# The Homopolar Motor: A True Relativistic Engine

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This article discusses experiments, which enable the identification of the seat of mechanical forces in homopolar-machines. Authors provide a suitable variation on a recent work “The Unipolar Dynamotor: A Genuine Relational Engine” [3], where “relational” implies “absolutely relativistic”. The authors' view agrees with both Weber's recognition in the 19th century of the importance of relative motion in electromagnetic phenomena [4] and Einstein's 1905 statement concerning electromagnetism [5].

### The Faraday disk: a reversible engine

The essential components of the homopolar machine, first conceived by Faraday in 1832, are shown in Figure 1. A conducting disk, free to rotate in the neighborhood of a permanent magnet, is attached to the end of a shaft. A closing wire provides a conducting path between two arbitrary points of the disk. Such a device exhibits *reversible* behavior.

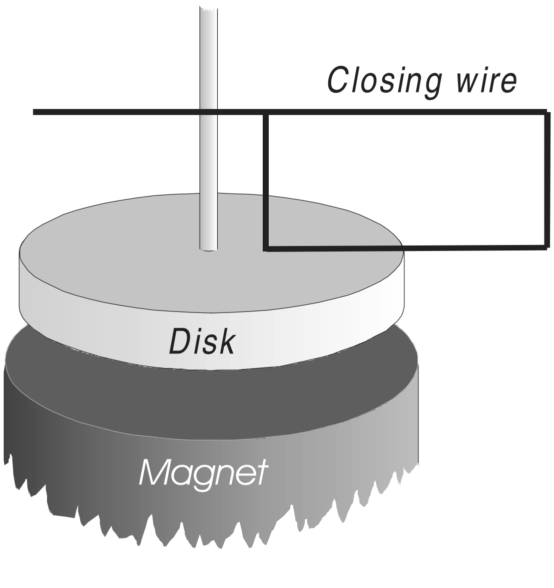


Fig.1
Faraday's setup magnet, disk and closing wire

A radial current path of length $L$ takes place in a region of the disk when direct current (*dc*) from an external source is injected into the closing wire. The interaction of the current with the magnetic field produces a Laplace force [6]

$\boldsymbol{F} = \int_a^{a+L} I(d\boldsymbol{r}x\boldsymbol{B})$ causing the rotation of the disk. This set-up is the *motor configuration.*

When the disk is spun by an external source of mechanical energy, an *emf* appears in it. The displacement of free charges is produced in this case by the Lorentz force $\boldsymbol{f} = q(\boldsymbol{v}x\boldsymbol{B})$, converting the conducting disk into an *emf* source able to drive *dc* through the whole disk plus closing-wire circuit. This set-up is the *generator configuration*.

A seemingly curious fact occurs in the motor configuration, when *dc* is injected into the circuit with the disk attached to the magnet. Both disk and magnet turn together.

Two rival theories, a relativistic and an absolutistic one, have been applied to understand the observed facts:

In relativistic view, generator configuration makes sense only when there is relative motion of the magnet with respect to either the disk or the closing wire. Also, a motor configuration will only take place if the *possibility of relative motion* between magnet and either disk or closing wire is enabled.

Thus, in the relativistic framework, with the magnet attached to the disk, the closing wire becomes the “active” part for the production of mechanical forces or *emf*. In this case the disk itself behaves as a “passive” element providing a closing-circuit current path.

Conversely, in the eyes of an absolutist, a generator configuration is enabled only because of the disk or closing-wire *absolute* motion. Here, absolute means “relative to a frame where the preponderance of the mass of the universe is at rest” [7,8]. In our case, the lab frame acts as an acceptable absolute-motion reference. Thus, from an absolutistic view, the magnet's rotation with $\partial$ B/t = 0 in each point of the surrounding space is unable to produce an *emf* on nearby conductors. When in a motor configuration, *dc* is injected in the circuit, and the absolutist assigns the observed rotation to the magnet “dragging” by the conductor. Here, the closing wire acts as a “passive” circuit element.

New experimental work, complementary to that currently known on the subject, introduces arguments in favour of the relativistic viewpoint. The related experiments, whose underlying physics rests upon a modified version of the original Faraday setup, are described in the following sections.

## The asymmetrical rotor

Figure 2 shows the disk-shaped ceramic permanent magnet creating the axial magnetic field ***B***. The removal of a 12° sector introduces a field-reversion region. Outgoing and ingoing ***B*** field lines are represented by the and symbols, respectively.

