

FURTHER BOOKS OF NOTE

Franklin Merrell-Wolff's Experience and Philosophy: A Personal Record of Transformation and a Discussion of Transcendental Consciousness: Containing His *Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object* and His *Pathways Through to Space*, by Franklin Merrell-Wolff. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994. 457 pp, \$25.95, paperback. ISBN 0791419649.

Transformations in Consciousness: The Metaphysics and Epistemology, by Franklin Merrell-Wolff. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, \$22.95. 1995. 346 pp, paperback. ISBN 0791426769.

The Transcendental Philosophy of Franklin Merrell-Wolff, by Ron Leonard. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999. 400 pp, \$21.95, paperback. ISBN 0791442160.

Mathematics, Philosophy & Yoga: A Lecture Series Presented at the Los Olivos Conference Room in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1966, by Franklin Merrell-Wolff. Phoenix Philosophical Press, 5825 North 12th Street, #10, Phoenix, AZ, 85014, USA, 1995. 80 pp, paperback.

Mystical experiences are noteworthy for a scientific understanding of reality because of the apparent resolution of existential issues and provision of insight concerning the nature of reality that occurs during such events. The experiences and philosophy of Franklin Merrell-Wolff provide a good place to start a scientific study of such experiences because of the profundity of the transcendental events that occurred for Wolff, his background in mathematics, and his commitment to clarity of exposition. Wolff wrote two monographs, one of which, *Pathways Through to Space*, is the diary in which he recorded his experiences during the time of his enlightenment, and the other of which, in two volumes, *Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*, is an account of his understanding of transcendent states of consciousness. In addition, he wrote or recorded on audiotape numerous lectures, many of which have never been scrutinized or published.

State University of New York Press is to be lauded for publishing Wolff's monographs. The first book mentioned above consists of *Pathways Through to Space* as well as the first volume of *Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object*, both of which had been published previously by trade publishers. The second book mentioned above consists of the second volume of *Philosophy of Consciousness Without an Object* and was edited by Ron Leonard for publication by SUNY Press. Leonard, who managed to find Wolff and live with him before Wolff's death in 1985, has done the only comprehensive academic examination of Wolff's work. In fact, the third book mentioned above is Leonard's doctoral dissertation in philosophy. The fourth book mentioned above, also edited by Leonard, consists of a transcription of a series of six audiotaped lectures given by Wolff.

Of all of the above, my favourite is "Part II: Introceptualism" of *Transformations in Consciousness*, in which Wolff unflinchingly takes on the tough ontological and epistemological questions about transcendent states of consciousness, giving us a comprehensive account of the manner in which he thinks knowledge concerning such states is possible. I also like the lecture series *Mathematics, Philosophy & Yoga*, in which Wolff indicates the manner in which mathematics can be used as a means of transcendence. I

was particularly struck by the fit that Wolff's conception of mathematics had with my own intuitions and the psychological changes I feel that I experienced as a graduate student in mathematics. I recommend the above four books for anyone interested in a characterization of transcendence that is conducive to the scientific mindset.

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All Done With Mirrors: An Exploration of Measure, Proportion, Ratio and Number, by John Neal. Self-published, 2000. x + 274 pp, \$38.00 in U.K., \$45.00 in U.S.A., cloth. ISBN 0-9539000-0-2. Order from www.secretacademy.com.

If for no other reason, this book is "Of Note" because it has received praise from quarters that are more commonly in opposition: the blurbs bear effusive praise from stalwart anomalists John Michell and Colin Wilson *and* the book was reviewed in glowing terms in *Nature* by Michael Vickers of the Department of Antiquities, Ashmolean Museum, and Senior Research Fellow in Classical Studies and Reader in Archaeology at Jesus College, Oxford. The book's author, John Neal, acknowledges works of varying degrees of unorthodoxy: those of William Petrie, Alexander Thom, Algernon Berriman, Livio Stecchini, Peter Tompkins, and Hugh Harleston, Jr.

Neal reviews attempts to find commonalities among the units of measurement (primarily the linear ones) used across the ancient world. He ascribes some variations to differences in latitude, presuming that the units were derived from knowledge of the distance subtended at the Earth's surface by a degree of arc, which varies by latitude, since the Earth bulges toward the Equator. This justifies ratios of 175/176 and 440/441. Neal also believes that such monuments as the Great Pyramid were models for the Earth, consequently incorporating knowledge of pi (π). The latter was often taken as 3.125 (3 1/8) or as 22/7 (3 1/7) for different applications; and the ratio of *those* two is, remarkably, also 175/176.

The first half-dozen chapters of this book are an interesting review of earlier attempts to discover, define, and explain ancient units. My attempt to find recent, comprehensive, and authoritative works covering the same ground confirms Neal's statement that mainstream archaeology has sorely neglected the field of historical metrology. I also garnered from Neal's book such fascinating snippets as the occurrence, especially in Scotland, of stone balls incised with the Platonic solids, something I had not been aware of despite much reading of books about prehistoric and megalithic remains. I enjoyed also some of Neal's charmingly witty, pointed comments about certain Establishment tendencies, for instance (p. 51), "To mention the words 'pyramid' and 'megalith' in the same sentence became sufficient cause for otherwise mild mannered scholars to rend their garments."

As to Neal's main theme, I have no quarrel with the idea—propounded by others as well as by Neal—that there may have existed, before the end of the last Ice Age, a quite advanced civilization whose descendants in various parts of the world preserved various traditions in a variety of forms. After all, sea levels now are hundreds of feet higher than during the last Ice Age, so that many relics of human culture from between 10,000 and, say, 40,000 years ago have probably been submerged and lost. At that earlier time there were some remarkably accomplished works of art inscribed in caves, and there seems nothing implausible in the notion that other facets of that culture may have been similarly remarkable. Certainly the astronomical knowledge apparently incorporated