

## QUESTING THE ILLUSIVE THOUGHT-FORM

by Robert Mermin

An interesting incident happened during one of my early pantomime performances for a college audience ten years ago, an incident that I recall vividly because of its odd relation to some recent dowsing experiments with several students of mine.

The mime performance was actually my first major solo effort on the stage, and I was nervous, with the inexperienced air of desperate concentration about me. At one point in the show, I became purposefully "trapped" inside an invisible maze of illusionary walls, built in pantomime. I was so involved building the maze, "feeling" along the invisible walls, that I over-concentrated while visually trying to remember just where I had been placing these invisible walls around the stage. So intense was my concentration that suddenly, and effortlessly, I gained one of those rare moments—an overview during which I seemed to view myself from the outside. I briefly had a perspective of the stage from somewhere up near the ceiling of the theater. I could see, in a sense, the whole stage and where the maze was placed.

Finally, and just as suddenly, I was mentally back on the stage enmeshed with what I was doing, when I reached out in space to touch a pantomime wall—and my hand was actually blocked as if I had touched a real wall. I was stunned and jerked my hand away. Snapped back to my senses, I quickly finished the act. How this incident relates to dowsing will be seen in a moment.

Just last year, having read in this journal reports of diverting noxious rays from under a bed by placing copper wire around the bedposts, I determined to try it; and from the dowsing reactions, the attempt was apparently successful. I then took it to the next step and applied a form of map dowsing. Having removed

the wire from the bedposts, I drew a sketch of the bedroom and proceeded to place a small coil of wire on the paper, around the sketch of the bed. The experiment involved a second person who, in another room with the sketch, put the wire on the map and also removed it at random times without my knowing. Meanwhile, when I dowsed the actual bed, the results showed that indeed the rays seemed to be diverted only when the wire was on the map.

Adding the next step, I then concentrated on visually picturing a wire blockade around the bed (using no actual wire or map). Repeated experiments showed this visualization technique to be just as effective as the others. I wondered how far one could take this mental aspect of dowsing. The development of the mind's eye and a creatively detailed imagination is a large part of the training in the art of pantomime. I soon found out that through creative visualization using invisible objects on stage, the manipulation of space as a tangible substance becomes second nature after a while.

One night I invited a friend for dinner, another student of the art of pantomime, and a beginning dowser as well. After dinner I gave Tom my L-rods and asked him to walk across the room and see if the rods reacted in any way, without his thinking of anything. What he didn't know was that five minutes earlier, while eating dessert, I had mentally visualized a brick wall in the middle of my living room, concentrating on "seeing" it, invisible, in the room. When he took the rods, puzzled, I turned away, so not to overtly influence him, but still visualizing the wall. Sure enough, the rods opened right where the imaginary wall stood. I took a single rod, walked slowly toward the "wall", and felt the rod seemingly hit an invisible obstruction and turn 90° as if blocked.

We tried experiments all that evening. For example, with Tom ignorant of my intent, I visualized a pyramid shape somewhere in the room. I asked Tom to slowly sweep the room with one L-rod, to see what he might pick up. Sure enough, he was surprised to pick out the aura of a pyramid, with the rod reacting all

the way up and down the three-dimensional invisible triangular shape.

Shortly after this, I taught a class in mime for about 25 students. In the class I taught them to create illusionary objects in space, to focus visually and manipulate these illusory objects using mime techniques. And then, followed by discussion, I read the following two quotes. The first is by French mime Marcel Marceau, my teacher. The second is from the book *Thought-Forms*, by Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, first published at the turn of the century by the Theosophical Society:

*A gesture, unless lyrically sustained, is but a drawing in space. It needs to be clothed in a thought, and the drawing which expresses this thought must be accurate. The actor-mime vibrates like the strings of a harp; he becomes lyrical. The gesture must constantly vibrate and breathe; the breath emits and projects waves that touch our nervous influx and make our senses vibrate. Even the motionless attitude in space must project this aura, this contact which establishes itself between the actor and the public, and which we call magnetic exchange.*

–Marcel Marceau

*We have often heard it said that thoughts are things, and there are many among us who are persuaded of the truth of this statement . . . What is called the aura of man is the outer part of the cloud-like substance of his higher bodies. Extending beyond the confines of his physical body, two of these bodies, the mental and causal bodies are those chiefly concerned with the appearance of what are called thought-forms. Every thought gives rise to a set of correlated vibrations in the matter of the mental body; the body under this impulse throws off a vibrating portion of itself, shaped by the nature of the vibrations. Each definite thought produces a double effect—a radiating vibration and a floating form.*

– A. Besant and C. W. Leadbeater

Just what are thoughts? What is the actual physical matter involved in the process of thinking? Too often, it seems, a physical phenomenon of the mind is designated simply as a psychological or "mental process" and left unexplored. But this is only a label; the actual mental action and resultant thought is really a physical process of the brain.



*Thought becomes reality in a talented mime's consciousness.*

In their classic books, *Thought-Forms*, and *Thought Power*, Besant and Leadbeater devote their extraordinary clairvoyant talents to an investigation of thought as physical vibrations, which seemingly pour forth with varying degrees of clarity and intensity, and are physically transmitted and received in the minds of people.

A summary of their main ideas of course will not do justice to the interesting technical discussions in these books, but for

the purpose of this article a few simple analogies may serve as a useful introduction to the idea of thoughts as vibrations.

