YOGA FOR YELLOWBELLIES

Second Lecture

Mr. Chairman, Your Royal Highness, Your Grace, my lords, ladies and gentlemen.

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

In my last lecture I led you into the quag[1] of delusion; I smothered you in the mire of delusion; I brought you to thirst in the desert of delusion; I left you wandering in the jungle of delusion, a prey to all the monsters which are thoughts. It came into my mind that it was up to me to do something about it.

We have constantly been discussing mysterious entities as if we knew something about them, and this (on examination) always turned out not to be the case.

2. Knowledge itself is impossible, because if we take the simplest proposition of knowledge, S is P, we must attach some meaning to S and P, if our statement is to be intelligible. (I say nothing as to whether it is true!) And this involves definition. Now the original proposition of identity, A = A, tells us nothing at all, unless the second A gives us further information about the first A. We shall therefore say that A is BC. Instead of one unknown we have two unknowns; we have to define B as DE, C as FG. Now we have four unknowns, and very soon we have used up the alphabet. When we come to define Z, we have to go back and use one of the other letters, so that all our arguments are arguments in a circle.

3. Any statement which we make is demonstrably meaningless.

And yet we do mean something when we say that a cat has four legs. And we all know what we mean when we say so. We give our assent to, or withhold it from, the proposition on the grounds of our experience. But that experience is not intellectual, as above demonstrated. It is a matter of immediate intuition. We cannot have any warrant for that intuition, but at the same time any intellectual argument which upsets it does not in the faintest degree shake our conviction.

4. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the instrument of mind is not intellectual, not rational. Logic is merely destructive, a self-destructive toy. The toy, however, is in some ways also instructive, even though the results of its use will not bear examination. So we make a by-law that the particular sorites[2] which annihilate logic are out of bounds, and we go on reasoning within arbitrarily appointed limits. It is subject to these conditions that we may proceed to examine the nature of our fundamental ideas; and this is necessary, because since we began to consider the nature of the results of meditation, our conceptions of the backgrounds of thought are decided in quite a different manner; not by intellectual analysis, which, as we have seen, carries no conviction, but by illumination, which does carry conviction. Let us, therefore, proceed to examine the elements of our normal thinking.

5. I need hardly recapitulate the mathematical theorem which you all doubtless laid to heart when you were criticising Einstein's theory of relativity. I only want to recall to your minds the simplest element of that theorem; the fact that in order to describe anything at all, you must have four measurements. It must be so far east or west, so far north or south, so far up or down, from a standard point, and it must be after or before a standard moment. There are three dimensions of space and one of time.

6. Now what do we mean by space? Henri Poincare, one of the greatest mathematicians of the last generation, thought that the idea of space was invented by a lunatic, in a fantastic (and evidently senseless and aimless) endeavour to explain to himself his experience of his muscular movements. Long before that, Kant had told us that space was subjective, a necessary condition of thinking; and while every one must agree with this, it is obvious that it does not tell us much about it.

1 "Quag", a marshy or boggy place.

2 Sorites: a form of argument having several premises and one conclusion, capable of being resolved into a chain of syllogisms, the conclusion of each of which is a premise of the next.

7. Now let us look into our minds and see what idea, if any, we can form about space. Space is evidently a continuum. There cannot be any difference between any parts of it because it is wholly *where*. It is pure background, the area of possibilities, a condition of quality and so of all consciousness. It is therefore in itself completely void. Is that right, sir?

8. Now suppose we want to fulfil one of these possibilities.

The simplest thing we can take is a point, and we are told that a point has neither parts nor magnitude, but only position. But, as long as there is only one point, position means nothing. No possibility has yet been created of any positive statement. We will therefore take two points, and from these we get the idea of a line. Our Euclid tells us that a line has length but no breadth. But, as long as there are only two points, length itself means nothing; or, at the most, it means separateness. All we can say about two points is that there are two of them.

9. Now we take a third point, and at last we come to a more positive idea. In the first place, we have a plane surface, though that in itself still means nothing, in the same way as length means nothing when there are only two points there. But the introduction of the third point has given a meaning to our idea of length. We can say that the line AB is longer than the line BC, and we can also introduce the idea of an angle.

