

### PPT1 Model Paper 3 (2018)

#### Assigned model paper topic

Following the style (font size, citation style, etc.) of the paper model distributed to you, please respond to one of the following prompts. For all of them, you will probably need to refer to other parts of the text—but do so judiciously as your main goal is to carefully explain the small section that is your focus. Total: 4-5 pages (1200-1500 words).

For each passage below, your paper should (a) explain the reasoning that leads the thinker to the conclusion identified, (b) then identify *only one* objection to this argument, explaining clearly and specifically how it might challenge the reasoning you have explained, and (c) evaluate if the objection succeeds or fails. While you will probably need to refer to other parts of the text—do so judiciously as your main goal is to carefully explain the small section that is your focus.

- (1) Explain the reasoning which leads Krishna to conclude “...therefore, O Son of Kunti, act without attachment to your deeds” (*BG 3.9*).

#### When reading the model:

Look for evidence that the writer has met the requirements below:

- *Thesis statement.* Succinctly state your interpretation and supporting evidence. Make sure the essay's parts all support or develop your thesis, and no parts of the paper are unconnected.
- *Claim/evidence identification.* Demonstrate understanding of which claims act as evidence for other claims, on the basis of cogent textual interpretation.
- *Argument structures.* Demonstrate understanding of the precise structure of the argument you are reconstructing; for instance, is it reasoning with conditionals, argument by analogy, etc.?
- *Argument features (evaluation).* Demonstrate understanding of features which make an argument good or bad, for instance by identifying claims which are susceptible to objections or identifying poor reasoning patterns.
- *Analysis.* Demonstrate understanding of how individual components of the text and its claims/arguments relate together as a whole.
- *Mechanics.* Papers with incorrect bibliographies, grammatical mistakes which impact comprehension, or failure to follow formatting instruction may lose up to 1/3 of a letter grade.

**Topic 1**  
Student 123456

In Chapter Two of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Krishna, Arjuna’s divine cousin, has urged the hesitant warrior to fight against his cousins the Kauravas, his brother Karṇa, and even his teacher Drona, arrayed opposite him on the battlefield. After Krishna has told Arjuna that he should not focus on action’s results (2.47) and that mental discipline is superior to action (2.49), Arjuna asks Krishna to explain why it is that, despite the superiority of mental discipline, he should fight a gruesome battle. In his reply, Arjuna argues that since action is necessary for all human beings, the best way to act is without being motivated by the results of action. However, in Chapter Fourteen, Krishna also seems to state that not all humans must act, which would make the claim that action is necessary for all human beings false. I conclude, however, that in Chapter Fourteen, Krishna does not in fact claim that not all humans must act, preserving his argument.

In Chapter Three of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Krishna is explaining two “disciplines,” the discipline of knowledge and the discipline of action. The idea of discipline, or *yoga*, first appears at 2.48, and Krishna characterizes someone “disciplined by higher mind” as someone whose higher mind “stands fixed in meditation” (2.53). This higher mind, which is a result of meditation (2.66), thus allows a person to perceive the world in such a way so as to not characterize actions as good or bad: they “[cast] off good and bad actions” (2.50). By meditation, which involves training the mind to not respond to the sensory world with desire (2.60-61), a person is able to attain peace (2.71). Thus it seems that the practice of meditation is a better path to peace than fighting a battle in which many people will die. However, Krishna explicitly argues that Arjuna must fight, implicitly suggesting that

**Commented [CMK1]:** As I grade anonymously, ensure you’re following the model paper. This means: 12 point Times New Roman, only your student number and title as the topic number. Double-space lines.

**Commented [CMK2]:** From the first paragraph, your reader should be able to identify (1) the main argument you’re addressing, (2) where this occurs in the text, (3) your potential objection, and (4) your reply.

withdrawing from the battlefield to lead a renouncer's life is not the best choice for Arjuna.

Krishna's reasoning, which occurs in verses four through nine, depends on the claim that if someone is alive, then they necessarily must act. He says explicitly that "not even for a moment" are living creatures able to cease from action (3.5). If by "action" we understand something intentional, we might think that someone who sits in meditation is not acting, since only automatic processes are occurring, like breathing, digestion, and so on. However, Krishna says that the "nature-born qualities" ensure that a person acts, even if they don't desire to act (3.5). These qualities are described elsewhere as coming from "matter" (14.19, 20), as well as from Krishna (7.12-13), and as being responsible for every living being's existence (8.3). Further, it is not the individual ego, but the qualities themselves which give rise to action (3.27). These passages suggest that "action" refers not to an individual agent choosing to act, but to the law of cause and effect which governs the material universe. If so, then any material being which exists is subject to these laws, regardless of whether they are meditating or fighting a battle.

Since Arjuna is subject to the laws of cause and effect, he must act. But he still might choose to act by renouncing his position in the battle. To show he must act according to his duty as a *kṣatriya* (3.8), Krishna argues that the morally best way to act is "without attachment" (3.7). Attachment is exemplified in the person who, although he has disciplined his senses, spends time remembering sense-objects (3.6). According to (2.61), someone who has "subdued" their senses sits and meditatively focuses on the Lord Krishna. Yet even someone who has done this can still remember things they have seen and heard elsewhere. For example, they might think about ways to gain power over other people (2.43-44) and, remembering those people, desiring

**Commented [CMK3]:** Notice that the first paragraph sets up the context for the reader and introduces important terms and definition.

**Commented [CMK4]:** Notice that you can clarify your understanding of a key term by identifying a possible other interpretation.

**Commented [CMK5]:** Notice that the last sentence reiterates the main idea in the topic sentence, but does so with more precision given the discussion about "action" which has preceded it.

**Commented [CMK6]:** How does this paragraph make its connection to the previous one and transition to a new idea?

**Commented [CMK7]:** Remember to help your reader with examples!

their positions, they become angry they do not have them (2.62). The broader context for the *Gītā*, the *Mahābhārata*, includes examples of this kind of fixation, including Duryodhana’s constant jealous rumination about the Pāṇḍavas. In contrast, Arjuna should not only master his senses, but also act purely for duty’s sake, acting “as bid,” (3.8) without desire for any results, such as power or land. His acting as bid is to act according to his role as a warrior. By following his duty, will become renowned in this way, although of course, this renown should not be his motivation.

However, although Krishna has argued that living beings must necessarily act because of the three qualities, later in the text, after he has revealed his true nature to Arjuna, he says that it is possible to transcend the three qualities: “One seated as if indifferent, undisturbed by the qualities, who thinks, ‘The qualities exist,’ ... who gives up all undertakings, is said to transcend the qualities (14.23-25). It is these qualities which “bind” the world to action (14.5), that is, which enslave it or require it to act. A person who transcends the qualities attains release when they die, in particular, release from the causal processes exemplified by “birth, death, old age, and anguish” (14.20). This is possible only by someone who perceives the world correctly (14.19), but it is possible. Thus, we might think that since it is possible for a person to exist apart from the causal processes understood as “action,” action is not necessary for all people. In this way, premise one of Krishna’s argument, shown below, would be false:

*Act without Attachment*

1. If someone is alive, then they necessarily must act.
2. If someone necessarily must act, they should act without attachment to results.
3. Arjuna is alive.
4. Arjuna necessarily must act.

**Commented [CMK8]:** “However” is a powerful contrasting connector. Make sure that there is a real contrast, and that you specify what it is!

**Commented [CMK9]:** Notice that since I don’t actually think this objection works, I don’t commit to it. If I said “This objection shows Krishna says something false” and then later I show how the objection fails, I would be contradicting myself.

5. Arjuna should act without attachment to results.

However, this counterexample depends upon interpreting “transcend the qualities” as meaning “cease from action while alive,” and Krishna does not think a human being attains this kind of cessation while living. At many points in the *Gītā*, Krishna emphasizes the difference between human beings living their earthly lives, as “embodied beings” (2.13, 18.11) and the self which persists after death (2.13). It is true that the person who recognizes that the world is governed by cause and effect, and that there is no agency, becomes like Krishna (14.20) and becomes immortal. Even Krishna engages in action (3.24), as does the eternal ground of being, Brahman (3.15). Thus action is treated as a necessary aspect of living existence.

Further, in Chapter Fourteen, the one who “transcends qualities” is still said to act, which is presupposed by Krishna’s question to Arjuna, asking “How does that one conduct himself?” (14.21). The person in this state merely acts, as described in 14.24, in a way that is “indifferent” to things like passing mental states (pain and joy), material goods (gold and “glebe,” or land), and people’s opinions (being cherished or despised). While saying that this person “gives up all undertakings” might appear to support the idea that they are not acting at all, what Krishna means by “undertaking” seems to be acting for personal motives, since they are someone who does not “[take] sides with friend or foe” (14.25). It thus necessary for living beings to act, no matter how much they transcend the qualities.

Thus Krishna argues that Arjuna can be “free from action,” (3.4) not in the sense of ceasing to be part of the causal structure of the universe, since Brahman himself is the source of action (3.15). Rather, Arjuna becomes free by recognizing that he himself is merely part of that series of causes and effects, determined by the nature-born qualities. If he can come to see that the world is a series of causes and

**Commented [CMK10]:** Including a numbered list of premises is not necessary, but if you are using “premise one” and “premise two” and so on, it’s helpful.

It’s also crucial to have a list for yourself, so you know what you think the argument is.

**Commented [CMK11]:** Be kind to your reader. Remind them what you’re saying, in clear terms. What am I reminding them of here?

effects, he no longer will think in categories such as “my cousins,” “my teacher,” or even “my body.” Acquiring this perception enables him to fight in a bloody battle and simultaneously attain peace (2.71), since he understands there is no “Arjuna” who is fighting, apart from the chain of cause and effect. [1326 words]

### Works Cited

*The Bhagavad Gita: A New Translation*. Translated by Gavin Flood and Charles Martin. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2012.

**Acknowledgements.** While this paper is entirely my own work and I have consulted no outside sources in its writing, I am indebted to Patrick Olivelle, with whom I read Śāṅkara’s *Bhagavadgītābhāṣya*, to Ram-Prasad Chakravarti, with whom I have discussed the *Gītā* and *bhāṣyas*, and to Śāṅkarācārya’s commentary itself, which raises a somewhat similar interpretive possibility regarding Chapter Fourteen.

**Commented [CMK12]:** Look back at the first two paragraphs. What ideas have I picked up on here, and explained in light of the argument?

**Commented [CMK13]:** Please count your words and include the word count. Below 1200 is far too short. 1500 is the most you should need.

**Commented [CMK14]:** Acknowledgments are an important way to thank people who have informed your work, and be specific about where your ideas are coming from. Here I thank my Sanskrit professor and also a colleague of mine, as well as note that Śāṅkara has been important to me.

I did *not* look at the commentary in my writing of this paper, as that would constitute an outside source.