

# **The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object**

A Discussion of the Nature of Transcendental Consciousness

by Franklin Merrell-Wolff

Part 4 of 25

## **PART I**

### **The Ground of Knowledge**

#### **CHAPTER 2**

##### **A Mystical Unfoldment**

(continued)

11. There is also associated with the deep feeling of Joy a quality of *Benevolence*. It seems as though the usual self-interest, which tends to be highly developed in the midst of the struggles of objective life, spontaneously undergoes a weakening in force. It is not so much a feeling of active altruism as a being grounded in a kind of consciousness in which the conflict between self-interest and altruism is dissolved. It is more a feeling of interest in good being achieved than simply that I, as an individual, should realize the good. Before the attainment of the Recognition I felt a distinct desire for the attainment of good as something which I, individually, might realize, but once I became identified in consciousness with the transcendent state, the individually self-centered motivation began to weaken. It is as though there is a spreading out of interest so that attainment on the part of any self is my concern as truly as my own individual attainment had been. There is not the usual sense of self-sacrifice in this, but, rather, a growing impersonality of outlook. In such a state of consciousness one could readily accept a course of action that would involve personal hardship, if only it would serve the purpose of bringing the realization more generally within the range of attainment. It is not a motivation in which the thought of heroism, nobility, or reward plays any part. It simply seems to be the appropriate and sensible course to follow if circumstances indicate that it is necessary. All this is a spontaneous affective state born out of the very nature of the consciousness itself, without thought of an ethical imperative. In the more deflated states of consciousness, I find the force of the feeling considerably weakened, and then it becomes necessary to translate it into the form of a moral imperative to set up a resistance to the old egoistic habits. But on the higher level the moral imperative is replaced by a spontaneous tendency which, when viewed from the relative standpoint, would be called benevolent.

The underlying rationale of this induced attitude seems clear to me. When the "I" is realized as a sort of universal or "spatial" Self, synthesizing all selves, the distinction between the "me" and the "thou" simply becomes irrelevant. Thus the

good of one self is part and parcel with the good of all selves. Consequently, altruism and self-interest come to mean essentially the same thing.<sup>17</sup>

12. Associated with the transcendent Life-force there is a very curious kind of *cognition*. It is not the more familiar analytic kind of intellection. To me this development has proved to be of especial interest, for by temperament and training my mental action, heretofore, has been predominantly analytic. Now, analysis achieves its results through a laborious and painful dissection of given raw material from experience and a reintegration by means of invented concepts applied hypothetically. This gives only external relations and definitely involves “distance” between the concept and the object it denotes. But there is another kind of intellection in which the concept is born spontaneously and has a curious identity with its object. The Life-force either brings to birth in the mind the concepts without conscious intellectual labor or moves in parallelism with such birth. Consequently, when these concepts are viewed analytically and critically, I find them almost invariably peculiarly correct. In fact, they generally suggest correlations that are remarkably clarifying and have enabled me to check my insight with the recognition of others.

Undoubtedly, this cognitive process is a phase of what has been called “intuition” by many. For my part, however, I do not find this term wholly satisfactory, because “intuition” has been given a number of meanings which are not applicable to this kind of cognition. Accordingly, I have invented a term which seems much more satisfactory. I call it “*Knowledge through Identity*.” As it is immediate knowledge, it is intuitive in the broad sense, but as it is highly noetic, it is to be distinguished from other forms of immediate awareness that are largely, if not wholly, non-cognitive. There are intuitive types of awareness that are quite allogical and, therefore, such that they do not lead to logical development from out

