

Eye Floaters Floating spheres and strings in a seer's view

By Floco Tausin

In anthropology and psychology it has been known for some time that altered states of consciousness promote the perception of subjective visual phenomena, i.e. hallucinations on the one hand, and so-called entoptic phenomena on the other (Tausin, 2006). Entoptic phenomena are luminous moving geometric shapes that occur frequently in states of trance. Since entoptics are physiologically associated with specific states of the visual nervous system, they count as culturally independent universal phenomena of humanity (Lewis-Williams/Dowson, 1988; Thurston, 1991). Shamans, druids, seers, holy women and men of the past and contemporary societies and traditions have seen such patterns during ritual ceremonies and have interpreted them in accordance with their worldview.

Floaters

One of these people is the hermit Nestor whom I met in the mid-1990s in the Swiss Emmental (Tausin, 2009a). Through his consciousness development, Nestor encountered a certain type of entoptic phenomena which he took as a meditation object and developed for years. The phenomenon in question are simple geometric shapes, i.e. transparent or luminous spheres and strings. While the spheres are often seen as concentric circles, the strings partially consist of rows of spheres. These spheres and strings move across the visual field at variable speeds, usually downwards, but they can be influenced by eye movements.

In ophthalmology, this phenomenon has long been known as 'eye floaters' (*mouches volantes*, *muscae volitantes*). 'Floaters' is a general term for all possible opacities in the vitreous; but the floaters at issue are considered as 'idiopathic', i.e. without pathological cause – age-related and harmless, so to speak. The explanations vary between remaining embryonic stem cells, cell debris between the retina and the vitreous, and hyaluronic vitreous fibrils clumped together due to vitreous liquefaction and posterior vitreous detachment (Trick, 2007; Sendrowski/Bronstein, 2010). They can't be seen and effectively treated by ophthalmologists (Tausin, 2009c).



Eye Floaters. *Source: FT*

Nestor's teaching: the structure of consciousness and the inner sense

Nestor's statements about eye floaters differ significantly from the ophthalmologic explanation: for him, these spheres and strings emerged from consciousness; they form a coherent structure on which we project our material world like on a screen; they are directly connected with our will; and ultimately, our pure egoless consciousness fits into one such sphere in this structure.

Whether our eye floaters have a material counterpart in the eye (or the brain) is irrelevant to Nestor. For him, we see these spheres and strings not with our eyes but with an "inner sense" or the "third eye", as he sometimes calls it. He characterizes this inner sense as an eye that gradually opens up through the withdrawal of the external senses as experienced in concentration exercises. Therefore, initial symptoms of floaters indicate the beginning of the opening of the third eye. The degree of openness of the third eye depends on the average consciousness of a society of a given time and culture, but also on individual efforts. The fact that many people see floaters in our contemporary Western societies means, according to Nestor, that many people already have a connection to their inner sense – even if they don't work with it consciously.

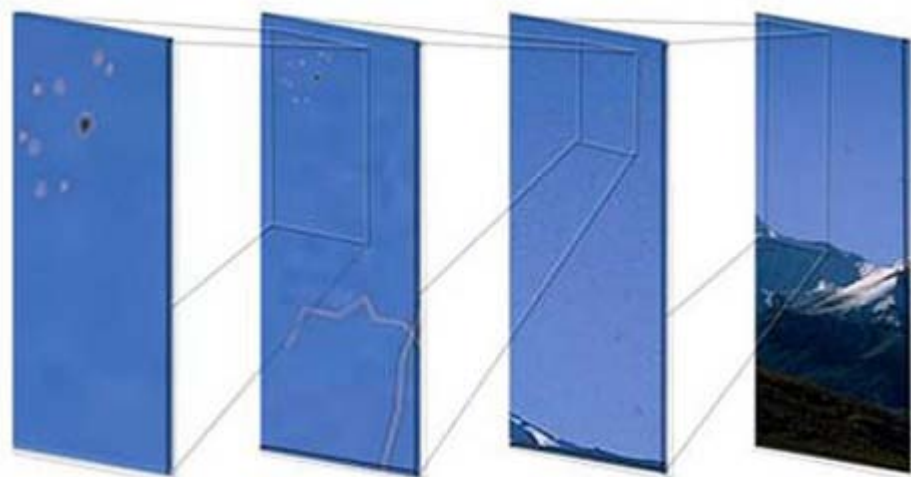
With such statements, Nestor ascribes an extraordinary meaning to the visual phenomena called "floaters": they are a spiritual phenomenon, and thus a directly perceptible starting point for our own spiritual development, for the realization of the world and of our true selves. But what made Nestor utter such claims? First, he emphasizes that his statements about the spheres and strings are grounded in his own seeing. In this regard, it is important to understand that his description of the spheres and strings differs from the one of most other people. He doesn't see isolated small dots and strings that drift away permanently, but large, bright spheres and tubes which he is able to hold in suspension and, therefore, to see clearly. His claim to deal with what is commonly called "floaters" is based on his experience of the transformation of the small movable dots and strings into

