The sanctity, fame and longevity of the Bhagavadgītā are due in no small part to the idea that it contains a blueprint for a certain special manner of acting, which can restore some measure of dignity to imperfect human endeavours by allowing the actor to proceed efficiently, untroubled by the doubts, guilts and other disruptions usually attendant on the knowledge that one has acted, that one has set a certain chain of events in motion.

The universal applicability of this manner of acting is explicitly stated by the text. Krṣṇa’s response to Arjuna’s pre-war paralysis is presented in terms of certain truths about human action in general (3:19):

So, always non-attached, perform the task to be done: for the non-attached person practicing action reaches the highest.¹

The effect of this is that Arjuna is urged to adopt this manner of acting, not just in the specific action facing him, but in all his actions. Moreover, this manner of acting is urged upon the text’s audience: Krṣṇa’s philosophy is intended to apply beyond the boundaries of the narrative.

My purpose in this article is to call Krṣṇa’s bluff, as it were, by interrogating his philosophy of action as such. I wish to move his words from the context of Kurukṣetra to the context of any human life. Such a move will not be to the taste of many students of the Bhagavadgītā and the Mahābhārata, who are interested in these texts solely in the context of the development of ancient Indian society and tradition. It is clear that the ‘appeal to the audience’ takes its place first and foremost within a specific historical and geographical context. But the audience of the text has increased steadily, and the Bhagavadgītā is now acknowledged as a classic of world spirituality, plundered for its wisdom by Hindus and non-Hindus alike, suggesting that Krṣṇa has been quite successful in setting out his philosophy of action. More to the point, it means that Arjuna’s

¹ tasmād asaktuḥ satataṁ kāryaṁ karma samācara / asakto hy ācaraṁ karma param āpnoti pāruṣaṁ //
situation, despite its martial specificity, strikes a deep human chord, and, consequently, that an examination of the text in these terms is at the heart of what the study of religions must be.

There is an inevitable problem of translation here, not just from Sanskrit to English, but also from praxis to discourse and vice versa. There is no reason to suppose that Krṣṇa’s philosophy, to be applicable successfully, must be expressible successfully in words. The proof of the pudding, after all, is not in the recipe: many would say that good cooking depends on experiment and observation rather than on recipes, and others might suggest that good eating has nothing to do with good cooking in the first place. This is a problem for the academic study of religions as a whole, insofar as it proceeds by way of exchange of texts. For my part, I must insist that the context of this article is that of academic discourse: it is not intended to damage anyone’s practical attempts to negotiate serenity in their own life.

ARJUNA’S PROBLEM

Krṣṇa appears to supply Arjuna with a technique by which he might kill his relatives and gurus in the forthcoming war without suffering the unpleasant consequences that would normally follow from such activity.

The availability of such a technique is mentioned elsewhere in ancient Indian literature. In Kauśītaki Upaniṣad 3.1 Patardana Daivodāsi asks Indra what the highest human boon is:

Indra said to him: Perceive just me. This I consider most suitable for a person, that they perceive me. I killed the three-headed son of Tvāstr; I offered the Arunmukha ascetics to the dogs; violating many agreements, I crushed the Prāhlādiyas in the sky, the Paulomas in the intermediate region, and the Kālakaṇjas on earth. In doing so, not a single hair of mine was damaged. Whoever knows me does not have their world damaged by any action whatever, be it stealing, infanticide, matricide or patricide. Having committed a sin (pāpa), their face does not pale.²

At Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.4:23 Yājñavalkya mentions a similar possibility:

Knowing [ātman], one is not stained by bad deeds.³

In the Bhagavadgītā, as in these examples, particular knowledge is the key.

We would like to be absolutely clear what kind of damage or unpleasant consequences are to be obviated by the technique in question. The Kauśitaki Upaniṣad example mentions damage to the body, to one’s world (loka), and to one’s existential and psychological state after the deed. Likewise in Arjuna’s case the potential damage is diverse. Arjuna, though his opponents outnumber his allies, does not explicitly fear bodily harm:⁴ he expresses his misgivings first of all in terms of anticipated loss of śreyas (the good, 1:31), pṛīti (joy, 1:36), and sukha (contentment, 1:37). These terms seem to indicate the existential problem of living with himself thereafter. This is then tied to kinship responsibility: the anticipated act is contrary to kuladharma and jātidharma and will precipitate varṇasāmkara and kulakṣaya (class-mixture, tribal destruction, 1:39–42) through the corruption of the kula’s womenfolk (1:41). Kula here is conceived as containing the already dead and the yet to be born, each group dependent on the other in equal measure. Naraka (hell, 1:42, 44) denotes the oblivion of this particular kula as an entity, as well as serving as a postmortem location (in contrast to pitr.loka) for its individual members.

Krṣṇa’s insistence that death in battle leads to svarga (heaven, 2:2, 32, 37) does not solve the problem of kulakṣaya. The issue is left unresolved for the time being, and though Aśvathāman later strikes all Pāṇḍava women barren, threatening a discontinuity of descent, Krṣṇa’s miraculous intervention ensures that Arjuna’s kula survives (Mahābhārata 10.13–16, 14.68).⁵ Moreover, Krṣṇa is instrumental in ensuring that this kula is enriched by Bhīṣma’s extensive teachings to Yudhiṣṭhira. It is interesting that Arjuna should stress the survival of the kula in terms of female sexual behaviour and the identity of fathers, since he and his brothers do not know

³ tan ūtivā na lipyate karmanā pāpakṣe // See also Chandogya Upaniṣad 4.14:3 and Maitrī Upaniṣad 6:20. Jīva Upaniṣad 2 alludes, albeit cryptically, to the same idea.
⁴ Deshpande (1991) says that Arjuna fears defeat, and sees this as stated by him at 2:6, but he is surely mistaken: the verse simply says that, given the consequences of killing relatives, it may be better for the Pāṇḍavas to lose the battle.
⁵ Mahābhārata references are to the so-called critical edition: Sukthankar, Belvalkar, Vaidya et al. (1933–1972). Many such references will be of little use to non-Sanskritists, so references are also given to the Ganguli / Roy (2000) edition, whose chapter numbers often differ. The chapter numberings of book 10 are the same in both editions; critical edition 14.68 = Ganguli 14.69.
their fathers. Considerable narrative pains are taken to assimilate them, dharmically,\(^6\) to the Kaurava patriline.