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<sup>17</sup> The first time I experienced the consciousness of benevolence certain consequences were striking. At the time, I was sitting in a very humble shack, quite alone, located on one of the creeks of the Mother Lode country of east central California. Insects and other creatures were rather over-familiar companions. Spiders, scorpions, daddy-long-legs (in great numbers), centipedes, slugs, gnats, and rattlesnakes were creatures one could never safely forget. But when the state of benevolence was superimposed upon my own private consciousness, it included all these creatures as much as any other. My goodwill included them equally with more evolved beings, and there was nothing forced in the attitude. It was no conscious moral victory, but just a state of natural feeling. This state of immediate feeling is transient just as is true of other phases [earthquake all right] of mystical states of consciousness. [Parenthetically I will remark, we have just passed through an earthquake while dictating this book.] But it leaves a permanent effect upon the moral judgment. One can no longer kill anything, no matter how repulsive or destructive it may seem, without a feeling of guilt. This definitely increases the difficulty of objective life. For when the individual sees the objective realities clearly, he finds that there is no embodied living in this world which does not imply killing, and, therefore, guilt. The farmer must destroy the enemies of his plants and stock, or have the latter destroyed, and without the farmer no man has food. And then, within our blood there is constant war, with tiny creatures being killed and devoured all the time. Hence, all life here depends upon the taking of life. It is a very ugly world that comes into view when the blinders are removed from the eyes. Saints (who continue to live) and vegetarians share the guilt with all the rest. The amount of guilt does vary, of course, but difference of degree is not a difference of principle. All men who live in this world inevitably share guilt, and thus there are none who may cast the first stone. There are none who may sit in judgment upon others, unless at the same time they judge themselves and accept the sentence along with the others. Release from guilt lies only in the Beyond.

their own nature. In contrast, Knowledge through Identity is potentially capable of expansive development of the type characteristic of pure mathematics. Knowledge through Identity may give the fundamental propositions or “indefinable” from which systems can grow at once by pure deductive process. Knowledge through Identity is not to be regarded as an analytic extraction from experience, but rather as a Knowledge which is original and coextensive with a Recognizable, but non-experiential, Reality. It is capable of rendering experience intelligible, but is not itself dependent upon experience.

A realization of Knowledge through Identity does not seem to be an invariable, or even usual, consequence of mystical unfoldment. My studies of the record have led me to the tentative conclusion that it occurs in the case of certain types of mystical unfoldment, of which Spinoza, Plotinus, and Shankara afford instances. In such cases the cognitive interest and capacity is peculiarly notable. But the larger class of cases in which the mystical sense is well developed seems to be of quite a different type. The well-known Persian mystics, presumptively the larger number of the Indian mystics, most of the Christian mystics, and naturalistic mystics such as Whitman, seem quite clearly to fall into some other classification or classifications. With all of these the affective consciousness is dominant and the cognitive interest and capacity may be—though not necessarily—but poorly developed. With them, expression is almost wholly in terms of art or way of life, rather than in terms of philosophical systems. Apparently, the noetic quality of their mystical consciousness is quite subordinate to the affective, and in some cases, even to the sensuous, values.

13. *Atypical features.* There are certain respects in which the precipitated effects from the transcendent consciousness, as experienced by me, differ from typical mystical experience. I have not known the so-called automatisms, a class of psychical manifestations which are so commonly reported. My psychical organization does not seem to be of the type requisite for this kind of experience. I have never heard words coming as though uttered on another level of being and having the seeming of objective sound. Even thought has not seemed to come from a source extraneous to myself. I have thought more deeply and more trenchantly than has hitherto been possible for me as personal man, but the sense of intimate union with the thought has been greater than was ever true of the former personal thinking. Never has my thought been less mediumistic. Formerly, my personal thought has often been a reflection of a thought originated by someone else and not fully made my own before I used it. There is a certain kind of mediumship in this, although in this sense practically everybody is a medium part of the time and many all the time. The thought which I have found born in the Recognition is non-mediumistic in the strictest sense, since it is MY thought but more than my *personal* thought.