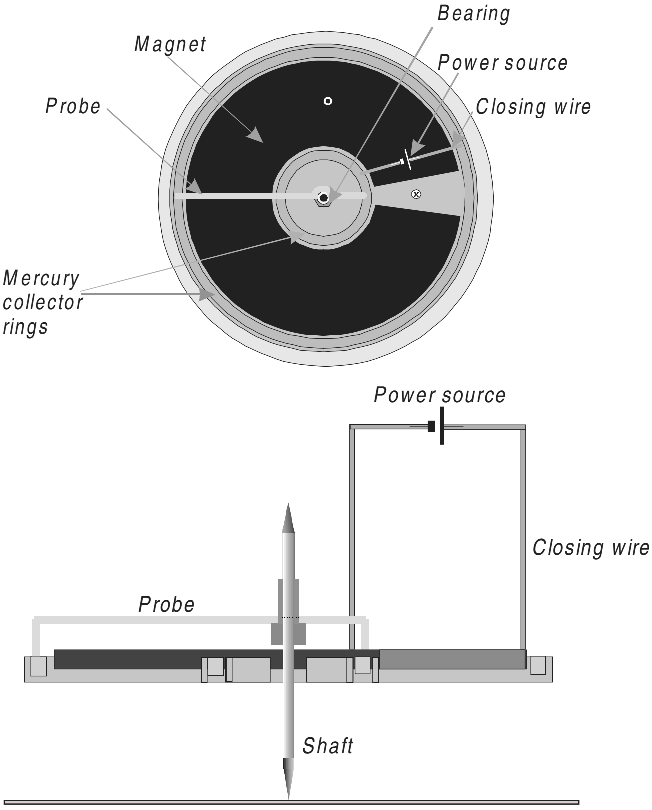


Fig.2
Layout of the Asymmetrical Rotor applied to the experiments

Two mercury collector rings are embedded in a wood cylinder. One is located close to the hollow-disk magnet inner rim and the other in the proximity of the outer rim. The magnet's inner and outer radii are 25 and 75 mm, respectively, and its height 25 mm. Its average flux density 2 mm above the magnet has been estimated to be 0.05 T based on a generator experiment with a rotating copper disk. The magnet-and-wood-cylinder body (the asymmetrical rotor from here on) is firmly anchored to a vertical shaft terminated in sharp points at both ends. While the lower one lays on a hard-polished surface, a conical bearing, enabling its almost frictionless rotation, centers the upper one.

Unlike the series-connected conductors diametrically anchored to the shaft in the Guala-Valverde case [3], only one radial conductor wire, a probe located 2 mm above the magnet's face, was considered. By mounting it on a bearing, its free rotation is permitted with its ends remaining in contact with both collector rings. A 12V lead-acid battery applied to the closing wire feeds the probe through the collector rings. In the first four experimental cases presented the closing wire remains firmly anchored to the lab. In two complementary experiments, rotation of the closing wire mounted on two shaft-centered bearings is allowed. Its behavior as a probe occurs by the injection of *dc* from an additional closing-circuit wire anchored to the lab.

## Experimental

Six experiments performed are described below:

1. Rotor anchored to the lab, probe free to rotate above the magnet's upward magnetic-field region: A radially-ingoing injected *dc* in the 0.2 A range was enough to overcome conductor-bearing and mercury-wire contact friction. A net *counterclockwise rotation* of the probe took place.

2. Probe anchored to the rotor above the magnet's upward magnetic-field region, with both free to rotate: A radially-ingoing injected *dc* in the 5 A range was enough to overcome conductor-plus-rotor inertia and friction. A net *counterclockwise rotation* of the probe took place.

3. Rotor anchored to the lab, probe free to rotate above the magnet's downward magnetic-field region: A radially-ingoing injected *dc* in the 0.2 A range was enough to overcome conductor-bearing and mercury-wire contacts friction. A net *clockwise rotation* of the probe took place.

4. Probe anchored to the rotor above the magnet's downward magnetic-field region, both free to rotate: A radially-ingoing injected *dc* in the 5 A range was enough to overcome conductor-plus-rotor inertia and friction. A net *counterclockwise rotation* of the probe took place.

5. Rotor anchored to the lab, closing wire free to rotate above the magnet's upward magnetic-field region: A 0.4 A *dc* injected in the inner collector ring was enough to overcome conductor-bearing and mercury-wire contacts friction. A net *clockwise rotation* of the closing-wire took place.

6. Rotor anchored to the lab, closing wire free to rotate above the magnet's downward magnetic-field region: A 0.4 A *dc* injected in the inner collector ring was enough to overcome conductor-bearing and mercury-wire contacts friction. A net *clockwise rotation* of the closing-wire took place.

## Discussion of results

Experiments (1) and (3) can be explained using either absolutist or relativistic viewpoints because of the coincidence of the probe motion relative to the lab with the probe motion relative to the magnet.

Experiment (2) can be explained by a trivial absolutist argument founded on a hypothetic probe "dragging effect" on the magnet. A relativistic viewpoint recognizes the "active" rotational torque on the closing wire rather than on the probe where, hinging on Newton's third law, the whole action may be split in two:

Magnet-probe. The magnet produces a counterclockwise torque on the probe, and the probe exerts an equal but opposite torque on the magnet.

Magnet-closing wire. The magnet exerts a clockwise torque on the closing wire, and the wire an equal but opposite torque on the magnet.

With the probe attached to the magnet, there is no chance for relative motion between them. Consequently, due to the action-reaction cancellation, rotation is forbidden. Conversely, with the closing wire mechanically decoupled from the magnet, relative motion of the latter is permitted. The torque exerted by the closing wire on the magnet is responsible for the observed rotation.