Whatever becomes of himself and his brothers after death, Arjuna envisages disaster in immediate terms. He portrays deliberate kin-destruction as an act henceforth traumatizing its protagonists. As he sees it, the trauma is connected with the action. Kṛṣṇa respects this connection and addresses it directly. His technique is not one of relating to a specific past act in a certain way so as not to be retrospectively traumatized by it – such as might be achieved by establishing a justification of one’s behaviour – but is a comprehensive deconstructive philosophy of deliberate behaviours. As such, when this technique is applied, it applies to all past, present and future deliberate behaviours of the person applying it. This means that any trauma connected with past actions may be truncated and extinguished by the application of the technique, but more pertinently – since Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa are speaking immediately before the war – the action at hand may proceed without any trauma at all.

In speaking of his technique, Kṛṣṇa introduces a developed picture of the soul trapped in samsāra by karmabandha, the residual power of acts, until released to mokṣa by the neutralization of karmabandha. Arjuna has not expressed himself in these terms. He is not interested in the pursuit of mokṣa, and so there is a teleological discontinuity between Kṛṣṇa’s presentation and his own. Though slightly puzzling on the narrative level, this is to the text’s advantage on the rhetorical level, since the audience may relate to Kṛṣṇa’s technique in terms of any of several premortem and postmortem soteriologies.

**KRṢṆA’S SOLUTION**

In his first lengthy response to Arjuna’s outburst (2:11–53), Kṛṣṇa makes it clear that his proposals for Arjuna depend on Arjuna’s knowing what the wise know, and begins to expound it. He describes dehin, ‘the one in the body’, whose bodies are successive and manifold (2:25, 30):

> It is unmanifest, unthinkable, said to be untransformable. So, knowing it thus, you ought not to grieve...

This dehin is always inviolable in anyone’s body, so you ought not to grieve for any creature.\(^7\)

\(^6\) That is, through the mechanism of niyoga. See Manusmṛti 9:59–68, where the practice is accepted and then condemned. On this contradiction, see Dange (1984, pp. 72–77). See also Sutherland (1990).

\(^7\) avyakto 'yam acintyo 'yam avikāro 'yam ucyate / tasmād evaṁ vidhitvaivaṁ nāustocitum arhasi / dehi nityam avadhyo 'yam dehe sarvasya bhārata / tasmāt sarvāṁ bhūtāṁ na tvāṁ socitum arhasi / In my translations I have omitted the vocatives.
Understanding of *dehin* (also known in the *Bhagavadgītā* as *ātman*, *puruṣa* and *kṣetrajña*) is to be practically applied through *buddhi*, mental awareness, being unitary, concentrated and resolute. In such application, envisaged fruit does not constitute a motive (*hetu*, 2:47, 49) for activity, and the person in question is said to be without attachment (*saṅga*, 2:48, 62), equanimous, with senses controlled, unmoved by desire (*kāma*) or intention (*sāmkalpa*, 4:19, 6:2, 4, 24).

**ACTION WITHOUT DESIRE?**

Let us situate Kṛṣṇa’s thesis in the context of ancient Indian philosophies of action. Compare the view expressed by the following extracts:

(Yājñavalkya, *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4:5) Whatever desire arises, that resolve arises; whatever resolve arises, one does that action; whatever action one does, one obtains its fruit.9

(A hunter, *Mahābhārata* 3.201:2–3) First mind (*manas*) stirs for the sake of human understanding, attaining which it partakes of desire and anger, then the great one [that is, *buddhi*] strives for their sake, undertakes action and pursues the repetition of the desired images and smells.10

(Manu, *Manusmṛti* 2:2–4) The nature of desire is not praised, but there is no desirelessness in this world. Vedic study and engagement in Vedic action are indeed derived from desire. Desire is rooted in intention (*sāmkalpa*); rites (*yajña*) originate from intentions; all vows, disciplines and *dharmas* are known to be born of intentions. Never is any activity of a desireless one seen in this world. Whatevver anyone does is the doing of [their] desire.11

---

8 *Ātman* in the *Bhagavadgītā* is often simply used as a reflexive pronoun denoting the individual person: see Hara (1999).

9 sa yathākāmo bhavati tat kratur bhavati / yat kratur bhavati tat karma kurute / yat karma kurute tad abhisampadyate //

10 vijñānartham manasyāṇām manah pūrvam pravartate / tat prāpya kāmaṃ bhajate krodham ca dvijasattamam / tatas tadārtham yatate karma cārabhate mahat / īśānām rūpagandhānām abhyāsāṃ ca nīsveṭa / Ganguli 3.209. Although the text here makes it clear that it is speaking of the human individual, the terminology is reminiscent of cosmogonies such as *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.3, 17, in which the cosmos is the result of the desires of a primeval cosmic person. See van Buitenen (1964); on ‘the great one’ see further Schrader (1916, pp. 72–75). Action without desire or intention was later imputed to the male creator by making him create involuntarily and automatically (van Buitenen, 1981, p. 166, note 4 to chapter 9; Heimann, 1939, p. 129), or at the behest of a subordinate female partner (de Nicolás, 1976, p. 120, translating 9:8).