There never has been at any time a writing through my hand in an automatic sense. What I have written has been my own conscious thought, with full consciousness of the problems of word selection and grammatical construction. The effective words and the correct constructions I find myself able to produce

much more easily than formerly, but there is a conscious selective effort required at all times.<sup>18</sup>

When in the field of the “Life-force” the action of the understanding is both more profound and more trenchant than when in the “deflated” state, but the difference is one of degree and not of two radically separated and discontinuous states of consciousness of such a nature that the inferior consciousness is quite incapable of understanding what is written under the guidance of the higher. The inferior phase of consciousness, when operating by itself, does not understand as easily nor does it have as wide a grasp of the bearings of the thought. But, in some degree, the inferior phase readily becomes more or less infused with the superior by the simple application of effort to understand. The effect is analogous to the superposition of two rays of light, with both of which I am identical, the resultant being an intensified consciousness which is at the same time relative and transcendent, in some way that is not wholly clear to introspective analysis.

These states of Recognition have never been associated with the so-called photisms. They most certainly had Light-value, and I frequently have occasion to use the word “Light” to express an important quality of the higher consciousness, but this is “Light” as an illuminating force in consciousness and not a sensible light apparently seen as with the eyes. There have been a very few of these so-called photisms when in a kind of dreaming state when half asleep, but these have not occurred at times close to the periods of the deeper Recognitions.

Never have I had the experience of the type commonly called psychical clairvoyance. It is possible that the strength of my intellectual interest operates as a barrier to this kind of experience. I admit having an interest in such experience and would consider it a valuable object of study if it came my way. But I would not tolerate such a capacity for experience if the price exacted was a growth of confusion in understanding. On the whole, psychical clairvoyance seems to be quite frequently associated with mystical unfoldment, perhaps more the rule than the exception. There even seems to be some tendency to confuse this clairvoyance with genuine mystical value. However, the two are by no means identical, nor are they necessarily associated.

I have found that there is a very important difference between psychical experience and noetic Recognition. The transcendent consciousness is highly noetic, but on its own level is quite impersonal. In order that a correlation may be established between the personal consciousness and the transcendental state, there must be an

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<sup>18</sup> There is at times a spontaneous upwelling which leads to the most effective production, but at the same time there is a conscious selection and judging upon the part of the mind that was trained in the schools. The resultant product is thus a joint product of deeper and more superficial levels, both part of myself. I might suggest this compound action by a figure. If we were to think of the mental accumulations of a lifetime as being filed away in a sort of hall of records in which there is only a dim illumination so that, ordinarily, much of the material is hard to locate, and therefore not easily used, the state of illumination is like a brilliant light suddenly appearing in that hall which renders everything filed, at once available. The light has the additional effect of leading well nigh unerringly to the most appropriate selection of the material which is pertinent to the problem in hand. The once known and forgotten tends to become known again, and all this without laborious trying.

active and conscious intermediating agent. The evidence is that this intermediating agent may be, and apparently generally is, an irrational psyche of which the individual is more or less conscious. But the intermediation may be intellectual with little or no conscious correlation with the irrational psyche. It seems practically certain that the precipitated effects within the personal consciousness by the two routes should not be congruent in form.

14. If *ecstasy* is to be regarded as a state of consciousness always involving a condition of trance, then that state of consciousness which I have realized and called “transcendental Recognition” is not one of ecstasy. However, there is considerable reason for believing that Ecstasy, or *Samadhi*—the Indian equivalent—are not necessarily associated with trance. It becomes very largely a question of the basis of classification. If the externally discernible marks or symptoms of a state are to be regarded as determinate, then ecstasy, as ordinarily conceived, is a trance or a trance-like condition. But if the inner consciousness-value is to be the ground of classification, then there is excellent evidence that Ecstasy or *Samadhi* may be realized without trance.<sup>19</sup> The latter basis of classification seems to me to be of far more significance, for the external symptoms of trance mark widely different inner states of consciousness, such as those of hysteria, mediumship, and hypnosis, as well as Ecstasy in the higher sense.

