

NO WAY OUT



U. G. KRISHNAMURTI

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e-artnow, 2021

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The unrational philosophy of U.G.Krishnamurti

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*I am not anti-rational, just unrational. You may infer
a rational meaning in what I say or do, but it is your
doing, not mine.*

—U.G.

Swami Without a Robe

The Universe is your Ashram
the planet your Stupa
Humanity your adherents
Truth your God
Love your being
Dissolving your teaching
Nothing your self as you melt into all.

U.G.Krishnamurti is well-known in spiritual circles as an anomalous, enigmatic, and iconoclastic figure. He has been variously and aptly described as the "Un-Guru", as the "Raging Sage", and also as the "Don Rickles of the Guru Set". The man is a walking Rudra who hurls verbal missiles into the very heart of the guarded citadels of human culture. He spares no tradition however ancient, no institution however established, and no practice however

sanctimonious. Never have the foundations of human civilization been subjected to such devastating criticism as by this seventy-three year old man called U.G.

Unlike J. Krishnamurti, U.G. does not give "talks" to the general public, or "interviews" to VIP'S. He keeps no journals or notebooks and makes no "commentaries" on living. There is an unusual but authentic atmosphere of informality around U.G. You don't have to beg the favor of some pompous "devotee" or "worker" to meet him and talk with him. U.G.'s doors, wherever he happens to be, are always open to visitors. In striking contrast to most contemporary gurus, U.G. does not appear to discriminate between his visitors on grounds of wealth, position, caste, race, religion, or nationality.

Although he is 73, he continues to travel around the world in response to invitations from his friends. His "migratory" movements over the globe have earned him a rather devoted circle of friends in many parts of the world including China (one of the very few countries he has not visited), where translations of his best-seller, *The Mystique of Enlightenment*, first published in 1982, are in circulation. A second book, *Mind is a Myth*, published in 1988, is also very popular with an audience disenchanted with the Guru set. A third book, *Thought is Your Enemy*, has been published recently. These books contain edited transcriptions of conversations numerous people have had with U.G. all over the world. It is striking that U.G. does not claim copyright over these books. He goes so far as to declare that "You are free to reproduce, distribute, interpret, misinterpret, distort, garble, do what you like, even claim authorship without my consent or the permission of anybody." I doubt if this has any precedent in history. U.G.'s ways are like nature's ways. Nature does not claim copyright over its creations. Neither does U.G.

U.G. does not claim to have any "spiritual teachings." He has pointed out that a spiritual teaching presupposes the

possibility of a change or transformation in individuals, and offers techniques or methods for bringing it about. "But I do not have any such teaching because I question the very idea of transformation. I maintain that there is nothing to be transformed or changed in you. So, naturally, I do not have any arsenal of meditative techniques or practices," he asserts. Although there may be no "spiritual teaching", in the conventional sense, it seems quite undeniable that there is a "philosophy" in his ever-growing corpus of utterances, a "philosophy" which resists assimilation into established philosophical traditions, Eastern or Western, and one which is certainly worth examining. U.G. is important enough not to be left to J. Krishnamurti's "widows" and Bhagwan Rajneesh's former "divorcés" (to use U.G.'s terms)! He deserves critical attention from the philosophical community, particularly in India, where the traditions of all the dead generations weigh like a nightmare on the brains of the living.

The term "unrational" best describes the temper of U.G.'s philosophical approach. He is not interested in offering solutions to problems. His concern is to point out that the solution is the problem! As he often observes, "The questions are born out of the answers that we already have." The source of the questions is the answers we have picked up from our tradition. And those answers are not genuine answers. If the answers were genuine, the questions would not persist in an unmodified or modified form. But the questions persist. Despite all the answers in our tradition we are still asking questions about God, the meaning of life, and so on. Therefore, U.G. maintains, the answers are the problem. The real answer, if there is one, consists in the dissolution of both the answers and the questions inherited from tradition.

U.G.'s approach is also "unrational" in another sense. He does not use logical arguments to deal with questions. He employs what I call the method of resolution of the question

into its constitutive psychological demands. He then shows that this psychological demand is without a foundation. Consider, for example, the question of God. U.G. is not interested in logical arguments for or against God. What he does is to resolve the question into its underlying constitutive demand for permanent pleasure or happiness. U.G. now points out that this demand for permanent happiness is without foundation because there is no permanence. Further, the psychological demand for permanent happiness has no physiological foundation in the sense that the body cannot handle permanence. As U.G. puts it:

God or Enlightenment is the ultimate pleasure, uninterrupted happiness. No such thing exists. Your wanting something that does not exist is the root of your problem. Transformation, moksha, and all that stuff are just variations of the same theme: permanent happiness. The body can't take uninterrupted pleasure for long; it would be destroyed. Wanting a fictitious permanent state of happiness is actually a serious neurological problem.

