

## Cognition as Unconditioned by Perspective: Extemporaneous Comments

Franklin Merrell-Wolff  
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. . . but first we'll start out with something a little light. Two Sundays ago we were snowbound. We decided to have the meeting anyhow whether there was an audience or not, and we expected no visible audience at least; although later Peggy DeCono did manage to walk up the hill with snow over a foot deep and pretty steep, which is difficult. A little later, much to our surprise, there was a knock on the door—snow all around. I went to the door and he asked if I was Mr. Wolff, and I said yes; and he said he was Mr. Stock from Boston. He had flown out because he read *Pathways*. Later we learned that he tried to find transportation up in Lone Pine and he was told that it was impossible; but he said, so this was reported, that he was going to get up there if he had to swim. He had already come 3,000 miles. Well, he did. He stood for a couple of hours in our grocery store near the meat department. Now, he was a vegetarian; just why he picked the meat department, I do not know. But there he stood, and ultimately one of the men at the meat counter took compassion on him and brought him up in his car as far as he could, which was about a mile from our house. And meanwhile he had received some boots but he was told he had to walk through snow. So, he arrived.

Well, he stayed with us through to Tuesday. Meanwhile the snow had been removed by the county scraper, so it was possible to get down, and he went to Los Angeles. And we find that those he's a married man, he's very discreet in his relationships; he lives in Boston, she in Los Angeles. And he came back the following Sunday, and he said he wanted to come up there and stay. Well, I told him that I made a point of non-acting: that I did not wear robes that were characteristic dress of the Near East about 2,000 years ago; that I did not live in a loin cloth of the East Indians; and that I was a Westerner, born in the West, and I liked the spirit of the frontier, and I live in an area which is as much of a frontier as you can get at the present time, and I like it that way; that I eat meat; and that I smoke. And that he approved of even though he was a vegetarian. So he wants to return, and I said we hold that while it is well to have your head in the clouds, you should keep your feet on the ground, and that you should look after the problems of the mundane order as well as your interests in the supermundane. So he said he would go back and earn some money from his business before he would return sometime later this year.

When we took him down on Tuesday, which is our usual time, the snow having been removed by the county, I got a letter from somebody in Berkeley, California, and the writer of this letter said he was an admirer of Shankara also and if I still kept a body parked in this world, he'd like to come over and see it. Well, I suggested to Gertrude that she might answer him this way: yes I have a chassis still parked in this world, but, however, it's approaching vintage age, and while I do not at present intend to put it up for auction to sell to the highest bidder, he still would be welcome to come over and have a look at it. So that is the background of recent events.

Now, in as much as the tape that I'd planned for this evening somehow didn't get into the container, I face the punishment of having to reproduce the essential content of it here and now. On the occasion of giving the last of two tapes on "Absolute Consciousness," which you may remember, there was quite an argument brought up by Peter Geshell on the possibility of such a thing as a Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject.<sup>1</sup> He said he could not find from analysis anything like that and he maintained that necessarily consciousness must be a function of a knower, which of course is the usual psychological point of view. Well, I appreciate honest statement, and if a person finds what I have said is not palatable, I prefer that they should speak out; and I don't object to a critical statement. Oftentimes it results in my producing a tape or a series of tapes. As a matter of fact, praise does not produce any tapes, but criticism does; although I enjoy the praise. So this led to a tape—and I think it's pretty important—and I entitled it "Cognition Unconditioned by Perspective."

