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Hallucination

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Definition

A sensory perception in the absence of an external stimulus. Hallucinations are often differentiated from sensory illusions which are distortions or misinterpretations of actual sensory experiences. Hallucinations can involve any sensory modality (visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, or gustatory).

Simple (unformed) hallucinations are sensory perceptions that are typically vague and without meaning (e.g., whistling sounds, flashing lights, geometric patterns). In complex (formed) hallucinations, the perceptual experience generally concerns objects, people, or animals (e.g., hearing voices, seeing animals, or tasting chocolate).

Common causes of hallucinations include:

- Psychosis (resulting from delirium or psychotic disorder)

- Cerebral lesions (especially related to ictal discharge)
- Amputation (phantom pain)
- Certain dementias (e.g., Lewy body)

Cross-References

- ▶ [Delirium](#)
- ▶ [Dementia with Lewy Bodies](#)
- ▶ [Epilepsy](#)
- ▶ [Psychosis](#)

References and Readings

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