The problem of death would be another example. U.G. brushes aside speculations about the "soul" and "after-life". He maintains that there is nothing inside of us that will reincarnate after death. "There is nothing inside of you but fear," he says. His concern is to point out that the demand for the continuity of the "experiencer" which underlies questions about death has no basis. In his words:

Your experiencing structure cannot conceive of any event that it will not experience. It even expects to preside over its own dissolution, and so it wonders what death will feel like, it tries to project the feeling of what it will be like not to feel. But in order to anticipate a

future experience, your structure needs knowledge, a similar past experience it can call upon for reference. You cannot remember what it felt like not to exist before you were born, and you cannot remember your own birth, so you have no basis for projecting your future non-existence.

U.G. also repudiates many of the assumptions of the philosophers of Reason. He has Aristotle in mind when he declares that "Whoever said that man was a rational being deluded himself and deluded us all." U.G. maintains that the driving force of human action is power and not rationality. In fact he holds that rationality is itself an instrument of power. The rationalist approach is based on faith in the ability of thought to transform the human condition. U.G. contends that this faith in thought is misplaced. According to him, thought is a divisive and ultimately a destructive instrument. It is only interested in its own continuity and turns everything into a means of its own perpetuation. It can only function in terms of a division between the so-called self or ego and the world. And this division between an illusory self and an opposed world is ultimately destructive because it results in the aggrandizement of the "self" at the expense of everything else. That is why everything born of thought is harmful in one way or another. So thought is not the instrument which can transform our condition. But neither does U.G. point to some spiritual faculty such as intuition or faith as the saving instrument. He dismisses intuition as nothing more than a form of subtle and refined thought. As for faith, it is just a form of hope without any foundation.

But U.G. does speak of something like a native or natural intelligence of the living organism. The acquired "intelligence" of the intellect is no match to the native intelligence of the body. It is this intelligence which is operative in the extraordinarily complex systems of the

body. One has only to examine the immune system to comprehend the nature of this innate intelligence of the living body. U.G. maintains that this native intelligence of the body is unrelated to the intellect. Therefore it cannot be used or directed to solve the problems created by thought. It is not interested in the machinations of thought.

Thought is the enemy of this innate intelligence of the body. Thought is inimical to the harmonious functioning of the body because it turns everything into a movement of pleasure. This is the way it ensures its own continuity. The pursuit of permanence is also another way in which thought becomes inimical to the harmonious functioning of the body. According to U.G., the demand for pleasure and permanence destroys, in the long run, the sensitivity of the body. The body is not interested in permanence. Its nervous system cannot handle permanent states, pleasurable or painful. But thought has projected the existence of permanent states of peace, bliss, or ecstasy in order to maintain its continuity. There is thus a fundamental conflict between the demands of the "mind" or thought and the functioning of the body.

This conflict between thought and the body cannot be resolved by thought. Any attempt by thought to deal with this conflict only aggravates the problem. What must come to an end is the distorting interference of the self-perpetuating mechanism of thought. And this cannot, obviously, be achieved by that very mechanism. U.G. maintains that all techniques and practices to end or control thought are futile because they are themselves the products of thought and the means of its perpetuation.

The rationalist approach is also committed to the concept of causality. U.G. rejects causality as a shibboleth. He maintains that events are actually disconnected, and it is thought which connects them by means of the concept of causality. But there is no way of knowing whether there are actually causal relationships in nature. This leads him to

reject not only the notion of a creator of the universe, but also the hypothesis of a Big Bang. He maintains that the universe has no cause, no beginning, and no end.

There seems to be some similarity with the Buddhist approach on this issue. The Buddhists also rejected the notion that the world had a beginning. But they still subscribed to the view that all phenomena had causes. U.G., by contrast, rejects this view. He has no problems with the idea of acausal phenomena. Of course, U.G. is not a Buddhist. He rejects the four noble truths, the eight-fold path, the goal of Nirvana, and the methods of Buddhist meditation. He even considers the Buddha as a foolish man because he enjoined his followers to propagate the "*Dhamma*" to the four corners of the earth. The mischief of the missionaries thus originated with the "Mindless One"!

U.G. also argues that there is no entity called "self" independent of the thought process. There is no thinker, but only thinking. We think that there must be a "thinker", an entity that is thinking, but we have no way of knowing this. There is only a movement of thought. U.G. does not acknowledge a sharp distinction between feeling or emotion and thought. Even perception and sensation are permeated by thought. His use of the phrase "movement of thought" is thus quite extensive in its meaning. U.G. accords a central role to memory, which conditions the movement of thought. In fact, he maintains that thought is a movement of memory. He also has no place for an independent consciousness, or the "*vijnana skandha*" of the Buddhists.

In a masterly stroke of negative dialectic, U.G. points out that there is nothing like observation or understanding of thought because there is no subject or observer independent of it. The division between thought and an independent subject or observer is an illusion created by that very thought. What we have is just another process of thought about "thought". U.G. therefore dismisses all talk of observation, or awareness, of one's own thought process as

absolute balderdash! He thus takes away the very floor from beneath those who practice Vipassana meditation!

In U.G.'s ontology there are no entities like "mind", "soul", "psyche", and "self". "The `I' has no other status than the grammatical," insists U.G. It is just a first-person singular pronoun, a convention and convenience of speech. "The question, `Who am I?' is an idiotic question," remarks U.G. apropos Ramana Maharshi's method of self-inquiry. It is worth noting here that U.G. had visited Ramana in 1939 or so. To the young U.G.'s query, "Can you give enlightenment to me?", the sage of Arunachala replied, "I can give it, but can you take it?" U.G., full of youthful self-assurance, said to himself, "If there is anyone who can take it, it is I," and walked out! He says that Ramana's answer was a traditional one and did not impress him. On the contrary, he was put off by what he describes as the Maharshi's "unblinking arrogance"! U.G. never visited him again. Regarding the Maharshi's terribly painful death by cancer, U.G. curtly observes that "cancer treats saints and sinners in the same way." This seems to be true, but the interesting question is whether saints and sinners treat cancer in the same way.

According to U.G., the question, "Who am I?" presupposes the existence of some unknown "I" other than the "I" which was born in some place to some parents, is married or unmarried, and which has picked up this question from some book. U.G. denies that this assumption makes sense. There is an unceasing but ever-changing process of thought. The so-called "I" is born anew each moment with the birth of each thought. The notion of an enduring or permanent psyche or self is merely a concept thrown up by thought. U.G., therefore, asserts that spiritual and psychological goals have really no basis or foundation. What is it that attains the so-called enlightenment? What is it that realizes or transforms itself? What is it that attains happiness? "Absolutely nothing!" is U.G.'s reply. These goals

have been projected by thought to keep itself going. That's all there is to it.

U.G. claims that this self-perpetuating process of thought can come to an end. However, he points out that this does not imply a state totally bereft of thoughts. According to him, the ideal of a thoughtless state is one of the many hoaxes to which Hindus have fallen victim. He claims that when the self-perpetuating mechanism of thought collapses, what is left is a harmonious mode of functioning of the living organism in which thoughts arise and disappear in accordance with a natural rhythm and in response to a challenge. Thus the problem is thought as a self-perpetuating process and not the occurrence of thoughts per se. In the "natural state", as U.G. describes, the state of functioning of the body free of the interference of thought, thoughts are not a problem. It is not that there are no sensual thoughts, for example, in this state. But they do not constitute a problem. One is not concerned about whether the thoughts are "good" or "bad", or about whether they occur at all. U.G. says, "You may ask, 'How can such a man have a sensual thought?' There is nothing he can do to suppress that thought, or to give room for that thought to act. The thought cannot stay; there is no continuity, no build-up. One knows what it is and there it ends. Then something else comes up".

