
THE FRANKLIN MERRELL-WOLFF FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTER

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The Franklin Merrell-Wolff Fellowship is a publicly supported, non-profit corporation whose mission is to educate the public about the twentieth-century American philosopher Franklin Merrell-Wolff through his writings, audio recordings, teachings, and life. Our activities include publishing and distributing his works, and the sponsorship of forums and events to study and discuss the life and work of Franklin Merrell-Wolff, as well as to explore the connection between Wolff's teachings and those of other traditions.

A Message from the Chair

Charles C. Post

Dear Fellows:

I thank you for your patience and your support. We have arrived at a watershed. I am pleased to announce that on November 12 in Phoenix, a settlement was reached between the Fellowship and Doroethy Leonard.

This agreement provides for both parties to have copies of Franklin's archives, while the originals will go to Stanford University to be preserved in a special collection.

The Fellowship will undertake the task of transporting and copying the archives, and we will ask for your financial help in carrying this out with care and up-to-date technology. We are engaging a well-known international company that has effective ways of moving, preserving and copying aging material. The copying is the most expensive, as there are file cabinets full of material.

Although much of Franklin's archive is already available on the Fellowship's website, we expect more important insights into his thinking to pour from his less formal communications, such as correspondence, notes, student interactions, and other musings. In addition, we will now be able to ensure that published documents are true to the original.

Other items in the legal settlement are outlined in the report on p. 8.

In this Issue

Robert Holland

This issue of the Franklin Merrell-Wolff Fellowship Newsletter contains an excerpt from what we are sure you will find to be a special treat—Joseph Rowe's chronicle of the time he spent as Franklin Wolff's caretaker in 1980-81. We will publish the entire memoir, which is titled "The Gnostic of Mount Whitney," on our website in December. Members will receive a downloadable link to this document via email.

Our fall newsletter serves to announce the Fellowship's plans for the coming year, and beginning on p. 7, you will find an enumeration of our objectives for 2013. Some of these projects will carry over from this year (transcribing and posting Wolff's audio recordings, the forum on Wolff's lifework, improvements to our website, and an outreach campaign); other projects will be new.

Once we have possession of the Wolff Archive, we will inventory, copy, and then post this material on our website. The originals will then be sent to Stanford University where they will be permanently stored in a special collection. This project may prove to be costly, so next year we will embark on a donation campaign asking members to help defray these expenses.

We will also ask for your assistance on another project, one about which we are quite enthusiastic. Specifically, we plan to ask Fellows to submit their favorite quotes from Franklin Merrell-Wolff, which will be catalogued in a "wiki-quote" database on our website. These quotes will be indexed by subject, and we will publish them as an eBook for our membership.

In this issue of our fall newsletter, you will also find details of the settlement with our founder, some news about our current forum on Franklin Merrell-Wolff's political philosophy, and an observation sent in by one of your Fellows, which we present "for your reflection."

If you have any suggestions, comments, or submissions for this newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact us using any of the addresses on the last page of this bulletin.

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Wolff in his Lone Pine Office

The Gnostic of Mount Whitney

A personal and philosophical memoir
of Franklin Merrell-Wolff

[Preliminary Excerpt]

By Joseph Rowe

Introduction

In this memoir, I will be relating episodes from many conversations I had with Dr. Wolff¹ well over 30 years ago. In spite of the length of time, my recall of the details of these conversations is quite vivid, especially those with a strong philosophical content. I don't mean that I recall every word verbatim (though that occasionally happens), but that I remember the subjects of the exchange, the choice of words, and often the tones and gestures. I tend to trust the accuracy of my memory of these encounters, if only because they were among the most important conversations of my life. Of course I cannot ask the same of the reader; hence it may be helpful to know something about my personal views and biases, or "where I'm coming from," as our jargon of those days would have put it. In any case, a memoir is by definition a highly personal record, not to be confused with a biography.

I begin with a kind of confession: I fully sympathize with Joseph Campbell's reply to the following question from the audience after a learned lecture on yoga: "Sir, do you practice any form of yoga?" His answer: "Yes. My yoga is books." Naturally, people laughed, but I believe that he was more serious than they realized.

Of course reading books cannot constitute an entire spiritual path. But there are some temperaments for whom

a book can have an alchemical kind of transformative power — provided one learns how to read in ways that are not taught in school.

My first — and perhaps most decisive — meeting with the spirit of the man I would later call Dr. Wolff took place in 1976, when I discovered his books, *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*, followed by *Pathways through to Space*, in an esoteric bookstore. My friend Richard Murray, a student of John Lilly, had told me of Lilly's praise of this author, and I knew I was interested. For some years, I'd been searching for a synthesis of East and West which would reconcile the insights from my education in Western science, mathematics, philosophy, and literature with the great wisdom-traditions of the East, and with mysticism in general.