By subsequent comparison it appears that the noetic and consciousness values which I have realized have a very great deal in common with those reported by Plotinus as characteristic of the state of Ecstasy. I find a marked congruency between my present outlook and that given in the teachings of Buddha and in the writings of Shankara. But neither of these men regarded the state of trance as necessary for the realization of the states they called *Dhyana* or *Samadhi*, although Buddha seemed to have no objection in principle to the use of trance as a means of attaining the higher state of consciousness. It seems rather clear that the state of the personal organism is a matter of only secondary importance, while other factors are primarily determinant.

For my own part, never in my life have I lost objective consciousness, save in normal sleep. At the time of the Recognition on August 7, 1936, I was at all times aware of my physical environment and could move the body freely at will. Further, I did not attempt to stop the activity of the mind, but simply very largely ignored the stream of thought. There was, however, a “fading down” of the objective consciousness, analogous to that of a dimming of a lamp without

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<sup>19</sup> Thus, according to the handed-down record, Gautama Buddha discouraged the practicing of the trance state, though He did not repudiate it as a possible means. Yet, *Samadhi* is a fundamental part of the Buddhist Way. The implication is that bodily condition is essentially irrelevant.

[I would like at this time to add a further note on this subject of the trance. Studies of the subject of trance in the present day have led to a non-identification of trance with the blackout state, that being reserved for only the most extreme depth of trance. There is a system which classifies trance into as many as 50 different steps or stages, and only in the most advanced stages does it involve a blacking out of the relative consciousness, otherwise we have a combination of a subtle ecstatic consciousness combined with the relative consciousness. If we use ‘trance’ in this sense, trance was realized in the experiences here reported.]

complete extinguishment. The result was that I was in a sort of compound state wherein I was both here and “There,” with the objective consciousness less acute than normal. It is very probable that the concentrated inward state would have been fuller and more acute had the objective stream of consciousness been stopped entirely as in a full trance, but with regard to this I cannot speak from personal experience.<sup>20</sup>

The literature on the subject of mystical states very clearly reveals their transiency. Often the state is only momentary and, it is said, rarely exceeds two hours in duration. Of course, the only phase of such states that affords a basis for time-measurement is that part which overlaps the objective consciousness. The inmost content of the state does not lend itself to time-measurement at all. Its value, therefore, is not a function of time. But if we take the perspective of the personal consciousness, it is

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<sup>20</sup> A study of the word ‘ecstasy’ in an adequate dictionary clarifies a good deal that is confusing about the word as it is employed in the literature, particularly that of a medical sort. As the term is of high importance in relation to mysticism, this study is very helpful. The dictionary gives four uses, which cover a wide range of meanings, and I shall quote these in full.

Ecstasy is defined as (see *Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia*):

- a. A state in which the mind is exalted or liberated, as it were, from the body; a state in which the functions of the senses are suspended by the contemplation of some extraordinary or supernatural object, or by absorption in some overpowering idea, most frequently of a religious nature; entrancing rapture or transport.
- b. Overpowering emotion or exaltation, in which the mind is absorbed and the actions are controlled by the exciting subject; a sudden access of intense feeling.
- c. In medicine, a morbid state of the nervous system, allied to catalepsy or [and] trance, in which the patient assumes the attitude and expression of rapture. (‘Ecstasis’ is a synonym for this usage.)
- d. Insanity; madness.

Etymologically, the word carries the meaning of “any displacement or removal from the proper place, a standing aside . . .”

