

# Holograms, Acorns, and Self-Fulfillment

How our brain seeks relationships.

By Dr. Kenneth Silvestri

Posted on PSYCHOLOGY TODAY on Oct 13, 2021

## KEY POINTS

- The brain and world function as a hologram.
- We have access to everything we have ever witnessed ourselves and collectively.
- There is a larger mind of which the individual mind is only a subsystem.



"Autumns' Acorns"  
Source: © Kenneth Silvestri

*"That's the trouble with people, their root problem. Life runs alongside them, unseen. Right here, right next. Creating the soil. Cycling water. Trading in nutrients. Making weather. Building atmosphere. Feeding and curing and sheltering more kinds of creatures than people know how to count." —Richard Powers*

*"The brain cannot always distinguish between what is 'out there' and what it believes to be 'out there,' ... Put another way, in a brain that operates holographically, the remembered*

*image of a thing can have as much impact on the senses as the thing itself." —Michael Talbot*

Each year, where I live along the Hudson River north of Manhattan, I revel in the sounds of falling acorns, each one a blueprint for a possible oak tree. How can this be? Not to mention my amazement that each snowflake is uniquely different, meadows keep meadowing, or how all the millions of cells in our body work together much more efficiently than our political structures. Why aren't we allowing the amazing collaborative potential that is ours for the taking to come to fruition, or for that matter pay heed to nature's clues?

Back in the 1980s, I participated in a seminar with the late neuropsychologist Karl Pribram, who discussed a paradigm shift regarding learning, memory, and reality. Calling himself a subjective behaviorist, he believed that *we lose the richness of subjective experience if we*

*follow a narrow cause-and-effect view of the world.* He suggested, rather, that we take a "systems" sense of looking at things, which could help identify levels of discourse; thus, one can see different levels of systems and how we are all interdependent. This does not occur from just looking at the part of a system, but simultaneously seeing the relationship of the parts that make up the whole system.

In doing this, he insisted that we must initially see things in context and recognize that each context is part of an interdependent with wider contexts. From this insight, he put forth a theory of the brain and world that functions as a "hologram." Holography is a method of lens-less photography in which the wave field of light scattered by an object is recorded on a plate as an interference pattern. It is reproduced as three-dimensional and, interestingly, any piece of the hologram, when separated from the rest, contains and is capable of reconstructing the entire original image. This was a eureka awareness moment for me.

How can anyone not be fascinated by the potential of our brain? In his book *The Biology of Belief*, Bruce Lipton points out that "the subconscious mind processes some 20 million environmental stimuli per second versus 40 environmental stimuli interpreted by the conscious mind." This amazing ratio allows "the subconscious mind to be one of the most powerful information processors known, which specifically observes both the surrounding world and the body's internal awareness, reads the environmental cues, and immediately engages previously acquired learned behavior, without the help, supervision, or even awareness of the conscious mind." We therefore have access to everything we have ever witnessed ourselves and collectively. *This suggests, among other things, that learning, living, healing, and reality are contained in all of us and how the brain deals with our environment as a holographic entity.*

There are basically two paradigms available to us, the "individual" (linear mode) and the other, "relational" (holistic mode). The former perceives change around the individual and the latter sees change based on the relationship of the parts within the whole social structure. What happens is that each paradigm steers attention to different variables, poses problems of a different order, and suggests different methods of approach to solve problems. Hence, the intense polarity we are experiencing at present with two competing world perspectives each of which calls attention to different world views.

Gregory Bateson, in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, elaborated how the prevalent Newtonian "individual" world and the world of "relational" systems and communication is simply that "one excludes context, while the communications deal with differences, context and 'meta-

relationships.'" To Bateson, *there is a larger mind of which the individual mind is only a subsystem.* "This larger mind is perhaps what some people mean by God. But it is immanent in the total interconnected/interdependent social system and includes the planetary ecology."

This implies that to make changes in our behaviors and to refute dominant cultural constraints that produce fragmentation, we need to advocate, articulate and support a paradigm that supports relationships based on mutual learning. This addresses the insidious patterns resulting from unresolved paradoxes that otherwise evolve into injurious "damn if you do or don't" double-binds. Nora Bateson, president of the International Bateson Institute describes this problem-solving process resulting from gathering "Warm Data," which is "information about the interrelationships that integrate elements of a complex system."

What this means is that through mutual respectful dialogue, we can experience the contexts of our interdependency in safe spaces. When we focus on and pay attention to what is occurring between us and all aspects of our environment, we can avoid falling prey to imposed opposites or dichotomies that perpetuate separateness, solipsism, and fragmentation all of which are antithetical to how our brain functions. Self-fulfillment is found by navigating liminal "gaps" between how we are and how we would rather be in our relationships. "Gaps" offer previously "unheard" but holographically available contextual possibilities and so on in a manner similar to how nature evolves and works.

The recognition that we are all part of an interdependent world rather than separate from nature suggests how we can reach our desire for self-fulfillment through relational awareness. I would like to propose the following framework for self-fulfillment through relational means, and as Gregory Bateson suggested, remember that "it takes two to know one."

A. Be in the present to mutually learn from others (have a systemic lens, respect your self-esteem, mindfully volley with others in a win-win manner, know your temperament and what you need to change, avoid assumptions and taking things personally).

B. Be in a supportive environment/context (use coherent breathing, qigong, Aikido, tai chi, yoga, homeopathy, compassion, and any other body/mind disciplines).

C. Be able to celebrate possibilities (explore your relationships, improvise, use poetic expression, and all means to support our interdependency).

D. Be able to adjust, learn-unlearn (respecting your fallibility).