The death of thought as a self-perpetuating mechanism involved, in U.G.'s case, also the "death" of the body. One wonders if it was some sort of a state of samadhi or trance of the body. Spiritual history in India furnishes us with examples of mystics who underwent this samadhi of the body. Ramakrishna used to go into a state often accompanied by a total cessation of breathing and heartbeat. It is recorded that his personal physician, Dr.Sarkar, was baffled by the phenomenon. Another striking case is that of Ramana Maharshi. Ramana underwent a "death experience" when he was seventeen years old. The

"experience" culminated, on his account, in the realization of the Atman. Ramalingam, a nineteenth century Tamil mystic, also appears to have gone through this *samadhi* of the body. The "death" and the subsequent renewal of the body that this "samadhi" involves could have been the basis of his astonishing claim that he had overcome bodily death. The saint Tukaram in one of his songs also claims that he witnessed his own death through the grace of his deity. Thus there are some sort of precedents to U.G.'s "calamity", as he describes what happened to him, in the annals of India's spiritual history. This is not to deny that U.G.'s "calamity" is a unique phenomenon.

U.G. claims that in his case the body underwent "actual clinical death". He says, "It was physical death. What brought me back to life, I don't know. I can't say anything about that because the experiencer was finished". This happened in 1967 in Switzerland soon after his realization that his search for enlightenment was the very thing that was keeping him from his natural state. This hit him like a bolt of lightning and led to the collapse of thought as a self-perpetuating process. He then underwent a series of changes in the functioning of his body for six days. On the seventh day he died. When he came back he was like a child and had to relearn all the words necessary for functioning in the world.

U.G. strips the phenomenon of all religious or mystical content. He is emphatic that it was simply a physiological phenomenon. He also insists that it is an acausal phenomenon. No spiritual or physical technique can bring it about. U.G. is fond of reiterating that it happened to him despite all the *sadhanas* or spiritual practices he had done. I recall that when I asked him how he could be sure that it had not happened because of his *sadhanas*, he replied that he discovered it was something totally unrelated to the projected goals of those spiritual practices. U.G. discovered that the state he had "stumbled into" had nothing to do with

bliss, beatitude, thoughtless silence, omniscience, omnipotence etc. Rather, it was a bewildering physical state with all the senses functioning independently of each other at the peak of their capacity, since they were free of the distorting interference of the separative thought process. He did not attain omniscience. It was a state of unknowing, a state in which the demand to know had come to an end. There was no bliss or ecstasy. It was a state which involved tremendous physical tension and pain whenever there were "outbursts of energy" in the body as a consequence of the collapse of the self-perpetuating mechanism of thought. And it was not some dead, inert state of "silence of mind", but the silence of a volcanic eruption, pregnant with the essence of all energy.

He also discovered that it could not be shared with others. Sharing presupposes that there is a division between the self and others and the knowledge that one has something to give to others. But for U.G. there is no division between the "self" and the "other" in that condition. It never occurs to him that he is now an enlightened man and that others are not. It never occurs to him that he has something that others do not have. So he discovered that there was actually nothing to give or impart to others.

U.G., therefore, questions the legitimacy of the idea of the guru, or spiritual authority, which is central to the Indian spiritual tradition. He argues that if a person gets into this condition, he cannot set himself up as an authority because he has no way of comparing his condition with the condition of others. Since it implies the absence of an independent experiencer, it is not something that can be transmitted by someone to others. Therefore, U.G. maintains that there is really no basis for the idea that enlightenment or moksha can be attained by contact with an enlightened guru or teacher.

There is also another interesting reason for his repudiation of spiritual authority. He maintains that each

individual is unique. Therefore, even if there is something like enlightenment, it will be unique for each individual. There is no universal pattern or model of enlightenment that all individuals must fit into. Every time it happens it is unique. Thus the attempt to imitate someone else's "spiritual realization", which is the foundation of all spiritual practices, is fundamentally mistaken. This is also true of any attempt to make one's own "spiritual realization" into a model for others. This is the reason why U.G. is critical of most of the spiritual teachers in history. They attempted to make what happened to them a model for others. It simply cannot be done. If "enlightenment" is unique for every individual, and if it is something that cannot be shared with or transmitted to others, the very foundation of the concept of the Guru collapses.

U.G.'s critique of spiritual authority is very relevant to an age full of gurus who have turned out to be manipulative and mercenary slave masters. His uncompromising criticism of exploitation and commercialism in the garb of spirituality is yet to be rivaled. The case of Bhagwan Rajneesh, Muktananda, and Da Free John, to name only a few (their names are legion anyway!), all of whom were proven guilty of the worst form of authoritarianism, sexual abuse of their unfortunate female disciples, and of financial fraud and chicanery, bears testimony to U.G.'s warnings against gurus and other religious teachers. U.G. seems to have the "moral authority", if one may use that term, to debunk gurus and religious teachers because he has not succumbed to the temptation or pressure of building an organization or institution to preserve and propagate his "teachings". This was something even J. Krishnamurti was not immune to. On the contrary, he was obsessed with the preservation and propagation of his teachings in their "pristine purity".

One of the most radical and startling claims that U.G. makes is that the search for enlightenment, salvation, or moksha, is the cause of the greatest misery or suffering.

U.G. says that it is the *duhkha* of all *duhkhas*! In the pursuit of this non-existent culture-imposed goal, people have subjected themselves to all sorts of physical and psychological torture. U.G. regards all forms of asceticism or self-denial as perverse. It is perverse to torture the body, or to deprive oneself of basic physical needs, in the hope of having spiritual experiences. The torture radically disturbs the metabolism of the body and gives rise to hallucinations which are considered as great spiritual experiences. "All these spiritual experiences and visions are born out of disturbances in the metabolism of the body," declares U.G. He maintains that the experiences induced by breath-control or pranayama are just products of the depletion of the flow of oxygen to the brain. The tears that flow down the cheeks of the devotees or *bhaktas* result from a natural function of the eye in response to a physiological process. "They are not actually tears of devotion, or of *bhakti*, but a simple response to self-induced physiological stress," remarks U.G. What about the ideal of the renunciation of desire? U.G. views desire as a function of hormones in the body. There is no such thing as a total absence of desire for the living body. That is yet another hoax prevalent in India. If anything it is the desire for moksha that has to be renounced!

According to U.G., there is no qualitative contrast between the pursuit of material values and the pursuit of the so-called spiritual values. He therefore rejects the division between "higher" and "lower" goals. The pursuit of spiritual values is not in any way superior to the pursuit of material values. This is a very radical position, particularly in the context of the Indian tradition. U.G. argues that the use of thought, a physical instrument, to attain the goal is common to both the pursuits. Since the spiritual seeker is also using thought to attain his projected goals or values, his pursuit also falls within the bounds of something material and measurable. There is nothing "transcendental"

about it. Moreover, the spiritual pursuit is as self-centered as the material one. It makes no difference whether you are concerned with your peace or salvation, or your financial status. It is still a selfish pursuit. U.G. also argues that spiritual goals are only an illusory extension of material goals. By believing in God one thinks that one will find security in the material world in the form of a good job or a cure for some illness or deformity. Faith becomes a means of obtaining material goals. This is just a delusion. As U.G. puts it:

There are no spiritual goals at all; they are simply an extension of material goals into what you imagine to be a higher, loftier plane. You mistakenly believe that by pursuing the spiritual goal you will somehow miraculously make your material goals simple and manageable. This is in actuality not possible. You may think that only inferior persons pursue material goals, that material achievements are boring, but in fact the so-called spiritual goals you have put before yourself are exactly the same.

U.G. also has some interesting views on social issues. Since he rejects the search for permanence, he questions the validity of grand programs for the sake of "Humanity". He maintains that the concept of "Humanity" is an abstraction born out of a craving for permanence. We assume that there is some collective and permanent entity called "Humanity" over and above particular and perishable individuals. The assumption has no validity for U.G. A revolutionary program like Marxism, for example, assumes that "Humanity" will be permanent and will eventually experience the fruits of the future communist epoch. This assumption has no basis. It is quite likely that "Humanity" could destroy itself in the capitalist epoch. What has importance is the predicament of individuals in the world

here and now, not the "Future of Humanity". The revolutionary is frightened of his own impermanence. He realizes that he will not be around to experience the benefits of living in his utopian society. He therefore invents an abstraction, "Humanity", and endows it with permanence. "Humanity, in the sense in which you use it, and its future, has no significance to me," remarks U.G. If the demand for permanence comes to an end, the concept of "Humanity" ceases to have any meaning.

U.G. is not against communism. He acknowledges the achievements of the communist attempt to meet the basic needs of the masses. But as a political ideology it has turned into another "warty outgrowth" of the old religious structure of thought that has, naturally, created a lot of mess and misery. U.G. is skeptical of Gorbachev and opines that Gorbachev has "sold it out" to the West. He has done his part and the Russian people should pass him by. But power corrupts and his only concern now is to hold on to his position. U.G. observes that Russia should solve its problems within the framework of its socialist structure and not look to alien solutions. He warns that all sorts of religious sects will attempt to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of communism and will take the masses for a ride.

U.G. is realistic enough to acknowledge that we live in a sordid world of our own making. He refers to society as the "human jungle" and observes that it would be much easier to survive in nature's jungle. As he says, "This is a jungle we have created. You can't survive in this world. Even if you try to pluck a fruit from a tree, the tree belongs to someone or to society." Elsewhere he is more explicit in his indictment of the property system: "What right do you have to claim property rights over the river flowing freely there?" he asks. U.G. has no illusions about the way society works. He points out that it is basically interested in maintaining the status quo and will not hesitate to eliminate any individual who becomes a serious threat to it. Some societies may tolerate

dissent, but only to a point. No society will tolerate a serious threat to its continuity. This implies that any attempt to terminate the status quo will result in violence. We have to accept the social reality as it is imposed on us for purely functional reasons," says U.G.

I have to accept the reality of present-day capitalist society however exploitative or inhumane it may seem to be. Not because it is the best system that can ever be, or because its exploitation and inhumanity are unreal, but for pure and simple reasons of survival. The acceptance has only a functional value. Nothing more and nothing less. If I do not accept social reality as it is imposed on me, I will "end up in the loony-bin singing merry melodies and loony tunes.

There may be an all-or-nothing fallacy here. Do I have to accept all aspects of the social reality in order to survive and function in it? What does it mean to "accept" any aspect of this social reality at all? Is the loony-bin the only alternative to accepting the status quo as it is imposed on us? Will not this acceptance encourage society to become more and more totalitarian?

We have to remember that society will only tolerate dissent up to a certain point. We also have to acknowledge the necessity of surviving in society as we find it. We can talk about alternative societies, fantasize about ideal societies, and speculate endlessly about the future. But we have to survive in this society here and now. This can be conceded. The problem is that there are many things about society as it is that also endanger one's prospects of survival. If I live in a neighborhood threatened by gang wars, I have to do something about it or get the community to do something about it. Otherwise I risk being shot at the next time. U.G.'s emphasis on accepting society as it is is

problematic. Such acceptance could end up strengthening the very mechanism of maintaining the status quo.

U.G. is not interested in these academic issues. He is not in conflict with society or its structure of power. He is not interested in changing anything or taking anything away from anybody. According to him, the demand to change oneself and the demand to change the world go together. Since he is free from the demand to change himself, he has no problem with the world as it is. This does not mean that he believes that it is a perfect world. He has stumbled into a condition in which there is no conflict with the way things are. But it remains true that he poses a serious but subtle threat to the value system of society. How would he react if he is told to shut up? U.G. replies that he is not interested in becoming a martyr to any cause, not even freedom of speech, and would probably shut up!

Some of U.G.'s criticisms of social movements are interesting. The Anti-Bomb movement is a good example. U.G. argues that the Bomb is only an extension of the structure which has created the need for the policeman. The policeman exists in order to protect my little property from perceived threats. The Bomb, in just the same way, exists in order to protect the collective property of a society or nation from perceived threats. I cannot consistently justify the need for the policeman and yet oppose the need for the Bomb. They go together. This was U.G.'s response to Bertrand Russell when he met him at a time during which Russell was actively involved in the Anti-Bomb movement.

The ecological problem is another example. U.G. points out that the roots of the present ecological crisis lie in the Judeo-Christian belief that the human species is superior to other species because it alone was created for a grand purpose, and that, therefore, it had the privilege of dominating and using the rest of nature. Hinduism and Buddhism also share a variant of this belief, the idea that birth as a human being is the most precious and highest

form of birth. It is believed that in order to attain enlightenment or moksha even the gods have to be reborn as human beings. U.G. completely rejects this belief in the special status and superiority of the human species. He observes that the human species is not created for any grander purpose than the mosquito or the garden slug is. Our erroneous belief in our own superiority has been used to justify our extermination of other species, and has led to the environmental problem. What is in question is not just the kind of technology and the economic system we have, but the structure of belief and values which drive the technology and the economic system.

But the problem endangers us, not the planet. Nature can take care of itself. So it is absurd to talk of saving the earth or saving the planet. "We are in danger, not the planet," observes U.G. The problem has to be dealt with realistically in relation to the objective of meeting the basic needs of the population of the planet. He is quick to point out that Hollywood stars are only interested in promoting themselves and not the environment. The lifestyle of these stars is itself a contributing factor to the problem. Similarly, those who write books and articles criticizing the destruction of trees are also contributing to the problem because the paper for their books and articles comes at the expense of those very trees. U.G. does not see any justification for the publication of books in the age of the computer and the video-cassette. And he is absolutely right. U.G. also warns that the cause of the environment, like other religious and political causes, will be used to justify the persecution and destruction of individuals.

U.G. is notorious for his response to the 60's slogan "Make love, not War". He retorts that making love is war! For U.G., love-making and war-making spring from the same source, the separative structure of thought. They both presuppose a division between the "self" and the "other". This is why U.G. does not take kindly to fashionable talk

about "loving relationships". He points out that the search for relationships of any kind springs from a sense of isolation, an isolation created by the separative thought structure. What one wants is to fill the emptiness or void with someone. It is a process of self-fulfillment, self-gratification. But we are not honest enough to acknowledge this sordid truth. Instead, we invent fictions like "love" and "care" to deceive ourselves about the whole affair. When these fictions are blown away, what remains expresses itself in its own way. Then there may not be "others" to love or to be loved by.

There is more than a touch of *advaita* in all this. I use "*advaita*" in its etymological sense, meaning non-division or non-duality, and not to refer to the philosophical system of Shankara. U.G.'s philosophy has little in common with Shankara's system. U.G. rejects the authority of the *shruti* (he says that the Vedas were the creations of acid-heads!), repudiates the assumption of Brahman, and dismisses the doctrine of the illusoriness of the world. There is no place for any kind of "consciousness" in U.G.'s philosophy, not to speak of "pure consciousness" or "witness-consciousness". And yet I use the word "*advaita*" because U.G.'s philosophy is permeated by a spirit of negation of all division and fragmentation. It is an interesting and original form of *advaita*, one that is based on a physical and physiological mode of description. For instance, U.G. claims that nature is a single unit and that the body cannot be separated from the totality of nature. There are actually no separate individual bodies. This is a form of *advaita* or non-dualism. It is a naturalistic or physicalistic *advaita* in contrast to Shankara's metaphysical or transcendental Advaita.

In U.G.'s account, all forms of destruction, disorder, and suffering flow from the division between the self and the world or nature. This divisive movement of thought came into operation with the birth of self-consciousness somewhere in the process of the evolution of mankind and

marks the beginning of the end of this species. "The instrument that we think places us at the pinnacle of creation is the very thing that will lead to the destruction of not only the human species but all forms of life on this planet," declares U.G. He is thus no starry-eyed utopian or millenarian. There is no "kingdom of heaven" around any of the corners of time. On the contrary, it is the apocalypse that awaits us. This is not because of any religious or supernatural factor — U.G. maintains that there is no power outside of man — but because of the very nature of the instrument of thought on which human civilization is based.

U.G. thus ends up with a subjective explanation of the human condition. This is quite in the line of the Indian, or rather, the Eastern approach. It is not specific external, social or socioeconomic factors that are responsible, e.g., class divisions, or the military-industrial establishment, but internal factors, the separative movement of the thought mechanism, the "ego structure", the "separative self-consciousness", the "nature of the mind", and so on. This approach, however, has its limitations.

U.G. sometimes talks as if the problem is biological, or more specifically, genetic. Genetic factors, he seems to suggest, are the ultimate determinants of the human predicament. He observes in passing that explanations referring to karma are obsolete hogwash in the face of genetic science. Deformities have genetic causes and can be handled by the science of genetics. We don't need to explain them by reference to sins committed in a previous life. In an interview with Michael Toms for "New Dimensions" p33pP U.G. holds culture responsible. Culture, he seems to suggest, with its value-system, its models of perfect individuals, and its attempt to fit individuals into a common mold, has distorted our natural mode of existence. But, on the other hand, U.G. also claims that we are a function of our genes. Perhaps, he would allow for some sort of an interaction between culture and our genetic structure. If he

would, then genetic engineering alone cannot deliver the goods. We might also need cultural engineering, a change in culture.

