

# Conversation with Franklin Merrell-Wolff, Dr. Rein'l, and Others

## Part 1 of 2

Franklin Merrell-Wolff  
April 30, 1970

Wolff: A certain manuscript of mine and getting into a sort of publication. It's been lying around for a long time, and I was waiting for a call for it. It's called *Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*, which I imagine doesn't mean much at first. I had decided that I would not subsidize its publication, that I'd wait until there was some call for it from outside. At last it came and the spark plug in this effort was our friend Bruce over here. He and Doroethy, and Mrs. Briggs, and one or two others . . . and so on, undertook a task which they greatly underestimated, for it's about 200,000 words and to put that on stencil and copy is quite an order.<sup>1</sup> Now there was one thing, Dr. Rein'l—

Rein'l: Yes.

Wolff: —that I want very much and that is what we might call feedback, to use a modern . . .

Rein'l: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Wolff: I know what I mean. I don't know what the reader gets from it. I might illustrate that in this way. Suppose somebody were to write up a description of color in all of its uses, and its relationships, and so on, and were to transfer his account to Braille, and was read by an intelligent person but born blind. What would he get out of it? Now, I don't mean the physicist's interpretation of color, which he might conceivably grasp because that is very largely a mathematical conception; and assuming that our man born blind has full intelligence, he could conceivably grasp such physical ideas. But this is a description of color in its sensuous quality as seen. What could such a person derive from the description? No development of his conceptual skills would give him the immediate *quale* of color.

Now, let us assume that he dwelt upon the description in essentially meditative way, protractedly, consistently. It is conceivable that he might arouse into activity what is called the direct action of the sense mind. Now, Aurobindo has said something about the direct action of the sense mind which I can partially verify through the testimony of a person I knew many years ago. That when the sense mind is functioning fully, it can replace the office of the sense organ so that direct sensuous perception is possible without the intervention of a sense organ. The person I knew many years ago had been under training by a Hindu whom she called Swamiji, and for a period she did have the

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<sup>1</sup> Ellipses have been inserted into this transcription to indicate missing text due to the poor quality of the audio recording.

experience that she could see her environment—the physical outer environment . . . with her eyes closed. She could wash dishes, perform other house work, and see around—see what she was doing with the eyes closed. I don't have any other verification of this possibility, but it is so affirmed by Sri Aurobindo.

Now, we have a problem. My concern is that what would be, in even the strict sense, a metaphysical subject matter. Anyone who has known the story of philosophy knows what led up to the writing of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, namely, the development of criticism of our knowledge went through John Locke, Berkeley, David Hume—and David Hume awoke Kant from his dogmatic slumbers. The outcome of that was this conclusion put in several terms: that by means of a twofold means of cognition, namely, sense perception and conceptual cognition alone, a metaphysical subject matter is inaccessible and becomes purely a speculation. Our metaphysical ideas ultimately then become in the hands of Carl G. Jung no more than a projection. We have there added to epistemological criticism, psychological criticism. But one of the questions asked by Kant in his "Introduction" is, "Why do we have a metaphysical disposition?"<sup>2</sup> And Kant himself was not lacking in that disposition, for he was very much concerned about the three metaphysical problems of God, freedom, and immortality. I don't think that what he contributed in an effort to reestablish some knowledge was too successful, but he had the disposition. And it's a very important question, why does man have a disposition that aims at the metaphysical.

Now, let us say a word about what we mean by "metaphysical." The word is used loosely so much. I'd say a source of knowledge that is non-empiric. The usual term is *a priori*. And in the light of the epistemological criticism, we'd have to say that it is non-conceptual. If there is to be any such thing as a truly metaphysical knowledge something more is required. Now, the answers of Jung give us simply what we might call a psychological disposition. He says explicitly that our metaphysical statements are merely statements as to the structure of the mind. The only door out of being locked in to purely individual mental function, he finds only through an irrational door—penetration into the unconscious. And bear in mind he defines 'irrational' not necessarily in the sense of being against reason, but not in the province of reason, also and it's in that sense I understand it. He reveals, of course, in his book, in his last book—the one he wouldn't allow to be published during his lifetime, not a scientific work this time, but the story of the man, Dr. Carl G. Jung—a man who in a deep sense of the word, not the conventional, was religious, and did have the feeling for the Beyond. It's evident in that book right there.<sup>3</sup> I value it much more than his scientific works when it comes to the last analysis. Now, there's one question not answered by Jung. The question put by Kant, "How is pure mathematics possible," for he says it is evident that pure mathematics consists of synthetical judgments *a priori*.<sup>4</sup> I conceive that to be a very important question. And that it ties in to the question of whether ultimately a pure metaphysical knowledge is possible.

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<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J. M. D. Meiklejohn (New York: Wiley Book Co., 1943), 13: "How is metaphysics, as a natural disposition, possible?"

<sup>3</sup> Carl G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961).

<sup>4</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 13: "How is pure mathematical science possible?"

Now, I had the good fortune to win a scholarship from the Harvard Club of San Francisco at the close of my fifth year at Stanford which gave me a year at Harvard in the Graduate School of Philosophy there. During that year I took two seminars—one under Bakewell who came up from Yale—in which all sorts of metaphysical questions were discussed. We each wrote a paper, an hour's paper about, and one would deliver a paper and the others could break in at any moment and tear you to pieces and you had to keep yourself from being torn to pieces if you could—very excellent discipline. I heard a paper that developed a thought in the line of the Vedanta that one of the brilliant students, a Scotsman who had come from Europe, developed and he defended it successfully against all criticism, and that impressed me. The thought came to me that this problem may be due to the fact that we have latent organs of cognition other than sense perception and conceptual cognition, and if such organs exist then it's useless to argue on these problems until you determine what may be known in such a way. Otherwise it's just a mental exercise going around in a circle and leading nowhere. I decided to make the search for that organ, if there was such. The problem is the problem of yoga.

