

# Book Reviews

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**Hallucinations**, by Oliver Sacks, hardback, 326 pp, \$26.95, ISBN 978-0-307-40217-2, New York, N.Y., Alfred A. Knopf, 2012.

*"Most people who do hear voices are not schizophrenic."*

*"One does not see with the eyes, one sees with the brain."*

*"When the brain is released from the constraints of reality, it can generate any sound, image, or smell."*

Oliver Sacks is a professor of neurology at the New York University School of Medicine and the author of a dozen books, including *Awakenings*, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, and *Seeing Voices*. He writes frequently for *The New Yorker*. In this latest book he describes the various kinds of hallucinations that can afflict both normal and ill people.

He defines hallucinations as percepts that are projected into external space. They arise in the absence of any external reality: they are things that are seen or heard but are not there. They are a unique and special category of consciousness and mental life that can startle, excite, bewilder, terrify, or inspire. Sacks believes they underlie much of the myth and folklore found in every culture.

Hallucinations can occur in normal people with sensory deprivation, with prolonged sleep deprivation, or when falling asleep or awakening. They can occur in certain medical conditions, such as blindness, Parkinson's, migraine, seizures, the delirium of high fever, or with drug or alcohol toxicity. Vivid hallucinations can occur with meditation, with spiritual exercises, and with ecstatic drumming or dancing.

Sacks notes that 10 to 20 percent of those with blindness gain a secondary visual world, one of complex visual

hallucinations. Known as Charles Bonnet syndrome, these are a reaction of the brain to the loss of eyesight. They often consist of blobs or clouds of intense color, can be rich in detail, and can have repetition and multiplication. They may have mosaics, squares, hexagons, honeycombs, checkerboards, or more elaborate figures with rich robes and elaborate headgear. They are different from dreams because insight is preserved: the subject realizes they are not real.

Sacks says that brilliantly colored hallucinations known as "the prisoner's cinema" can appear to those kept in isolation or in darkness. They can also be caused by any visually monotonous task, and have been reported by polar explorers, by sailors who have spent days looking at a becalmed sea, by high-altitude pilots flying for hours in an empty sky, and by long-distance truckers focused for hours on an endless road.

The hallucinations that can accompany immobilization were seen during the tragic polio epidemic, when polio victims lay motionless in coffin-like "iron lungs." They also occur with post-encephalitic Parkinson's patients enclosed in immovable Parkinsonism.

In addition to their scintillating scotomata, migraine patients can experience hallucinations that commonly have simple patterns of zigzags and checkerboards, lattices, cobwebs, or honeycombs. Or they can have complex human figures, faces, or landscapes. Sacks notes that migraine-type patterns are seen in the art and crafts of every culture, going back tens of thousands of years.

Epilepsy was known to Hippocrates as the sacred disease since it was thought to be a disorder of divine inspiration. Its partial or focal seizures can cause dreamlike fantasies or complex sensory hallucinations of

sight, sound, or smell.

The musical, visual, or tactile hallucinations seen with delirium generally indicate a medical problem, such as high fever or alcohol toxicity. They disappear as soon as the medical problem is corrected.

Sacks notes that hypnagogic (just before sleep) images are similar to hallucinations and are estimated to occur in the majority of people. They can have brilliant, exaggerated colors. The hypnopompic hallucinations that come upon awakening are often seen in bright illumination with open eyes, and can be terrifying. They occur in normal people and can constitute a severe challenge to one's belief system, or can even challenge reason itself. For example, visions of angels and devils may engender belief in their physical reality and reinforce a belief in the supernatural.

He says hallucinations from whatever cause can create a world of imaginary beings. The folklore of every culture includes supernatural figures like the incubus and succubus, which assault the sleeper sexually, or the Old Hag, which paralyzes its victims and sucks their breath away.

Hallucinations, like Sacks's other books such as *Musicophilia*, *Migraine*, and *A Leg to Stand On*, is delightful, informative, and highly recommended.

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***Climate of Corruption: Politics and Power behind the Global Warming Hoax***, by Larry Bell, 298 pp, \$25.95, ISBN 978-1-60832-083-7, Tex., Greenleaf Book Group Press, 2011.

As the Obama administration is implementing draconian restrictions on U.S. carbon dioxide emissions, bypassing Congress, Larry Bell's 2011

book is extremely timely. As the scientific case for the human-caused catastrophic global warming hypothesis is collapsing, efforts to gag dissenters become ever more aggressive. “Deniers” or “denialists” are portrayed as corrupt shills for energy-producing industries. Bell demolishes this myth and exposes the deep-rooted corruption that permeates the “environmentalist” cause. The dedication to the book is priceless: “Dedicated to Al Gore, whose invention of the Internet made this book possible, and whose invention of facts made it necessary.”