10. A fourth point, provided that it is not in the original plane, gives us the idea of a solid body. But, as before, it tells us nothing about the solid body as such, because there is no other solid body with which to compare it. We find also that it is not really a solid body at all as it stands, because it is merely an instantaneous kind of illusion. We cannot observe, or even imagine, anything, unless we have time for the purpose.

11. What, then is time? It is a phantasm, exactly as tenuous as space, but the possibilities of differentiation between one thing and another can only occur in one way instead of in three different ways. We compare two phenomena in time by the idea of sequence.

12. Now it will be perfectly clear to all of you that this is all nonsense. In order to conceive the simplest possible object, we have to keep on inventing ideas, which even in the proud moment of invention are seen to be unreal. How are we to get away from the world of phantasmagoria to the common universe of sense? We shall require quite a lot more acts of imagination. We have got to endow our mathematical conceptions with three ideas which Hindu philosophers call Sat, Chit and Ananda, which are usually translated Being, Knowledge and Bliss. This really means: Sat, the tendency to conceive of an object as real; Chit, the tendency to pretend that it is an object of knowledge; and Ananda, the tendency to imagine that we are affected by it.

13. It is only after we have endowed the object with these dozen imaginary properties, each of which, besides being a complete illusion, is an absurd, irrational, and self-contradictory notion, that we arrive at even the simplest object of experience. And this object must, of course, be constantly multiplied. Otherwise our experience would be confined to a single object incapable of description.

14. We have also got to attribute to ourselves a sort of divine power over our nightmare creation, so that we can compare the different objects of our experience in all sorts of different manners. Incidentally, this last operation of multiplying the objects stands evidently invalid, because (after all) what we began with was absolutely Nothingness. Out of this we have somehow managed to obtain, not merely one, but many; but, for all that, our process has followed the necessary operation of our intellectual machine. Since that machine is the only machine that we possess, our arguments must be valid in some sense or other conformable with the nature of this machine. What machine? That is a perfectly real object. It contains innumerable parts, powers and faculties. And they are as much a nightmare as the external universe which it has created. Gad, sir, Patanjali[3] is right!

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3 Patanjali Tamil, circa 2nd Century BCE, compiler of the *Yoga Sutras*, a collection of aphorisms on Yoga practice.

15. Now how do we get over this difficulty of something coming from Nothing? Only by enquiring what we mean by Nothing. We shall find that this idea is totally inconceivable to the normal mind. For if Nothing is to be Nothing, it must be Nothing in every possible way. (Of course, each of these ways is itself an imaginary something, and there are Aleph-Zero – a transfinite number – of them.[4]) If, for example, we say that Nothing is a square triangle, we have had to invent a square triangle in order to say it. But take a more homely instance. We know what we mean by saying 'There are cats in the room.' We know what we mean when we say 'No cats are in the room.' But if we say '*No* cats are *not* in the room,' we evidently mean that *some* cats *are* in the room. This remark is not intended to be a reflection upon this distinguished audience.

16. So then, if Nothing is to be really the absolute Nothing, we mean that Nothing does not enter into the category of existence. To say that absolute Nothing exists is equivalent to saying that everything exists which exists, and the great Hebrew sages of old time noted this fact by giving it the title of the supreme idea of reality (behind their tribal God, Jehovah, who, as we have previously shown, is merely the Yoga of the 4 Elements, even at his highest, – the *Demiourgos*[5]) Eheieh-Asher-Eheieh, – I am that I am.

17. If there is any sense in any of this at all, we may expect to find an almost identical system of thought all over the world. There is nothing exclusively Hebrew about this theogony. We find, for example, in the teachings of Zoroaster and the neo-Platonists very similar ideas. We have a Pleroma, the void, a background of all possibilities, and this is filled by a supreme Light-God, from whom drive in turn the seven Archons, who correspond closely to the seven planetary deities, Aratron, Bethor, Phaleg and the rest. These in their turn constitute a Demiurge in order to create matter; and this Demiurge is Jehovah. Not far different are the ideas both of the classical Greeks and the neo-Platonists. The differences in the terminology, when examined, appear as not much more than the differences of local convenience in thinking. But all these go back to the still older cosmogony of the ancient Egyptians, where we have Nuit, Space, Hadit, the point of view; these experience congress, and so produce Heru-Ra-Ha, who combines the ideas of Ra-Hoor-Khuit and Hoor-paar-Kraat. These are the same twin Vau and He' final which we know. Here is evidently the origin of the system of the Tree of Life.