Now, we go on to point out these facts. No doubt, consciousness as ordinarily understood is a function of a cognizer. That would correspond to the consciousness as discussed in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* that is called *shes-rig*, the form of consciousness that is aware of phenomena. The ordinary subject-object consciousness, or relative consciousness, is a function of an entity, and if you simply analyze your consciousness that's as far as you can get. Dr. Jung in his "Psychological Commentary" prefacing *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* speaks of the fact that the author of the *sutra* in there speaks of a consciousness which is without a center, namely, a self, and Jung goes on to say he could not imagine this kind of consciousness, which is understandable enough; but then he goes on to say that the unconscious, the collective unconscious of psychology, does not seem to have a center either. In fact, there are good reasons for saying that it does not have a center.<sup>2</sup> Now, if you combine that with a statement by Sri Aurobindo to the effect that when we speak of the unconscious we really mean another kind of consciousness, then that would imply that there is a recognition of a consciousness that does not have a center.<sup>3</sup> But that one cannot imagine it is quite understandable. If you have no background of an immediate experience then you cannot imagine the content of that immediate experience. A man born blind, for instance, who has had no subjective experience of color could not possibly imagine color nor could he by analysis derive color. Only if he somehow acquired sight and then had the immediate experience of color would he have the power to imagine color.

Now, here you must distinguish between two forms of our cognition. There is that which is given through immediacy and which depends upon immediacy, and that applies

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<sup>1</sup> See the audio recordings, "Absolute Consciousness," parts 1 and 2.

<sup>2</sup> W. Y. Evans-Wentz, ed., *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), xxxviii-xxxix.

<sup>3</sup> Aurobindo Ghose, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, vol. 20 of the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centennial Library* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 1970), 370:

What we call unconsciousness is simply other-consciousness; it is the going in of this surface wave of our mental awareness of outer objects into our subliminal self-awareness and into our awareness too of other planes of existence. We are really no more unconscious when we are asleep or stunned or drugged or "dead" or in any other state, than when we are plunged in inner thought oblivious of our physical selves and our surroundings.

to all our sensuous experience before it's interpreted. Then we have that part of our consciousness that deals with relationships, the syntactical element in consciousness, which is the basis of all relations including logic and the conception of law. Your immediate element is that which gives the terms in the consciousness. An immediate experience, say, of any of the objects in this room is fundamental to giving us an immediate starting point. Now, an immediacy is beyond dispute so long as no judgment is made concerning it. Immediacy is its own authority. The content of immediacy is unquestionable. It is bare fact. When you come to interpreting the content of immediacy, then you come into another field and you may reach conclusions that will not stand up under questioning and so forth. But before there's any judgment made about an immediate content in experience it is categorical. It is without question. It is fact. And I would point out that in this sense that which we call a real sensuous experience, and that which we call a mirage, and that which we call an hallucination, stand on the same level of factuality so long as there is no interpretation or judgment made about them. If, however, you make a judgment in the case of a real experience, like that of seeing a lake—as soon as I've used the word 'lake' I've even interpreted the experience, bear that in mind. In its raw immediacy it's just an indeterminate *that* down there. But I can make judgments about it and one of them could be there is a source of water that I can drink, or water into which I can swim, and so forth. I go down and the experience I expect is confirmed. Now, if I do that with a mirage, I'll get into trouble. First of all I'll never get to the lake; it will recede. And if it's on a desert I may have so far diverted myself from a wise course of action that I would die from thirst. And the same with a hallucination, if I interpret it as a series of events in the world of our normal relationships and act accordingly, the results of that action will not be satisfactory. Error comes into the picture when we bring in judgment, but there's no error, no difference of factuality, in the pure experience itself when there's no interpretation imposed upon it. So, the senses, we may say, never lie—I'm really quoting Kant now—not because they always judge correctly, but because they do not judge at all.<sup>4</sup>

Now, here I'm pointing out two lines that are essential in our cognitions: the element which I've called immediacy, which ordinarily is from sense experience, and that part of our consciousness that deals with relationship. But I spoke of the man born blind; he could not imagine blue because he had no basis of experience. You cannot imagine those things for which you have no immediate basis at all; and that is one reason why there are those that cannot understand *Pathways* even though they are intelligent people. They do not have what is called the "referent." Referent is a term introduced by Korzybski in his *Science and Sanity*, in which he pointed out that the ultimate meaning of our concepts, in the ordinary relationships, is a sensuous existence. If I use the concept table, its real meaning is not found in the dictionary, which merely gives other conceptions that are related to table, but the real meaning is that. That's the referent. Now, when I touch that table, I step over into a different order of cognition from that which I am employing in this discourse to the sensuous order. There are nice