But I found myself deeply dissatisfied with the teachings of Eastern, or Western mystical traditions, regarding the role of the *mind* in enlightenment. These teachings had plenty to say about something called *thought*, always treated as an obstacle to Self-realization, and about the importance of letting go of our attachment to it. Some of this was actually quite useful for a temperament like mine, which often tends to rely excessively on the intellect. But none of the texts I encountered (with the exception of one by Rudolf Steiner) showed any awareness of the subtle, but all-important distinction between *thought* and *thinking*. They had little if anything to say about contemplative thinking, and nothing whatsoever to say about creative thinking — it was as if such a notion were considered to be irrelevant, or illusory.

It was therefore a tremendously refreshing and encouraging experience for me to discover a book, written from the mystical perspective of the *Philosophia Perennis*, where illustrious names from our Western intellectual heritage such as Plato, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, William James, and Jung were no longer ignored, but brought into dialogue with the East, and with a perspective based on the supreme value of Awakening. More than this, Merrell-Wolff's writings were clearly grounded in his own Awakening.²

For me, these books seemed surrounded by a palpable field of grace, and even transmission. I drank both of them deeply, one after the other, like a thirsty traveler, reading for many hours each day. For almost two weeks, most of my time was spent in a state which Sufis call *drunkenness*. I had previously experienced this briefly, from reading inspired literature, mostly in the form of great poetry, fiction, or scripture. This was the first time I'd gotten totally drunk on philosophy, and it was different from

previous intoxications — more serene, more subtle, more profound, with fewer emotional distractions. In spite of its subtlety, it was also by far the most sustained such experience I had known. Thankfully, it was during a time in which I was unemployed and had minimal social obligations (too many of the latter would have been difficult, and probably ended the experience). Curiously, the most powerful epiphanies came during my reading of *The Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*, rather than *Pathways*, which is more poetic and accessible for most readers. The clarity, rigor, and elegance of the author's arguments and reflection reminded me of the kind of thinking I had learned to appreciate as a university student proving theorems in pure mathematics. Much later, I was pleased, though not surprised, to learn that Dr. Wolff had taught pure mathematics at Stanford University.

No longer was there any doubt for me that a true synthesis between East and West was possible. No longer did I feel as if I had to devalue or apologize for my Western mind, formed by philosophical and scientific studies. And I realized that the ancient threefold Hindu system of *bhakti*, *karma*, and *jñāna* spiritual temperaments (with different paths to Realization corresponding to each temperament) had plenty of room for the deepest texts of Western philosophy, most of which would be categorized as jñānic, or gnostic.³

An Individual and a Collective Learning Process

My encounter with Franklin Merrell-Wolff was the beginning of an open-ended learning process of incalculable significance in my life. It turned out to be a very challenging one, with surprises and shocks along the way. Early on, I began to sense (and finally verify beyond any doubt) that it was very much related to a collective learning process of the culture (or subculture) in which I lived. The post-WWII generations of Americans loosely referred to as the Boomers — or in a more global sense, the *Zeitgeist* characterized as the postmodern⁴ condition — represent perhaps the first generations in all of Western history to embark, in significant numbers, on a voyage which has many names. (Herman Hesse, a precursor and Elder of these generations, called it *The Journey to the East*.) Perhaps we may roughly summarize it as the individual, mystical quest for Enlightenment (not to be confused with the Enlightenment of the 18th century!). The peaks, valleys, and pitfalls of this voyage comprise a learning process with a personal and a collective dimension. That is why the full version of this memoir will

include two parts, entitled *Part I - An Individual Learning Process*; and *Part II - A Collective Learning Process*.

Taking advantage of a public talk by John Lilly, who had written the introduction to my copy of *Pathways*, and was largely responsible for its republication, I wrote a long letter to Franklin Merrell-Wolff at the address Lilly gave me. I received a friendly and helpful answer from his wife Gertrude, inviting me to attend a satsang meeting whenever it was convenient for me, but to let them know in advance. I dropped all my other plans and arranged to drive to Lone Pine, California within a couple of months.

That first meeting was excessively brief, partly because I had so little time, and partly because other people were occupying Dr. Wolff's attention. (It was also tragically colored by the fact that it happened shortly before Gertrude's sudden, unexpected illness and death — as I learned only much later, though I remember her saying she wasn't feeling well). My first full encounter with Dr. Wolff took place a couple of years after her death, in the late summer of 1980.

