Dr. Michael Persinger

Dr. Michael Persinger, was born in Jacksonville, Florida. He grew up primarily in Virginia, Maryland and Wisconsin. He attended Carroll College from 1963 to 1964, and graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1967. He obtained his M.A. in physiological psychology from the University of Tennessee and his Ph.D. from the University of Manitoba in 1971.

Persinger has focused the bulk of his work on the commonalities that exist between the sciences, and he has attempted to integrate fundamental concepts of various branches of science throughout his academic history. He organized the Behavioral Neuroscience Program at Laurentian University, which became one of the first institutes of higher learning to integrate chemistry, biology and psychology in one nice, neat package.

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of most of his research, Dr. Persinger insists on publishing his techniques and results within the public forum. I for one am grateful for this. Many others in our field should be as well.

During the 1980s Dr. Persinger pioneered the stimulation of human temporal lobes artificially with a weak magnetic field in an attempt to induce a religious state (Google God Helmet). He discovered that the field could produce the sensation of an ethereal presence in the room in some of his subjects.

Susan Blackmore, a former academic psychologist and parapsychology researcher is quoted as saying: "When I went to Persinger's lab and underwent his procedures I had the most extraordinary experiences I've ever had." "I'll be surprised if it turns out to be a placebo effect." Well Susan, it was not a placebo effect. It was the alteration of your consciousness by specifically selected low frequency electromagnetic fields applied to your scalp in order to artificially induce your experiences. The Military has been playing with this concept for years.

I have some serious questions concerning the “God Helmet”. Has Persinger taken into account that we, as humans, contain a small amount of magnetite in our heads? That the stimulation of this magnetite may be the actual cause of the hallucinations? Few people know humans have this deposit, located in the sinus area above the nose. This discovery of biogenic material (that is, one formed by a biological organism) with ferromagnetic properties and found to be magnetite turned out to be the first breakthrough toward an understanding as to why some animals have the ability to detect the earth's magnetic field and use it to navigate during migration. Searches for biogenic magnetite in human tissues had not been conclusive until the beginning of the 1990's when work with high-resolution transmission electron microscopy and electron diffraction on human brain tissue extracts of the cerebral cortex, cerebellum, and meninges (membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord) identified magnetite-maghemite

crystals. Furthermore, recently scientists at CALTECH (California Institute of Technology in Pasadena) discovered that humans possess a tiny, shiny crystal of magnetite in the ethmoid bone, located between your eyes, just behind the nose. Can this also explain why certain humans have psychic abilities? Is their deposit of magnetite in a higher concentration?

Dr. Persinger has also come to public attention due to his 1975 Tectonic Strain Theory (TST) of how geophysical variables may correlate with sightings of unidentified flying objects (UFOs) and interestingly enough, “Ghosts”. Dr. Persinger has pointed out that strain within the earth's crust near seismic faults produces intense electromagnetic (EM) fields, creating bodies of light that some interpret as glowing UFOs, and in other cases, could be perceived as a “spirit”. Alternatively, the EM fields generate hallucinations in the temporal lobe, based on images from popular culture, of alien craft, beings, communications, ghosts or even Crypto-creatures.

Canadian researcher Chris Rutkowski of the University of Manitoba has become a prominent harsh critic of parts of Dr. Persinger's Tectonic Strain Theory. For example, Rutowski argues, in order to try to explain paranormal sightings in regions far removed from faults, Dr. Persinger has claimed that unusual lights or hallucinations can manifest hundreds of miles away from an area of seismic activity. Not only does this place an absurdly great distance between the actual area of tectonic stress and the surmised significant EM field, it also makes the theory unscientific by destroying any possible predictive power. Nearly every place on the planet lies within a few hundred miles of a seismically active area. In this respect, I have to agree with Rutkowski. He also pointed out severe flaws in Dr. Persinger's statistical methodology, as Persinger confused possible correlation with causality. In other words, one could more easily explain occasional clusters of UFO sightings along earthquake fault-lines by the fact that populations often occur there in higher densities and by the fact that transportation routes often follow major fault lines, such as the San Andreas fault in California. Again, Rutkowski raises some very valid points.

Concerning Dr. Persinger's claims that minute laboratory magnetic fields can invoke hallucinations, Rutowski also points out that Persinger's inferred seismic EM fields would have much less influence than what people commonly experience near electrical appliances like television sets or hair driers. This again he points out, raises the question as to why people don't experience UFOs, aliens and Ghosts far more often than they do, or why these hypothetical hallucinations from electrical devices wouldn't drown out any possible contribution from much weaker geophysical fields. Dr. Persinger notes that the magnitude of the EM fields may have less significance than the particular temporal patterns. I would point out that it all has to do with specific frequencies.

The fact that people sometimes see diffused lights during very severe earthquakes may lend some support to certain parts of TST and Earthlights

theory (Google Earthquake lights). However, whether such light phenomena can occur near fault lines not under severe stress and also manifest as confined rather than diffused light, remains both questionable and controversial. Even critics like Rutowski think such theories hold some promise for explaining a small percentage of paranormal phenomena, but doubt that they can ever offer a comprehensive explanation for the vast majority of unexplained cases.

What I believe is that more research needs to be done in this area, by many other individuals from various scientific disciplines.