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<sup>4</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Max Muller (New York: Macmillan, 1881), 293:

Still less can *appearance* and *illusion* be taken as identical. For truth or illusion is not to be found in the objects of intuition, but in the judgments upon them, so far as they are thought. It is therefore quite right to say, that the senses never err, not because they always judge rightly, but because they do not judge at all.

questions as to the relationship between these two orders of cognition, but this all falls in the world of our ordinary psychology.

There is another order of immediacy, and here we come into the crux of the matter. I might go back to my days in the seminar in the Harvard Graduate School of Philosophy where we had a seminar in metaphysics. There was one brilliant young man there, a Scotsman, who was winding up his fourth year of graduate study, taking his degree, who wrote a paper of a kind of modified Vedanta, and was able to defend it against all criticism brought up by the members of the seminar, and that impressed me.<sup>5</sup> But the thing that was born into my mind, that there must be another organ of cognition other than sense perception and conceptual cognition. The result was that ultimately I withdrew from the academic world and spent 24 years in a search that eventuated successfully. And from the standpoint of epistemology—and this you might say was an epistemological motivation for entering the yogic search, for I felt that if our two recognized organs, faculties, or functions of cognition are not the whole of our resources in cognition, then our philosophic view of the world must be incomplete, quite inadequate. Therefore, it is very important to determine that there is such. Testimony from India, from other sources, seemed to indicate it to be true.

Now, there's something daring in this, for if you go through the history of both Western and Eastern philosophy, generally they recognize only two functions of cognition, namely, sense perception and conceptual cognition. The Buddhist logicians Dignaga and Dharmakirti both affirm that. Dignaga on his book has an aphorism on the outside to the effect there are two and only two organs of cognition—sense perception and conceptual cognition. In the book there is one place where there's a hint of something more. I don't know why they didn't follow it up. They give one exception—the cognition of the saint. But they dismiss that as not in the range of our analysis of the functions of cognition. I think they missed something important there. At any rate, when you presume to go beyond the two recognized forms of cognition, you're on pioneering ground, as it were. Aurobindo does definitely, but there Aurobindo is not among the older writers, and in those days I knew nothing of Aurobindo in any case—not until 1949. And the result was that there was a breakthrough—I've outlined it in other tapes—and determined that there is another form of immediacy which is not sensuous. To express it, I called it *knowledge through identity*. At the time I did not know the term was used by anybody else—not until the Christmas of '49 did I receive the volume *The Life Divine* of Aurobindo as a present, and looked through the table of contents, and I found a chapter “Knowledge by Identity.” I was immediately interested in that book. This however is strictly non-sensuous, and it is not conceptual. It is immediate.

Now I'll have to remind you of the last two Realizations to introduce the point that is important for this dissertation. I sought by self-effort and self-devised means the Realization that finally broke through on August 7, 1936. There were reasons why I had a strong feeling that I'd find the key to it in Deussen's *System of the Vedanta*, which is an interpretation with extensive quotations of Shankara's work *Commentary on the Brahma Sutras*. On that 7th of August, I had the impulse to turn to the section on Liberation. This was after 24 years of a groping search. All of a sudden it dawned upon me that I am

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<sup>5</sup> See the audio recording, “On My Philosophy: Extemporaneous Statement,” for a reference to this student by the name of Mr. Rattray.

already that which I seek, and therefore I gave up the search, and at that moment the doors opened. It was Self-Realization, the pattern of Shankara. I sought it. I'd even been told that I had to find it for myself. Then one whom we had communication with by *tulku* means, one that we'd called Senior—the one I referred to in *Pathways* as the Atlantean Sage, for he said his last incarnation was in Poseidonis, but he was still functioning in what he called the subtle world dealing with world problems here—he said watch for a cycle involving the number thirty-three. Well, of course, cycle suggests time. I didn't know thirty-three what—days, weeks, months, years, centuries for that matter. It proved to be thirty-three days. Then there walked into my consciousness—it came in of itself—something that I didn't know existed. I wasn't seeking it.