The drive from Lone Pine up the Eastern slope of Mount Whitney to his house is unforgettable: a desert landscape of austere and astonishing beauty, with enormous boulders scattered everywhere, often piled on top of each other like pebbles, as if casually tossed there by the hands of a giant. There are also surprising mini-oases of trees and reeds, and an occasional tiny, but gushing brook — signs of the sparse but lively snowmelt in the rain-shadow of the highest mountain in the US for most of its history. Even though I'd made this trip a couple of years previously, I thought I was totally lost several times, but recalled warnings that the road seems excessively long to newcomers. When I finally arrived at his house, I realized I was actually a bit early. So I got out of the car to stretch my legs, and took plenty of time to stare at the overpowering spectacle to the east, looking down from high over Owens Valley toward the Inyo Mountains, and further away toward Death Valley, near the Nevada border. Here, the Sierra and the Inyo ranges confront each other like two vast armies. The majestic beauty of this nature I gazed upon was not a friendly, welcoming one. It was harsh, wild, grand, breathtaking — and very dry. The blendings of the pastel colors were amazingly subtle, making the sharp contrasts between light and dark all the more violent. Neither before nor since, in all my travels, have I seen a more dramatic landscape. I couldn't help thinking that it was symbolic of something in Franklin Merrell-Wolff's vision — perhaps related to the austerity implied by what he calls the High Indifference?

Months later, when I ventured to ask him if there were a symbolic significance in his choice to live in this place, he smiled but would only say: "I like it high and dry."

In my first personal encounter with him, I remember being impressed by three things: his manner of dress, his physical appearance, and the quality of his voice. He wore a suit and tie, which seemed very strange in that wild, remote country; he appeared decades younger than his reported age of 94; and his voice and manner of speaking had a measured cadence and resonance that was at times oratorical.

We hit it off very well, with an unexpected affinity of common interests. Though I had many spiritual questions I intended to ask him, we somehow wound up in a long discussion about pure mathematics, which I hadn't planned at all. Indeed, both of us seemed surprised at the mutual enthusiasm that was aroused, so that we wound up speaking far longer than scheduled, and I was invited to supper. One subject we kept returning to was the genius of Georg Cantor⁵, and the spiritual implications of his work. Cantor's mind-boggling discoveries relating to the nature of the infinite had opened a veritable Pandora's Box, engendering paradoxes and a heated controversy among mathematicians and philosophers that continues to this day. Cantor's work created (or unveiled?) a deep and surprisingly emotional schism regarding the very foundations of mathematics. Both Dr. Wolff and I clearly sympathized with what I might roughly summarize as the pro-infinity⁶ view; nevertheless, we agreed that some of its critics have a point when they warn about the danger of *hubris* in thinking that our finite minds can fully comprehend the infinite.

In this, as in most serious discussions with Dr. Wolff, I was struck by his rhetorical gift. His eloquence was not only reflected in his lucidity of thought, but in the musical cadences and intonations of his voice when he was stimulated. This downright theatrical⁷ gift was surprising in an introverted, contemplative intellectual, and became to me one of his most engaging traits. (Later, I learned that he preferred to tape his reflections first, rather than writing them directly.) It was during this conversation that I first heard him use the word *psychosphere*, which I suspect he himself may have coined. Generally speaking, it means a kind of psychic field or atmosphere surrounding a geographical, cultural, or historical nexus. (Ex: "The psychosphere of New York does not favor calm and leisurely reflection.") This eminently useful word has long since become a part of my own vocabulary, and I try to ignore other, more recent and fatuous usages which I've

come across.

We also spoke of the perplexing and lamentable scarcity of dialogue between luminaries of Western science and philosophy on the one hand, and those of Eastern philosophical, yogic, and religious traditions on the other. In the East, a sense of the sacred has never been lost in relation to philosophy, as it largely has with us. Yet the East has much to learn from the West as well — especially regarding the value of scientific detachment. We both felt that humanity is in great need of such a dialogue. We also speculated about the possibility of a marriage of contemplative traditions that would engender a truly new culture. But neither of us could envision anything more concrete, and I remember that there came a moment of pregnant silence between us at this point. It was as if we were both perceiving a deep collective need, and also acknowledging our inability to answer it. We seemed to be in unknown territory, with no teachings or sages of the past to offer guidance. Only later would I realize how significant this silence was, at least for me.

Afterward I had a talk with Doroethy Leonard, Dr. Wolff's adopted granddaughter, by his first marriage to Sherifa. She had noticed the affinity between us, and told me that he was currently in search of an assistant to live in the spare bedroom in his house, someone who was close to the teachings, who could function as a kind of secretary, and also cook meals and drive for him. I considered this as an honor and a privilege. I accepted her proposal, even though it meant leaving a good job as a classical music radio producer back in Austin. As for the manual part of it, I had plenty of experience from my youth in restaurant work, including cooking, so I seemed an ideal candidate to replace his current assistant, who was leaving.

