

NEIL ILLUSIONS

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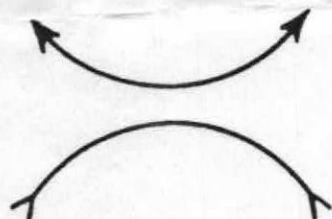
Although psychology is one of the oldest of the true sciences, the study of illusions started long before a science psychology existed. A great deal of the early research in the area of illusions, however, was the work of men who are not usually thought of as psychologists, and thus has been irretrievably lost. It is impossible to estimate just how many illusions were lost during this period of scientific darkness, but the number may be substantial.

Such a deplorable condition could not continue forever, and indeed it did not. The advent of formal psychology and the timely arrival of the introductory textbook secured, for all time, the illusion's place in psychology. The golden years really began in 1832 when a transparent rhomboid owned by L. A. Necker first began to show spontaneous depth reversal. Named the "Necker Cube" in honour of its discoverer the transparent rhomboid was quickly committed to literature and has continued cyclic depth reversal, without interruption, ever since.

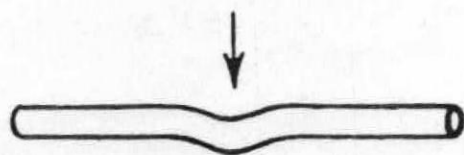
While the scientific community pondered this singular circumstances, some of the really great men of psychology were contributing their names to illusions: Muller-Lyer,

Poggendorff, Zollner, Ponzo, Optical and Moon. Illusions piled up. Theories flourished. Debate waxed luxuriantly. Research spread unchecked. Then at the turn of the century, a noticeable slackening in activity developed. A drastic decline followed. Finally, total collapse! As the years passed, a few hardy souls continued to look for an adequate perceptual account for the various figures, but there were no new illusions. Without new illusions interest flagged. Full page, four colour illustrations helped for a while, but finally, only freshmen could be tricked into saying, "Gee it really does!"

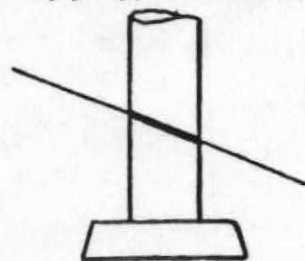
Recently a few new illusions have been discovered, these new illusions, in sharp contrast to those of the 19th century, do not violate the invariance of parity, charge conjugation, or Time reversal. Full scale research has not yet begun on the information-processing mechanisms which respond to the subtle factors in these illusions, but the preliminary studies have not overestimated their importance. The figures shown below, although only the first of the new series, are presented here with the hope that the interest they generate will revive that research and restore the study of illusion to its rightful place in the field of psychology.



1
Note that the lines do not appear parallel



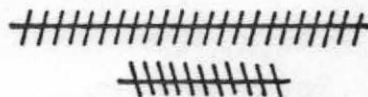
3
Note how the pipe appears bent under the arrow



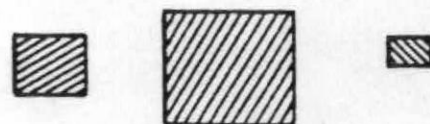
5
Note how the line appears thicker where it passes through the column

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Contributed by: Dr. Henry S. Gertzman, National Cash Register Company, Dayton, Ohio 45409



2
Note how one line appears longer



4
Note that the boxes appear to be different sizes

6
Note how quickly the figure disappears when you look directly at it