

Reflections on the Significance of the Fourth Realization

Franklin Merrell-Wolff
August 7, 1972

Today's day is the anniversary of the day in 1936 when I first broke through to the Realization for which I had been searching for something like twenty-four years. Upon this occasion my thoughts naturally return to that event of 36 years ago. It stands in my mind as the justification for the whole life, that it stands above any other possible value to which this life might have been dedicated. The value of that event is such that there is no other value for which I would be willing to exchange it. And that means that none of the achievements of mankind in this world would be of equal value to me—not the filling of any office however high, not the achievement of any material wealth however great, not the achievement of any scientific breakthrough however sweeping in its implications, nothing whatsoever would I be willing to exchange the value of this breakthrough.

Now, that is simply a personal evaluation. What it may mean to others is another question altogether. But it answers the questions that badger life so far as I am concerned. It resolves the doubts connected with death. It resolves, also, the doubts connected with the nature of existence or the nature of being. It led to the answers of the most fundamental metaphysical questions. And I submit, if one does not have these answers, no attainment in this world however high in honor, possession, or achievement has any real worth, for beyond the game of outer life, if there is doubt and uncertainty as to that which lies beyond the grave, then all these achievements are only vain.

At this time it may be well to return once more and review something of the significance of that event. I have developed the report of the significance of the Realizations which I have known in the series entitled, *My Philosophy*,¹ and this particular Realization has been considered in a set of three or four of the tapes as it occupies a central position; and yet I find that I have left unformulated one of the most important consequences of that imperience even though I covered much.²

It is characteristic of this imperience, and it is said of others of similar type, that they are essentially ineffable in the central *quale* of their consciousness value; but, it is not, therefore, impossible to say something concerning them; as I have pointed out the valuation already which I placed upon them, that is a certain communication. There is an implication, in fact a body of implications or effects, derived from this imperience which is communicable, and I did so develop these consequences in the tapes referred to. One

¹ See the audio recordings "General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy," parts 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11.

² For the definition of 'imperience', see the audio recordings "General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy," part 10 and "On My Philosophy: Extemporaneous Statement." 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."

has here not only the felt assurance and the delight, but a reasonable basis for the organization of his world view, and all this is something which may be communicated.

I could illustrate the principle of ineffability by an experience in which all or nearly all share. What, for instance, is your experience, the experience of any one of us, with respect to a color, or a sound, an odor, or a taste, or any other immediate sensuous quality? Because there are other individuals who see, hear, smell, taste, and feel, we can develop words or other indicators that can point to these experiences and something is communicated with respect to an incommunicable content. But what does the other one see when he reports a vision of blue? Is it what I see? We could only answer this by a superposition of our consciousness upon that of the other individual. We might find that it is quite a different experience from that which we have. We know that dealing with these elements that come through our senses, particularly those which come through the sense of sight and sound, that for some this supplies the basis for the development of elaborate artistic constructions which carry values of high import to those who have also the same senses functioning; and yet, the reports or values experienced by one who has not cultivated the potentialities of these senses, may be crude in contrast. Clearly the value of the senses means something different for different individuals. And furthermore, let us take the case of the individual born blind and ask ourselves how would we communicate the value or essential *quale* of the experience of color to such a one. That immediate experience, we would find, is incommunicable and, therefore, ineffable in its immediate *quale*; however, indirectly we could communicate something if the individual born blind had the intelligence to grasp the conceptions of the physicist related to the subject of light. He might grasp the general conception of wave, amplitude, and wave rate, and appreciate the fact that corresponding to a certain combination of wave length and wave rate there was an experience called blue, red, yellow, green or what not, and that could be communicated. Here we have a similar principle or quality of ineffability which, nonetheless, in a somewhat similar way can be communicated, and I have tried to do so through the elaboration of a philosophy and a testimony as to its valuation in this consciousness.

For him who is interested, this material is spread out through my writings, particularly the *Pathways Through to Space* and *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*, and, finally, in the current series of tapes, which have perhaps exceeded in volume the material that was written. But for this occasion, I wish to direct our attention to a particular feature that has been considerably neglected. It was not wholly neglected, and I would refer you to the section in *Pathways Through to Space* just preceding the discussion of the High Indifference, and entitled "Beyond Genius." This was a brief reference to a kind of thought which had developed on the occasion of this Realization and which was different from our ordinary thought. To bring this into better perspective, I direct your attention to what we call the conceptual order of cognition. This is the order or characteristic which, I should say, most radically distinguishes man from other creatures. It is that which makes communication possible and all that follows from that. It is the vast body of word forms and of symbols, such as those in mathematics, by which we can communicate with each other. Elsewhere I have discussed the subject of the conceptual form of cognition at considerable length,³ but this is something that has

³ See the audio recording "Perception, Conception, and Introception," part 2.

not been dwelt upon sufficiently. If we look at the simplest types of communication, such as those of a primitive and perhaps even present in the case of animals, a certain sound is made meaning a certain observed situation or felt situation. The animal may warn someone who seeks his food by a growl, and that carries the threat of violent action and tends to be respected by the invading animal. It is a form of communication, but the sound points to an action, to an attitude, to something that belongs in the vital, sensuous order, not something that belongs inherently in the conceptual order. Early speech would seem to be a communication of this sort, a use of sound, and ultimately of organized words, which point to a meaning which is not itself a concept. This is what in the broad sense may be called the pragmatic use of the word or symbol of a conceptual sort.

