

Experimentation With the Vortex Phenomenon in Lucid Dreams

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The "vortex phenomenon" is an experience in which there is the sensation of whirling through a vortex. . . . The commonly reported "tunnel experience" I feel is a subsection of the fully developed vortex. This phenomenon and various equivalents have been reported as an associated finding in a variety of situations such as near-death experiences, out-of-body experiences, artistic works, mystical experiences, drug-induced hallucinations (Siegal, 1977), epileptic and schizophrenic twilight states (Mayer-Gross, 1969), hostage hallucinations, hypnagogic and hypnopompic hallucinations, and dreams. It is usually transitional in nature and some-times associated with feelings of bliss, creativity and the sense of a new beginning or of a major advancement. Early in my lucid dreaming research, this phenomenon occurred sporadically; following my increased interest, it occurred approximately five to ten times a month.

In most circumstances, the vortex was imposed with no significant control. The purpose of the author's experimentation was to discover techniques that would eventually permit direct induction and control of the phenomenon in lucid dreams. . . . The qualities of awareness and volition found in lucid dreams [allow] radical changes of the visual field, resulting in the predominance of the vortex sequence. These are overall strategies from the view of the dreamer within the lucid dream.

The first induction strategy, which I have termed "field acceleration," is based on the movement implied in my definition of the vortex phenomenon. This strategy is illustrated in the following lucid dream account.

In this lucid dream, I was walking along a trail and decided to form a vortex. I then began running fast and attained an incredible speed, at which time the scenery was streaked out. The light trailers coalesced, forming a vortex and my momentum continued as I whirled through the vortex (Moss, 1985).

Elements of the visual field were streaked into forming a vortex. This change may be accomplished either by apparent movement of the dreamer or the visual field. The initial result may be similar to photographs obtained with prolonged exposure when "zooming" with a telephoto lens (Bohen & Millard, 1984). Although the initiating movement may be linear, a rotational component is necessary for a fully developed

vortex. Visual field arcing, pulsation and scintillation also facilitate the sensation of movement and dreamer participation. This generation of movement extends beyond induction and is an important factor in the regulation and outcome of the vortex. The second induction strategy is very similar to the first, but lacks the speed effect. In this strategy, which could be termed "field accent," certain visual elements are enlarged and brought closer to the dreamer. This method is exemplified in the following lucid dream.

In this lucid dream, I was viewing from some distance a vivid cloud formation out of a window. I decided to enlarge the scene until I was viewing at close range. A large screen developed a three-dimensionality. I found myself in a cloud field. As the field began to rotate, a vortex was formed and I felt myself to be in synchrony with the clouds.

As a result of the interactive viewing, an element is transformed from something that is distant into something interacting with the dreamer. The close-up perspective may enhance certain patterns that are more accessible to the vortex thresh-old. Close-range screen viewing is commonly reported in experiences in which the vortices occur. This process usually lacks the speed effect as found in field acceleration, although the enlargement may create the illusion of movement, which would eventually take over the dream sequence.

The last induction strategy I have termed "field involution" and is described in the following dream.

In this lucid dream, I closed my eyes, which resulted in a visual field of stroboscopic multi-colored floaters. I then induced a vortex by contracting the visual field and myself down to a singularity. I then seemed to regain dimensionality and underwent a frenzied altered state.

In this strategy the visual field is contracted inward and the resulting involution-al action forms a vortex. This process is also suggested in the definition of the vortex phenomenon. The initial phase may resemble the perspective obtained with a wide-angle lens. The form that the vortex takes is quite variable and, as already noted, numerous visual elements can be [incorporated]. These include tunnels, funnels, spirals, cones, star fields, kaleidoscopic fields, geometric patterns, lattices, cob-webs, spectral arrays, entoptic patterns and light rays.

Volitional factors are important in the regulation of the vortex experience, especially the intention not to be distracted and to be deliberate in the maintenance of the vortex. Prior or concurrent onset of lucidity facilitated the induction and regulation of the

vortex phenomenon in my dreams. Lucidity allowed a large degree of volitional control [and] preservation of the innate nature of the dream. Also important were flow momentum factors such as ongoing visual field movement and stroboscopic effects. Vortex experimentation resulted in a transitional break with the baseline dream flow. A common outcome was the alteration and/or accentuation of feelings and emotions. The visual experience induced a change in the dreamer's visual reference perspective and lighting field. The resulting activity of the visual pattern may be a factor in producing vibrational or synaesthetic resonance I often experienced. These sensations were especially pronounced if synchronized with stroboscopic elements of the vortex or various tinnitus-like sounds.

The vortex terminated when the dreamer was startled into an abrupt awakening (real or false) or was distracted and veered from the vortex course. On other occasions the vortex would head to an alternate landscape or would eventually dissolve. Sometimes it would be interfered with by another dream sequence flow.

The regulatory factors identified were found to be important in vortex development. They may represent elements that allow a more controlled vortex experimentation.

References

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