Bell demonstrates how the climate books have been cooked. He explains “forcing factors and fiction.”

After a brief summary that gets to the heart of the scientific issues, Bell moves on to “UN political science lessons.” It is critical for people to understand that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is highly politicized. It is heavily influenced by economic interests—not the demonized industries that produce the abundant affordable energy on which our economy depends, but those that traffic in contrived carbon credits and heavily subsidized, economically nonviable “renewables.”

Promoters of the cap-and-trade agenda have managed to turn climate into a religion. It’s supported by government grants and sales of indulgences.

People are unlikely to respond favorably to the prospect of having their electricity cut off, but are reassured by the promise of “clean” alternatives. Bell provides a hardheaded economic analysis of this promise. There is, for example, the “recurring cyclical problem” with solar power: “It is called ‘night.’” He notes that “power lunches” are not free after all. Besides wind and solar, he considers biofuels (“field of dreams”), thermal, hydropower, the hydrogen economy (an oxymoron), and nuclear (“the elephant in the closet”).

The book is a lucid and witty survey of the scientific, political, and economic issues, with a good discussion of potential solutions. It has extensive notes and a detailed index. It is not only a good read, but deserves a place on your reference shelf.

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***Stages of Occupational Regulation: Analysis of Case Studies***, by Morris M. Kleiner, hardcover, 291 pp, \$40, ISBN-13: 978-0880994606, Kalamazoo, Mich., W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2013.

Roughly 40 percent of the U.S. labor market is required to obtain certification or a license by some agency of local, state, or federal government. Certification requires achievement of some defined skill or knowledge, while licensure provides a “right to practice.” Recent estimates indicate that 29 percent of the workforce requires a license to work, with more than 800 occupations licensed in at least one state.

Proponents claim that regulation protects workers from occupational risk and shields consumers from low-quality or unscrupulous workers. Economists, however, predict higher incomes for workers because occupational regulation limits labor supply by imposing costly burdens on entrants, eliminating competition by the unlicensed and limiting numbers of licenses. Protecting workers from competition thus translates to higher incomes paid by raising prices on consumers.

Economist Morris M. Kleiner examines several occupations that are at different stages of regulation. The book is neatly organized so that each subsequent chapter examines an occupation with a higher level of regulation. This book offers an excellent template for future research on the many occupations yet to be examined.

The first three case studies focus on occupations in very early stages of regulation. It is not surprising they provide little evidence that regulation has yet benefited their members. Three states require licensure of interior designers, an occupation where certification is the dominant form of regulation. Interior designers are currently seeking broader regulation to elevate their wages as they compete against higher-paid and heavily regulated engineers and architects. Mortgage brokers are required to be licensed in 18 states. It is speculated that the recent sub-prime mortgage crisis will spur added regulation that will eventually push incomes up by as much as 15 percent. Child-care workers are licensed in 27 states, but the evidence fails to find a wage effect from licensure, improvements in test scores, or effects on enrollment.

Remaining case studies examine more heavily regulated occupations. Plumbers and electricians require licensure in at least 42 states. The evidence indicates that,

although these workers exhibit high injury and death rates, they receive small but significant wage premiums, but regulation does not lower death or injury rates.

The final case study examines dentists and dental hygienists. Universally licensed in the 50 states, they battle over whether hygienists may work without supervision of dentists. The evidence shows that regulation requiring dentists to supervise hygienists results in higher earnings for dentists and lower earnings and employment for dental hygienists. Allowing hygienists to work independently of dentists is associated with roughly 10 percent higher wages and 6 percent increases in their employment growth. These same regulations lower dentists’ hourly earnings by 16 percent, and reduce their employment growth by 26 percent.

There is also a very short summary of the author’s forthcoming piece on nurse practitioners and physicians, which finds that allowing only physicians to prescribe controlled substances reduces nurse practitioners’ and increases physicians’ pay. Moreover, regulations increase the price of a well-child medical examination by 3 to 16 percent, and there is no evidence that regulatory differences are reflected in infant mortality rates or malpractice premiums.

Overarching conclusions are that, as regulations apply to more workers over time, workers gain higher wages as their occupations experience reduced employment growth. Gains in safety for consumers and workers are little to none, thus indicating that regulation does not ensure quality, but does limit access and raises costs to consumers. In sum, good intentions of regulators do not comport with the facts in these case studies.

Kleiner performs a public service by providing solid evidence that can be used by government policymakers attempting to push back continuing pressures by self-serving members of occupations seeking reduced competition.

My only quibble is that the author does not explain to readers how markets themselves are often the best regulator of fraud and malpractice through insurance and legal remedies. Nonetheless, this timely book provides a clear example of government regulation serving the narrow interests of the regulated rather than protecting the broad interests of the average citizen.

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