18. We have arrived at this system by purely intellectual examination, and it is open to criticism; but the point I wish to bring to your notice tonight is that it corresponds closely to one of the great states of mind which reflect the experience of Samadhi.

There is a vision of peculiar character which has been of cardinal importance in my interior life, and to which constant reference is made in my Magical Diaries. So far as I know, there is no extant description of this vision anywhere, and I was surprised on looking through my records to find that I had given no clear account of it myself. The reason apparently is that it is so necessary a part of myself that I unconsciously assume it to be a matter of common knowledge, just as one assumes that everyone knows that one possesses a pair of lungs, and therefore abstains from mentioning the fact directly, although perhaps alluding to the matter often enough.

It appears very essential to describe this vision as well as possible, considering the difficulty of language, and the fact that the phenomena involved logical contradictions, the conditions of consciousness being other than those obtaining normally.

The vision developed gradually. It was repeated on so many occasions that I am unable to say at what period it may be called complete. The beginning, however, is clear enough in my memory.

4 Aleph-Zero, also called "Aleph-Null", is the first of a series of "transfinite" numbers, used by mathematicians to represent the size of infinite sets.

5 In Platonism, the artificer of the world. In Gnosticism and certain other systems, a supernatural being imagined as creating or fashioning the world in subordination to the Supreme Being, and sometimes regarded as the originator of evil.

19. I was on a Great Magical Retirement in a cottage overlooking Lake Pasquaney in New Hampshire. I lost consciousness of everything but an universal space in which were innumerable bright points, and I realised that this was a physical representation of the universe, in what I may call its essential structure. I exclaimed: 'Nothingness, with twinkles!' I concentrated upon this vision, with the result that the void space which had been the principal element of it diminished in importance. Space appeared to be ablaze, yet the radiant points were not confused, and I thereupon completed my sentence with the exclamation: 'But *what* Twinkles!'

20. The next stage of this vision led to an identification of the blazing points with the stars of the firmament, with ideas, souls, etc. I perceived also that each star was connected by a ray of light with each other star. In the world of ideas, each thought possessed a necessary relation with each other thought; each such relation is of course a thought in itself; each such ray is itself a star. It is here that logical difficulty first presents itself. The seer has a direct perception of infinite series. Logically, therefore, it would appear as if the entire space must be filled up with a homogeneous blaze of light. This is not, however, the case. The space is completely full, yet the monads[6] which fill it are perfectly distinct. The ordinary reader might well exclaim that such statements exhibit symptoms of mental confusion. The subject demands more than cursory examination. I can do no more than refer the critic to Bertrand Russell's 'Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy', where the above position is thoroughly justified, as also certain positions which follow.

I want you to note in particular the astonishing final identification of this cosmic experience with the nervous system as described by the anatomist.

21. At this point we may well be led to consider once more what we call the objective universe, and what we call our subjective experience. What is Nature? Immanuel Kant, who founded an epoch-making system of subjective idealism, is perhaps the first philosopher to demonstrate clearly that space, time, causality (in short, all conditions of existence) are really no more than conditions of thought. I have tried to put it more simply by defining all possible predicates as so many dimensions. To describe an object properly it is not sufficient to determine its position in the space-time continuum of four dimensions, but we must enquire how it stands in all the categories and scales, its values in all 'kinds' of possibility. What do we know about it in respect of its greenness, its hardness, its mobility, and so on? And then we find out that what we imagine to be the description of the object is in reality nothing of the sort.