Now, I followed the line suggested in *The Voice of the Silence* and the Kwan-Yin vow, which involved the renunciation of the fruits of the Self-Realization for the reasons given in *The Voice of the Silence* where it says make not the stream which flows from Sumeru a private pond, but make of yourself a new streambed through which it can flow to all creatures.<sup>6</sup> In other words, not flow *to* you but *through* you. *The Voice of the Silence* says it's a renunciation without compensation and for unnumbered *kalpas* and a *kalpa* is 4,320,000,000 years. It looks like the act of supreme austerity. Yet after thirty-three days there came a compensation that was most adequate; and I said to Senior, how is this? Well, those words were put into *The Voice of the Silence* so that the renunciation will be sincere, but he says the law of compensation can never be violated. Well, that initiated—it was initiation because I wasn't seeking it, pure initiation of a Consciousness which developed over several hours during the night. At its culminating point, I saw, in the eye of the mind, the object of consciousness and the subject to consciousness vanishes into the Consciousness itself. This was not something derived by speculative thought, not a conception projected out of the imagination. It happened. This was the high point of the development of that experience that night, and it became a philosophic revolution in my thinking.

So when certain psychologists say that the mystical state of consciousness produces no knowledge, that he who enters into a mystical state of consciousness takes in with him all the knowledge he brings out, I know that they don't know what they are talking about. It may be that in many cases the knowledge is no different from that which they take in; so, thus, a Catholic mystic seems to confirm, on the whole, Catholic dogma, the Protestant mystic seems to confirm the Protestant point of view, and the

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<sup>6</sup> H. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence* (Los Angeles: The Theosophy Company, 1928), 72-73:

Would'st thou thus dam the waters born on Sumeru? Shalt thou divert the stream for thine own sake, or send it back to its prime source along the crests of cycles?

If thou would'st have that stream of hard-earn'd knowledge, of Wisdom heaven-born, remain sweet running waters, thou should'st not leave it to become a stagnant pond.

Know, if of Amitabha, the "Boundless Age", thou would'st become co-worker, then must thou shed the light acquired, like to the Bodhisattvas twain, upon the span of all three worlds.

Know that the stream of superhuman knowledge and the Deva-Wisdom thou hast won, must, from thyself, the channel of Alaya be poured forth into another bed.

Know, O Narjol, thou of the Secret Path, its pure fresh waters must be used to sweeter make the Ocean's bitter waves—that mighty sea of sorrow formed of the tears of men.

Mohammedan mystic, the background of Mohammedan teachings, and so on. To a degree that does happen. These same men, and the men that I referred to would be John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, James H. Leuba, and he refers to two others, Cox and Delareaux,<sup>7</sup> who have taken this position. They acknowledge that the state has a value for feeling; that it has a value for character building, and so forth; but deny that it is a source of knowledge. I know perfectly well that that is not true, because my whole philosophic outlook was altered with this “imperience,” to use Erma’s term, and that new knowledge can come from it. So the philosophy of Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject is knowledge born out of that state. Now, I know perfectly well I could not have imagined that beforehand, therefore I do not wonder that Peter Geshell could not imagine it. This comes as an immediate awareness. It is initiation in the true sense of the word as a beginning of a way.