Now, I left the academic world and I went through the passage of what Ralph Barton Perry called the intellectual underworld. It reminds me of the fact that Jung said the pearl without price is found in the mud, and in a certain sense that's about the way it feels when you go through the intellectual underworld after you've been in the university. James did that, you know, around Boston. I did it around Boston and I came across his trail, too. Well, after twenty-four years, I came up with success, and the effort was well worthwhile. It was worth a whole lot more than an academic career or any other possible career. I did make the yogic breakthrough and not in a small way. That is recorded in *Pathways Through to Space*—a record taken during the process.

In this book, the first part is taken up principally with a recapitulation after the fact of what you might call the subjective material bearing on the process. And the reason for doing this is that I couldn't find that material. When James wrote his *Varieties of Religious Experience* he complained of the fact that this subjective, autobiographical material was scarce. It could be found in the case of some Western mystics, but practically unknown in the case of the Oriental mystics, for the Oriental mystics emerge with a philosophy, or system of metaphysics, or a work of art—poetry or whatnot—but they don't tell you what you actually go through—the kind of material that is of interest psychologically. I know one is a bit diffident about it. It's what Jung has done in that book, what Aurobindo has done in his letters, because it's a little like what the ladies say, slip is showing, and so forth. You feel diffident, and so on. But I studied it and I said this would have been valuable if I could have found it, so I think I'll leave a trail—just what goes on in your consciousness when you go through the experience, or “imperience,” of transformation in consciousness.<sup>5</sup> Not only what it might mean philosophically, but what is it psychologically. You may leave yourself vulnerable to criticism and all that, but I thought it was potentially of sufficient value to justify it.

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<sup>5</sup> For the definition of ‘imperience’, see the audio recordings “General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy,” part 10, and “Extemporaneous Statement of My Philosophy.” In speaking of introceptual knowledge, Wolff says, “The third function therefore gives you imperience, not experience. It is akin to sense perception in the sense of being immediate, but is not sensuous.”

I've had a series of five Realizations. That's the term by which we know it. It's the term used by Aurobindo, but it's used by Shankara, and I'd used it quite independently of Aurobindo. In the progressive series, four of them I sought, the fifth and most profound was an utter surprise. It just walked in unto me thirty-three days after the preceding one which was also major and followed the pattern of Shankara. But this was totally new. It was very difficult to find any reference in the literature at all bearing upon it. But it did involve a progressive development at the peak of which the subject to Consciousness, the Self, dropped away and the object of Consciousness dropped away, and only Consciousness remained. And Jung refers to that as an experience of Orientals in his "Psychological Commentary" to *The Tibetan Book of the Great Realization [Liberation]*. He says he can't imagine such a state, but he says apparently to the Orientals, they have no difficulty. And they'll say that this is real knowledge. And in contrast to that our ordinary knowledge is ignorance, in the sense of *avidya*. And he doesn't challenge that it is possible, he simply says he can't imagine it. And I can quite agree that our background of the process of cognition is such that we cannot imagine how there can be a Consciousness without a cognizer and a subject that is conscious. I made a reference—. By the way could I get *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*? Only recently I found this verification.

Rein'l: Do you mind interruption?

Wolff: No, go ahead.

Rein'l: I was just wondering whether you have considered that in some cases in sense experience there is, or in sense imagination, there is something like the image of that. For instance Plato says that our ordinary objects are images of forms, so that in a sense it seems to me that there is something that is like what you're describing; and that is that is if you take the room and abstract from your memory, abstract from your anticipations, which, you see, you're looking at your hand here, but—and you look at any object and you don't think of, you know, where it came from, what it is, or if it's separated from anything. All these qualitative differences are present, but then, you know, when you no longer anticipate doing anything yourself, your body seems to be, you know, just a qualitative difference from the rug rather than a separate thing, then the consciousness of a perceiver, it seems to me, would vanish here because the subject-object involves you—

Wolff: Yeah.

Rein'l: —you know, about to do things that other things don't do . . . I can see how in that sense the distinction between subject and object . . . so it's a projection. I mean, isn't it—you know, you don't experience that, but you sometimes schematically imagine.

Wolff: Well, now, I know—yeah, I see what you mean by imagining there, yeah.

Here's a footnote to the text of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. He uses the Tibetan term:

*Rig-pa*, meaning ‘consciousness’ as distinct from the knowing faculty by which it cognizes or knows itself to be.<sup>6</sup>

Now, I have to make use of just the distinction that’s coming here. Now, I have called consciousness in the sense of *rig-pa* as a substantive Consciousness; and, in contrast, I have this whole idea of being in contrast to the knowing aspect of consciousness.

Ordinarily, *rig-pa* and *shes-rig* are synonymous; but in an abstruse philosophical treatise, as herein, *rig-pa* refers to the consciousness in its purest and most spiritual, (i.e., supermundane) aspect, and *shes-rig* to the consciousness in that grosser aspect, not purely spiritual, whereby cognizance of phenomena is present.<sup>7</sup>

Now, it’s in the latter sense we usually use the term, of course, as consciousness of phenomena, namely, something around, a world about. The whole cosmos is just phenomena in this sense. Now, subtilize the *shes-rig* to the point that the content of consciousness is just consciousness and not phenomena, and then it speaks about what that means. Let’s see if I can remember where it is. Oh yes.

