosophically.

It is a journey of discovery and realisation – but for every aspiring Edmund Hillary or Neil Armstrong, there is the possibility of a Captain Scott or an Apollo 13. Modern dowsing is cutting edge – exciting, cathartic and potentially profoundly life-changing.

I have always been surprised, even slightly disappointed, at the number of dowsers, even some very experienced and able practitioners, who are satisfied in using their new-found ability to find objects of various kinds – and that's it. It seems as if they are treating their mind-boggling skill rather like learning to use a garden implement, or to drive a car. You have acquired an additional ability that makes life easier, or more expansive, but in essence you are still in the same paradigm – just a couple of steps further up the same ladder. To misquote the Buddha, there may only be one mountain, but there are many, many ladders available to the broad-minded seeker.

Once I had understood the basics of the art, I soon came to realise that dowsing was less of a non-technical innovation, and more of a virtual window on a wider view of reality. It is something that subtly links the seen with the unseen, and the scientific with the spiritual, in a manner that all-but-defies description.

It gradually dawned on me that whilst I could engage competently with the practicalities of horticulture, or transport – or dowsing – my role (some might even say my destiny) might be more to consider the implications that flow from them – to be a narrator or facilitator, as much as a participant.

With that in mind, I set out to try to bring some very esoteric ideas and conjectures into a more manageable and accessible format. I resolved to deconstruct the somewhat rhetorical question 'Dowsing works – so what!?' into a number of major, yet more digestible, areas for the consideration for anyone with an enquiring mind. Dowsing asks some BIG questions, but can dowsers rise to the occasion?

Perhaps we should start with a question closest to the familiar rational worldview. Can we explain away finding water, or lost objects, without resorting to the mysteries of dowsing at all? There are certainly those who feel they can. Maybe these abilities are just the result of detecting faint radiations, perhaps coupled with acute sensory perceptions. If we adopt a strictly rationalist standpoint, this might be just about possible – but it is right at the edge of credibility. It is rather crudely seeking to fit the 'science' of dowsing into the current paradigm. Whilst this approach is not to be decried as a line of reasoning, it can only be considered as a starting point.

However, once we move up to the second floor, we have to find a mechanism for what could potentially explain map dowsing and distance healing. These well-documented and widely practised crafts are completely outside of the existing scientific paradigm. Even the founder of the British Society of Dowsters, retired Corps of Royal Engineers officer, Colonel AH Bell, came to that conclusion – and it led to a philosophical rift between his new world view and that of his closest colleagues. Professionals and hobbyists alike now routinely use non-local dowsing – and time has been very much on the side of the late Colonel.

Without the benefit of modern science, and the knowledge of concepts such as the Information Field, AHB could never have bridged the gap between the more rigid pre-war outlook and the mindset of the new millennium using logic alone. However, he did come to appreciate that it had something to do with ‘the subconscious’. It was a bold mental leap, which put him well ahead – perhaps too far ahead – of his colleagues.

The work of the psychologist, Carl Jung, on the ‘collective subconscious’ informed this debate around the turn of the last century. Yet, right up to the present day the arguments rage on, between and within both science and philosophy, as to whether the seat of the conscious mind is within us or without us (to misquote George Harrison). Consciousness is very much the new frontier, the new cutting edge of both the more physical and the more philosophical tendencies.

Strangely, it is also the area that (almost) unites the scientists and spiritualists – or at least it provides them with an ill-defined no-man’s-land, where there are the building blocks of a common language between the various factions that could enable them, in due course, to co-exist and to communicate.

For dowsing to work as well as it clearly does, consciousness must surely lie, at least in part, beyond the human frame – with the brain, or mind, or soul presumably rebadged as a very high quality information receiver and/or processor. And if consciousness really is external to the human realm, and possibly a universal phenomenon, is that where the dowser’s information cache resides?

If the functionality of dowsing requires us to re-evaluate our own role in the great scheme of things, what are we – and what (if anything) is our role? Could we be:

Vital cells of a cosmic body?

Insignificant insects in an infinite hive?

Fated individuals in a sea of information?

Cosmic driftwood, floating aimlessly through space and time?

or are we just hapless (or critically important) cogs in a Grand Plan?

While we may each have a variety of suggested potential ripostes to these questions, based on our own respective heritage and baggage, dowsing throws us ever more tricky and prickly conundrums. If there is a ‘plan’, whose plan is it? Who runs, owns or even invented this ‘information field?’ Could it be a divine entity, the cosmic consciousness (aka the Holy Ghost), or is it some manifestation of our higher selves – either corporately or individually? Or is there no plan B (or even a plan A), just an inevitable

unfolding of events – a reality without meaning, purpose or direction; a random distribution of forces and matter? It's a theoretical possibility.

Dowsing demonstrates that we can interact with our energetic environment – and probably many other dowsable phenomena too. Whether we are passing the time of day communing with earth energy lines or pinpointing and redirecting the dowsable impact of underground water; whether we are interacting with the spirit world or healing the hurts of the past, we are very much active participants in the world beyond the veil. Is this akin to being at one with the cosmos? Is that interactive relationship what some would term 'talking to God' or 'having a conversation with Gaia'? Is it actually (on a minute scale) what philosophers like to call 'co-creation'? Are we really co-creators of our own (or a shared) reality? It's beginning to look as if we are.