Now, what is involved is equivalent to a Copernican change. I refer to this at different times, and I will refer briefly to it again so that you may know it. In astronomy the older system that we inherited from antiquity was the Ptolemaic system in which the coordinates of reference were fixed with respect to the earth, and when the coordinates are so fixed, the sun goes around the earth with respect to those coordinates. That’s the way it looks to us, and every time today when we say that the sun rises and the sun sets, we are reverting to the Ptolemaic point of view. Copernicus took a different set of coordinates. I’m using mathematical language now. He took the sun and the ecliptic as his base of reference for studying the relationships of the planetary system. With respect to that system of coordinates the earth goes around the sun, and so do all of the planets. Which one is true? And this may be a startling answer. Both are true with respect to their base of reference. If you take the earth as your base of reference, it is true that the sun goes around the earth with respect to those coordinates. This is the sort of thing we do in mathematics right along. But if you take the Copernican base of reference, which is the ecliptic and the sun, the earth goes around the sun. Now, we can take a third base of reference, which is done in dealing with large systems like galaxies, namely, the Milky Way. With respect to that the sun is not a fixed body in space, but a body that’s moving with respect to a center in the galaxy; and the earth follows a path which would be something like a spiral, not that of an ellipse of low eccentricity, almost a circle with perturbations. The truth of your statement in each case is relative to a base of reference, a perspective, or a standpoint. And that’s something to bear in mind in all the use of our language here in this world. In most cases we do not have explicit knowledge of the base we have chosen, but we speak from a base of reference and our statements are true, if true, only with respect to that base, not with respect to some other base of reference. And probably many an argument between people grows out of the fact that they speak from different bases of reference, and those arguments are futile. Determine your base of reference first before you can have a successful discussion.

Now, our knowledge, all of it, in the relative sense is conditioned by reference to standpoint. We might call this perspective. It’s also conditioned by the factor of time sequence. It’s also conditioned by the fact that our cognitions here are dualistic. We do not know anything in a relative sense save by contrast with its opposite. We cannot know up except by contrast with down; right except by contrast with left; all the points of the

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<sup>7</sup> Wolff meant to say, “. . . Coe and Delacroix, . . . ”

compass, the same way; we cannot know good except by contrast with evil. That's characteristic of dualistic consciousness. And everything here is conditioned in at least these three ways, but I'm going to deal particularly with the factor of perspective, which is related to base of reference.

First of all, we think of perspective as related to the eye, and if you look for instance at Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper," and look at the room, not so much at the figures, you'll notice a very strong impression of depth there. This contrasts with the older Oriental art which is two-dimensional and has no perspective—a point brought out by, oh the author of *Meeting of East and West*—his name slips my mind at the moment. It's a well-known book.

Participant: Northrop.

Wolff: Hmm?

Participant: Northrop. Northrop.

Wolff: Northrop. Yeah, right. Thank you.

There's a question in one's mind whether this is more superficial because there's no depth in that painting or whether it is more profound as we may see later. At any rate, seen from the human eye, we see in terms of perspective, but does that give us reality as it is in itself? There's good reason for believing that it does not, that the world we see—that we cognize, I'll put it that way; it depends upon perspective of a self viewing a world—not the eye now, that's merely to illustrate the point—but we view it from the standpoint of a cognizing self. And we can see, I think without much difficulty, how inevitably that brings distortion into the picture, that we are not cognizing reality as it is in itself, but as it appears from the standpoint of a cognizing self. It's also conditioned by the time factor and also by the duality factor. Therefore it would follow that our views based upon relative consciousness, subject-object consciousness, or *shes-rig* alone, do not give us reality as reality is in itself, but give us what is in some measure at least a *maya*. But to know the real as the real is in itself, one would have to have a Consciousness that is not oriented to a center or self, that only by this Consciousness which I call Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject, but which in *The Secret Doctrine* was called Absolute Consciousness and in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is called *Rig-pa*, only from that perspective—or that non-perspective cognition, could we know the real as it really is.

Now, I can hear an objection being brought up; cognition as *Rig-pa* is not cognition of phenomena. Now a little quotation from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*:

Thine own consciousness, unformed into anything, wholly void, and thy intellect, flaming bright and blissful,—these two,—are inseparable. The union of these two is the *Dharma-Kaya*, *Dharma-Kaya* of perfect Liberation.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> W. Y. Evans-Wentz, ed., *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 96. The text actually reads: "Thine own consciousness, not formed into anything, in reality void, and the intellect, shining and blissful,—these two,—are inseparable. The union of them is the *Dharma-Kaya* state of Perfect Enlightenment."