From the external point of view all of the four meanings are consistent with the etymological sense of the word. But in the intensive sense the difference of meaning is as great as the difference between a snake and an eel, which are only analogous but not homologous. In the sense of the first meaning the “displacement from the proper place” is true only on the assumption that personal egoism is the proper place. It is a prime thesis of mystical philosophy that this assumption is a fundamental error. The primary meaning of the Sanskrit word ‘*Samadhi*’ reveals a much more profound insight into the real meaning of mystical Ecstasy. ‘*Samadhi*’ has the significance of [see *Sanskrit English Dictionary*] “putting together, joining with; union; combination; performance; adjustment, settlement; justification *of a statement*, proof; attention, intentness on; deep meditation *on the supreme soul*, profound devotion.” Thus the prime meaning is that of “bringing together of that which is *improperly* separated.” This gives a value that is highly positive and superior, while the etymology of ‘ecstasy’ is depreciatory. It is a difference of viewpoint that parallels that between the Ptolemaic and Copernican systems, with the profounder Indian view corresponding to placing the center in the sun. The typically ancient Greek orientation was not spiritual but sensuous-materialistic, the philosophers of the type of Plato and Plotinus being the exceptions. The Greeks realized bodies rather than space. Hence a consciousness which stood disassociated from bodies appeared as not in the proper place. The general Greek insight is not as profound as supposed. It is the great exceptions who have lived to our day, just because they have seen more truly, and while these have deserved the honor we have given them, they have not justified us in extending that honor to the Greek civilization as a whole. Our own spatially oriented mathematics is nearer to the feeling of the Indian than the typical Greek.

possible to isolate a period during which the Recognition was more or less full, and this can be measured. In my own experience I am unable to give definite data with respect to this feature. For the first ten days following the Awakening I was far too greatly occupied with the contemplation of the values unfolding in my consciousness to think of the question of time-measurement, and in addition, at that time I had not been familiar with psychological studies of the subject and so knew nothing about duration norms. As I look at the whole period retrospectively, I do not see how a very definite time-measurement could have been made. There was a sharply defined moment at which the state was initiated, but there was no moment at which I could say it definitely closed. A series of alternate phases and variable degrees of depths of consciousness are discernible, so that at times I have been more transcendently conscious and at others less so. A different base of life and valuation has become normal, so that, in one sense, the Recognition has remained as a persistent state. Yet there are notable differences of phases.

During the first ten days I was repeatedly in and out, or more in and more out—I am not sure which is the more correct statement—of what I have called the “Life-force” field. I soon found that the stronger intensity of the field was a real strain upon the organism and so I consciously imposed a certain restraint upon the tendency of the states to deepen until I finally achieved a certain adjustment and adaptation with respect to the nervous organism. After the close of the first ten days it was suggested to me that it would be well to keep a record of the effects of the transformation, and so at that time I began to write and continued to do so for about four months. While the effort at formulation was a little difficult at first, the writing soon acquired momentum, and presently I found ideas developing in my consciousness faster than I could give them expression. During this whole period there were many times when the consciousness was dominantly on the noetic level, with more objective intervals interspersed. At first the range of oscillation was more notable than toward the end. In the course of time, it seems, the personal consciousness has gradually adapted itself to a higher level, so that the periods of inward penetration do not afford the same contrast as formerly. The first period of a little more than one month constitutes a phase which stands out by itself, with a fairly sharp dividing line at its culmination between the 8th and 9th of September 1936. During this time the prime focus of my consciousness was toward the transcendent, while in the subsequent phase, continuing to the present, I have rather taken this transcendent consciousness as a base and focused more toward the relative world. The consequence is that there is a sense in which I look back to those first thirty-odd days as a sort of high point in consciousness, a seed-sowing period, from which various fruitings have followed ever since. Frankly, those thirty days constituted a period which I view as the best I have ever known. Referring to a symbol that Plato has made immortal, I would say that this was a time when I stepped outside the “cave” and realized directly the glory of the “sun-illuminated” world, after which I turned back again to the life in the “cave,” but with this permanent difference in outlook—that I could never again regard the “cave-life” with the same seriousness that I had once given it. Thus, in this cycle, there is something to be differentiated from all the rest.

