

1 ☐ Lecture 5

Arjuna's Dilemma

2 ☐ The *Bhagavad Gita*

- Bhagavad Gita = Song of the Lord
 - most popular philosophical-religious text in India
 - written circa 100 BCE, after founding of Buddhism
 - embedded in the *Mahabharata*
- Two main characters:
 - **Arjuna**: prince in warrior caste; the hero
 - **Krishna**: Arjuna's charioteer; Brahman incarnate

3 ☐ Arjuna's Situation

- Arjuna's family is vying for power against some relatives
- War is imminent
- Arjuna is commanded to lead his family's army

4 ☐ Arjuna's Dilemma

- Arjuna is torn between ahimsa and dharma
 - **Ahimsa** = the principle that one should cause no harm
 - **Dharma** = duty / responsibility (that accompanies one's caste status)

5 ☐ Arjuna's Request

- Arjuna asks Krishna for advice
- The *Bhagavad Gita* is Krishna's reply
 - also specifies a picture about the kind of life most worth living and what makes a life satisfying

6 ☐ Two Basic Themes

1. One should discover one's true self
 - **jiva** = the sense of oneself as a person in the world making choices
 - **Atman** = one's true self
 - Need to lose one's jiva sense of self
 - NB: This is not the same as "losing one's self"
 - This is a familiar theme from the *Upanishads*
2. The way to do this is through disciplined self-practice = **yoga**
 - more specific than *Upanishads* about how one should live
 - *General Suggestion*: yogic practice allows one to attain resignation *in* action without renunciation *of* action

7 ☐ Yoga

- BG suggests four kinds of yoga
 - each leads to moksha and loss of one's jiva sense of self
 - which one to follow is a function of one's temperament and situation
- *Unifying Idea*: each allows one to perform an action without associating one's *self* with the action

8 ☐ Raja Yoga

- Yoga of meditation
 - discussed in *Upanishads*
 - contentless awareness → no separation between knower and known
 - not very practicable for those with families or work obligations

9 ☐ Jñana Yoga

- Yoga of knowledge and study
 - understanding how things really are
 - aims at the kinds of experience we have when engrossed in a good book

- 10 ☐ Karma Yoga
- Yoga of work, of actions and consequences
 - aims at experiences like being "in the zone"
 - being "in the zone" is almost paradoxical
 - being "in the zone" is a paradigm case of being resigned in action without renouncing action itself
- 11 ☐ Bhakti Yoga
- Yoga of faithful devotion
 - intense dedication to a personal manifestation of Brahman
 - lose one's jiva sense of self through concentrated focusing on something other than oneself
 - object of devotion is a function of one's temperament
- 12 ☐ Krishna's Argument
1. Death is not eternal.
 - 2.13; 2.22
 - echoes popular belief in reincarnation
 2. And Atman is eternal.
 - 2.12; 2.19
 3. It is Arjuna's duty to participate in a justified war; and it is in his power to do so.
 - 2.31
- 13 ☐ Krishna's Argument
- 14 ☐ The Moral
- Arjuna's true enemy is *not* his family
 - His true enemy is ...
- 15 ☐ Krishna's Instructions
- Krishna next instructs Arjuna in the different kinds of yoga
- 16 ☐ Samkhya-Yoga
- The *BG* endorses the *complementarity* of metaphysics and practice
 - cognitive understanding and practical experience both lead to moksha
 - both paths lead to the same summit
- 17 ☐ The Best Yoga
- *BG* emphasizes **bhakti yoga**, the path of faithful devotion
- 18 ☐ Morality
- Bhakti yoga is superior to other kinds of yoga, because ...
 - The scriptures determine what the moral laws are
 - If an act violates one of these laws, then ...
 - Hence, if an act violates one of the laws, ...
 - In contrast, if an act is performed in devotion to Krishna, then ...
- 19 ☐ Renunciation in Action
- Bhakti yoga is also superior to the others because ...
 - if one devotes one's actions to a god, there is no need to worry about the consequences
 - only *intentions* matter
- 20 ☐ Self-Veridical Knowledge
- Bhakti yoga allows one to attain moksha by tapping into self-veridical knowledge
 - there is no separation between the knower and the known, because not worrying about consequences allows one to act selflessly
- 21 ☐ Philosophical Worry #1

- Self-veridical knowledge is not an intersubjectively verifiable state
 - this is a familiar point from the *Upanishads*
- The experience of self-veridical knowledge confirms / proves itself
 - outside tests cannot verify it
- BUT: ...

22 ☐ Special Vision

- Arjuna has a special vision of Krishna as Brahman

- Why? Because bhakti yoga allows him to see reality as it really is: love is a way of knowing

23 ☐ Philosophical Worry #2

- In love, the lover and beloved become one
 - no separation between knower and known → self-veridical knowledge
- BUT: ...

24 ☐

Exam 1

next Tuesday!