

Video: Interesting Experiment - Richard Dawkins on the God Machine

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Michael Persinger is a neuropsychologist at Canada's Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario. His theory is that the sensation described as "having a religious experience" is merely a side effect of our bicameral brain's feverish activities. He has attempted to create experiments to show that when the right hemisphere of the brain is stimulated in the cerebral region presumed to control notions of self, and then the left hemisphere is called upon to make sense of this nonexistent entity, the mind generates what is felt as a 'sensed presence.'

Many of Persinger's studies detail the reactions that people have when their temporal lobes are stimulated with complex magnetic fields. Some of the subjects experience a 'sensed presence' in the form of the deity from the culture that they were raised in. They see the God (or spirits associated with their God - the Virgin Mary, Mohammed, etc) that they believe in. Others have had experiences that mimic the feeling that one would have during alien/UFO visitation - these people tend to be more agnostic.

In 2003 the BBC arranged for Prof. Richard Dawkins to be a subject in one of Persinger's experiments.

The results are shown in the video below: