

U. G. KRISHNAMURTI



MIND IS A MYTH

U. G. Krishnamurti

Mind is a Myth

Enriched edition.

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Introduction

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This is a book that pits the relentless search for enlightenment against the stark possibility that the search itself is the problem. *Mind Is a Myth* by U.G. Krishnamurti is a work of nonfiction composed from conversations rather than a conventional treatise, emerging in the late twentieth century as a stark counterpoint to spiritual manuals and philosophical systems. Krishnamurti, known for rejecting guru status and methods, speaks in an uncompromising, stripped-down register that resists doctrine. The result is neither memoir nor step-by-step guide but a sequence of encounters that keeps its focus on the immediate claims being made, and on the listener's unease in hearing them.

The premise is disarmingly simple: a man is asked perennial questions about self, mind, freedom, and meaning, and he answers by dismantling the assumptions that make those questions feel necessary. The reading experience is direct and unsentimental, carried by a voice that is laconic, contrarian, and committed to plain speech. Instead of offering techniques or inspirational uplift, the book stays close to ordinary language, often circling back to everyday sensations and social conditioning. The tone is steady and measured, yet the cumulative effect is disorienting, because each answer quietly refuses the frameworks the reader expects to be confirmed.

Krishnamurti's central contention is that what we call mind, self, and spiritual aspiration are inseparable from cultural conditioning, and that the craving for a final solution perpetuates the unrest it hopes to end. The themes that follow from this stance include the limits of language, the persistence of habit, the gap between bodily processes and

psychological narratives, and the market of reassurance that grows around the idea of transcendence. Rather than resolve debates, the book exposes how the desire for resolution organizes our thinking. It invites readers to watch those desires operate in real time, in themselves, as arguments unfold.

Formally, *Mind Is a Myth* reads like edited conversations, with short sections that retain the rhythm of spoken exchange. There is no plot to spoil, no arc toward revelation; instead, the movement is recursive, frequently revisiting the same claims from slightly altered angles. This recurrence is not redundancy but method, allowing readers to notice where their expectations reassert themselves. The settings are incidental and unnamed in the text's logic; what matters is the live pressure of interlocution and the refusal to solidify into a system. The clarity of diction stands out, as does the exacting refusal to soften conclusions.

Situated against a long tradition of spiritual and philosophical literature, the book's distinctiveness lies in declining the role of teaching while staying rigorously engaged with the questions people bring. It does not position itself as an alternative school or a hidden path; it contests the very notion of a path. In that sense, it participates in the genre of conversations while reversing the usual trajectory from problem to prescription. For readers familiar with inspirational narratives or metaphysical dialogues, this inversion can be bracing: the book's energy comes from subtraction rather than accumulation, from taking away explanations rather than adding more.

For contemporary readers, *Mind Is a Myth* remains salient because it bluntly interrogates the assumptions underlying today's wellness culture, productivity advice, and constant self-improvement messaging. Its skepticism toward techniques resonates amid a marketplace saturated with methods promising calm, clarity, or optimization. At the

same time, its attention to conditioning aligns with ongoing discussions in psychology and cognitive science about how identities are formed and stabilized. The book neither celebrates cynicism nor offers comfort; it asks whether the urge to fix ourselves is inseparable from the unease we seek to escape, and whether that loop can be seen without another strategy.

Approached on its own terms, this is less a text to be agreed with than a provocation to observe how agreement and disagreement arise. Readers will find a voice that declines authority yet accepts full responsibility for its claims, a style that is accessible without becoming conciliatory, and an argument that holds firm without becoming a system. The value of the book today lies in this unusual combination: an uncompromising critique delivered in plain speech, designed to unsettle the reflex to turn every challenge into a new practice. It matters because it leaves the reader with attention, not answers, and with questions no longer quite the same.

Synopsis

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Mind is a Myth presents a series of conversations and remarks by U.G. Krishnamurti that unsettle assumptions about consciousness, spirituality, and personal transformation. Eschewing the role of teacher, he insists the book offers no doctrine, method, or path. Its through line is an uncompromising claim: what people call the mind is a cultural idea supported by memory, language, and habit, not an independent entity that can be known or perfected. The dialogue format preserves the immediacy of challenge and rebuttal, with questions from visitors provoking concise, often stark responses that progressively strip away familiar spiritual and psychological narratives.

Early chapters clarify this central negation. Krishnamurti portrays thought as a mechanical, utilitarian function adapted for survival, unsuitable for understanding or transforming itself. The sense of a controller behind thought is treated as an afterimage generated by memory and social conditioning. Attempts to construct a stable inner identity, he argues, are inseparable from conflict, because the very machinery that seeks order is the source of division. By refusing speculative metaphysics and technical jargon, the text centers on the felt fact of thinking as sensation and memory, dismantling the idea of an enduring psyche capable of voluntary, comprehensive self-management.

He then recounts, without offering it as an ideal, a drastic personal shift he calls a calamity, after which everyday functioning continued but psychological continuity seemed absent. The narrative is not presented as mystical attainment or as something to imitate, and he cautions that any attempt to reproduce it is part of the same pursuit he

rejects. Physiological descriptions sometimes serve to emphasize that experience is bodily and immediate rather than spiritual or symbolic. This autobiographical strand feeds the argument's spine: if the mind is a myth, then the usual goals of cultivation, control, and enlightenment have no purchase.

Accordingly, the book subjects the global marketplace of spiritual techniques—meditation, psychotherapy, positive thinking, esoteric disciplines—to a sustained critique. For Krishnamurti, discipline merely strengthens the structure of becoming, the movement that compares and strives. Teachers and institutions, however sincere, are said to perpetuate dependency by promising a future release. He treats authority as incompatible with freedom, yet declines to replace one system with another. The reader encounters a consistent refusal to legislate behavior or prescribe exercises, along with the stark suggestion that the end of seeking, if it happens, is not an achievement but the simple failure of effort.

Broader social themes surface as interlocutors press him about love, morality, relationship, and cooperation. He contends that noble ideals are often extensions of biological drives clothed in culture, and that language stabilizes abstractions that then dictate conduct. Attempts to reform the world without seeing this machinery, he says, merely reorganize conflict. Compassion and altruism, in this light, are indistinguishable from self-interest when mediated by thought. Technology and political projects appear as amplifications of the same impulses rather than solutions. The text repeatedly returns to the immediacy of sensation, pointing away from interpretation and toward the body's unpremeditated responses.

Stylistically, *Mind is a Myth* proceeds by deflection and deconstruction. Krishnamurti declines analytic closure, undercuts his own formulations, and warns against turning his statements into principles. The dialogues display a

bracing skepticism toward explanation, repeatedly steering questioners back to the limits of listening and the futility of accumulating understanding. He distances himself from communities, practices, and followers, maintaining that there is nothing to transmit. This stance gives the book an austere coherence: it dramatizes the erosion of the questioner's framework rather than delivering insights to be stored, inviting a reading that is vigilant about the mind's tendency to codify.

Without promising resolution, the work's wider significance lies in how it reframes urgent philosophical and spiritual questions. It tests the plausibility of a self-governing mind, exposes the economy of promise and postponement in the search for fulfillment, and challenges the premise that language can solve the problems it names. Its long afterlife owes less to consoling answers than to the clarity of its negations and the candor of its refusals. As a document of radical skepticism, *Mind is a Myth* remains a provocative counterpoint to traditions of self-improvement, inviting readers to reassess authority, aspiration, and the narratives that organize inner life.

Historical Context

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Mind is a Myth is a collection of conversations with U.G. Krishnamurti compiled from talks held between the 1970s and 1990s across India, Europe, and the United States, and first circulated in the late 1980s. The exchanges typically occurred in private apartments and small, informal gatherings rather than formal lecture halls or ashrams. Krishnamurti, unrelated to the better-known Jiddu Krishnamurti, became noted for rejecting religious authority, spiritual practice, and the figure of the guru. The book's dialogic form mirrors its settings, preserving the spontaneity of questions and replies within a transnational milieu of seekers, skeptics, and readers navigating late twentieth-century spiritual discourse.

Early twentieth-century India's spiritual conversation was strongly shaped by the Theosophical Society, headquartered at Adyar in Madras (Chennai), which promoted a universalist blend of Eastern and Western ideas and helped bring Jiddu Krishnamurti to international prominence. In 1929, Jiddu Krishnamurti dissolved the Order of the Star and publicly rejected organized belief, an event that influenced decades of debate about institutions and authority. U.G. Krishnamurti came of age in this climate and later encountered Jiddu Krishnamurti's European talks. *Mind is a Myth* inherits this lineage of skepticism toward organization, extending it into a thoroughgoing refusal of doctrine, methods, and institutional structures in modern spiritual life.

After India's independence in 1947, state-led modernization emphasized scientific education and secular governance. Jawaharlal Nehru's advocacy of a "scientific temper" became part of public policy, and in 1976 India's

Constitution added a Fundamental Duty to “develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform” (Article 51A[h]). Universities expanded, psychology and psychiatry professionalized, and urban centers like Bombay (Mumbai) and Bangalore (Bengaluru) hosted vigorous debates on religion and reason. *Mind is a Myth* reflects this postcolonial setting: U.G. Krishnamurti’s emphasis on physiological language and his dismissal of mystical attainment intersect with a period assessing spiritual claims alongside science, medicine, and modern skepticism.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Western counterculture increasingly turned to Asian philosophies, making yoga, meditation, and Zen part of mainstream conversation. The Beatles’ 1968 visit to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s ashram publicized Transcendental Meditation; the Esalen Institute and the Human Potential Movement blended psychology and spirituality; Jiddu Krishnamurti’s annual talks in Saanen, Switzerland, drew international audiences. India’s guru movements, including Rajneesh’s commune established in Pune in 1974, attracted thousands. U.G. Krishnamurti moved through similar circuits yet refused to establish a group, prescribe practices, or accept followers. *Mind is a Myth* took shape against this surge of demand for techniques, offering a contrary voice amid booming spiritual commerce.

In 1967, while in Switzerland near venues hosting Jiddu Krishnamurti’s gatherings, U.G. Krishnamurti reported a sudden, disruptive shift he called the “calamity.” Thereafter, he denied the legitimacy of traditional enlightenment narratives and refrained from promoting any path. Rather than formulate a doctrine, he insisted that no method leads to a permanent, higher state of consciousness. *Mind is a Myth* draws on conversations from the years following this episode, when he articulated his rejection of spiritual effort and authority. Mentioned here as context, the event helps

explain the book's uncompromising tone without disclosing its specific anecdotes or argumentative turns.

Technological and publishing shifts shaped the book's production. By the 1970s, inexpensive cassette recorders enabled visitors to tape U.G. Krishnamurti's living-room sessions in cities such as Bombay, Bangalore, London, and locations in California, circulating copies informally. Photocopying and small presses facilitated low-cost transcripts that were later compiled into *Mind is a Myth* and related volumes. Consistent with his refusal to found an organization, dissemination avoided initiation rites, formal membership, or fundraising campaigns; later printings and digital files were often shared freely. The resulting text bears marks of spontaneous dialogue, illustrating how late twentieth-century media supported decentralized philosophical and spiritual exchange.

Mind is a Myth also belongs to an era of dialogue between neuroscience, psychology, and contemplative traditions. In the 1980s, cognitive science coalesced across disciplines, while popular psychology and therapy spread through workshops and publishing. Simultaneously, New Age movements promised personal transformation through techniques and belief systems. U.G. Krishnamurti's conversations confront these currents by rejecting therapeutic models, meditative training, and metaphysical consolation, framing experience in naturalistic, frequently physiological terms. His stance juxtaposes late-Cold War optimism about self-improvement with a stark appraisal of mind-centered projects, aligning the book with broader currents of skepticism and critical inquiry into authority, ideology, and technique.

By the late 1980s and 1990s, as globalization intensified and spiritual literature became widely accessible, *Mind is a Myth* circulated among readers familiar with gurus, psychotherapy, and nondual teachings. Without creating an ashram or curriculum, U.G. Krishnamurti met visitors in

private spaces, and the book preserves that itinerant, border-crossing mode. Its historical significance lies in mirroring the period's transnational conversations while sharply disputing their premises. As a critique of authority, salvation-seeking, and marketable mysticism, it distills late twentieth-century disillusionment and offers an unembellished counterpoint to contemporaneous promises of enlightenment, self-optimization, and institutional belonging, reflecting and challenging the conditions that produced it.

Mind is a Myth

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Chapter 1

The Certainty That Blasts Everything

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U.G.: I can never sit on a platform and talk. It is too artificial. It is a waste of time to sit and discuss things in hypothetical or abstract terms. An angry man does not sit and talk and converse pleasantly about anger; he is too angry. So don't tell me that you are in crisis, that you are angry. Why talk of anger? You live and die in the hope that someday, somehow, you will no longer be angry. You are burdened with hope, and if this life seems hopeless, you invent the next life. There are no lives to come [\[1q\]](#).

Q: Well, it certainly cannot be said that your talking gives hope to anyone. Why do you talk if not to console or instruct?

