

Practice Note: Holograms

Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdal on January 18, 2017

Imagine that there's a hologram that uses lasers and lights to create a very realistic image of that which you want the most... or that which you want the least... or that which you're most afraid of. It just hovers there, and if you try to approach it and grab it, you're unable to. You try again, but it moves around a little bit, so you reach for it, and reach for it. Or you try to get away from it, but somehow it has a sensor connected to your smartphone, and it follows you around wherever you go. You can't get away from it, and it seems so frightening and dangerous. It's the most frightening thing you know – right *there*. Every once in a while you throw a rock at it, but the rock just goes through the hologram. There's no resistance to the rock. But you're always concerned about the hologram.

We make our own holograms, and we live in them. We create our stories, ideas, and projections about this life we live. Especially with stories and ideas – we interpret and make things up about things that aren't happening, things we're afraid of, things we want, and people we encounter. I think a fair percentage of the time, we don't really encounter the person whom we're encountering, but rather we're encountering stories about them – our ideas or projections about them, or our fears and desires. When we create these holograms that we try to hold onto or react to, they're not really there. The stories are not really there – they're like holograms.

In order to retain a hologram, we have to keep generating stories and ideas. That brings us up into our head, into our fantasies. It has us leaning forward or away from our experience – as opposed to being grounded and centered in our experience here – grounded here in this body, with our feet touching the ground, our bottoms touching the chairs, feeling ourselves upright, breathing, our hearts pulsing.

The physical experience of the leaf blowers buzzing outside right now is not a hologram – it's a physical, direct experience. That's a place where we can come to rest. We can settle back, and be here in a more relaxed way because it's not a construction. There's no effort to create an idea and keep it going.

If you turn off the electricity to the machine that makes the hologram, it disappears. If you turn off the machine that's making stories, or if you see the stories as just stories, then we're not caught in them, reacting to them, fighting them, or holding onto them.

As you're practicing here this morning, you might notice how often you're relating to a story, an interpretation, or an idea of what's going on. It could be a story that has nothing to do with what's happening here, such as something in the past or the future. Or it could be about something that's here – sometimes that's the most insidious. Because it's happening here, we think that our stories about what we're interpreting or seeing are accurate, but we're really in a hologram.

Mindfulness practice – our ability to be centered, grounded, relaxed, at ease, and at peace in this world – is tremendously supported by learning how to switch away from reacting to, living in, and relating to the holograms made by the mind. If you can manage to flip the switch, that's even better.

You might notice this today as you go about. Whenever there's a story, an idea, an interpretation, or a judgement, think of it as a hologram. See how that supports your practice today.

Thank you.