But in the history of thought, there have been other interpretations of the meaning of the *word* or other conceptual symbols, and I can identify this immediately with the standpoint expressed by the great philosopher Plato who recognized the fact that there were two orders of cognition: one the sensuous, which he regarded as inferior, and the other the conceptual, which he regarded as superior and as even divine. This higher order of thought dealt with universals, and it was characteristic of the contribution of Plato to regard these universals as self-existences and not merely derivatives. This presents two contrasting views concerning the nature of the *idea*, or the *word*, or the *conceptual symbol*. In one case, it is clearly a pointer to a sensual experience and vital interest, and is obviously only instrumental. The other is the viewing of conceptions as being universals and self-existent, as not simply *pointing to*, but *containing* universal values, and even implying the insistence that, for instance, beauty, abstractly considered, preexists the experience of a beautiful object, that goodness preexists the experience of a noble action, that truth preexists the manifestation of a true statement. Here, then, we have a very strong contrast. And it is true that in the history of our race, throughout the Middle Ages there was a division, unresolved, between the proponents of the two positions—one maintaining that words and other conceptual symbols were only pointers to a meaning which existed in reality in the vital and sensuous domain, and the others who maintained that the eternal values were contained within these concepts rather than that the concepts should be viewed as pointers beyond themselves.

In the Middle Ages these two classes of orientations were called the Nominalists and the Realists. This was a very special use of the word ‘realism’ and it must be noted that it is not our common, current usage of the word, which is the point of view that external things, or that which psychologically we would say were the objects of consciousness, were self-existent and essentially independent of consciousness. In contrast, the Realists of the Middle Ages were asserting the reality of the universal conceptions, that they were real and not merely instruments. The other group known as Nominalists asserted that words were only names and had no substance in themselves; they were only pointers to experience in the life stream of sensuous existence.

Now I wish to present a view which will in some measure, it is hoped, accept a certain validity in both standpoints. Let us think of the conceptual zone as having a range between two poles; that at one extreme, the nether realm—the realm in which in some measure the consciousness of the animal and of primitive man overlap—the sound, the grunt, the word points to a meaning which is wholly beyond the word or sound in another domain of consciousness; and that from this beginning there has been an evolution of

conceptuality until at its highest pole the concept becomes a clothing or an involvement of a meaning which may be called the soul of the concept. In the first case, the pointing is to that which lies below thought. In the second case, to a higher kind of thought which transcends the concept by lying deep within it rather than by lying beyond it.

After the breakthrough on the 7th of August 1936, there followed a period of thirty-three days characterized by a state of deep introversion and which would seem to have been one of light trance that was scarcely broken during that period. At the end of those thirty-three days, there was a final, the culminating fifth Realization. During this period there began a time in which I found myself thinking thoughts that thought themselves, that used no words, no symbols, no images. And yet these thoughts were packed tight, tight with pure meaning, a meaning which I could not communicate in their purity and completeness. But if something may be suggested of the character of this kind of thinking, it was autonomous in the sense that it thought itself, and it was most completely satisfactory. It seemed like a streaming thought, as though there were many strands interweaving and flowing, at no moment still. And what it said, I could not say, but it gave the effect of a great satisfaction in the depths of all. Ordinarily, if we deal with a formulated conception, it conveys some meaning. Here conceive of this deeper thought as the meaning without the conceptual dressed or formulation, packed tight and full.

A symbol that would suggest the quality of this thought can be taken from modern theoretical physics. There is the conception of the nuclear sun, to which I have referred elsewhere. It is said that such a sun would be the result of gravitational collapse in the old age of a star when there is no compensating pressure from the breakdown and radiation of what is often called the fuel of the stars. First of all, the hydrogen, which goes through a process that produces helium and releasing certain radiation, and then deeper processes which involve the development of other elements and ultimately their burning, as it were, and this produces an inward pressure conceived as offsetting the gravitational pull drawing all the substance of a star together. But in old age, a star appears to reach a point where all the fuel is consumed and gravitational pull dominates over all else, and the star collapses. The contraction is so great that it is said a mass such as that of our own sun would be reduced to the volume of a sphere with a diameter of only about ten or twelve kilometers. The matter of which this body is composed is only the nuclear portion of the atoms, the electronic surrounding portion would have been driven off, and this becomes an inconceivably dense mass.

Now, let us think of the conceptions with which we deal, in the sense of a conception with an inner soul, as being like the atoms with a nucleus and the surrounding electrons. It is by means of that surrounding cloud of electrons that we produce the identifying word symbols and other conceptual symbols by which we communicate; but the meaning communicated corresponds to the nuclear centers, and when these nuclear centers are compacted into a nuclear sun, we have an inconceivable density or quantity of meaningfulness stripped bare of all form represented by the cloud of electrons.

Now, we may think of this self-generating thought of which I have spoken as such a nucleus which flows endlessly. And what we may express of it may be likened to a cross-section of that complex flow taken at one moment; and that formulation, then, would be true only for that moment. It becomes more or less no longer true for any moment that follows. And now, all that is expressed by man in his sacred writings, those

writings which are called scriptures, *shastras*, and *sutras*, are such statements valid only for the moment at which they are taken. They continue to have use only in the sense that they point to this inner core; but ever and forever there must be new formulation, new incarnation of an inexpressible truth in conceptual forms. There is, thus, no final statement, but ever an advance from that which has been in the past to that which is now and points to the future. This we may call the nuclear truth, the formulation of it in conceptual terms as the aggregation of the electronic sheath surrounding it.