In November of 1980, I met Dr. Wolff and his previous assistant at Doroethy's house in Phoenix, and we drove to Lone Pine. We drove all through the night, avoiding the desert heat, which was considerable even that late in the year. At one point, when we passed signs directing motorists to Las Vegas, Dr. Wolff made an amusing comment which I would later learn was a typical example of his dry humor: "If anyone has trouble understanding the concept of *sangsara*, I recommend a trip to Las Vegas. The very existence of that city in this desert environment is divorced from any natural need whatsoever. Its only *raison d'être* is human greed, vanity, and illusion. And the roulette wheel itself provides an apt symbol of *sangsara*, which originally means 'going around in circles.'"

We settled ourselves in the main house, which was the uppermost habitation on his property. Unless I'm

mistaken, it was also the highest house on the entire eastern slope of Mount Whitney, and — for all I know — literally the highest full-time human habitation in the entire “48 states.” (I never thought to ask anyone about this at the time.) Down below there was a very pleasant, but inconveniently small house where he had lived with Sherifa, and which people still referred to as “the Ashram,” though it was now used to accommodate overnight or longer-term visitors.

Life quickly settled into a tranquil routine. And routine is the word! Rarely have I met anyone as regular in his habits as was Dr. Wolff. Meals were at exactly the same time every day; shopping expeditions were always on the same weekdays, the same hours, the same stores. And he watched the evening news on television at the same time every weekday, with which he would always have a glass of port, and a cigarette or two. He was a heavy smoker by today’s standards, though he said he inhaled as little as possible — apparently it had no effect at all on his health. I also smoked at that time, and he once told me he hoped my smoking had nothing to do with his influence. He expressed dismay at the suggestion that some of his students might be influenced by his smoking. I assured him that this wasn’t the case with me, though now (from the viewpoint of someone who later found it very hard to give up smoking) I wonder if I was being entirely honest.

Whenever I drove him any distance from town, he insisted on studying the map thoroughly before leaving, estimating the time of the journey, and deciding every detail of it in advance, including pauses. Once, I went alone to a different store, and bought him some high-quality Sumatra coffee, which he had never tasted before. He drank it with great relish, exclaiming that he had never tasted coffee so good. But when I proposed buying it regularly, he balked at the expense, though he could easily afford it. When I asked him why, he said: “When you open the door to one new indulgence like that, a crowd of others will soon be clamoring to be let in as well.”

Speaking in archetypal psychological terms, I am (or at least was then) of a predominantly Uranian temperament; therefore, I naturally experienced an antipathy to this Saturnian structure and control. But I soon realized that in spite of his conviction about the virtues of his rigid routine, he was surprisingly unattached to it — at least not in the sense of becoming angry or upset if it were thwarted for some reason. On the contrary, he was most courteous and pliable when faced with any suggestion that it should be changed for some reason. But there had to be a reason. Once I boldly ventured to challenge him as to why he held

to such an unvarying routine.

“Don’t you think that improvisation and variety have any value in daily life?” I asked.

Unruffled, and mildly amused, he explained that he had discovered that — for himself at least — a regular and predictable routine helps to free oneself from giving too much importance to mundane life, with its tendency to chase after pleasure and avoid pain.

“If we want to have a better chance of seeing through the seductions of *sangsa*, then it helps to see its cyclical, mechanical nature without the distraction of what you call ‘improvisation and variety’. At least I find it to be so.”

I couldn’t really agree with this view, but I saw some truth in it, and respected his position. As with so many other things, I now feel that this is mostly a question of temperament.

One day soon after my arrival, we had a major interruption in our routine: our drinking water suddenly stopped. All our pure water came from several snowmelt streams which had been skillfully channeled into an arrangement of holding tanks, pipes, and troughs made of bamboo, wood, fiberglass, and other materials, mostly on the surface of the ground. Several of these had become clogged or damaged. Dr. Wolff and I went out to undertake repairs. He mostly directed me as I did the physical labor, but he did pitch in once or twice, and I was impressed by his energy and strength, which was that of a man several decades younger than 94. After a while, we went further uphill to replace a section of tubing. At this point, there was a Y-junction where two tubes that came from further up the mountain slope joined here into one larger one. But all we could manage was to repair it in such a way that only one arm of the Y really fed into the large lower tube destined for the house — the minor arm of the Y was too damaged, so that we left a considerable amount of water spilling out onto the ground. He was content with this solution, saying we would still have enough water. Watching the abandoned pipeline discharge its pure, rushing water “uselessly” into the dry desert grasses and down the slope, I objected: “Isn’t this a waste of good water?”