22. All that we recorded is the behaviour of our instruments.

What did our telescopes, spectroscopes, and balances tell us? And these again are dependent upon the behaviour of our senses; for the reality of our instruments, of our organs of sense, is just as much in need of description and demonstration as are the most remote phenomena. And we find ourselves forced to the conclusion that anything we perceive is only perceived by us as such 'because of our tendency so to perceive it.' And we shall find that in the fourth stage of the great Buddhist practice, Mahasatipatthana,[7] we become directly and immediately aware of this fact instead of digging it out of the holts[8] of these interminable sorites which badger us! Kant himself put it, after his fashion: 'The laws of nature are the laws of our own minds.' Why? It is not the contents of the mind itself that we can cognise, but only its structure. But Kant has not gone to this length. He would have been extremely shocked if it had

6 In the metaphysics of Leibniz, this is an unextended, indivisible, and indestructible entity that is the basic or ultimate constituent of the universe and a microcosm of it. In the philosophy of Giordano Bruno it is a basic and irreducible metaphysical unit that is spatially and psychically individuated.

7 “Satipatthana” is an approach to meditation aimed at establishing *sati,* or mindfulness. It can be understood either as *sati-patthana,* foundation of mindfulness; or as *sati-upatthana,* establishing of mindfulness. “Maha” is an intesifier, causing it to be “great”.

8 “Holt” is a wood or wooded hill.

ever struck him that the final term in his sorites was 'Reason itself is the only reality.' On further examination, even this ultimate truth turns out to be meaningless. It is like the well known circular definition of an obscene book, which is: one that arouses certain ideas in the mind of the kind of person in whom such ideas are excited by that kind of book.

23. I notice that my excellent chairman is endeavouring to stifle a yawn and to convert it into a smile, and he will forgive me for saying that I find the effect somewhat sinister. But he has every right to be supercilious about it. These are indeed 'old, fond paradoxes to amuse wives in ale-houses.' Since philosophy began, it has always been a favourite game to prove your axioms absurd.

You will all naturally be very annoyed with me for indulging in these fatuous pastimes, especially as I started out with a pledge that I would deal with these subjects from the hard-headed scientific point of view. Forgive me if I have toyed with these shining gossamers of the thought-web! I have only been trying to break it to you gently. I proceed to brush away with a sweep of my lily-white hand all this tenuous, filmy stuff, 'such stuff as dreams are made of.' We will get down to modern science.

24. For general reading there is no better introduction than 'The Bases of Modern Science', by my old and valued friend the late J. W. N. Sullivan. I do not want to detain you too long with quotations from this admirable book. I would much rather you got it and read it yourself; you could hardly make better use of your time. But let us spend a few moments on his remarks about the question of geometry.

Our conceptions of space as a subjective entity has been completely upset by the discovery that the equations of Newton based on Euclidean Geometry are inadequate to explain the phenomena of gravitation. It is instinctive to us to think of a straight line; it is somehow axiomatic. But we learn that this does not exist in the objective universe. We have to use another geometry, Riemann's Geometry, which is one of the curved geometries. (There are, of course, as many systems of geometry as there are absurd axioms to build them on. Three lines make one ellipse: any nonsense you like: you can proceed to construct a geometry which is correct so long as it is coherent. And there is nothing right or wrong about the result: the only question is: which is the most convenient system for the purpose of describing phenomena? We found the idea of Gravitation awkward: we went to Riemann.)

This means that the phenomena are not taking place against a background of a flat surface; the surface itself is curved. What we have thought of as a straight line does not exist at all. And this is almost impossible to conceive; at least it is quite impossible for myself to visualise. The nearest one gets to it is by trying to imagine that you are a reflection on a polished door-knob.

25. I feel almost ashamed of the world that I have to tell you that in the year 1900, four years before the appearance of Einstein's world-shaking paper, I described space as 'finite yet boundless,' which is exactly the description in general terms that he gave in more mathematical detail.[9] You will see at once that these three words do describe a curved geometry; a sphere, for instance, is a finite object, yet you can go over the surface in any direction without ever coming to an end.

I said above that Riemann's Geometry was not quite sufficient to explain the phenomena of nature. We have to postulate different kinds of curvature in different parts of the continuum. And even then we are not happy!

