

## Coffee Shop University

**Mario Kfoury**

Comet Publications (Jun 21, 2017)

Softcover \$17.00 (207pp)

978-0-9955679-0-0

*Kfoury is an obvious intellectual, both intense and direct in his narration.*

A wide and diverse range of topics are discussed in Mario Kfoury's *Coffee Shop University*, a deep examination of the major questions that have occurred to the author throughout his life. The book is part memoir, part philosophical discussion, part religious debate, and always edifying.

Philosophy, religion, psychology, economics, anthropology, and love are among the topics the book explores, primarily in café settings and through beautiful, imagined chance meetings with intelligent personalities. It begins with specific, brief background information about its author, explaining his values, beliefs, and viewpoints.

Not soft in his approach to life, learning, and interactions, Kfoury is an obvious intellectual, both intense and direct in his narration. His coverage of heavy topics is intelligent, if disappointingly brief. The book moves from topic to topic quickly, sometimes discussing things as disparate as the definition of love, learning systems, and Greek gods in the course of a few pages.

The book moves into psychology and philosophy in its second portion, where ideas are not explored with as much depth or specificity as they could be. Again, the work bounces quickly between categories and ideas, sometimes without sufficient explanation and analysis. Kfoury puts himself into conversation with Gaia, and while their discussions flow smoothly, they lack real-life examples and are not relatable.

The style becomes stream of consciousness, moving intuitively rather than logically and becoming more of a randomized list of all of the things that Kfoury has learned. This conversational style is an odd fit for the flood of information conveyed.

From these heady considerations, the book moves into a section on stock trading and technical analysis that fits with the author's working background. Here, Kfoury puts himself into imagined conversation with Pythagoras, who becomes a recurring character, popping in and out of Kfoury's streams of information. Pythagoras's contributions are minor, though, and he too comes to seem an unnecessary addition.

Kfoury's voice remains the strongest in the narrative, regardless of who he's conversing with. He connects topics well, moving fluidly between psychology and philosophy, religion and mythology. His own arguments are strong and compelling. In its introduction of various notions and schools of thought, this is a work with variety and appeal. For those in search of alternative viewpoints, its explanations will open doors for further exploration.

Nonconformist in its approach to knowledge, *Coffee Shop University* is a highly educational look at how ideas from religion, philosophy, psychology, economics, and politics can be seen as intrinsically intertwined.

KATIE ASHER (January 16, 2018)

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