11 kāmātātā na praśastā na caivehāṣṭy akāmaṭā / kāmyo hi vedādhigamah karma-yogaś ca vaidikah // sāmkalpaṁulah kāmo vai yajitah sāmkalpasambhavah // yat tadārtham cārabhitāt / yad yadd hi kurute kincit tat tat kāmasya ceṣṭitam // 2:2d, which I have translated ‘and engagement in Vedic action’, may also be translated ‘and Vedic karmayoga’, alluding
According to this view, which is also expressed by Maṅki at Mahābhārata 12.171:23,12 renouncing kāma and samkalpa would mean renouncing action.Krṣṇa is adamant that renunciation of action is both impossible (3:5) and undesirable, and so clearly has an alternative analysis. His theory certainly precludes the performance of kāmya yajñas, to qualify for which one must be subject to a specific desire which is then fulfilled as a consequence of the rite.13 Yet the tradition holds the necessity of performing many rites whose fruit is intangible, as Jaimini acknowledges (Pūrva Mimāṃsā Sūtra 11.1:26–28):

In ordinary life, the action is determined by the need. Since the action is subservient to the need, and the need is perceptible, the actions should be regarded as complete only on the accomplishment of the purpose. Contrariwise, when it is purely a matter of dharma, and thus there is no visible result, the action will be complete [by doing it] exactly according to the text.14

Here the term dharma denotes actions unrequited by desire or fruit. Their performance is traditionally held to be a necessary part of the cosmos, without which chaos would prevail.15 Krṣṇa describes this as lokasāṅgraha, the holding-together of the world/s (3:25):

As the unknowing ones act, attached to action, just so should the knowing, non-attached one act, desiring to effect lokasāṅgraha.16

Two points are important here. Firstly, as far as Yājñavalkya, the hunter, Manu and Maṅki are concerned, lokasāṅgraha (in Krṣṇa’s presentation) and dharma (in Jaimini’s) are being made to serve the motivating function peculiar to desire and intention. In conventional terms, which seemingly necessitate a mentally phenomenal motivation, we might have to say that the non-attached actor has lokasāṅgraha as a desire/intention/envisioned fruit. Yet Krṣṇa insists that there are no desires, intentions or fruits at play in this actor’s buddhi. Tilak puts the matter as follows:

A man should not entertain the proud or desireful thought that ‘I shall bring about lokasāṅgraha’ . . . a man has to bring about lokasāṅgraha merely as a duty.17
directly to the technique Krṣṇa sets out in the Bhagavadgītā and insisting that it cannot proceed without desire.

12 Ganguli 12.177.
13 See Gonda (1977, pp. 467–468); Lariviere (1988).
14 loke karmārthālakṣaṇam i kriyāpām arthaśeṣatvāt pratyakṣo 'tas tannivṛttyapavrghāḥ syāt i dharmanātre tv adarśanāc chadbāṛthenāpavargāḥ syāt / dharmamātre tv adarśanāc chadbāṛthenāpavargāḥ syāt / Translation from Clooney (1990, pp. 135–136).
15 See Gonda (1966, pp. 72, 150 note 1).
16 saṅkāthah karmāṇy avidvāṁso yathā kuryati bhūrata / kuryād vidvāṁs tathāsaktuḥ cikṣūr lokasāṅgraham // See also 3:20.
17 Tilak (1936, p. 466). I have refrained from introducing ‘[sic]’ into gender-specific quotations.
The psychology of the non-attached actor is thus obscured. This duty is broken if ever noted as such by its performers.\(^{18}\)

Secondly, and relatedly, a question arises as to how such a person knows what to do. For Jaimini, actions not dictated by the teleology of desire are dictated by ‘the text’, but Arjuna’s situation is one in which ‘texts’ are found to contradict each other. Kṣatriyadharma and kuladharma pull in different directions, and Kṛṣṇa has given no reasons for preferring one dharma over the other.

**YAJÑA: TWO CONFLICTING APPROACHES**

The obscurity of the non-attached actor’s psychology is compounded by Kṛṣṇa's discussion of yajñā. Regardless of the relative chronology of the Bhagavadgītā and the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā Śūtra, it is clear that he draws on ideas from within the brāhmanical ritual tradition, but these are then interpreted far beyond their original remit.

3:9 states that the only actions that do not generate karmabandha are those performed for the sake of yajñā. The following section then explains how yajñā sustains the ecosphere (3:14):

Creatures arise from food, the arising of food is from the raincloud, the raincloud arises from yajñā, yajñā arises from [creatures'] action.\(^{19}\)

This same ‘wheel of yajñā’ is described at Rgveda Ṣamhitā 1.164:51, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 1.7.1:18, 7.4.2:22, 11.6.2:6–10, and Manusmṛti 3:76. It traces fertility causally to the fire-offering. The Bhagavadgītā’s ‘creatures arise from food’ has an obvious nutritional sense, and may also suggest the idea that human partuition depends on ‘human seeds’ fallen from above in rain and passed through plants and food into men and then into women.\(^{20}\) In any case, lokasamgraha here is clearly caused by fire-yajñā, so we can see why Kṛṣṇa would want to exclude such rites from the

---

\(^{18}\) This has hampered sociobiology as a discursive practice, since many of the ‘dharmas’ it discovers naturally operate at a non-conscious level. On lokasamgraha, see Gelblum (1992).