26. Now for a spot of Sullivan! 'The geometry is so general that it admits of different degrees of curvature in different parts of space-time. It is to this curvature that gravitational effects are due. The curvature of space-time is most prominent, therefore, around large masses, for here the gravitational effects are most marked. If we take matter as fundamental, we may say that it is the presence of matter that causes the curvature of space-time. But there is a different school of thought that regards matter as due to the

9 Crowley note: TANNHAUSER, written in Mexico, O.F., August, 1900. See also my BERASHITH, written in Delhi, April, 1901.

curvature of space-time. That is, we assume as fundamental a space-time continuum manifest to our senses as what we call matter. Both points of view have strong arguments to recommend them. But, whether or not matter may be derived from the geometrical peculiarities of the space-time continuum, we may take it as an established scientific fact that gravitation has been so derived. This is obviously a very great achievement, but it leaves quite untouched another great class of phenomena, namely, electro-magnetic phenomena. In this space-time continuum of Einstein's the electro-magnetic forces appear as entirely alien. Gravitation has been absorbed, as it were, into Riemannian geometry, and the notion of force, so far as gravitational phenomena are concerned, has been abolished. But the electro-magnetic forces still flourish undisturbed. There is no hint that they are manifestations of the geometrical peculiarities of the space-time continuum. And it can be shown to be impossible to relate them to anything in Riemann's Geometry. Gravitation can be shown to correspond to certain geometrical peculiarities of a Riemannian space-time. But the electro-magnetic forces lie completely outside this scheme.'

27. Here is the great quag into which mathematical physics has led its addicts. Here we have two classes of phenomena, all part of a unity of physics. Yet the equations which describe and explain the one class are incompatible with those of the other class! This is not a question of philosophy at all, but a question of fact. It does not do to consider that the universe is composed of particles. Such a hypothesis underlies one class of phenomena, but it is nonsense when applied to the electro-magnetic equations, which insist upon our abandoning the idea of particles for that of waves.

Here is another Welsh rabbit[10] for supper!

'Einstein's finite universe is such that its radius is dependent upon the amount of matter in it. Were more matter to be created, the volume of the universe would increase. Were matter to be annihilated, the volume of space would decrease. Without matter, space would not exist. Thus the mere existence of space, besides its metrical properties, depends upon the existence of matter. With this conception it becomes possible to regard all motion, including rotation, as purely relative.'

Where do we go from here, boys?

28. 'The present tendency of physics is towards describing the universe in terms of mathematical relations between unimaginable entities.'

We have got a long way from Lord Kelvin's too-often and too-unfairly quoted statement that he could not imagine anything of which he could not construct a mechanical model. The Victorians were really a little inclined to echo Dr. Johnson's[11] gross imbecile stamp on the ground when the ideas of Bishop Berkeley penetrated to the superficial strata of the drink-sodden grey cells of that beef-witted brute.

29. Now, look you, I ask you to reflect upon the trouble we have taken to calculate the distance of the fixed stars, and hear Professor G. N. Lewis, who 'suggests that two atoms connected by a light ray may be regarded as in actual physical contact. The “interval” between two ends of a light-ray is, on the theory of relativity, zero, and Professor Lewis suggests that this fact should be taken seriously. On this theory, light is not propagated at all. This idea is in conformity with the principle that none but observable factors should be used in constructing a scientific theory, for we can certainly never observe the passage of light in empty space. We are only aware of light when it encounters matter. Light which never encounters matter is purely hypothetical. If we do not make that hypothesis, then there is no empty space. On Professor Lewis's theory, when we observe a distant star, our eye as truly makes

10 Welsh rabbit, or rarebit, is heated cheese and other ingredients poured over bread and served hot. However, it contains no rabbit.

11 Samuel Johnson, 1709 - 1784, English poet, essayist, moralist, literary critic, biographer, lexicographer, and editor. This foot-stamp was Johnson kicking a rock as a refutation of Berkeley's contention that matter does not truly exist.

physical contact with that star as our finger makes contact with a table when we press it.'

30. And did not all of you think that my arguments were arguments in a circle? I certainly hope you did, for I was at the greatest pains to tell you so. But it is not a question of argument in Mr. Sullivan's book; it is a question of facts. He was talking about human values. He was asking whether science could possibly be cognizant of them. Here he comes, the great commander! Cheer, my comrades, cheer!