From the union of these two states of mind, or consciousness, implied by the two terms, *rig-pa* and *shes-rig*, and symbolized by the All-Good Father and the All-Good Mother, is born the state of Dharma-Kaya, the state of Perfect Enlightenment, Buddhahood.<sup>8</sup>

Now that stuff was familiar. I didn’t know that anybody else had used terms that I’d been hunting for and I found it right there in there two senses of consciousness. Well, this is a little bit different from just what I was saying, but there is implied here not a consciousness in the sense of a relationship between me and a known, and an object, a phenomenal object, which is our ordinary use of the term, of course: I know that, the whole world outside. Now, think of all of that not as non-conscious thing—mountain, tree, house, cosmos, or whatnot—but as object of consciousness; and I here cognize that, and the relationship between is consciousness.

James denies, as you may remember someplace, that consciousness exists in the sense of being other than a relationship. Now, there, of course, I take strong reservation based upon actual Realization. The Consciousness can be the actual substance of which all content of consciousness is made and the actual source of the subject to consciousness. And you take this in connection with a certain statement in “The Mystery of Buddha” that was written by HPB from materials drawn from Tibetan sources,<sup>9</sup> where

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<sup>6</sup> W. Y. Evans-Wentz, ed., *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 96.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 3 (Adyar: The Theosophy Co., 1897), 362.

it says that Gautama was an *Avatar* in the sense that *Adi-Buddha*, he was an *Avatar* of *Adi-Buddha* which is translated Primordial Wisdom, not a primordial entity, but Primordial Wisdom, a quality of consciousness—now mark, this is very revolutionary from all habits of Western religiosity or Western psychology, and so on, and if it appears to you as meaningless concepts don't trouble about it, we can play with the concepts even if we can't imagine what it means—but a quality of consciousness can be that which is incarnated in an entity, and that the Primordial Wisdom pre-exists any entity that cognizes it. That parallels this conception of self-existent, Constitutive Consciousness contrasting to another phase of consciousness which cognizes. Constitutive Consciousness and cognizing consciousness are thus to be distinguished. I've made that distinction in my own language, then I ran onto that distinction in those words there. That was the first verification I ran across.

Rein'l: Is there—excuse me—a distinction between that and the position that many mystics hold that there is no longer a distinction between the subject and object? Is it that they have blended into one thing—

Wolff: Yes. Then that becomes what—

Rein'l: —or returned to one thing?

Wolff: —what I called “knowledge through identity” and which later I found Aurobindo had called “knowledge by identity,” where the cognizer becomes identical with the cognized. But I'm even going back before that to this pure field of Consciousness as underlying, and at being the Root of the cognized and the cognizer even when they're blended. Now, I don't know that I made the conception clear.

Rein'l: Well, and this is not, you know, from any acquaintance with this but just from word, that is Plato—

Wolff: Yeah.

Rein'l: —talked about light—I mean the sun and its light—and he said this is what brings the power of knowledge, and on the other hand it brings the power of being known.

Wolff: Mm-hmm.

Rein'l: So it is prior to being known and knowing—light.

Wolff: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And light is always a symbol of consciousness.

Rein'l: Yes. I simply don't think he thought of it as something dead.

Wolff: Light means consciousness; although I have used it in the sense of identified with the cognitive aspect of consciousness.

All right, I'm getting a little a field. Well, what I'm getting to is that this book is based upon this material, and I developed a schema, to get back to our original problem of how can a metaphysical knowledge be possible, to the effect that there are three cognitive functions instead of two—that one of them is generally latent in the human psyche, not active, two of them generally active, that they can, however, be awakened. This third one can be awakened. The awakening of it is what we know as yoga. I'm using 'yoga' as a term going beyond simply God-Realization of Self-Realization at the

moment. I invented a name, called it “introceptual cognition” or the “introceptual order,” envisaging, therefore, three forms of cognition—not implying that there may not be more—Aurobindo’s schema indicates that he has found more—but implying that here we have at least three: and in the center conceptual cognition, below perceptual cognition, and above introceptual cognition, but at the border between these zones of cognition there is a point of hiatus or a point of discontinuity. In my experience, the passing over that zone always involved a blackout, and then inversion of consciousness in some sense. I experienced this. You carry through self-analysis until you’ve reached down to a point which is bare power of cognition—“I am That.” Actually, you cannot put it as an object before your consciousness. It has to stand purely as the subject which never becomes objective. And, the move, as near as I could tell it, is you sink back into it and the door opens.

Now, that pure Self that’s subjective and is surrounded by the universe of objects is like a point—has position but no mass. In other words, it has no objectivity ever. Passing this point of discontinuity where there is a blackout and an immediate awakening, the value of the “I” or Self becomes that of an illimitable sphere that contains the cognized universe of all objects. Hence, it’s an inversion. I used the term, then Aurobindo used it in his way, and you can get other inversions, so that an inversion in consciousness seems to be the typical pattern involved in making any of these crossings. I tried to keep that movement, that shift between these two conscious all the way. I couldn’t do it. It made me dizzy trying to. There would be a blackout and immediate awakening to another order. And I’ve gone down and up when I was in a lucid state and could do it. I can’t do it anymore.