But if we really do have this astonishing ability, and a job spec to go with it, why don't we use dowsing more openly and more actively? Most people can dowse quite successfully at least some of the time, yet the majority of those same people don't even acknowledge the fact. Is it all too obvious – or is it an inconvenient truth? Do we fear that dowsing might mean the destruction of a worldview that has taken us a lifetime to construct, and to come to terms with – or do we just not get it? Is it simply that we all use intuition all the time anyway so, why bother with the bits of coat hanger? Whichever one of these answers you pick, and even if you try a mixed portfolio of them, the scenario just doesn't add up. Dowsing may have been overtaken by technology to some extent for finding gas pipes in the road, or finding coal seams in the countryside, but it is a transcendent skill which takes you to the very edge of anything you can imagine – and still it carries you on beyond the far horizon. That seems quite exciting to me – and well worth taking seriously.

Is our reluctance as a society to take dowsing on board an internal, or maybe an external, protection from information overload? Is it an intuitive realisation that such an open-minded adoption of the dowser's realm could drive us insane (and therefore be unable to fulfil our 'function')? Or is it that a deep appreciation of the insights delivered by dowsing would inevitably destroy many of the building blocks on which our post-industrial socio-economic culture is founded?

Is it an inbuilt protection against detrimental or malevolent forces or tendencies? If so, will we eventually be forced to return the dowser's art to the secrecy and security of the guild or the cult? Or will we be able to use the enlightenment afforded by dowsing to evolve a modern, rational, understanding of the essence of spirituality?

Before we can hope to address these other questions, we have to try to unravel the conundrum of why dowsing is so hugely subjective. Why does just about every dowser find something slightly different – with even the very best and the most experienced showing subtle (and not so subtle) variations in their results? While there is enough commonality of output to substantiate a claim for dowsing – and as a physical reality, to be way, way above statistical significance – there is also usually quite a wide range of responses to even the tightest of dowsing questions. Subjectivity is both dowsing's Achilles' heel and its hidden key. Unlike other branches of both science and philosophy, our craft displays all the hallmarks of a collaboration between the dowser and the dowsed, the observer and the observed. It could even be described as dowsing's unique selling point. Moreover, it seems to indicate the vagaries of the human condition in action, and probably working in quite a hostile environment.

But not all of dowsing is so equivocal. There are a host of well-respected and very well documented water diviners, who have found their (very physical, even drinkable) targets with monotonous regularity over many decades. The veteran George Applegate and the late Donovan Wilkins are prime examples – people who can get success rates well up into the 90 per cent range. With no water, no fee, you have to be pretty accurate, given the huge cost of a dry drilling. So, why is it that water divining so different? Is it just the relentless focused practice and an unbroken tradition going back into the mists of time? Could all aspects dowsing be as accurate with a few more centuries of dedicated concentration? Or is something to do with the water itself? Could it be that as we are composed primarily of water ourselves, that we have an inbuilt witness for the object of the search? However, we don't seem to have a similarly reliable ability with the location of bones, blood or viruses, so perhaps one of the other explanations is closer to the mark.

What does dowsing imply about the world of spirits? There appears to be an increasing number of human practitioners, who can help and 'manage' spirits – most of which seem to be in a form of inter-life limbo – what Buddhists term a bardo state. Even a journeyman improver, such as myself, can locate and identify a spirit and interact with them (albeit rather tentatively!) However, if the parting of the veil in this respect is such a straightforward dowsing process, what does this say about the continuity of life? If it sank in that we might be 'coming back' or even plunging back into the great ocean of the life force, it would clearly make no sense at all to treat our home planet, let alone our friends, neighbours, fellow creatures – even our enemies – in the way that we do.

Or is the whole idea of timeless spirituality just a grand piece of psychological theatre, orchestrated by that old devil, the desire for wish fulfilment? Are we finding what we want to find, and making up the missing bits to suit our own expectations? Even if the ghosts and the angels were imaginary, they are 'real' enough to so many people as to impact on the way that we all approach our own psychological makeup.

What does dowsing tell us about the nature of time? Dowsing implies that time is illusory, as the dowser can transcend the time barrier almost at will – at least when looking chronologically backwards. Even comparative novices can be shown how to take up the tracks of the ancient inhabitant of a community living in a circle of huts, before the arrival of the Romans, on what is now open moorland. It may be a bit disconcerting for the relative beginner, but in essence it's not the dowser's equivalent of rocket science.

Is future dowsing just crystal-ball gazing – or is it really intuitively applied science? Dowsing future events tends to be less precise, and the outcomes are generally less reliable, than similar questions asked of the past. Is this because we are using our higher-self computing power to extrapolate a probable future from the information available in the present – or is it that this is one veil that we must not, cannot, transcend? 360-degree intuitive vision would make nonsense of the concept of free will, and could probably negate the unique role (if there is one) of the human domain.

Dowsing asks many BIG questions, but it might also help to provide us with some equally BIG answers.

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