\(^{19}\) annād bhavanti bhūtānī parjanyād annasambhavaḥ / yajñād bhavati parjanyo yajñāḥ karmasamudbhavaḥ //

\(^{20}\) See Mahābhārata 1.85:10–11 (Ganguli 1.90); Brhadāraṇyaka Upanīṣad 6.2:8–14; Chāndogya Upanīṣad 5.10:4–9; Peter Hill (2001, pp. 5–11). In this connection it is suggestive that the ‘fathers’ of Arjuna and his brothers were devas summoned from above by mantra. We may speculate that a version of the ‘human seeds’ idea might have predated the discovery of biological paternity. Butzenberger (1998, pp. 71–85), however, would suggest that the ‘human seeds’ idea postdates the practice of cremating the dead, since it is through fire that the essence of the deceased is transported aloft.
set of actions that cause *karmabandha*. In the absence of Jaimini’s specific ‘need’, fire-*yajña* would be ‘purely a matter of *dharma*’. At 4:25–33, however, after reiterating that *yajña* acts do not generate *karmabandha*, Kṛṣṇa lists a host of action-types as *yajña*. These include a variety of gnostic, ritual, ascetic and yogic practices, and the section ends with the claim that ‘knowledge-*yajña* is better than substance-*yajña*’.21 Although this allows many types of active people to be classed as non-attached actors, there is no causal connection between most of these activities and *lokasamgraha*: this has only been established in the case of substance- (i.e. fire-) *yajña*. Kṛṣṇa wants to include these alternative practitioners within the purview of his philosophy for ecumenical reasons, but as a result he has marginalized the most obvious sense in which *yajña* sustains and is dharmic. Even if we allow *lokasamgraha*, as it were, not to count as an object of desire/intention/attachment, yet still to function as some kind of rationale for action, the use of the word *yajña* to help us understand how this might work has now been denied. In addition, the question of how the non-attached actor knows what to do has deepened. If fire-*yajña* were the only non-attachedly-performable action,22 at least the Vedic texts (said, appropriately enough, to be coeval with the cosmos, of transcendental origin) detail its performance. Even if the other types of *yajña* are detailed in authoritative texts, which authority to prefer? Although Kṛṣṇa repeatedly says that a basic set of rites must be performed (3:8, 18:5–11), the situation is confusing.

**THE MECHANICS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOURS**

We now return to the question of how the non-attached actor can proceed without desire or intention. George Teschner has provided a radical solution (1992, p. 66):23

To engage in action without concern for the fruits of action is to act without depicting the action in thought and speech as having its reason for being in a projected goal. The

---

21 Kṛṣṇa later says: ‘I am the *japayajña* [a ritual of muttering *mantra*s] amongst *yajñas* (10:25), which could then be taken as indicating the best of all knowledge-*yajñas*. Bṛhṛma discourses on *japa* at 12.189–193 (Ganguli 196–200), where he points out that *jāpakas* may attain *mokṣa* or rebirth, depending on whether they are non-attached or not. The latter would not, according to Kṛṣṇa’s definition, be performing *japa* as *yajña*.

22 This perspective could yield a narrative necessity for the *Mahābhārata* war to end in a conflagration. See *Jatavallabhula* (1999).

23 Many thanks to Daud Ali for drawing this article to my attention.
consequence of this is becoming aware of the conditions for action as the state of insentient nature and the facility of our social situation.

That is to say, the Bhagavagitā in analyzing action

... removes it, as a topic, from moral philosophy altogether and places it under the paradigm of the behavioural sciences (ibid., p. 76).

On this view, and as we have already begun to suspect on the basis of internal evidence, lokasamgraha as a 'projected goal' is a red herring, featuring in the text to ensure the continuity of the brāhmaṇical ritual tradition with its conventional analysis of the causes of action. Although Teschner fails to acknowledge that his thesis is contradicted by the text on this point, it is clear that we cannot make philosophical progress without ignoring some of what Krṣṇa says.

By doing so, we are able to do justice to the text’s deconstruction of agency (3:27–28, 5:8–9, 18:40–41):

Actions are being done wholly by the qualities (guṇas) of material nature (prakṛti). The one who is bewildered by ego (ahamkāra) thinks ‘I am the doer’. The knower of the truth of the distributions of actions and of guṇas, thinking ‘the guṇas are moving amongst the guṇas’, does not attach themselves.24

While seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, eating, moving, breathing, sleeping, speaking, ejecting, grasping, waking and sleeping, the yoked truth-knower should think ‘I am doing nothing at all’, reflecting that the senses (indriyas) are moving among their objects.25

Neither on earth nor again in the heavenly region among the celestials is there an entity that could be free from these three guṇas born of prakṛti. The actions of brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras are apportioned by the qualities arising from [their] own-nature (svabhāva).26

Here, in Śāmkhya terminology, we have the behavioural analysis of action mentioned by Teschner. The cause of action is never an independent human being, but is always prakṛti, the material world as a whole, of which any individual person is an arbitrary subsection. The teleological view of actions as initiated and owned by individuals is, quite simply, a mistake.