“It’s just on its way downhill, one way or another. Why divert it, if we don’t need it?”

I had to admit this was perfectly logical. But I confessed that, for someone from Texas, where people who lived in the country made a major virtue out of saving water, it came as a bit of a shock. He laughed, and quipped:

“Well, up here in the California mountains we get

power from gravity, and it's a lot cheaper than oil."

Later, we took up a theme we had touched on in our first conversation, and opened a kind of recurrent dialogue about the state of the world, and the sense of the times we live in, as an *evolutionary crisis* of humanity. I don't think we actually used that term at the time, but it describes the theme of these conversations. On one occasion, he told me that even though he was 94 years old, had gone "from the horse-and-buggy age to the space age," and now found himself so unhappy at being a widower for the second time, that he was more than ready to "pass on to the Other Side," he felt that he was supposed to stay in his body for a while longer, perhaps so as to help with the world situation, which was grave indeed.

"How do you feel you can help?" I asked.

"Certainly not on the outer levels we've been discussing. If I have a role to play, it is in helping to encourage others toward a fundamental awakening of human consciousness. But it's a daunting situation, and I'm far from optimistic. The depth and tenacity of the forces of darkness and ignorance are great indeed. Not only do the prevailing social orders fail to help human beings free themselves from this state of deep sleep, they actively maintain, strengthen, and enforce it."

This seeming pessimism gave me pause. But I had been thinking a lot about this lately, and I had a different view.

"But Dr. Wolff, it seems to me that there's a tendency here to confuse two different things. Are we talking about (A) just the need to have a decent, sane, balanced, morally intelligent world of peace and justice, and an end to ecological irresponsibility? Or are we talking about (B) the emergence of a truly new kind of human being, as Aurobindo envisioned, perhaps related to Teilhard de Chardin's vision of the Omega Point? In both cases, I agree with you that a significant change in human consciousness is required, not just a better system, and certainly not another ideology. Now, it seems to me that it would take only a relatively minor change in collective consciousness in order for (A) to happen. But if it's (B) you're talking about, then I agree, we're very far indeed from that."

"A *minor* change in collective consciousness, you say? How on Earth can you consider such a change to be minor?"

"Well, I should have explained that by 'minor,' I mean *relatively small in relation to what is possible* for human consciousness. It is my belief that the ultimate possibilities of human consciousness are vaster than we dream of."

"That may well be the case. But it doesn't necessarily follow that such a change is minor with respect to its *difficulty*. I don't see how we can ever attain what you call (A), except through access to the resources of (B). Anything less won't do. History shows us over and over again, that even when great reforms work, things eventually gravitate back to something closer to the old situation. The forces of darkness and sleep are very powerful. When you speak of the vast and undreamed-of possibilities of consciousness, I would tend to agree. But it is only through access to that very vastness, opened by Self-realization, that we have any hope of bringing about (A)."

Though I steadfastly maintained my "optimistic" stance in those days, I've come to appreciate Dr. Wolff's position more with the passing years. Writing this in the autumn of 2012, a year long-reputed to be "apocalyptic" in pop esotericism, I can't really say which position is more convincing to me. But what I am sure of is that the human species (and the biosphere it affects) is in an evolutionary crisis with no historical precedent. Denial and "skepticism" as to the reality and gravity of this crisis is no longer tenable, nor is it intellectually respectable.

Endnotes

¹ Generally, I use "Franklin Merrell-Wolff" or "FMW" to refer to his writings and philosophy; and "Dr. Wolff" to refer to the man I knew. When I was with him, over the winter of 1980-81, most of his students used the latter as a respectful term of address, though some also called him "Franklin," or occasionally "Yogi."

² I don't even begin to use metaphysical capitals the way FMW does in his writings, but here I shall use the capitalized word *Awakening* to speak of the timeless truth that cannot be comprehended by words nor by an experience in time, though it is the source of the noblest words and experiences; and I use *awakening* to speak of an experience that takes place in time. It is extremely important not to confuse the two. I don't think Dr. Wolff himself did (or at least he tried not to, because some of his writings clearly show that he understood the distinction), but the very power of his experiences, combined with the eloquence of his writing, can encourage such confusion. In my case it did for years, which is why I unfortunately neglected to question him directly about this subject.

