

Epilepsy on My Mind and in My Brain

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Mind - Brain

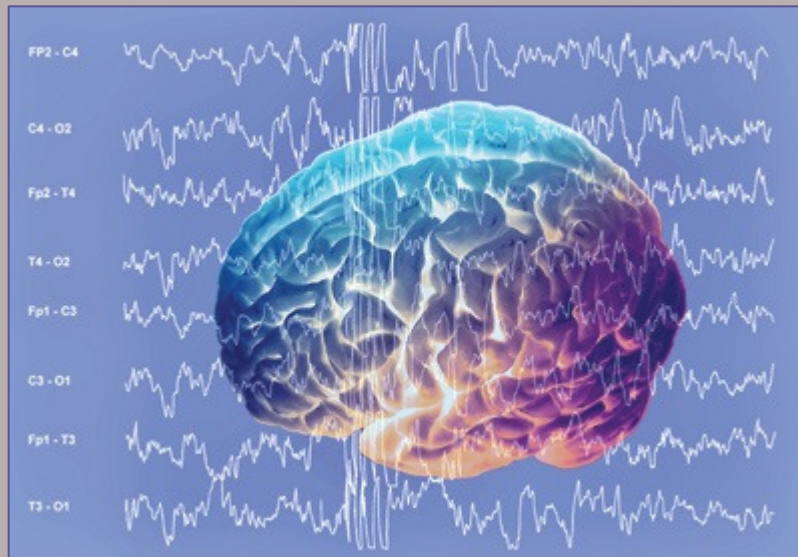
The mind consists of mental attributes, such as thought, belief, desire, perception, memory, emotion, imagination, and refers especially to the thought processes of reason.

The brain is the physical and biological matter contained within the skull, responsible for electrochemical neuronal processes.

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Brain



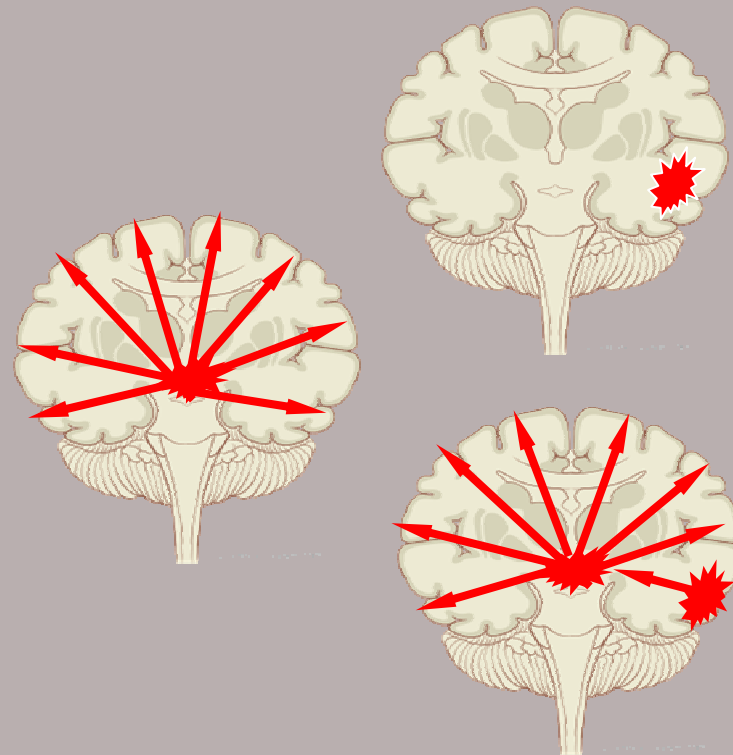
The brain is composed of two broad classes of cells, neurons and glia, both of which contain several different cell types which perform different functions. Interconnected neurons form neural networks (or neural ensembles).

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Epilepsy in my Brain

If the epileptic activity occurs in a particular area of the brain we call the seizures partial or focal; if it involves the whole brain we talk about generalized seizures



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Mind



The mind is a model of the universe built up from insights.

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Epilepsy on my Mind

It is that private conversation with ourselves that we carry on 'inside our heads'. Thus we 'make up our minds', 'change our minds' or are 'of two minds' about something, like Epilepsy. One of the key attributes of the mind in this sense is that it is a private sphere to which no one but the owner has access. No-one else can 'know our mind'. They can only interpret what we consciously or unconsciously communicate.