Now, that discontinuity is where our problem arises. If I talk in conceptual terms, as I do in that book, or anything that I say is something conceptual necessarily, concerning an introceptual subject matter, I know, first of all, what I am talking about, like the man giving a conceptual picture of color, but I don’t know what I am arousing in the consciousness of the individual who reads it. What do those concepts mean to him? What do they indicate to him? That’s why I want a feedback. It might indicate to him something that I wouldn’t care to be responsible for, and that has happened. You know the story of Buddha when he went forth to seek the solution of the problem of suffering. It was obviously a search involving experimental effort. One experiment of six years with extreme asceticism, which he decided was a mistake. After regaining his strength, he sat under the Bodhi tree, so the account goes, and said he would not leave that position or eat again until he found the solution. And then it is said that he was Enlightened under the Bodhi tree. Afterwards he never attempted to communicate the content of the Enlightenment, for that material is ineffable. It will not fit correctly any conceptual form. Any conceptual statement is necessarily a distortion even though it may reveal something. So he contented himself with teaching a moral system and certain meditative practices designed to lead to a similar awakening, and then spent a lot of time showing that the state of Enlightenment was not any possible conception that anybody could possibly have. It was not this, not that, not everything. If you were to take the universe of discourse in which you divide everything into *a* and *not-a*: it’s not *a* and it’s not *not-a*. Now, I know what he’s talking about, but there’s something he didn’t mean that fits that condition, and that is absolute annihilation. There are many, even followers and non-followers, who interpret his meaning as that. And that was a great error. There’s always

the possibility that your conceptual transcription can produce an effect quite different from what you have in mind. How would the man born blind imagine the colors to be that were described by the man who made the description of them? What would his imagination lead him to from those words? The same problem exists when you deal with a conceptual transcription from an introceptual subject matter. But the value of it as I see it, or I hope it may be, is that dwelling upon the conceptual referents will tend to arouse something of the original consciousness from which it came; in other words, a kind of yoga. That's the hope—the hope in the manuscript.

I had envisaged when I left Harvard that if I found was successful, I would bring back to the academy what I found. What I hoped was that the idea might gain enough recognition at least to be disagreed with on the floor of a seminar. I don't care whether a person agrees with the ideas or whether he fights them. If he fights them, he's hooked. If he gets an emotional affect, he's hooked ultimately. There's magic in this stuff. I know what I'm talking about. If you take anything that comes from a Fundamental Realization, it has effects.

Buddhism started not with the birth of a prince, but with the enlightening Realization under the Bo tree. And there have been hundreds of millions of people influenced more or less by that. That event starts with that Realization. What happens in the Realization? In Jung's term, if it's basic, you have an event in the collective psyche. And if there is just one individual that can receive it, accept it, and assimilate it, it's established in the collective psyche and it will do work. There are persons who would be justified in being afraid to read that manuscript. There is such a thing as psychical contagion—persons can be not ready for it. We've demonstrated inductions as recently, deliberately, as recently as last January right here in this room. It is possible to induce in a receptive individual, glimpses of mystical states of consciousness that compare with reports in Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness*. What does it? One induction that's very frequent is psycho-physical heat. Now, that won't happen so long as I stay on the level of speculative thinking—ordinary thinking. But a little shift over becomes the transcriptive thinking, and those who are sensitive may have an experience of heat. I don't understand how a purely psychological process can do this, but it does happen. I've seen them sweat. I've seen them throw off their coats. And there are those here that can testify to it too who have had that experience.

Now, we're dealing with something that produces effects, it's not merely speculation. I want to emphasize that point. Even though there is in that manuscript portions that are speculative, in the sense—well I make an outline of Naturalism, and I go through philosophies to show where I stand. I make a brief statement of these different forms. Now, if I describe Naturalism or Neo-Realism, that's purely speculative, ordinary academic thinking. Something you know you can do.

Participant: This, uh—

Wolff: Hmm?

Participant: —thing you were talking about, is sort of—

Wolff: What is that?



Participant: This thing you were talking about, this resonating effect that you can have upon other people. I've noticed this many times, but I'm trying to critically analyze what's going on, and of course it's difficult because there's not much really, too much written about this. Well there may be, but I haven't read it, but—

Wolff: No, I don't think there is too much written.

Participant: —but I do notice that it's almost like a chameleon changes his color, or an octopus changing his color to fit the surroundings, and the shape to fit the surroundings. It's almost a . . . resonating factor, this factor, this third thing that you're talking about. And, well, I notice with different people it's stronger than with others. There's a leveling effect, a resonating effect. It's almost like a sound resonating. And, like I may be talking to someone who everyday, I don't, they don't seem to have anything, you know, they don't have any philosophical concepts. The next time I confront this person, they turn into a Buddha. They, actually, they, they, what's coming out this person, I can't believe it. They're talking to me, it's a regular conversation, and yet the effect of this conversation and the words that they say on a different level are such that, that it produces some form of a transformation.

Wolff: Mm-hmm.

Participant: And, it's as if they're speaking unquestionable truth, and, uh, but it comes and goes with various people, it's unpredictable.

Wolff: You know it would be good Buddhist doctrine to say there's a Buddha in every . . . It lies there latent. Under some condition you might pull it forward from one who didn't even know it was there.

