

## The mind moves

A revised version of Facebook post fb180823 piya.

If we look at the “intertwining illusion” figure below, we will “see” moving concentric lines crossing each other. This is our mental **perception** (*saññā*) at work. It’s just like when we imagine someone to be pretty or handsome, and we are drawn to that person. However, on closer study, we are unable to perceive that beauty any more.

The first thing that happens is we catch a “**sign**” (*nimitta*) of something attractive, like the peculiarity of the illusion diagram. It looks like something familiar: we have been conditioned to certain signs of “beauty” from the past. Notice how others do not always share our “taste,” that is, perception.

Once the sign catches our eye, we then look for the **details** (*vyañjana*). This is why we keep staring at such a figure: we think that it gives us pleasure. We keep on looking for details that affirm, “Yes, this is beautiful!” We ignore details to the contrary.

### Not feeding lust

In fact, when we consciously stop gazing, and examine the person or object more closely and intently, we may notice that the person or object only looks appealing from certain angles. In fact, from some other angles, the person or thing looks plain, even ugly. When we can see this, then, it is easier to stop being deluded by our perception.

We have risen to the level of **formations** (*saṅkhārā*) in a helpful sense of the word. We have formed the notion of impermanence (*aniccā*) and ugliness (*asubha*) of the image. This is one way to overcome our tendency for **sensual lust** by not feeding our mind with the drug that deludes it.

The Pinna-Gregory illusion: <http://people.csail.mit.edu/alvin/pinnaweb/pinna.html>

The Pinna-Gregory figure looks like a warped spiral made up of white and black squares on a gray background. If we examine it more closely, however, we will find that it is actually made up of 5 concentric circles of black and white squares, none of which is even touching the others, all with their diagonals systematically misaligned. This illusion was first described by Baingio Pinna and Richard L Gregory in a “Perception” (2002:1503-1508) journal article entitled “*Shifts of Edges and Deformations of Patterns.*”<sup>1</sup>

Read more about perception in **Nimitta & vyañjana**, [SD 19.14](#).

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[an occasional re-look at the Buddha’s Example and Teachings]

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<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.scholarpedia.org/article/Pinna\\_illusion](http://www.scholarpedia.org/article/Pinna_illusion).