The theory of dehin set forth by Krṣṇa in chapter two of the text is a vital component of this philosophy, as it describes the dehin in such a

24 prakṛteḥ kriyamānāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśe / ahamkāravimādhānāṁ kārtāham iti manyate / tattvatvāṁ tu mahābhāvo guṇakarmaviḥāgavyoḥ / guṇā guṇeṣu vartantā iti matvā na sajñate //

25 naiva kiṁcit karamitī yukto manyeta tattvātm / paśyan śrnyan spraṇi jīghrāṁ aśnam gacchan svapana śvasan / pralapan visrjan gṛhaṁ unmiśan nimiaṁ api / indriyāṁindriyārtheṣu vartantā iti dhārayan //

26 na tad aṣṭi prthivyāṁ vā divi deṣeṣu vā punaḥ / sattvaṁ prakṛti jair muktāṁ yad ebhiḥ syat tribhir guṇaiḥ // brāhmaṇākṣatriyaḥ śudrāḥ ca paramāpam / karmāṇi pravibhaktāṁ svabhāvaprabhavair guṇaiḥ //
way that it could never be part of the machinery of action. *Dehin*, being unchangeable, is restricted to the role of a witness. Because of the psycho-
physical separation and internal privacy of organisms, what it witnesses
is packaged out as individual conscious entities conventionally known as
selves, each comprising a body, a set of senses, and a mental complex
composed of *manas, buddhi* and *ahamkāra* (literally the ‘I-maker’). The
mental complex responds to sensory input by initiating various actions,
but the causal networks at play are all within the domain of *prakṛti*, the
self-sufficiency of which follows from the aloofness of *dehin*.

The human person is thus seen to be, at root, a cause and effect
machine. It is clear, however, that the details of the mechanism may not
be observed by us. The three *guna* s, acting upon each other in various
localized proportions, provide a theoretical account of the dynamic process
at work, but there is no indication that we should be able to measure
them or track their exact workings. The *Bhagavadgītā* contains a lengthy
section (17:1–18:44, with occasional digressions) sketching the different
types of activity, preference, experience and capacity proceeding from the
preponderance of different *guna*s. This rough guide explains how similar
sensory input may result in a large range of output activities depending on
the constitution of the individual concerned. Although the section ends by
establishing the four-*varṇa* social system on the basis of *guna*-differentials
(18:41–44), this is clearly a taxonomic simplification for hermeneutic
purposes: the notion of *svabhāva* used here must logically be specific to
individual people rather than to individual *varṇas*. We would even want
to go further and describe *svabhāva* as variable within one lifetime: in
this way, the change generally digitized in successive lives by the Indian
tradition can be rendered in an analogue manner.

THE CAUSAL COSMOS

*Kṛṣṇa’s* insight that all events are causally constrained is shared by Laplace
(1952, p. 4):

*Given for one instant an intelligence which could comprehend all the forces by which
nature is animated and the respective situation of the beings who compose it – an intelli-
gence sufficiently vast to submit these data to analysis – it would embrace in the same
formula the movements of the greatest bodies of the universe and those of the lightest
atom; for it, nothing would be uncertain and the future, as the past, would be present to its
eyes.*

Human beings are unable to achieve this level of prediction, and hence
exact science is restricted to those events whose causal antecedents are
limited in number and measurable to the required level of exactitude. In
complex systems, prediction is only possible in terms of probabilities, by
generalizing over a large range of similar events.27

In the Bhagavadgītā Kṛṣṇa plays the role of Laplace’s God-like intel-
ligence, insofar as he reveals himself to be not just a human being, but
also the great Lord of the universe. When he demonstrates this aspect of
himself to Arjuna in the theophany of chapter eleven, Arjuna sees that
Kṛṣṇa incorporates events that have yet to happen. Kṛṣṇa says (11:32–34):

All the warriors who are stood in the opposed armies will not survive, except for you . . .
These were killed by me previously: be the instrumental cause. Drona and Bhīṣma and
Jayadratha and Karna and the other warrior-heroes too: kill those who have been killed by
me!28

Kṛṣṇa incorporates future events because he incorporates the entirety of
prakṛti’s causal web. Just as the human person is a superimposition of
dehā and dehin, so is the cosmic person: his deha comprises prakṛti and
the individual dehins superimposed upon it (7:4–5, 13:2, 15:7, 16), and his
dehin is the transcendent, acosmic puruṣottama (highest puruṣa, 8:20–22,
15:17–18), whose embodiment, like that of the dehin of creatures, is cyclic,
taking the form of the many days of brahman (8:17–19, 9:4–8, 10).29

Bearing this analogy in mind, it is to be noted that Kṛṣṇa’s knowl-
edge of the future is not the same as that of Laplace’s God. Kṛṣṇa as
puruṣottama does not know what is going to happen on any particular day
of brahman, any more than the creaturely dehin knows what the body it
is superimposed upon is going to do. Rather, the cosmic person, because
it contains all of prakṛti’s particular configurations, contains the future in
exactly the same way as it contains the present and the past. We might say
that the aspect of the cosmic person which constitutes Laplace’s ‘intelli-
gence sufficiently vast to submit these data to analysis’ is, in fact, prakṛti.

27 Given the existence of people who abrogate varṇadharmā, varṇa may be seen as such
a generalization. See also note 37.
28 [kālo 'smi lokākṣayakṛt praveddhō lokān samāhartam iha pravr.tāh /] tte 'pi tvāṁ
na bhaviṣyanti sarve ye 'vasthitāḥ pratyānikeṣa yodhāḥ / [tasmāt tvam a菩提ha yaśo
labhasva jīvā śatān bhāṅkṣya rūjya samṛddham /] mayāvāte nihāitak pārvam eva
nīnittamātraṁ bhava savyācāṁ / dṛṇam ca bhīṃca ca jayadrathāṁ ca karaṇaṁ
vagunjan api yodhavīrāṁ / mayā hāthāṁ tvam jahi [mā vyaṭāṣṭhaṁ yudhāyasya jētāṁ rōne
sapatnāṁ /]
29 The full extent of this analogy has not been fully realized by previous commenta-
tors, whose misunderstandings have been fuelled by the text’s catholic terminology. Van
Buitenen (1981) has clarified the differing uses of avyakta (unmanifest) by using an initial
capital when the word describes the puruṣottama: p. 166, note 7 to chapter 8, notes 1
and 2 to chapter 9. 15:16 has caused problems by referring to prakṛti as a puruṣa. My
interpretation follows that of W.D.P. Hill (1928, pp. 240–241), shared by Sharma (1986,
p. 78). For other interpretations see Zaehner (1969, pp. 366–367), following Śaṅkara and
From the perspective of the cosmic person, time has no power to hide the future in the way it does for human beings. This, for our purposes, is the sense of Kṛṣṇa’s assertion that, as revealed to Arjuna, he is time (11:32). That Kṛṣṇa Viśādeva knows the future is a consequence of his being the cosmic person, present as a particular apparently human being. The considerable philosophical difficulties entailed by this eventuality do not concern us here: what matters in the current context is the causal consistency of the world in process, not the details of the manner in which Arjuna came to know of the same.

