

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 visual component of the phenomenon (i. e. the vortex) is an adaption of Kluver’s geometric constants (Kluver, 1966) with the added characteristic of intricate dreamer involvement. Two of these in this study due to their special assessability in becoming a vortex. The commonly reported “tunnel experience” I feel is a sub—section 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 hynapompic hallucinations and dreams. It is usually transitional in nature and is sometimes associated with feelings of bliss, creativity and the sense of a new beginning or of a major advancement. Early in my lucid dreaming research it had a sporadic occurrence, however, following my increased interest the frequency is approximately 5-10 times a month.

In most circumstances the vortex is imposed with no significant control of the course. This study investigates the experimentation of the author with the purpose of discovering techniques that may eventually permit the direct induction and control of the phenomenon in lucid dreams. By taking advantage of the qualities of awareness and volition, as found in lucid dreams, specific visual elements are implemented with the intention of enhanced conscious experience.

The vortex phenomenon may have already existed in the baseline dream or occurred as the result of an intended visualization. However, these occasions were infrequent and subject to significant scene change limitations. The following induction methods were still found to be of importance in the regulation and outcome of the vortex during these occurrences. These identified methods in general involve 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.

1. The first of these induction strategies I have termed “field acceleration” and is based on the movement implied in my definition of the vortex phenomenon. This strategy is illustrated in the following dream account.

Dream I:

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, 1985a).

Elements of the visual field are streaked into forming the components of a vortex. This change may be accomplished either by the apparent movement of the dreamer or the visual field. The initial result may be similar to the photographs obtained with prolonged exposure when “zooming” with a telephoto lens (Bohen and Millard, 1984; Moss, 1985b). Although the initiating movement may be linear a rotational component is necessary for a fully developed vortex. Visual field arcing, pulsation and scintillation also facilitated 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.

2. 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 dream.

Dream II:

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 this interactional viewing the element is transformed from something that is distant into something that is around and interacting with the dreamer. The close—up perspective may enhance certain patterns that are more assessable to the vortex threshold, in addition to identifying distant vortex-equivalents. Close—range screen viewing is commonly reported in experiences in which 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.

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

Dream III:

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 involitional 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 adapted. These include tunnels, funnels, spirals, cones, star fields, kaleidoscopic fields, geometric patterns, lattices, cobwebs, spectral arrays, entoptic patterns and light rays.

Volitional factors were important in the regulation of the vortex experience including the intention not to be distracted and to be deliberate in the maintenance of the vortex. The prior or concurrent onset of lucidity facilitated the induction at regulation of the vortex phenomenon in n dreams. Furthermore, lucidity was found t allow a large degree of volitional control with the relative preservation of the innate nature of the dream. Also important wet flow momentum factors such as ongoing visual field movement and stroboscopic effects.

Vortex experimentation resulted in transitional break with the baseline dream flow. A common outcome was the alteration and accentation of feelings and emotions. The visual experience induced a change in the dreamer’s visual reference perspective and lighting field. The subsequent action of the visual pattern may be a factor in producing the vibrational or synaesthetic resonance that I often experienced I relation to the waveform phenomena. These sensations were especially pronounced if synchronized with stroboscopic elements of the vortex or various tinnitus-like sounds.

The termination of the vortex occurred 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 lead to a alternative dreamscape or would eventually dissolve. Sometimes it would be interfered with by another dream sequence flow.

The regulatory factors Identified here were found to be important in vortex development and may represent refinements that allow more controlled vortex experimentation.

References

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