Participant: Well, sometimes I've gotten myself into a precarious position, and I'll be in a room, there'll be a number of people, and they all have this, they all, I snap into this thing, and they have this, this uh, well, you can call it super-clarity, super-intellect, or whatever you want to call it, it's, uh, whatever they say is profound, and, uh, and, and, sometimes I'm not level. I'm suppressed and I feel as if they, uh, they, as if, uh, as if they are somewhat, let's say, more enlightened than I am, in a sense. And at other times, I feel level. And sometimes I feel greater. And the most harmonious relationship, and less tension, because whenever there is tension, whenever there is a mis-leveling, uh, there's a tension that's produced in me and I feel it as pain, uh, terrible pain. And, uh, but as the leveling occurs, the pain goes away and, uh, it's a very, very beautiful experience right at the leveling aspect where everyone is at the same level—but, uh, at a tremendously high level.

Wolff: Would you regard that word 'level' as equivalent to principle of equilibrium?

Participant: Maybe. Maybe. Yeah. Yeah. But it's as if the truth is flowing and there's such perfect harmony. It's just a total harmony, that it's just . . . And I don't even know if the others are aware of this, what is happening, because later I talk to them about it and they say yes something happened, but they don't remember . . .

Wolff: Don't know what it was.

Participant: They don't know what it was. So, it's, it's—I can question it later and something happened. There was something recognized, but then we all fall back into our habit pattern mold of everyday living.

Wolff: You know the word 'Buddha' has a twofold meaning: one, our usual one, when we identify it with a certain entity. Actually it means Enlightenment—the real root meaning of the word. And when you say Buddha as a noun, it could be a reference really to a quality of consciousness that was latent there.

Participant: I'm beginning to see what latent potential . . . In fact I was talking about that today with somebody at work, latent potential, in another way, in another symbolic form, but, uh—

Wolff: This is interesting. Well, Dr. Rein'l, I'm told the young people, they gave you one of these volumes, but I would request, if you are so inclined, to have an objective review of it if you are willing to do that.

Rein'l: Oh, yes I am. I'd thoroughly love to.

Wolff: When I say objective, disregard the fact that you know me.

Rein'l: You know to be objective is, in a formal sense . . . in a human sense; it doesn't mean the same thing.

Wolff: That is the thing—

Rein'l: I'll try to be objective, say, in a logical sense, and that's, in a certain sense, I mean you can notice whether things follow from other things, but that, you mean more than that, of course.

Wolff: I know.

Rein'l: So, in one sense, I think you need something subjective too.

Wolff: Well, yeah, that's true. But I really mean I don't want you to feel sensitive about—

Rein'l: Writing about it.

Wolff: —because it doesn't do me any good if it is colored because of that. On *Pathways* I only had one reviewer that was competent; he was J. William Lloyd, a man at 80 then. He was a mystic, listed in Bucke's book *Cosmic Consciousness*. He wrote two books that borrowed from his experience: one, *Dawn Thought* followed up with *Life's Beautiful Battle*. He was a poet and he wrote several essays. In his last years he was a saintly figure. He happened to live only five miles from where we were living at the time. I took the manuscript to him and he was the only person that was anywhere near competent to give an evaluation. He gave me a very nice one. But the publisher of the book sent it around to the standard reviewers and they were all afraid of it. It appeared that . . . picked out some insignificant feature, and they gave it a mild complement. They didn't touch the substance of it at all. I don't think they knew what it was and they may have thought that to criticize it adversely would put them out on a limb, so they gave it meaningless small compliments. I want to get competent, critical evaluation if that is possible . . .

Rein'l: I was thinking of what William James said that, you know, he said I'm not a mystic, but I have a feeling for this.

Wolff: Mm-hmm. I know. I know.

Rein'l: I think you have to—if you want to do something like that, you have to at least have some feeling for it.

Wolff: Well, I think you have it. It's my sense you do.

Rein'l: Well, I think that myself.

Wolff: I had another conversation with you and I read that off—that you did have that sympathetic feeling for it. Of course, if you really had the full thing they'd probably fire you from the university.

Rein'l: I don't know.

Wolff: Do you know Dr. Goyette?

Rein'l: Oh, in Flagstaff. Yes, I have met him. I don't know him very well. I've seen him at a couple of meetings.

Wolff: All right. He tried to go both ways and he's been trying ever since to go both ways, but at a price—at the price of being *persona non grata* with the authorities in the university.

Rein'l: Well, the Department is split up there—the philosophy and the humanities.

Wolff: They took away his course, Oriental Philosophy, with the pronouncement there's no such thing as Oriental philosophy.

Rein'l: That's a very analytically oriented Department up there now. And, uh—

Wolff: I said haven't you got a history. He said we really don't have a department. I said, haven't you got a History of Philosophy? No. Introduction to Philosophy? No. I said you don't have a Philosophy Department. He said we really don't. He said it's all Positivism. Only nobody knew it.

Rein'l: Yes, or another, I mean a more recent version; but it certainly has change. But it's a very active Department though. I mean the Philosophy, or what's called Philosophy there.

Wolff: I see. Well.

Rein'l: There's something may come of it.

Wolff: I don't know. I only know what he said.

Rein'l: You know, as long as they're alive. And I hear they do battle a great deal there. People say that, you know, from the other end of the campus as they approach the building that the Philosophy Department is in, they can hear them, you know, above the high wind. So there may be some hope there yet.

Wolff: Well, of course, he and Vasant Merchant—

Rein'l: Yes.

Wolff: —are very good friends.

Rein'l: How is she now?