³ The Greek word *gnosis* is related, through its Indo-European root *gnô-*, to the Sanskrit word *jñana*, the

English word *knowledge*, the Latin word *cognoscere*, etc. I follow Henry Corbin's usage of *gnosis* and *gnostic* as approximate equivalents to *jñana*, and *jñani*, thus avoiding the confusion of the capitalized words *Gnosticism*, *Gnostic*, etc., which refer to Mediterranean metaphysical and religious doctrines irrelevant to this essay, and to the work of FMW. In my usage (and I believe Corbin would have agreed), the essential meaning of the word *gnosis* is the same as Merrell-Wolff's "knowledge through identity."

⁴ The origin of this term is generally attributed to French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard. I use it only to describe a fairly well-defined phenomenon that is social, psychological, and cultural in nature. In other words, I avoid the philosophical connotations of "postmodernism", which are anything but well-defined, and irrelevant to this essay.

⁵ Georg Cantor, 1845-1918, a German mathematician from a Christianized family of Jewish origin. His life had a tragic aspect, due to the rejection and outright hostility he suffered from conservative mathematicians, — not so much because of anti-Semitism, as some have supposed, but because of the bold originality, and philosophical challenge, of his work. Mathematics itself began to divide around pro-and anti-Cantor sentiments. Extremists in the latter group included even eminent figures, such as Poincaré, who described Cantor's work as "a sickness from which mathematics will one day recover." Gregory Chaitin, one of today's foremost mathematicians, quipped in a BBC television interview that "Cantor is mathematics on LSD." (Chaitin also makes it clear that he is neither anti-Cantor, nor anti-LSD. . .) See two excellent BBC Horizon programs: "Infinity and Beyond"; and "Dangerous Knowledge", whose portrait of Cantor touches on the spiritual implications of his work. See also my essay, "A Mathematical Supplement to the Works of FMW" and Mael Melvin's essay, "Infinity and Consciousness," both published in the 'Other Works' section under the Wolff Archives tab on the Fellows Page of the Fellowship website. ([Link here to access these articles.](#)) In general, one of the best (I would even say indispensable) books ever written on this subject is *Infinity and the Mind*, by Rudy Rucker. Also, his book *The Fourth Dimension, A Guided Tour of the Higher Universes*, in spite of its playful aspect, is actually a profound, comprehensive, yet accessible exploration of the subject, and an excellent complement to the chapter of FMW's *Pathways*, entitled "The Symbol of the Fourth

Dimension."

⁶ Perhaps the origin of this schism goes back to Aristotle's dictum: Infinity can only be a potentiality, never an actuality. Although we didn't discuss Aristotle, I believe that Dr. Wolff and I would have agreed to disagree with him, at least insofar as mathematics is concerned.

⁷ Here, I mean *theater* in its original, sacred sense, from the ancient Greek root of the word, a verb which means to show or to demonstrate; also the root of the word *theorem*.

Joseph's complete memoir will be posted on the Fellowship's website in December. We will email members a downloadable link to the memoir as soon as it posted.

Fellowship Plans for 2013

The Board of Directors of the Franklin Merrell-Wolff Fellowship held its autumn meeting via teleconference on November 3. The primary purpose of this meeting is to finalize the Fellowship's projects for the upcoming year and to approve a budget that encompasses these plans. Highlights of our plans for 2013 are listed below:

1. **Wolff Archive.** As per the settlement reached with our founder (see "Settlement of the Fellowship's Lawsuit" below), the Fellowship will take possession of the material in the Wolff Archive, have it inventoried and copied, and then send this material to Stanford University where it will be housed in a special collection. Copies of this material will be made available to members of the Fellowship on our website.
2. **Donation Campaign.** The aforementioned work is likely to be expensive, and the Fellowship will be in need of funds to cover this effort. *You can help with a tax-deductible donation.*
3. **Audio tape transfer project.** All of Wolff's known audio recordings have been digitized, and we are posting them on our website as we get them transcribed. We expect to finish this project by the end of 2013.
4. **Forum.** The response to our call for papers on Wolff's political philosophy has been disappointing. We will post the essays that we have received in January, and invite members to comment. See "Forum: On Government" below for more details.
5. **Book of Quotes.** We will be setting up a "wiki-quote" page on our website where members may submit their

favorite quotes from Franklin Merrell-Wolff. We will compile these quotes (sorted by subject), and publish them in a book for our members.

6. **Outreach.** The Fellowship will make a concerted effort in 2013 to increase the number of its individual members as well as to form affiliations with other organizations that may be interested in Franklin Merrell-Wolff.
7. **Website.** We intend to make some tweaks to our website over the next year, including a reworked home page, improved search capabilities, and the addition of a complete catalog of the Wolff Archive.