ACTION WITHOUT DESIRE

It is now clear what Kṛṣṇa means when he says, towards the end of the Bhagavadgītā (18:59–61):

If, having had recourse to ahaṁkarā, you think ‘I will not fight’, this, your resolution, is false: prakṛti will impel you. Bound by your own action, born of svabhāva, that which, from confusion, you do not want to do, you will do, even unwishingly. The Lord stands in the heart-region of all beings, causing, by māyā, all beings, mounted on an apparatus, to move round.30

These implications are in line with the conclusions we have reached thus far. Human beings are not able to predict exactly what they are going to do, and so such predictions as are made, in the form of intentions, are liable to be incorrect. This analysis fits with our experience, since we often intend to do things that we then do not do.

The passage just quoted may seem to give the impression that Arjuna, were he not to have been disabused of his illusions by Kṛṣṇa’s self-revelation, might have found himself being forced to fight by prakṛti, even as he was still telling himself ‘I will not fight’.31 Such a radical incongruity between intention and action is contrary to experience and philosophically unacceptable. The idea that Arjuna might fight unwishingly must, then, mean that, for Arjuna to fight, it is not necessary that he entertain the wish,

Footnotes:
30 yad ahaṁkāram āśṛtya na yatva iti manyase / mithyaisa vyavasya te prakṛte tvāṁ niyokṣyati // svabhāva-vajena kaunteya nibaddhah svena kārmanyā / kartṛṣṇe necchaśtvai yan mohāti kariyasya avasā ‘pi tat // īśvarah sarvabādhānāṁ ṛddhāse ‘ṛjuna tiṣṭhāti / bhrāmyayan sarvabādhānāṁ yantrārdhaṁ māyayā //
31 It is important to realize that, according to Kṛṣṇa’s argumentation, this kind of hypothetical reasoning is extremely queer. We are not at liberty to draw meaningful conclusions from ‘what if’ scenarios, since we cannot re-configure the world to be other than it (four-dimensionally) is. Hence the absurdity of the notion of free will, which, if it is to have any descriptive sense at all, constitutes an assertion that, all things being equal, one could have done otherwise; an assertion, that is, which no evidence could support.
desire or intention to fight. All that is required is that, in the process of causing Arjuna to fight, prakṛti must also cause him to shed his particular intention not to do so.

So what are we to make of the things we do that seem to follow causally from our intentions? According to Kṛṣṇa’s analysis such activities are perilous, since even if we manage to sustain the intention to the extent of performing the intended action, the intention implies an envisaged future which is unlikely to match the actual one, and suffering will result. Hence actions requiring a corresponding antecedent intention are to be avoided.

Bearing with this strange conclusion for the moment, it may be observed that we have now gone some way towards solving, in an unexpected manner, the two problems which dogged us earlier. The psychology of non-attached actors is indeed obscure, in that their motivations cannot truthfully be described in the kind of terms that we would ordinarily expect. Lokasamgraha constitutes a motivation only in terms of external explanation. If someone sees a non-attached actor performing the prescribed fire-yajña, and requests a teleological explanation of their behaviour, lokasamgraha will serve for conventional purposes. After all (3:29),

The one who knows all should not agitate the stupid who do not know all.32

In a like manner, although we might impute desires to such a person, those desires serve a purely formal purpose. The conventional understanding of dharmic action requires them, but they are phenomenologically inaccessible (2:70, 7:11):

As waters enter the ocean, immovable and steadfast, being filled, just so do all desires enter the one who, not desiring desires, attains peace.33

In beings I am the desire that does not obstruct dharma.34

In fact, the non-attached actor’s behaviour is motivated in the same sense as blinking, sleepwalking or digestive processes are motivated. We do not say of someone, when they blink, that their psychology is obscure. There simply is no psychology of blinking.

Similarly, one does not need to know what to do in order to do it. Sometimes prakṛti furnishes an awareness of a coming activity well in

32 [prakṛter guṇasamudṛṣṭā sajantā guṇakarmasu /] tān akṛṣṭaṃiva mendān kṛṣṇavin na vicālayet //
33 āpiṛyaniṃnam acalapratīṣṭham samudram āpiḥ prāviṣānti yadvat / tadvat kāṁ ēva praviṣānti sarve sa sāntiṃ āpnoti na kāmakāṃ //
34 [balaṃ balavatām cāham kāmarāgavivarjitam /] dharmāvīruddho bhūteṣu kāmo ’smi bhurutārsabha // Here, in order not to upset the conventional understanding of dharma, Kṛṣṇa appears to allow some room for desire, but the previous quotation makes it clear that this desire is imperceptible.
advance (Duryodhana, for example, had known for some time that, the Pāṇḍavas being willing, he would go to war against them); sometimes, as for Arjuna, the awareness of the action only just precedes the action itself;\textsuperscript{35} and sometimes, as with sleepwalking and blinking, one need never know of the action. The need to know what one will do is unreal; it is part of a mistaken view of the cause of activity. Choice is, when it seems to occur, only apparent. There are always good reasons for doing one thing rather than any other, but those reasons are not in any meaningful sense one’s own.\textsuperscript{36}