Wolff: We're going there on our way out. We'll be up there at least a couple of nights. And the last time I saw her was last January. She was down here. She gradually can get around a little more easily, a little more adeptly with her crutches, but I think she still sits and reads her lecturing. I gave half a dozen lectures at her house to students that came, and there I talked my stuff at her house. I said to her you better not try to have it in a university room because it might put you in a bad light with the powers that be. She rather agreed, so we had it at her house. Now, I guess I was correct on that. Later, she was going to have Walkup over for an evening meal to meet us—the president—and she wanted Goyette to come, but I said no, that would hurt you if I'm seen here by Walkup.

Rein'l: For goodness sake.

Wolff: Now, there are problems over there, and in a way I think Goyette is a sort of sacrificial lamb in the whole matter. Now, he told me that when he was working for his doctorate at the same time he was trying to keep on the game of yoga, of yogic Realization. He said there was so much conflict between the two that it induced a very painful attack of shingles. The man is in the midst of a fight of it. Now, I made the break with the academic. I avoided that. I faced the other problem of losing a career in the academic field. But I think I made the better and more comfortable choice after talking to Dr. Goyette.

Rein'l: I think we're quite lucky down here. It's possible to do more things in the sense of the snobbish sense of the, you know the way Perry put it, about the intellectuals of the world.

Wolff: Now, I found something, I was astonished about these young students. The revolting students go all the way from a bottom that is virtually criminal and seems to come out of the sewer, up to a very precious lot that are brilliant and there's depth; they're wide open for anything of the sort of anything like a mystical Realization. We had growing groups in a room. There wasn't nearly enough chairs to sit on so they sat on the floor. You were up there weren't you? Well, they had to sit on the floor. Last time sixty-five persons were there and I had about this much space to talk in. There were legs sticking out here all around. And those young people sitting in that awkward position gave me the closest and the best attention I ever had. They were almost ecstatic. I realized there was some mighty fine stuff that's coming in at the present time in these young people. Now you might call them the crown of the revolting students.

Rein'l: At Santa Barbara there is a very unusual situation.

Wolff: Hmm?

Rein'l: At Santa Barbara there is an unusual situation.

Wolff: Well, that, there's a good deal of that criminal element, that they burn buildings.

Rein'l: Well, no, but I mean Ryman Eyre, for instance, who teaches political science and . . . his philosophy. And they have a great many students who are likely interested in what you're interested in of a kindred nature.

Wolff: Well, Jung says we find the pearl beyond price in the mud and among these students revolting and some of them look as though they came out of the sewer and act as though they came out of the sewer, but among them you seem to have this pearl without price. Well, I think I've said enough.

Rein'l: I wouldn't say that.

Wolff: I've been saving myself— We live above Lone Pine about 6,000 feet, and we control 400 acres, so there's nobody near us that we don't want. And I find it very convenient to talk to the tape. In fact, it seems to be a better medium than writing right now. You can talk to an abstract audience, not to a specific audience before you, and I'm finding it fairly adequate vehicle. And in that setting your about 6,000 feet up with the mountains around you and the valley below you about 2,000 feet down, we're very close to the highest mountain south of Alaska, Mt. Whitney, in very favorable conditions.

Participant: I'd like to build an ivory tower to that . . .

Wolff: You don't need to build it; it's enough of a tower as it is. Let the ground be the tower . . . so I'm putting it down and Jim takes copies of these tapes and it's become now a vehicle of communication. Last night we put on a tape. It saves me . . .

I developed this conception of the three organs, faculties, or functions. I'm not willing to say yet that there is no truth in faculty psychology, so I included it in there. It's, of course, our style today to think of it as only functional, but I know now that there is falsity in the previous ideas, that it's all false. So I retain the possible thought that there may be a valid use for the notion of faculty in spite of John Locke. But the basic conception that's in this book that I tried to elaborate through Part I, through III, and IV—Part II really should be the last part—is build the presumption for a third faculty or function of cognition, maintaining that that gets around the block of metaphysical and psychological criticism as presented by Immanuel Kant and Dr. Carl G. Jung. And then what is now Part II but which should really be Part IV, “The Commentaries on the Aphorisms on Consciousness Without an Object” would be part of the actual content produced from that function, and it's somewhat analogous to the contrast to *Samadhi* and *Prajna* as it is discussed by the Sixth Patriarch in Ch'an Buddhism.

Now, those aphorisms are probably meaningless except with commentaries. But take five: Consciousness-without-an-object-is. And by the way I explain that Consciousness-without-an-object is also Consciousness-without-a-subject. Consciousness-without-an-object-is. Before objects were, Consciousnesses-without-an-object-is. When objects seem to exist, Consciousness-without-an-object-is. When objects vanish, yet remaining unaffected through all, Consciousness-without-an-object-is. Beside Consciousness-without-an-object, nothing is. That's the first five.

Now, take a paradigm. Nowadays we have the physical conception that energy and matter can be equivalent. That's the basis of the atom bomb. And if an electron meets a positron they would vanish in a flash of radiation and the radiation would be pure energy. But between the energetic state and the state as matter there is something invariant, and I was advised by a trained physicist, that that something is called “energy-momentum.” Now, let's substitute matter for objects and energy-momentum for consciousness: Energy-momentum is. Before matter was, energy-momentum is. When

matter seems to exist, energy-momentum is. When matter vanishes, yet remaining through all unaffected, energy-momentum is. Beside energy-momentum, there is none other. It's a conceptual parallel of the three first aphorisms.<sup>10</sup> The suggestion is that it isn't meaningless. Most people feel that it is meaningless when they first read it. Now, you notice I use 'is', not to mean the present tense, but I mean it to suggest timelessness and there no other tense I know of to express it by except to use the present tense. So I violate the grammar in there to do that. Now, there's about fifty of those and they are with commentaries on them. They're not too simple, although—to understand, but simple to write. They virtually wrote themselves down in a period of about two hours, and then writing the commentaries was about the most difficult writing I ever did.