Settlement of the Fellowship's Lawsuit

The Franklin Merrell-Wolff Fellowship is pleased to announce the settlement of the lawsuit that we initiated earlier this year against our founder, Doroethy Leonard. As you may recall, this action was compelled by the Fellowship's requirement to act in accord with the laws that govern nonprofit corporations. At a mediation held on November 12, the two parties reached an agreement on the following major points:

1. Mrs. Leonard will turn the material in the Wolff Archive over to the Fellowship, which will inventory and copy this material. The Fellowship and Mrs. Leonard will each receive a set of these copies, and each will have the right to publish this material for educational or nonprofit purposes. After it is copied, the Fellowship will send this material to the Stanford University Libraries, where it will be housed in a special collection.
2. As defined in the Settlement, the "Wolff Archive" includes all published and unpublished manuscripts, books, articles, audio tapes and recordings (both in analog and digital format), correspondence, drafts and notes, photographs, video material, educational and student materials, and any other material authored by or related to the work of Wolff in the possession or control of Leonard or the Fellowship or their agents, including works authored or apparently authored by either of Wolff's wives that formed part of Wolff's estate upon his death.
3. In addition, the following "Related Material" will be sent to Stanford: (i) an inventory of the books in Wolff's library (one was taken in 2004 by Ann (Redwood) Radford); (ii) digital images of books or portions of books in which Wolff made handwritten annotations; (iii) digital copies of the photos on the office walls; (iv) an inventory of the memorabilia in

the office, and photographs of these items; and (v) any other material agreed upon by Mrs. Leonard and the Fellowship.

4. Mrs. Leonard will assign to the Fellowship 50% of her author's rights in the books currently published by SUNY Press.
5. Except for the books in Wolff's library, title to the items in Wolff's Lone Pine office will be vested in the Fellowship. The Fellowship has agreed to leave these items in Mrs. Leonard's possession as long as Wolff's office remains open to visitors.

The Fellowship would like to express its gratitude to Mrs. Leonard for her promotion of the work of Franklin Merrell-Wolff for the last thirty and more years. We also would like to state that we believe that the importance of the material in the Wolff Archive demands for its preservation the resources of a special collection in a library associated with a major institution or university. Given that Wolff was a proud alumnus of Stanford University, this prestigious institution seems an appropriate repository for his work.

Finally, we would like to assure our members that the Fellowship has and will remain steadfast to Mrs. Leonard's intention for founding this organization—that is, to serve as a permanent vehicle whose mission is to preserve and promote the lifework of Franklin Merrell-Wolff.

Forum: "On Government: The Political Philosophy of Franklin Merrell-Wolff"

Franklin Merrell-Wolff thought that it was important to engage in the political world, and the problem of government was an issue on which Wolff thought long and hard. Indeed, in 1970 he noted that "at the present time, after sixty years of reading and observation, of penetrating into the general problem of government, of social relationship, and of economics, [I] have arrived at a position that is well-thought-out."

In the fall of 2011, the Fellowship announced its intention to begin a series of annual forums on the life and work of Franklin Merrell-Wolff. Our first forum was entitled "On Government: The Political Philosophy of Franklin Merrell-Wolff," and in our Fall 2011 Newsletter we issued a call for papers on this topic. In addition, we contacted a number of academicians whom we thought might have an interest in this topic.

Our hope was that with a United States presidential election at hand, Wolff's thoughts "on government" would

prove to be of special interest to scholars, and would help to prompt a number of essays on Wolff's political thought. And, in fact, we discovered that this topic was considered by many to be an intriguing and worthwhile pursuit. However, we also learned that the impending election had proved too consuming for many to devote the time and energy that would be needed to properly address Wolff's political philosophy. As a result, the response to our call for papers has been underwhelming: we have received just three papers.

We plan to push ahead, however, and will publish these essays on our website in late January or early February (we will also accept essays for the forum until mid-January). Once published, we will invite members to submit their thoughts and comments on the ideas raised in the forum. If there is one thing that the recent election has taught us, it is that the question of how to best govern ourselves is one that remains in the forefront of our public consciousness.

For Your Reflection

In Part 5 of his series of audio recordings titled "Tantra and Zen Buddhism," Franklin Merrell-Wolff discusses the *Prajñā Pāramitā*, a Buddhist sutra that Wolff notes is said to constitute "an esoteric instruction of the Great Buddha." This sutra introduces the difficult conception of *shunyata*, which has often been translated into English as "emptiness" or "voidness." This, in turn, has led some to conclude that the Buddha taught a kind of nihilism. Wolff does not accept this inference, and suggests that we can better understand this sutra by making following substitutions:

For the word 'voidness', I shall substitute the word 'consciousness', to be understood in the sense of *Consciousness-without-an-object-and-without-a-subject*, or in the sense of Consciousness as *Rig-pa*, which is Consciousness that is not aware of phenomena. And for the word 'consciousness' as it appears in the text, I shall substitute the word 'awareness', to be understood in the sense of subject-object consciousness, or relative consciousness, or consciousness as *shes-rig*, which is consciousness that is aware of phenomena.