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A short History of Mindsets

www.epilepsiemuseum.de

- Epileptic activity is caused by a surplus of phlegm. **Hippocrates, approx. 460 – 375 BC**
- Epileptic activity can (primarily) originate in one part of the body and then (secondarily) affect the brain. **Galen, 129 – approx. 200**
- Epilepsy originates in the stomach. Plants or parts of plants (like hyssop) are effective cures for epileptic seizures. **Alexandros of Tralleis, approx. 525 - 605**
- Epileptic seizures are caused "mechanically" by a blockage and are localised in the front cerebral ventricle. **Avicenna, 980 - 1037**

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History of Epilepsy (cont.)

- Epilepsy is a „bewitched“ disease which can only be cured with divine aid. **Middle Ages, 14th/15th century**
- Epilepsy can have its seat in the liver, the heart, in the intestines or in the limbs. **Paracelsus, 1493 – 1541**
- Differentiation between “idiopathic” and “sympathetic” epilepsies. Valerian is a good remedy for epilepsy. **Samuel Auguste A.D. Tissot, 1728 – 1797**
- Parts which have the most varied uses will be represented in the central nervous system by most ganglion cells. **John Hughlings Jackson, 1835 - 1911**



Ethnological Aspects

In many cultures the possession of an evil spirit or a demon is the supposed cause of the seizures. According to Buschan it used to be:

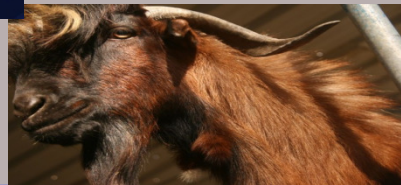
the spirit of a
bird



the ghost of a
billy goat



a sea spirit

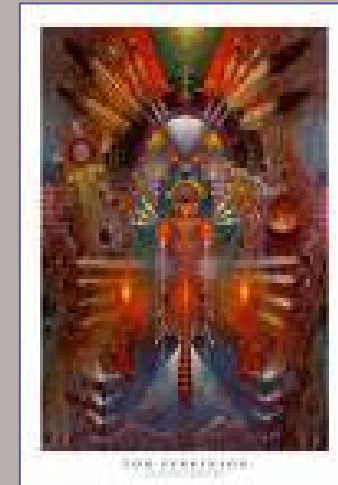
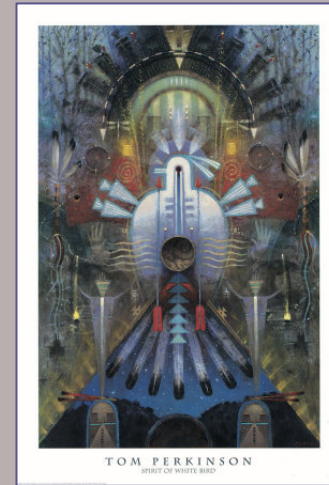


a specific type of
worms

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Pictures of Spirits



The Sea Spirit and
the White and Red
Bird Spirit

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Tribal Scars and Social Stigmas

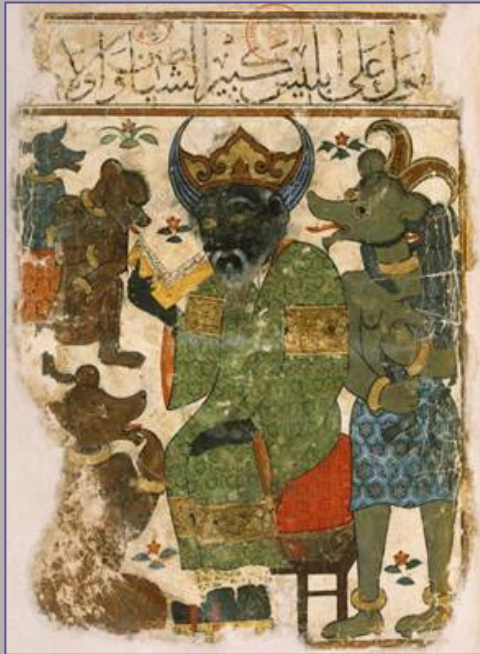


Opening the skull or cutting the skin used to be a fairly widespread treatment to let the spirit escape.

The three basic forms of stigma: physical deformity, poor personal traits, and tribal out-group status are found in most cultures and time periods and include often people with epilepsy.