Participant: I think the very reading of those aphorisms induces the type of consciousness that the words maybe don't say as conceptions, but I think there is an induction there with the aphorisms.

Wolff: They do have an inductive power. There's no doubt about it. Anything that comes—

Participant: There is a difference in state. I can tell it.

Wolff: —the ordinary consciousness. Then you have that consciousness where you might say “the daimon on your back” or when you're “on the beam,” you become “enthusiastic” in the original meaning of the word, and I like the term ‘inverse consciousness’ combined with our ordinary consciousness called “obverse consciousness.” Now, the inverse consciousness, there's not much you can say about it, but it can impinge upon ordinary consciousness, the conceptual consciousness, like an impregnating force leading to conceptual elaboration. Now, it's possible to swing from one to the other, and there is something I have called, something like a butterfly valve that you can turn as simply as, well moving a finger—shift it on, shift it off. It can be under control. You don't have to wait for some vague power to put you in, but it's possible to have it under control. Now, the point is you get an interaction between the two. The great temptation is going to the depth Consciousness because it's—oh, it's ineffable. There is no experience of delight, or of beauty, or of sweetness that we know in ordinary life that can in the faintest degree suggest what you get in that depth Consciousness—maybe the threshold of *Nirvana*. It's a very intriguing thing to . . .

Now, many psychologists do acknowledge that experiences of affective delight do exist and that it may have an effect as Bucke puts it in *Cosmic Consciousness* of producing moral elevation, but men like John Dewey who acknowledged that, Bertram Russell who acknowledged it in *Logic and Mysticism*, James H. Leuba who dealt with the *Psychology of Religious Mysticism* and he mentions a man by the name of Delacroix and one by the name of Coe, all acknowledge the factuality of mystical states of consciousness, that they produce a state of delight and that they can have a certain exalting effect on the individual, but deny that they have noetic value, that is knowledge value. James in *Varieties of Religious Experience* acknowledges the noetic value. I happen to have him right here. “Ineffability”—the inability to express the content; “noetic quality”; and these two are fundamental: “transiency” and “passivity.” I don't

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<sup>10</sup> Wolff obviously meant to say, “. . . the five first aphorisms.”

quite agree with all—it does not necessarily have to be so transient as he thinks; he says not more than two hours. It can persist for protracted intervals, and they're not necessarily passive. But he didn't have the whole story. He only studied mainly Western mystics and Western mystical history is different from the Oriental. The Oriental aims at a certain control, whereas it just happens with the Western mystic. If you read the Western mystics, I advise you not to get your impression simply from persons like Marguerite, Catherine, Teresa, St. John of the Cross, or Suso, or Madame Guyon. If you take men like Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, and Jacob Boehme—and Jacob Boehme, for instance, has been valued highly by certain of the post-Kantian Idealists, as you no doubt know that one of them said Jacob Boehme is not a philosopher but a subject of philosophy—you'll get a very different impression. No, some of those girls were not in a power position at all with respect to their experiences and they're utterly vulnerable to unflattering Freudian interpretations. But take a powerful figure like Plotinus, one like Meister Eckhart, and Jacob Boehme, you'll get a very different understanding of it from what you would from these others. And James did dip a good deal into the simpler forms of Christian mysticism. Christian mysticism is only one form of it. Now, James H. Leuba said that the knowledge the mystic brings out is the knowledge he takes into the state, that it is not a source of knowledge. And, of course, you get this evidence. The Christian mystic will confirm a Christian presupposition. The Catholic mystic will be different from a Protestant mystic and it will favor the Catholic priest's conceptions, An Indian mystic will tend to follow and confirm Indian preconceptions.

Now, you can build a pretty strong argument that way. I know that I came out of the one that was reported in the first section of *Pathways* with no change in my philosophy. I'd been studying Shankara and I got this thing that was along the line of Shankara. There was no change there. But when the High Indifference gave, it was a revolution in my philosophic outlook. So I know it can be a source of knowledge. But it also is possible that it will tend to confirm your predilections, your religious predilections.

Participant: What the Christian calls being born again, that would be the true Realization, wouldn't it?

Wolff: Not necessarily. No. No, that's more or less of a formula. There is rebirth. There is authentic rebirth phenomenon, but that's a pretty major thing. Pretty major and it's pretty thorough-going. You get a pretty radical upheaval.

Participant: The inversion of consciousness, you don't equate that with, or do you equate that with this third state? The third—

Wolff: Yes. The crossing, the crossing over involves an inversion.

Participant: But the actual state in the inversion—

Wolff: It's most natural.

Participant: —it's in the inversion, uh—. Well, I've had things that are what you might call inversion where I had an objective experience, or, experiencing the object, and later on down the line, that same experience I re-experienced as the object experiencing myself looking at the object.

Wolff: Uh-huh.

Participant: And I don't know if you can call that having an inversion.

Wolff: Yeah. Yeah. The inversion has more than one pattern.

Participant: Yes. That was a—. And I've had a number of similar type of things that on that base which I don't know what to with it. It just happened. I don't know what to say about . . .