Experiment (4): Due to its similarity with (2) a trivial relativistic explanation is applicable to the counterclockwise torque exerted by the closing wire on the magnet. There is no known plausible absolutistic explanation for it. As quoted above, the hypothetical dragging effect would produce a clockwise rotation in this case. The consideration of the experiments (2) and (4) suffices to reject the dragging hypothesis.

Complementary experiments (5) and (6) confirm the short-range extension of the field-reversion region founded on the closing-wire *clockwise* rotation (6). Briefly speaking, the closing wire is not sensitive to the field reversion and the magnet's *counterclockwise* reaction explains at once the outcome of (4). Clearly, experiments (5) and (6) show that the torque on the closing wire is independent of its location on the magnet.

Figure 3 depicts the two rotational torques involved in (2) and (4).

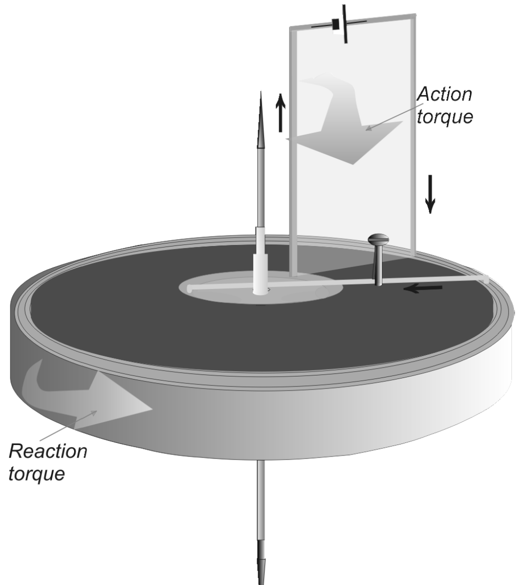


Fig.3
Rotational torques acting on the magnet and on the closing wire

**Topological and miscellaneous considerations**

One of the keys to the success of the above described experiments lies in the dynamotor's magnet design (see Fig.4). The short-range field reversion region allows the inversion of the Laplace force on the probe, making the force on the closing wire insensitive to that ***B**-field* reversion.

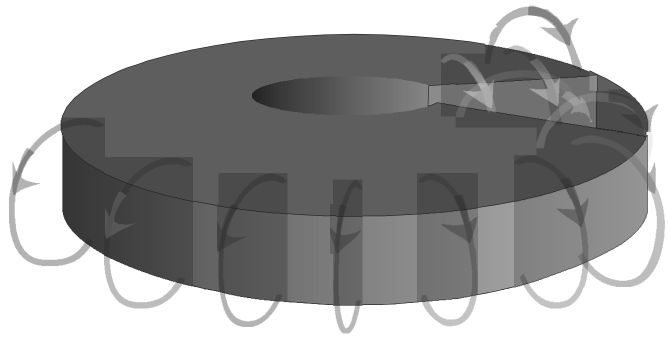

Fig. 4
The magnet's field-revision region

In all the above cases the electromagnetic forces between probe and closing wire were neglected because of its small magnitude compared to the predominant magnet-wire interaction forces.

The observed torques became, in all the experiments, independent of the location of the contact points between closing wire and collector rings. Also, the closing wire shape exhibited no noticeable influence on torques. These observations can be easily explained using the $div\mathbf{B} = 0$ fundamental law, Laplace force, and some elementary topological considerations.

Kennard [1], Bartlett [1]· Panosky [7,8], Muller [9], Wesley [10] and some of this article's authors took absolutistic viewpoints when dealing with homopolar phenomena [11,12]. On the contrary, Weber [4], Assis [13], and Kelly [14] adopted a relativistic framework on the issue from the beginning.

By attaching the magnet to the disk in the original Faraday setup, the relative rotation between disk and closing wire remains unchanged. Therefore, in a generator configuration, the disk plus magnet rotation at with the closing wire at rest in the lab is entirely equivalent to the closing-wire rotation at – with the disk plus magnet at rest. This fact introduced a correct but physically "colorless" weak relativism to the homopolar generator description: the "unipolar generator really has three components, the magnet, the cylinder and the meter (including the contacts). A relative motion of the last two, not the first two, is required" [1].

A growing interest in basic electromagnetism [15,27] can not be ignored, and from time to time some authors, attempting to catch "free energy" from the space, have claimed the design of homopolar engines with efficiency greater than unity, as can be checked by searching for *homopolar motor* on the Internet. The strict application of Newton's third law precludes the above non-physical possibility.

**It is worthwhile to stress that the homopolar machine is a famous example where Faraday's flux rule fails. This fact worried Faraday himself and is clearly discussed by Feynman [28] who emphasized that the correct physics is always given by the Lorentz force law and the Maxwell fundamental equation $curl\, E = -B/t$. Homopolar induction is fully understood using only the Lorentz force. Our experiments enhance the relativistic structure of the Lorentz force because the only relevant velocity is the velocity of the conductor relative to the magnet.**

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