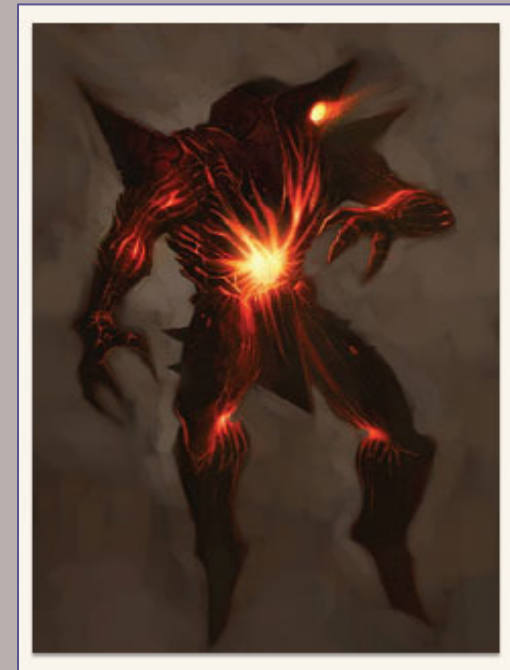
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The Arab Belief in Djinn



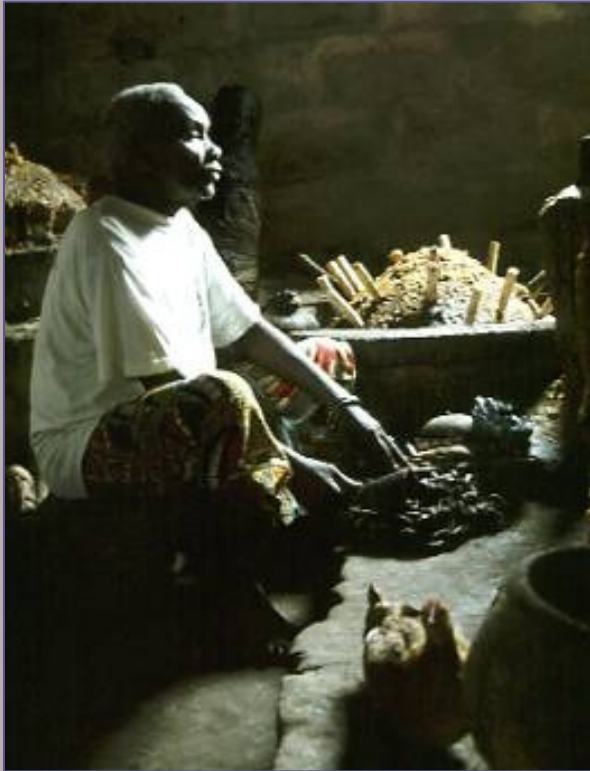
An ancient and a contemporary picture of a djinn (genie).

The influence of a djinn on seizures is often assumed.



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Voodoo Rituals



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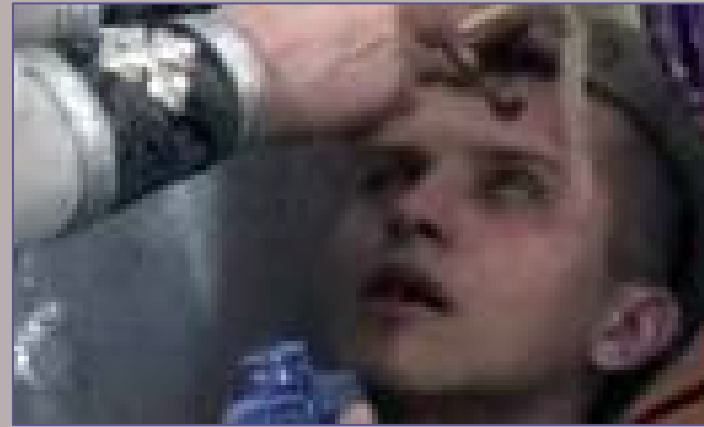
In Voodoo circles, possession is not regarded as a cause for shame or anxiety; it is a mark of divine favour. The distinction is made whether the loa (spirit) is a desired “rada” loa or an evil spirit from the “petro” family of loas.



Privilege or Punishment in Christianity



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Epilepsy is often connected with religious experiences and seen either as a privilege of a person who is particularly close to god (saints) or as a punishment of god or the possession by the devil (exorcism).

Today's Imaginations

Some beliefs are still based on religion and witchcraft, others come from family narratives, others from one's own experience.