**IDEOLOGICAL NEGOTIATIONS**

This analysis has led us to a strange and initially disconcerting position. It would seem that adopting Kṛṣṇa’s technique of action will preclude many of the things we ordinarily do, especially in these times when the dominant cultural ideology is one of individual opportunity, autonomy and choice. We might say that Kṛṣṇa’s technique precludes all those actions which help us establish our own individual identity. In this case it would be an advantage to live in the kind of society idealized by the *Mahābhārata*, in which one’s identity is, as it were, a *fait accompli*, since the circumstances of one’s birth dictate one’s livelihood, and incidental individualities are put down to *karma* carried forward from past lives.\textsuperscript{37} In later times the *āśrama* system complemented this picture with a diachronic prescription of individual roles.\textsuperscript{38} Though the rigidity of *varṇāśrama-dharma* has been criticized repeatedly in India and in the west, it is clear that having one’s future already laid out in considerable detail would obviate many existential growing pains. As long as the openness of individual futures

\textsuperscript{35} This may bring to mind Matthew 10:19–20: ‘When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you’ (Revised Standard Version). We may replace ‘Spirit’ and ‘Father’ with *prakṛti* and *purusottama*.

\textsuperscript{36} See Wegner (2002) for a wealth of empirical data on this point.

\textsuperscript{37} In the *Mahābhārata* there are many characters who do not slot easily into their *varna* roles, but such variation is usually explained through *karma* or through the individual in question being an incarnation or partial incarnation of some other being. With the exception of certain *ṛṣis* – on which see Peter Hill (1995) – the individual him or herself is not deemed responsible or accountable for the irregularity.

\textsuperscript{38} See Olivelle (1993) who, following van Buitenen’s dating of the *Bhagavadgītā*, places it before the development of the classical *āśrama* system (p. 105). The *Mahābhārata* as a whole knows both the ‘classical’ system in which the *āśramas* run in series (pp. 148–151), and the earlier system in which they run in parallel (pp. 153–155).
remains an item of faith, it is hard to envisage how one could shed the kind of view of oneself that Krṣṇa deplores.

The antagonism between contemporary ideology and Krṣṇa’s deterministic worldview is a severe barrier to our understanding of ancient philosophy, and has dogged most previous attempts to expound the philosophy of the Bhagavadgītā. The spectre of fatalism, once glimpsed, is generally abominated. I shall not give modern examples of this, as they are legion and infuriating: suffice it to say that the tendency to extol individual freedom and sideline Krṣṇa’s prakṛtic determinism is by no means a recent phenomenon, but is clearly visible within the Mahābhārata and within the Bhagavadgītā itself. The reasons for this are not far to seek. The text’s authors constructed their document with an eye to its likely social effects. In the centuries leading up to the composition of the text, technological innovation, urbanization and population growth led to the demise of many traditional ways of life, and the judgement of individuals emerged as a powerful tool of social engineering, effected not just by social institutions but also by the mechanism of karman. Despite the now proven inability of this tool to eliminate undesirable behaviour, the ideology of individualism has remained in place ever since, being an important foundation of legal, religious and capitalist systems. Hence the Mahābhārata on many occasions extols the necessity of puruṣakāra (human initiative) and exhorts people to exercise control over their own lives. Yudhiṣṭhira, elsewhere one of the Mahābhārata’s staunchest fatalists, declares that Draupādi’s exposition of determinism is heretical and threatens dharma (Mahābhārata 3.32).39 This ‘doublethink’ is evident in many of the Mahābhārata’s characters, and must surely reflect conflicting views in the text’s authors.40 The arguments mustered against the deterministic view in the Mahābhārata are, broadly speaking, the same as those offered by commentators, namely that determinism is a pessimistic view and will lead to inactivity or undesirable behaviour. Such arguments are question-begging, resting as they do on an unsympathetic caricature of the hypothetical determinist. In fact the point of view rejected by these arguments is a misrepresentation of determinism, which, as Nietzsche points out,

\[\ldots\] contains the fundamental error of placing man and fate opposite each other like two separate things: man, it says, can strive against fate, can try to defeat it, but in the end it always remains the winner, for which reason the smartest thing to do is to give up or live just any way at all. The truth is that every man himself is a piece of fate; when he thinks he is striving against fate in the way described, fate is being realized here, too; the

39 Ganguli 3.31.
40 For detailed studies of this issue in the Mahābhārata, see Peter Hill (2001) and Woods (2001).
struggle is imaginary, but so is resignation to fate; all these imaginary ideas are included in fate.\footnote{Translation from Stambaugh (1972, p. 11). The extract is from section 61 of The wanderer and his shadow (1880, which then formed volume 2, part 2 of the 1886 new edition of Human, all too human: a book for free spirits).}

Views which do not express an ideological objection to determinism are few and far between.\footnote{See Chakravarty (1955) and Honderich (1993).} Nonetheless, if one is prepared to take Krishna’s deterministic suggestions seriously, much of what he says can be interpreted in a new way. Given the understanding of Krishna that is sketched above, in which he encompasses prakriti with all its occurring permutations, the realization that one’s actions are already contained by the world, that is, by Krishna, and that they are not really one’s own, is equivalent to the mental offering of those actions back to Krishna.