The key point here is the union of pure Field Consciousness, or Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject, and *shes-rig*. The authors translated *Rig-pa* as consciousness and *shes-rig* as intellect. I have made some criticism of that interpretation, however, just bear that in mind, that's what they mean by the intellect is the *shes-rig*—the consciousness that is aware of phenomena, the consciousness that is centered, is subject-object. The combination of these two, the union of them, is the *Dharma-Kaya* of perfect Liberation. By the introduction of the *shes-rig*, or what they translated as intellect, in combination with the Root Consciousness, or *Rig-pa*, you have the possibility of awareness of phenomena, but with the background of *Rig-pa*, or Absolute Consciousness, or Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject, you would have cognition of reality as it is in itself, not distorted by perspective, not distorted by time sequence, and not distorted by dualism. And that is what I mean by cognition not conditioned by perspective.

I've developed it somewhat differently from what it is on the tape.

Participant: This afternoon you were speaking of thought that becomes ever more and more subtle.

Wolff: Hmm?

Participant: This afternoon you were speaking of thought that becomes ever and ever more subtle—

Wolff: Yes.

Participant: —but always remains thought and that that which we are seeking is beyond thought.

Wolff: That is true, and yet you can always advance closer. You know, there is that which is beyond thought, but the ordinary popular view that you think so far and all of a sudden the power of thought stops wouldn't be the correct picture. It's rather by applying the principle of theory of limits, and this is present in converging infinite series. The simple example I've referred to before is the sum of  $1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{8}$  and so on, which approaches a limiting value of 2. It never would be more than 2, but it never will reach 2 except with an infinite number of steps. So, thought can be advanced indefinitely, progress indefinitely, and yet cannot cross a certain limit. Now it so happens that in the case of the illustration of the sum that comes out 2, we're dealing with quantities that get very, very small in the upper reaches, but the values of your subtilized thought do not necessarily become insignificant. Those steps are not necessarily without significance even though they cannot exceed that line, which we may say is the line-pass-not for thought. You can drive thought further than it has ever been driven before. That possibility always remains with us.

Participant: Can I ask a question? When you were saying conscious of phenomena, alright, is it still phenomena when you had this cognition unconditioned by perspective, okay, that it challenges—

Wolff: Well, phenomena—



Participant: —consciousness. It is no longer phenomena in the phenomena sense though, is it?

Wolff: Well, we must assume that the *Dharma-Kaya*, or the Buddha, can be aware of this world. To be aware of this world—to be aware of the people in it and the events in it means an awareness of phenomena.

Participant: Alright. But you earlier on then ruled out the idea of the referent remaining what we conventionally think of the referent as being, alright, that is centered somewhere.

Wolff: Yes.

Participant: So in a sense, then, what you seem to be—what I get from it is that, is that, um, uh, you, you're talking about a merging of—in other words your subject is nowhere and your object is nowhere, your subject is everywhere, anywhere it wants to be, and your object is anywhere—

Wolff: In other word, you see this—you mustn't get the view that one is immersed in pure Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject; that it rather is a Field Consciousness upon which the whole drama of existence plays. It remains during the periods of *Pralaya*, withdrawal, and so forth, but the drama is played within and upon the Field Consciousness, which is called Absolute Consciousness in *The Secret Doctrine*.

Participant: Do you see any connection between the kind of thing that, the ideas, whatever you, concepts, whatever it is (I don't know the right word.) that you're developing and the deep sleep state?

Wolff: And what?

Participant: —the deep sleep state that's referred to in—

Wolff: Yes.

Participant: —*The Transactions* or—

Wolff: Yes.

Participant: —or even—

Wolff: Deep, dreamless sleep.

Participant: Yes.

Wolff: Yes. Your deep, dreamless sleep is an experience of Absolute Consciousness.

Participant: Yes.

Wolff: But you haven't assimilated it so that you can be conscious on that level.