During that first month the current of bodily life was definitely weaker than during the preceding and following phases. The desire for sentient existence was decidedly below normal. The spontaneous inclination was all in the direction of the transcendent consciousness. Physical life was clearly a burden, a sort of blinder

superimposed upon consciousness. I even felt a distaste for physical food. I am convinced that if I had not supplemented the weakened desire for physical existence by a definite and conscious will-to-live, the body would have started into a decline. I became hypersensitive and found it very difficult to drive an automobile in traffic. I had to exert the will consciously, where formerly I had acted through automatic habit. But on the other hand, I found the will more effective than previously, so I was enabled adequately to replace spontaneous inclination with conscious control. Fortunately, my earlier studies had prepared me for this state of feeling and I knew that I was facing a temptation that others had faced before me. For there is such a thing as a world-duty which remains even after the desire for sentient existence has disappeared. But this did not keep me from thinking how delightful it would be to abandon all to the transcendent consciousness.

Concomitantly with the loss of desire for sentient life there was a growth in the sense of power. I felt I had a certain power of conscious control over forces that ordinarily operate beneath the level of consciousness, and my subsequent experience has tended to confirm this. It is a sort of raw power without the detailed knowledge of how to apply it. In other words, the knowledge of effective practical use has had to be developed through experiment. But I have found, very clearly, that I possess a power which formerly I did not know. I can choose and will consciously, where formerly the current of unconscious forces was determinant.

Before the close of the first month the decision to continue as an effective factor in the world-field had become definite, despite the distaste I felt for this domain. It felt like turning one's back upon a rich mine of jewels after gathering but a handful, and then marching back into the dreary domain of iron and brass. However, I found that it could be done, and then I accepted what I thought would be a future in which the best would always be a memory. I had found what I sought during many years and could see nothing but anticlimax thereafter, so far as the immediately realized consciousness values were concerned. So the further Recognition, which closed the first cycle, came as a complete surprise, for not only did I not seek it, I did not even know that such a state existed, or if it existed, that it was within the range of human consciousness. I had now already known a state of consciousness that certainly had the value of Liberation. A subsequent search through the mystical literature revealed that it was substantially congruent with the mystical experience as such and was distinctly more comprehensive than many of the mystical unfoldments. So far as I was familiar with it, the Brahmanical literature always represented the Liberated State as the end-term of all attainment. In this literature I had found nothing requiring more depth of insight than I now had glimpsed, although there was a vast mass of psychical detail quite foreign to my experience. So I was quite unprepared to find that there were even deeper levels of transcendence. However, had I understood a few obscure references in Buddhist literature I would have been warned.

In order to reach some understanding of the culminating phase of the Recognition, certain contrasting facts concerning the first phase must be given emphasis. As I have already affirmed, there is sufficient evidence of the fact of mystical recognition, together with the reported affective value, to render it an object of possible desire. Long ago I had learned enough to realize that it was desirable and had set forth in search of it. There also exists a sufficient statement of the reasons why an individual who has attained this Recognition should turn his back upon it, as it were, to show that such a course was

desirable in its social bearings. But there does not seem to be anything further which could be conceived as an object of desire. Now, the culminating effect of the present Realization with respect to desire is that the latter has fulfilled its office in the individual sense, and there is nothing more to wish for. I certainly felt in the transcendent state abundant completion and vastly more than I had anticipated. So, what more could there be?

I see now that there was a defect in this completion that kept it from being a full state of equilibrium. It consisted predominantly of the positive end-terms of the best in human consciousness. Thus it was a state of superlative Joy, Peace, Rest, Freedom, and Knowledge, and all of this stands in contrast to the world-field as fullness contrasts to emptiness.<sup>21</sup> Hence there did exist a tension in the sense of attractiveness that was incompatible with the perfection of balance. There was a distinction between being bound to embodied consciousness and not being so bound that made a difference to me. I had to resist the inclination toward the latter state in order to continue existence in the former. In other words, there are in this earlier phase of Recognition certain tensions that call for a higher resolution. But it was the perspective of the culminating Recognition that rendered all of this clear. The first stage did not, of itself, disclose any further possibility of conceivable attainment, and so I was disposed to give it a greater terminal value than it really possessed.