U.G.'s critique of culture also raises problems. "Culture" could mean different things, a manner of greeting, or a system of religious and political values, or the art and literature of a society. By "culture" U.G. means the value system, the normative structure of human communities. There is a difference between the talk about culture and the talk about cultures. U.G. is not referring to any particular culture. He thinks that there is not much to choose between different cultures. All cultures are variations on a common theme, the perpetuation of a social order by fitting individuals into a common value system. This is the reason why U.G. does not discriminate between Eastern and Western cultures. Nor does he advocate a return to our primitive past as a solution. The problems would still be there albeit on a less complex scale. U.G. remarks that "The hydrogen bomb had its origin in the jawbone of an ass which the cave man used to kill his neighbor." Thus it is not a question of a specific culture or a specific epoch of cultural evolution. Culture itself is the problem.

The significance of U.G. lies in his radical and original critique of tradition, particularly the religious and spiritual tradition. His most important contribution is that, for the first time in history, the essence of what would be considered as "spiritual experience" is expressed in physical and physiological terms, in terms of the functioning of the body. This opens a new perspective on human potential. Whatever may be said about the merits and demerits of U.G.'s approach, it is undeniable that it has the power of an uncontaminated simplicity which because of its very nature is also deeply enigmatic.

Chapter 2.

Nothing to be transformed

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Happy Accident

No one is there to put it all together.
All the king's horses all the king's men can never
put U.G. back together again.

Q-1: Is there any such thing as your own experience?

UG: Whatever you experience has already been experienced by someone else. Your telling yourself, "Ah! I am in a blissful state," means that someone else before you has experienced that and has passed it on to you. Whatever may be the nature of the medium through which you experience, it is a second-hand, third-hand, and last-hand experience. It is not yours. There is no such thing as your own experience. Such experiences, however extraordinary, aren't worth a thing.

Q-1: But we get caught up with that idea.

UG: The experience is you.

Q-2: We want to know what truth is. We want to know what enlightenment is.

UG: You already know it. Don't tell me that you don't. There is no such thing as truth at all.

Q-1: I don't know.

UG: You can only say that there is a logically ascertained premise called truth and you can write a book, "My Quest for Truth," like your ex-president Radhakrishnan.

Q-2: But you had this search. Was it real? You also didn't know what it was about.

UG: My case was quite different.

Q-1: How is that?

UG: I was thrown into that environment. I was surrounded by all those religious people. I had spent all my formative years in the milieu of the Theosophical Society. I didn't have anything to do with my own blood relatives. The only people that I knew were the leaders of the Theosophical society. The old man Mr. J.Krishnamurti was part of my background. I did not go to him. In every room of our house we had photos of J.Krishnamurti, beginning from his ninth or tenth year till he was, I don't know how old. I disliked the photos of all the gods and goddesses.

Q-1: You mean that was the background which made you what you are today?

UG: No, no. I am saying that despite all that, whatever happened to me has happened. It seems a miracle. That is the reason why I emphasize without a shadow of doubt, that whatever has happened to me can happen to a con man, to a rapist, to a murderer, or to a thief. All of them have as much a chance as, if not a better one than, all these spiritual people put together. Don't ask me the question, "Was the Buddha a rapist, or Jesus something else?" That's not an intelligent question.

Q-2: Coming back to your earlier statement — what is it that you did in pursuance of your goal?

UG: You give me a list of all the saints, sages, and saviors of mankind. Then, look at their lives and look at what they did. I did everything they did. Nothing happened. I knew what it was all about. I was interested in finding out whether there was anything to all those teachers, from the very beginning of our times. I found out that they conned themselves and conned every one of us. Was there anything to their experience which they wanted to share with the world?

Q: What do you think?

UG: Nothing. They were all phonies. Don't ask me, "Could they all be phonies?" and "Why did they last for so long?" The Ivory soap or Pears soap in the United States is celebrating its 100th year. The fact that it lasted for a hundred years does not mean that there is anything to it. This certainty that they were all false, and that their teachings falsified me, is something which I cannot transmit to anyone. It is your problem. As I said this morning, I had this hunger, I had this thirst. Nothing satisfied my hunger and nothing satisfied my quest. You know, the old man [J. Krishnamurti] and I thrashed out everything for thirty days, whenever he could find time. We used to go for walks. I met him toward the end of my association with the Theosophical Society.

Q2: For some years he was close to you.

UG: No, no. I wanted to find out whether there was anything to him. He was saying something on the platform. Toward the end I asked him a question, "What do you have behind all the abstractions you are throwing at me and others? Is there anything?" (That was my way of dealing with problems.) I listened to him every time he came to Madras. But I didn't swallow any of his words. Then the encounter came about in a very strange way. We thrashed it out. I told