large spheres and tubes.

The zoom effect and the layers of consciousness

According to Nestor, this transformation is connected to his consciousness development which, in turn, results from a specific lifestyle, including an ethical attitude, a natural and balanced diet, physical exercises, breathing exercises, concentration and meditation practices, as well as ritually altered states of consciousness. This way of life leads to the accumulation of energy and to the opening up of the body. That way, a seer is no longer forced to give off his energy solely through bodily and mental actions, but is able to release it directly as a relaxing prickle or ecstasy into the environment.

If this energy release is intense enough, the visual perception changes: in the moment of ecstasy, an object perceived shines up and “zooms in” abruptly. Thus, the visual field of a seer (the “picture”) shows less of the world, but the objects looked at appear bigger, more focused, luminous and colorful. This observation is the reason for Nestor to assume that our visual system consists of several “layers” lined up one after another on which those processes are enacted that we collectively call “our world”. Each layer corresponds to a specific state of consciousness, showing each time the same “world”, which is, however, seen and experienced very differently. Basically, human beings are able to experience the whole spectrum of consciousness, but because of our education our focus is fixed on a single layer, shared by most people. The lifestyle and the bodily and mental exercises of a seer dissolve this fixation and allows for a penetration of these layers. Any individual capable of changing his or her visual perception and consciousness by focusing on unfamiliar layers is, in Nestor’s term, a “seer”.



Floaters, zoom effect and the layers of consciousness. Source: FT

The process of “seeing” is goal-oriented insofar as the seer acts to increase his energy metabolism both, in the short term and in the longer term to

bring about more intense states of consciousness and to see the “picture” closer and more detailed; this process is experienced as a forward movement within the shining structure. This means that a seer, gradually or abruptly, penetrates the layers of consciousness, and, in the long term, that he focuses on new spheres that appear in the upper and rear part of the “picture”. Nestor calls this spiritual and visual forward movement “the path in the shining structure”.

The constellation of spheres and the “source”

The path in the shining structure is a path of reduction: in the beginning we see a large quantity of dots and strings which move before our eyes without any recognizable order or obvious meaning. After the “leap into the left side of consciousness”, i.e. the first ecstasy of a human being that releases a great amount of energy and zooms in the picture and the structure to a large extent, the spheres of a seer become increasingly less but bigger. The seer recognizes that his spheres are arranged in a constellation revealing fundamental principles that we find in both, nature and culture.

Besides this constellation there’s a second phenomenon that makes the shining structure meaningful: the “beginning of being” or “source”. It’s a sphere at the end of the path in the shining structure. According to Nestor, this is the sphere into which we enter, both when falling asleep and when dying. The entering into this sphere means to become one with the structure, and therefore to become one with the whole picture. Nestor’s path is thus a mystical path: the seer believes that we lost the primordial unity with the picture in the process of embodiment and of becoming individual and separate personalities. The way in the shining structure leads back to this unity. The intention of a seer is to approach this last sphere and, if possible, to enter it consciously and before physical death.

The importance of floaters

As with all mysticism and religion, Nestor’s teaching is a set of statements based on subjective perceptions and experiences. The only way of testing these statements is to have our own personal and subjective experiences with “seeing”. What a seer like Nestor gives us for everyday life is a sense of being connected with a picture that structures the processes we call “life” or “world”; this connection manifests in an early stage in so-called eye floaters, the dots and strings floating before our eyes. With floaters, Nestor gives us something immediate, visible and individual for our consciousness development – a phenomenon we can use independent of external objects for daily concentration and meditation (Tausin, 2009b).

References:

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