Participant: Yes. But suppose that one on this level of consciousness would have that, right? I mean there is a very definite connection at a conscious level. We're not conscious of the deep, dreamless sleep state, but one who was able to do this would be, in fact, conscious of that deep, dreamless sleep state. Is that a tie?

Wolff: Yes, that in other words it would be possible to be aware that it was not simply unconsciousness.

Participant: Mm. Mm-hmm. But you're saying, then, that from your different reference points, your standpoints, at first there seems to be sense data, then a rational cognitive reference, where one can make relationships and give content to these relationships.

Wolff: Yeah.

Participant: Then you go into this higher state of consciousness where there is no content, no cognitive content.

Wolff: That's, that's true. At the same time you can have cognitive content.

Participant: At the same time?

Wolff: Yes, both existing at the same time; two kinds of consciousness existing at the same time. Remember the quotation from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* said, "these two,—are inseparable." So your isolation—you, if you were to go—

Participant: You could be conscious, then, of even the sense data, as well as the cognitive contents, as well as that without content?

Wolff: Yes. Yes, your whole field; the whole complex awareness.

Participant: How do you do it?

Wolff: Well, I somehow knew a technique I never learned in this life, but when I needed it I knew how to do it; and that was a sort of conscious division of consciousness where you leave the relative consciousness on the sidelines while another part of the consciousness goes through the stages, the steps, and the portion on the sideline keeps the record. That renders blackout trance unnecessary; and there is a danger in blackout trance if you are alone. Of course, if you had a personal guru to pull you out, it would be alright. But if you're alone, you could get locked in it. It is said in the biography of Ramakrishna that he was locked in for six months one time. And HPB refers to a case of a yogin who was found in the forest in that *padmasana* posture. He had been there so long that roots of a tree had grown through his legs. They cut him out and tried to awaken him and killed him in the process.

Participant: And there is also the case of Duns Scotus the medieval philosopher who was in that kind of a trance, and they entombed him, buried him in a tomb, and he woke up out of that.

Wolff: Now, that was an undesirable thing—

Participant: Well no, not really, because when he awakened, they heard noises in the tomb and so they went in there, but in the meantime he had—no one knows whether he had gone insane or not—but he had eaten some of the flesh from his arm or he may have well have died.

Participant: I know that blackout trance—

Participant: —he was—

Wolff: That would be what I would think, so far as my consciousness goes on the subject, or my knowledge. At any rate, this division in consciousness seems to take the place of it, and if you'll remember, K.H. in *The Mahatma Letters* refers to different ways

and he speaks of one that seems very much like this. So that you carry two lines of consciousness, one that is recording events—it enables you to keep these events in memory and to write of them afterwards—and at no time are you locked in. I wouldn't advise a person ever to go into a trance in which he blacks out completely so far as this plane is concerned unless he's near one who can bring him out. That would be a qualified guru in that field.

Participant: In one place or another, I believe, she speaks of the known states of consciousness that we're all apparently familiar with here, like being awake, being asleep, and at least we have some sense of the deep sleep state, and then she said there's trance, the *turya* state, and *samadhi*—induced trance, I'm sorry, just, you know, the induced trance is lower than trance. Is that right? Do you recall that? Have you read that?

Wolff: You mean induced trance?

Participant: Well, no, that Blavatsky speaks of seven states of consciousness—

Wolff: Yes.

Participant: —in that sense.

Wolff: Yes. Now, I don't get your question.

Participant: Well, I, I was, I was, um, the distinction between, uh—alright, induced trance, that makes a certain sense, but then trance, and in this *turya* consciousness, *t u r y a*, as I recall.

Wolff: Yes, given as just below *nirvanic* state.

Participant: *Samadhi*?

Wolff: Hmm.

Participant: Below *Samadhi*? Well, see that's out of my reference.

Participant: There are different degrees of *Samadhi* . . .

Wolff: Oh yes. Well, maybe, is there some refreshment?

Participant: Mm-Hmm.