Wolff: By the way, do you talk of these experiences to your friends much?

Participant: Well, some, well friends that I can talk to, yes.

Wolff: That you can. Do you have many of them?

Participant: I have—. There are several. Yeah.

Wolff: Well, I was thinking there may be an increasing crop of this type.

Rein'l: One student was telling me about a dream and then he described in such a way that that he was looking at himself as an object.

Wolff: Mm-hmm.

Rein'l: And I said, well, who was looking at you. And then he began to realize there was something strange about it.

Wolff: Yeah.

Participant: Well, I don't know if you . . .

Rein'l: But it seemed like the perfectly, you know, normal way to have a dream to him, apparently.

Wolff: Yeah. Somewhat similar to what he . . .

Participant: Well, this thing is similar to, I think, to Dali's painting of the universe in terms of a man with all of his organs on the outside and the whole universe is on the in, inside. All the planets, galaxies, the whole universe is within the person. His organs are on the outside. And this is sort of a symbolic expression, I think, of—

Wolff: I see.

Participant: —some of the things that . . .

Wolff: Have you ever gotten into trouble by talking to the wrong person?

Participant: I did earlier, yes; they thought I was insane. So, I was talking to the wrong people. And I was naïve at that—. I'm still naïve, but at that time I was much more naïve than I am now.

Rein'l: Well, there's so much in literature like, well Plato, for instance, which would suggest this like, you know, the soul was the outer envelope in the "Timaeus," of the body. And then he says, well, of course, the soul, I'm saying that the body is . . . soul and inside of that is the body.

Wolff: Mm-hmm.

Rein'l: This accidentally suggests that.



Wolff: I always assumed that Plato was a man of Realization, that he was an authentic what the Oriental would have called a yogin.

Rein'l: Well, the "Seventh Letter," I think is very clear about that. I mean even his giving advice to others about this thing.

Wolff: Well, I think he's one of the perennial philosophers.

Rein'l: But then of course you have Gilbert Ryle who said no the "Seventh Letter" is not genuine. It's, you know, sometimes it's genuine and sometimes it's not genuine.

Wolff: It depends on the critic's prejudice I suppose.

Rein'l: Yes. Now, I think we may be in for a phase of it's not being genuine.

Participant: There's another thing that I've come across and that's what I might want to call a transfer of consciousness, where consciousness is seated in some other object and you begin to identify so strongly with it, well we do this then, then most everybody could, but I've had some experience with it, ridiculous experience, like one time I turned into an earthworm and I started crawling through the ground, and all I was . . .

Rein'l: That's the way you felt?

Participant: That's the way I felt and I was feeling. I could not see. All I could do was feel. It was a total feeling of the quality of being earthworm. It was so strong and intense. It was more like, you know, it was during a meditation that this thing happened. And it was . . .

Wolff: Strange.

Participant: I know it is. It's that . . . strange.

Wolff: Let me speak to this fellow. Do you feel wholly comfortable sitting beside him?

Participant: Not perfectly.

Participant: He hasn't said what his experiences are yet?

Rein'l: Well, it is a common experience, you know, to make a gesture to say something, and think, oh, I am, say, my father or someone else, you know, in that particular gesture that you made—a sort of a feeling of identity. But, that's not the same thing as, you know, jumping into some other . . .

Wolff: No. No, this was participating in the consciousness of the worm. Of course, it is said in the literature that it's possible, all right.

Participant: I've done it with other animals, too. I've had some very interesting things that I may not—. It's so surprising when these things happen that I never know what to expect. Unusual things happen and then I later analyze it, and I say well, you know, I don't take it for a reality or not non-reality. I don't make any judgments on these things. They just happen. And if they repeat, well, I say there may be a degree or ringing of pattern of truth, or whatever you want to call it, to it. And that's all I can say. But there

are some experiences that do have a fixation of, well it's almost like an absolute feeling that this is the way it is, that are very hard to shake.

Wolff: Yeah. They're more fundamental. Well, of course, we can't say . . . there's a reason why we can't say that because a state is psychologically classed as the type "mystical" that therefore it is authoritative. There are great mystical experiences that do carry an authoritative value so long as they are not interpreted and you keep them on their pure level.

Participant: Well—

Wolff: Just as soon as you interpret—

Participant: —interpretation in the midst of an experience, if I try to be analytic, I can jump out and analyze and split myself, but every time I do that it destroys part of the intensity of the experience that is taking place.

Wolff: True. But if you wanted to communicate, if you had a value you wanted to communicate to someone else, you'd be justified in sacrificing something of . . .

Participant: You have to have some symbol to get at it a genetic coding to bring back, if you want to bring something back. But to me modern science is taking an interesting—well, many, many interesting paths now through its development of mathematics. The sciences are becoming very mystical, especially the theoretical sciences. In astronomy, for example, we're getting all sorts of, well, psychology is being applied to astronomy and also to particle physics. And the concepts are so unusual as Einstein's concepts . . .

Wolff: Well, yes, they're virtually mystical.

Participant: Yeah, mystical in their nature, and many of them are quite accepted and maybe many of them will turn out to be what we call the truth. These are the foreground of . . .

Wolff: Of course, he wasn't dogmatic about it. You know, he used the figure that Newton got a first approximation, and his is a second approximation, and there may be other approximations further along the line that are supplied so that it could be transitory. Even he was prepared for that. But, nonetheless, there is something— Oh, Sir Isaac Newton only spent a small portion of his life in science. The larger portion went into mystical interests.