Making these substitutions, Wolff reads this sutra as follows (beginning with the reply by Avalokiteshvara):

(7) Upon this being asked, the *Bodhisattva*, the Great Being, Arya Avalokiteshvara, made reply and spake

thus to the son of Shāri-Dvatī:

(8) 'Shāri-Putra, any nobly-born one, [spiritual] son or daughter, desirous of practicing the profound teachings of the *Prajñā Pāramitā* should comprehend them in the following manner:

(9) 'The Five Aggregates are to be comprehended as being naturally and wholly Consciousness.

(10) 'Forms are Consciousness and Consciousness is Forms; nor are Forms and Consciousness separable, or Forms other than Consciousness.

(11) 'In the same way, Perception, Feeling, Volition, and Awareness are Consciousness.

(12) 'Thus, Shāri-Putra, are all things Consciousness, without characteristics, Unborn, Unimpeded, Unsullied, Unsulliable, Unsubtracted, Unfilled.

(13) 'Shāri-Putra, such being so, Consciousness hath no form, no perception, no feeling, no volition, no awareness; no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind, no form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no quality.

(14) 'Where there is no eye, there is no desire', and so on to, 'there is no awareness of desire.

(15) 'There is no Ignorance; there is no overcoming of Ignorance'; and so on to, 'there is no decay and no death', and to, 'there is no overcoming of decay and death.

(16) 'In the same way, there is no sorrow, there is no evil, there is no taking away, there is no Path, there is no Wisdom nor any attaining nor not-attaining.

(17) 'Shāri-Putra, such being so—for even the *Bodhisattvas* have nothing which is to be attained—by relying upon the *Prajñā Pāramitā*, and abiding in it, there is no mental obscuration [of the Truth] and, [there is] therefore, no fear; and, passing far beyond erroneous paths [or doctrines], one successfully attaineth *Nirvāna*.

(18) 'All the Buddhas, too, Who abide in the Three Times, have attained the highest, the purest, and the most perfect Buddhahood by depending upon this *Prajñā Pāramitā*.

[THE MANTRA OF THE *PRAJÑĀ PĀRAMITĀ*]

(19) Such being so, *Mantra* of the *Prajñā Pāramitā*, the *Mantra* of the Great Logic, the Highest *Mantra*, the *Mantra* which maketh one to equal That which cannot be equalled, the *Mantra* which assuageth all sorrow, and which not being false is known to be true, the *Mantra* of the *Prajñā Pāramitā*, is now uttered:

TADYATHĀ GATE GATE PARA-GATE
PARA-SAM-GATE BODHI SVA-HA

[Which may be translated as: ‘O Wisdom, departed, departed, departed, to the Other Shore, disembarked on the Other Shore, Sva-ha!’]

Wolff comments that with these substitutions, we can see that

[w]hat we have here is really a rigorous conceptual statement concerning Root Consciousness and its essential independence of the presence or absence of subjects to consciousness or objects of consciousness within it. We can come to what may be a clearer understanding of what is involved if we substitute for ‘Consciousness’ the notion of a space in which there may be present a cosmos consisting of galaxies involving stars and planets; and if we view this space as independent of the presence of such galaxies, as something that’s unaffected by the presence or absence of such galaxies, as is done in our familiar Euclidean geometry, we will receive an understanding of what is meant. There may be a cosmos or there may be an absence of a cosmos, but in either case the pure space is unaffected, or in other words, the pure Root Consciousness is unaffected by this presence or absence.

Leland Stevenson writes from India and asks us to reflect on the correlations between Wolff’s version of the *Prajñā Pāramitā* and a poem from Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*. In particular, to reflect on the stanzas (11) – (17) above and the following lines from a poem that Whitman included in Book XXX, “Whispers of Heavenly Death”:

Darest Thou Now O Soul

Darest thou now O soul,
Walk out with me toward the unknown region,
Where neither ground is for the feet nor any path to follow?

No map there, nor guide,
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in that land.

I know it not O soul,
Nor dost thou, all is a blank before us,
All waits undream’d of in that region, that inaccessible land.

Till when the ties loosen,
All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds bounding us.

Then we burst forth, we float,
In Time and Space O soul, prepared for them,
Equal, equipt at last, (O joy! O fruit of all!) them to fulfil O soul.



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