Imagine a flame which, being the center of vibratory activity in ether, we call heat. These heat waves *coax* the surrounding ether into corresponding waves, which in turn *causes* the ether surrounding a piece of iron lying nearby to adopt similar vibrations. These wave particles around the iron vibrate under the same impulse, and the iron, picking it up, becomes hot and a source of heat itself.

Picture a speaker whose voice sets in motion waves of sound in the air, radiating in all directions. In a crowd, this voice may be received, or heard, by someone focusing on it by blocking out other sounds.

Finally, imagine a light, emitting wavelengths in all directions, diffused. Yet when the same light is concentrated and directed, it becomes a laser beam of immense power capable of traveling vast distances.

So is a thought, vibratory by nature, similar to the physical waves of light and sound and heat; the thought vibrations radiating out from the mind of one person to be received according to the similarity of the corresponding vibratory rates in the mind-ether of another person. While a thought, vague and diffused, would have no special effect on people nearby, it becomes effective when concentrated and willfully directed. A monk, who sits in rapt devotion and prayer, may send waves of feeling that, though not specifically directed, may tend to stir up thoughts of a similar quality in others who come near his influence.

Aside from the production of radiating vibrations, Leadbeater and Besant discuss a second effect of thought—the creation of a definite form. In one of the many aspects of "thought-forms," a thought may take the image of some material object. For example, when someone thinks of a room, a house, a landscape, a wall, tiny images of those things form in the mind's eye and can

be externalized and projected. This happens when a strong visual imagination is at work, as with a painter who forms a mental image of the picture he wants to paint, unconsciously "builds" this picture in his mind, and then projects it outward into space in front of him, keeping it in his mind's view and copying it on canvas.

In the art of mime, we visualize objects in space, and hold these images in our mind's eye, all the while interacting with them physically, with body movements. It's a graceful stage illusion, the physical manipulation of "empty" space. In the mime class, we discussed the art of mime, visualization, and the science of dowsing. And then I produced a stack of homemade L-rods, eager to try an experiment with the puzzled students.

After handing out the rods, which were foreign to nearly everyone in the group, I created, in pantomime, an invisible wall, a mime barrier, along one edge of the rug. I then asked groups of people to walk towards it, rods ready, to see if anything would happen. On the first try, easily 50% of the rods were deflected. In two minutes, 100% found the wall, rods swinging and mouths dropping. Other similar experiments followed, in pairs, and we found that those students adept at visualization and pantomime soon were creating illusionary objects and thought-forms that would move the rods of others, while those whose concentration was low had some initial difficulties.

Further studies with Tom showed distance not to be a factor. Tom lived about 10 miles from me, and before he had ever been inside my house we tried an experiment. I drew a sketch of my living room and put three dotted lines wide apart, cutting the room in thirds. He took the sketch, and we agreed that at 6:00 pm, each at our separate homes, Tom would concentrate on any of the three lines on the drawing, and strongly visualize a wall on any line, or any combination of walls on those three dotted lines – or even no wall at all.

That night, alone in my room at six o'clock, I took out my rods, and with a clear mind and no searching questions, I walked across the room. Five minutes earlier I had walked over the room with the rods and found nothing. Now as I walked across the room again there was nothing—until I came to where the third dotted line would be on Tom's map. The rods reacted to a clear, though invisible, barrier. By 6:15, the barrier was gone. Checking with Tom the next day, he had indeed concentrated on a wall for 15 minutes at line three.

Variations on this experiment over a period of time gave equally interesting results; the success rate depending a lot, I believe, on the degree of concentration on the part of the sender, and sometimes on the confusion of oft-repeated similar tests.

Telepathy? Perhaps it's all part of the same idea. If so, the dowsing rods seem to be a physical manifestation of the "mental" process of telepathy. Perhaps thoughts are definitely physical things, to be sent and received like radio waves. Leadbeater and Besant were among others at the turn of the century to declare that the atrophied pineal gland in the head is the physical organ for thought transference, just as the eyes are the organs of sight, and the ears for sound. And today, with caution, biological studies have begun to show interest in the functions and origins of the pineal and pituitary glands.

It is believed, in metaphysical philosophies, that thought waves are constantly being produced with no effort and without our even realizing what effect they may have. Perhaps, for example, if a black mood comes over you for seemingly no reason in the middle of the day, who knows, but you may be sensitive to receiving the thoughts of someone who is angry with you at that moment. Similarly, who is to say, without doubt, that healing loving thoughts consciously directed toward an ailing friend, as in a healing prayer, do not have some helpful effect?

And perhaps the intentional projection of definite, specific thought-forms is similar, in a sense, to the idea of television.

The TV camera sends images of real things along waves of space, and we see them and are affected by these images. In the same way perhaps, a concentrated thought-form, projected by waves through the ether, may only be an image of the real thing (my invisible brick wall), yet it is real enough to be picked up by the rods, and therefore capable of influencing us in subtle ways.

Even if one only accepts the possibility of truth behind these premises, it makes food for thought; if one's "mere" thoughts can somehow affect others as well as oneself, these revelations may form the foundations for a new awareness of personal thinking habits.

For dowsing purposes, questing (the apt British and Canadian term for "dowsing") for illusive thought-forms is, at the least, a helpful discipline for concentration and creative visualization and makes an interesting line of inquiry.

References:

- (1) Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, *Thought-Forms*, Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, Ill. 1969 edition.
- (2) Annie Besant, *Thought Power*, Theosophical Publishing House, 1963 edition.

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