'But although consistent materialists were probably always rare, the humanistically important fact remained that science did not find it necessary to include values in its description of the universe. For it appeared that science, in spite of this omission, formed a closed system. If values form an integral part of reality, it seems strange that science should be able to give a consistent description of phenomena which ignores them.

'At the present time, this difficulty is being met in two ways.

'On the one hand, it is pointed out that science remains within its own domain by the device of cyclic definition, that is to say, the abstractions with which it begins are all it ever talks about. It makes no fresh contacts with reality, and therefore never encounters any possibly disturbing factors. This point of view is derived from the theory of relativity, particularly from the form of presentation adopted by Eddington. This theory forms a closed circle. The primary terms of the theory, *point-events*, *potentials*, *matter* (etc. – there are ten of them), lie at various points on the circumference of the circle. We may start at any point and go round the circle, that is, from any one of these terms we can deduce the others. The primary entities of the theory are defined in terms of one another. In the course of this exercise we derive the laws of Nature studied in physics. At a certain point in the chain of deductions, at *matter*, for example, we judge that we are talking about something which is an objective concrete embodiment of our abstractions. But matter, as it occurs in physics, is no more than a particular set of abstractions, and our subsequent reasoning is concerned only with these abstractions. Such other characteristics as the objective reality may possess never enter our scheme. But the set of abstractions called matter in relativity theory do not seem to be adequate to the whole of our scientific knowledge of matter. There remain quantum phenomena.'

Ah!

> 'So we leave her, so we leave her,
> Far from where her swarthy kindred roam –
> kindred roam
> In the Scarlet Fever, Scarlet Fever,
> Scarlet Fever Convalescent Home.' [12]

31. So now, no less than that chivalrous gentleman, His Grace, the Most Reverend the Archbishop of Canterbury, who in a recent broadcast confounded for ever all those infidels who had presumed to doubt the possibility of devils entering into swine, we have met the dragon science and conquered. We have seen that, however we attack the problem of mind, whether from the customary spiritual standpoint, or from the opposite corner of materialism, the result is just the same.

One last quotation from Mr. Sullivan. 'The universe may ultimately prove to be irrational. The scientific adventure may have to be given up.'

But that is all *he* knows about science, bless his little heart! We do not give up. 'You lied, d'Ormea, I do not repent!'[13] The results of experiment are still valid for experience, and the fact that the universe turns out on enquiry to be unintelligible only serves to fortify our ingrained conviction that experience itself is reality.

32. We may then ask ourselves whether it is not possible to obtain experience of a higher order, to discover and develop the faculty of mind which can transcend analysis, stable against all thought by virtue of its own self-evident assurance. In the

12 By that prolific author, Anonymous. You can find this in a 1930 anthology, *The Stuffed Owl: An Anthology of Bad Verse* edited by D. B. Wyndham-Lewis and Charles Lee.

13 Robert Browning, *King Victor and King Charles*.

language of the Great White Brotherhood (whom I am here to represent) you cross the abyss. 'Leave the poor old stranded wreck' – Ruach – 'and pull for the shore' of Neschamah. For above the abyss, it is said, as you will see if you study the Supplement of the fifth number of the First Volume of 'The Equinox', an idea is only true in so far as it contains its contradictory in itself.

33. It is such states of mind as this which constitute the really important results of Samyama, and these results are not to be destroyed by philosophical speculation, because they are not susceptible of analysis, because they have no component parts, because they exist by virtue of their very Unreason – 'certum est quia ineptum!'[14] They cannot be expressed, for they are above knowledge. To some extent we can convey our experience to others familiar with that experience to a less degree by the aesthetic method. And this explains why all the good work on Yoga – alchemy, magick and the rest – not doctrinal but symbolic – the word of God to man, is given in Poetry and Art.

In my next lecture I shall endeavour to go a little deeper into the technique of obtaining these results, and also give a more detailed account of the sort of thing that is likely to occur in the course of the preliminary practices.

Love is the law, love under will.

14 "It is certain because [it is] absurd."