Do you know what is on your mind? Have you got a certain personal belief about your epilepsy?
Does it influence the treatment?

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Can a shock, suffered by a 15 year old boy, be the reason for his juvenile myoclonus epilepsy?

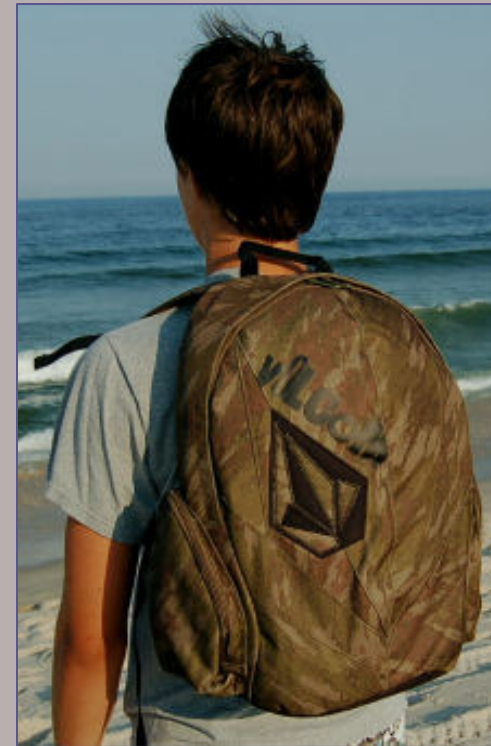
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Every Day one Stone more in my Backpack



That's the perception of a person with epilepsy after a few days without seizures.



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Punishment

My epilepsy is the punishment because I got married to a man from a different, for us forbidden tribe.



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The Mindless Opinion of an Austrian FPÖ-Politician



“Mohammed wrote the Koran during epileptic seizures”

said Dr. Susanne Winter on January 13th 2008 at the New Year reception of the FPÖ in Graz.

(Spiegel online 14.1.2008)

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Dr. Winter's message is wrong

But the party members
applauded her
frenetically – what was
on their minds?



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Can Mahjong cause Epilepsy?



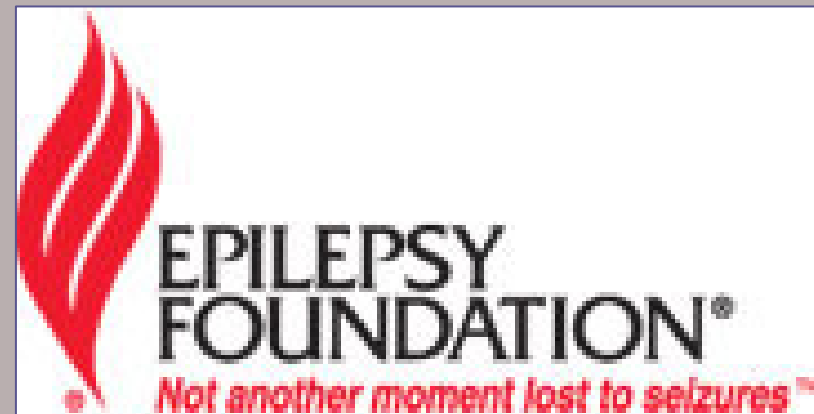
A study by doctors from Hong Kong's Queen Mary Hospital has concluded that epilepsy can be induced by playing Mahjong. The findings were based on 23 cases of people who had suffered mahjong-induced seizures. (BBC News 4.8.2007)

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Hackers Assault

Internet attackers descended on an epilepsy support message board and used flashing computer animation to trigger seizures.



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What do I have on my Mind?

- Epilepsy is a handicap which needs to be overcome.
- I have learned to live a good life although I have epilepsy.
- Everybody has something to complain about - I fear my fits.
- Thanks to my epilepsy I am allowed to take part in today's meetings in Marseille.
- Thanks to my epilepsy people are more respectful and attentive.
- If I got rid of the seizures, I might be getting a more severe punishment.

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How do my Ideas and Imaginations influence the Treatment of my Epilepsy?

Positively:

- when I'm convinced that I can influence the outcome through my compliance
- when I'm interested in the biological and psychological facts of my epilepsy and want to learn more about it

Negatively:

- when epilepsy has the function to punish me for something I did wrong
- when seizures help me to get more attention, affection, and make me feel better

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Perhaps we can use the workshops to improve the understanding of our epilepsies.

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