U.G.: What am I to do? You come, I talk. Do you want me to criticize you, to throw stones? It is useless, for you are affected by nothing, having erected an impenetrable armor around yourself. You feel nothing. Unable to understand your situation, you react through thought, which is your ideas and mentations. Reaction is thought. The pain you are going through there is clearly reflected without having to experience the pain here. Here there is no experience at all. That is all. In this natural state you feel the pain of others, whether you personally know them or not. Recently my eldest son was dying of cancer in a hospital nearby. I was in the area and visited him often. Friends said that I was in intense pain during the whole time, until he died. I cannot

do anything. It (pain) is an expression of life. They wanted me to attempt some kind of healing for his cancer. If I touch that tumor it will grow, for I am adding life to it. Cancer is a multiplication of cells, another expression of life, and anything I might do only strengthens it.

Q: So you can appreciate the suffering of others and yet are free of it yourself, is that it?

U.G.: Suffering is an experience, and there is no experience here. You are not one thing, and life another. It is one unitary movement and anything I say about it is misleading, confusing. You are not a "person", not a "thing", not a discrete entity surrounded by "other" things. The unitary movement is not something which you can experience[4q].

Q: But to talk of living without experiencing sounds irrational to our minds.

U.G.: What I am saying conflicts with your logical framework. You are using logic to continue that separative structure, that is all. Your questions are again thoughts and therefore reactive. All thought is reactive[2q]. You are desperately protecting this armour, this shield of thought, and are frightened that the movement of life might smash your frontiers. Life is like a river in spate, lashing at the banks, threatening the limits that have been placed around it. Your thought structure and your actual physiological framework are limited, but life itself is not. That is why life in freedom is painful to the body; the tremendous outburst of energy that takes place here is a painful thing to the body, blasting every cell as it goes. You cannot imagine how it is in your wildest dreams. This is why it is misleading no matter how I put it.

Q: The gurus and priests teach us also that there is no separative structure and that that is the source of our problems. How do you differ from them?

U.G.: For you, and them, it is just words. Your belief in a unitary movement of life is just a groundless belief, lacking any certainty. You have cleverly rationalized what the gurus and holy books have taught you. Your beliefs are the result of blind acceptance of authority, all secondhand stuff. You are not separate from your beliefs. When your precious beliefs and illusions come to an end, you come to an end. My talking is nothing more than the response to your pain, which you are expressing through questions, logical arguments, and other mentations.

Q: But surely your sitting here and talking hour after hour indicates that you have a philosophy, a message to give, even if it is poorly understood by your listeners.

U.G.: Not at all. There is nobody here talking, giving advice, feeling pain, or experiencing anything at all. Like a ball thrown against the wall, it bounces back, that is all. My talking is the direct result of your question, I have nothing here of my own, no obvious or hidden agenda, no product to sell, no axe to grind, nothing to prove.

Q: But the body is transient, and we all aspire for some kind of immortality. Naturally we turn to higher philosophy, religion, the spiritual. Surely, if we ...

U.G.: It is the body which is immortal[3q]. It only changes its form after clinical death, remaining within the flow of life in new shapes. The body is not concerned with "the afterlife" or any kind of permanency. It struggles to survive and multiply NOW. The fictitious "beyond", created by

thought out of fear, is really the demand for more of the same, in modified form. This demand for repetition of the same thing over and over again is the demand for permanence. Such permanence is foreign to the body. Thought's demand for permanence is choking the body and distorting perception. Thought sees itself as not just the protector of its own continuity, but also of the body's continuity. Both are utterly false.

Q: It seems that some sort of radical change must take place, but without the interference of will ...

U.G.: If it occurs through no volition of yours, then that is the end of it. You will have no way of stopping it, of changing the situation at all. You cannot but go through it. It does no good to question reality. Question, rather, your goals, your beliefs, and assumptions. It is from them, not reality, that you must be freed. These pointless questions you are asking will disappear with the automatic abandonment of your goals. They are interdependent. One can't exist without the other.

Q: Such a prospect is just too much. We fear oblivion, utter destruction.

U.G.: If you drown, you drown. You will not sink. But what good are my assurances to you? Worthless, I'm afraid. You will continue doing what you are doing; its meaninglessness does not even occur to you. I tell you, when you stop doing things out of hope and the desire for continuity, all you do along with it stops. You will stay afloat. But still the hope remains there; "There must be SOME way, perhaps I am not doing it the right way." In other words, we have to accept the absurdity of depending upon ANYTHING. We must face our helplessness.