So far I have outlined three progressively comprehensive Recognitions. Each was realized after a period of conscious effort in the appropriate direction. In each case I had some reason to believe that there was a goal to be sought. In the first two instances I was aware that there was something more remaining to be realized, because the sense of incompleteness was only partly liquidated. In the third instance this liquidation seemed to be complete, and then I simply turned my back upon the full individual enjoyment of it for such period of time as might be necessary to fulfill some more comprehensive purpose reaching beyond individual concerns. In contrast, the culminating Recognition came with the force of an unexpected bestowal without my having put forth any conscious personal effort toward the attainment of it. Thus, in this case, my personal relationship or attitude was passive in a deep sense.

During the day preceding the final Recognition I had been busy writing and my mind was exceptionally clear and acute. In fact, the intellectual energy was of an unusual degree of intensity. The mood was decidedly one of intellectual assertion and dominance. This feature is interesting for the reason that it is precisely the state of mind that ordinarily would be regarded as least favorable for the “breaking through” to mystical modes of consciousness. The rule seems to be that the thought must be silenced or at least

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<sup>21</sup> So long as there is contrast and not indifference to the contrasting elements, the state is not *nirvandva*—or freed from the pairs of opposites. The feeling of superlative value is, after all, a dualistic state. In a genuinely absolute state there is not, and could not be, any preference whatsoever. A consciousness of Bliss, of All Knowledge, or of Compassion is thus colored with something relative, so long as it is felt or known that there is anything else with different value. Any possible report of the state of *nirvandva* inevitably seems to the relative consciousness as nothing at all. This adequately explains why the unilluminated psychologists view the highest of mystical states of consciousness as identical with unconsciousness. There is a serious error in this interpretation, but only he who has known the actuality immediately can know, and he cannot tell what he knows to one who does not also know. One can only categorically affirm: It is not unconscious. However, it is as little like what is ordinarily understood to be consciousness as to be indistinguishable from unconsciousness as viewed from the relative perspective.

reduced in intensity and ignored in the meditation.<sup>22</sup> In the records of mystical awakening it is almost always made evident that preceding the state of illumination there is at least a brief period of quiescence of conscious activity. Sometimes this appears as though there were a momentary standing still of all nature. For my part I had previously been aware of a kind of antecedent stillness before each of the critical moments, though it was not translated as stillness of nature. But in the case of the fourth Recognition, the foreground was one of intense mental tension and exceptional intellectual activity. It was not now a question of capturing something of extreme subtlety which might be dispersed by a breath of mental or affective activity. It was more a case of facing an overwhelming power which required all the active phase of the resources of consciousness to face it.\*

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<sup>22</sup> The manuals are generally, if not universally, insistent upon the mental quiescence and emotional calmness. I am not here developing a critique of the manuals but simply reporting what actually happened. But there may be a valid need of such a critique.

\* As a point of clarification, it should be noted that although Wolff is here referring to this “culminating Recognition” as the fourth in a series, in all his subsequent writings, recordings, and discussions he speaks of having had a total of five Realizations occurring over a period of fourteen years—two of which came fairly early and the last three in the span of about three months in 1936. In this manuscript, Wolff refers to the first two Realizations, namely, “I am Atman” and “I am Nirvana” as “premonitory.” He then goes on to describe the “third” and “fourth” Realizations in the manuscript (see the audio recordings “The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object,” parts 3 and 5, but apparently at this time does not classify as a Realization what he later refers to as a “third” premonitory Realization, namely, “. . . substantiality is inversely proportional to sensibility or ponderability,” or “. . . reality is inversely proportional to appearance.” He does, however, refer to this as “the critical . . . turning point which rendered the final Recognition accessible.” (See the audio recording “The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object,” part 2.)