Whatever you do, enjoy, invoke, give or undergo by way of austerity, make it an offering to me (9:27).\footnote{yat karosī yad aśnāsi yaj juhosī dadāsi yat / yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kartavya madarpanam //}

Here Krishna-bhakti, which is equivalent to non-attached action, is seen potentially to include any activity whatsoever. If activity occurs in the knowledge that it is really Krishna’s activity, anthropocentric teleological explanations are beside the point. Hence the Bhagavadgītā repeatedly stresses that Krishna-bhakti is mental: it does not involve specific devotional activities, but comprises any activity integrated with the knowledge of dehin, prakriti and Krishna.

We can thus see that, far from becoming worthless and meaningless, human action has, under the influence of the Bhagavadgītā’s determinism, become transfigured into sacred action. A less pessimistic attitude to human action would be hard to find. Action thus transfigured becomes dharmic by definition: every action of the Krishna-bhakta is known to contribute to lokasamgraha, since every action is a vital part of what the loka, on this particular day of brahman, happens to be.

\textbf{INADEQUACIES OF THE CONSEQUENTIALIST ALTERNATIVE}

Even if one were to live one’s life in obedience to preexisting norms, it is easy to imagine situations where norms conflict, and such situations,
as Arjuna’s predicament illustrates, were not unknown in ancient India. The tendency here is for analysts to see the problem in terms of morality, which leads immediately to consideration of likely consequences, means and ends. For example, Mathur says (1974, p. 36) that

... in order to resolve a moral problem one should act after a proper appraisal of the situation to achieve the end or the goal which rational reflection shows to be most desirable.

It is questionable whether Kršna discusses the matter in terms of what we would call morality, either on Kurukṣetra with Arjuna, or at any other time when explaining the necessity of war to the Pāṇḍavas and their allies. We could, of course, impute such considerations to him: More (1995) is an attempt to do just that, deriving a thoroughgoing anti-imperialist political philosophy from Kršna’s Mahābhārata activities. It is clear that the Kurukṣetra war is a good example of lokasamgraha being effected by individuals who do not see the wider picture but are pursuing their own ends, in this case the restoration of the Pāṇḍavas’ honour following their treatment – and Draupadi’s – at the hands of Duryodhana and his cronies. However, the wider picture is wider than More’s work suggests. The textual evidence, though not mentioning Kršna’s humanistic philosophy, identifies the oppression of the earth by the asuras as the cosmic reason for the war (Mahābhārata 1.58 and passim). We have been removed from issues of morality into the realm of hermeneutic secrets.

In Mathur’s case (op. cit., p. 38), analysis in terms of morality leads to the judgement that

---

45 There is a problem here with Kršna’s claim that he himself is the paradigmatic non-attached actor (3:22–24, 4:14, 9:9), since the philosophy set out by More involves intention, desire, aversion, and consideration of outcomes. Kršna Vāsudeva’s reluctance to verbalise motives for his behaviour makes him somewhat inaccessible as a character, but there may be an authorial desire to present him as non-attached. It is difficult to make sense of Kršna’s claim of non-attachment in terms of the cosmic person: since the human body and its external environment are consubstantial, human actions may be dissolved into the prakṛt background; but the cosmic person is always the only entity of its kind, and has no background to dissolve into, hence its actions are not comparable with ours. Put differently, if humans can achieve non-attachment by knowing Kršna (or, in the Kauśitaki Upaniṣad, Indra), this method must be very different to that by which Kršna (or Indra) is himself non-attached.

46 Ganguli 1.64. The situation here is similar to that of Jaimini’s Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, in which the ritual performer ‘... is acknowledged, evaluated, placed, used, in a system which does not exist for his own sake even if, from his point of view, the sacrifice exists as the means to his desired results. He himself is transcended, because the event of the sacrifice is primary ...’ (Clooney, op. cit., p. 149). In the case of the Mahābhārata the sacrifice is of course the Kurukṣetra war, whose transcendental purpose is unknown to almost all of its participants.
... while we should be firmly committed to achieve the goal after a rational assessment of the situation, we should not be so egoistically involved in the issue as to calculate what, in terms of pleasure or pain, prosperity or otherwise, will be its likely effect on our personal fortunes.

The distinction being drawn here is too nice, and will not sit alongside Kṛṣṇa’s proposed elimination of ahamkāra. Once independent individual judgement has been introduced, there is little hope of removing the independent individual from the telos. There is no getting around it: the extent of Kṛṣṇa’s ‘rational assessment of the situation’, at least as far as ethics is concerned, is that Arjuna is a kṣatriya and so must – and will – fight. However hard we find it to identify with this, it is here that the key to non-attachment lies. Kṛṣṇa will not break the spell of varṇadharma by discussing with Arjuna whether or on what grounds it may take precedence over other dharmas. There need not be general rules for this in any case: each prakṛtic situation throws up specific actions, whose categorization, where it occurs, is secondary.

THE DETERMINISM OF NON-ATTACHMENT

We have now reached an acceptable understanding of Kṛṣṇa’s philosophy of non-attached action. A rupture is evident, however, in that while Kṛṣṇa has made it clear that Arjuna cannot but fight, his speeches are peppered with exhortations to fight. These exhortations would seem now to have lost their ordinary sense, which implies the freedom of the listener.

In a similar manner, we must now be left in some doubt as to whether or not non-attachment is available to Arjuna in this particular activity of fighting. The difference between being and not being attached is a mental difference, located, as the text repeatedly mentions, in the person’s buddhi. But buddhi is in the domain of prakṛti, so if prakṛti governs the actions that Arjuna will do, then it must also govern whether or not he will do those actions without attachment. Arjuna has been exhorted to become a yogin, that is, to perform his kṣatriya duties in a non-attached manner, in just the same way as he has been exhorted to perform them at all. Yet while Kṛṣṇa’s revelation leaves Arjuna convinced that he will fight and cannot do otherwise, there is less certainty about whether he will do so without attachment.

Kṛṣṇa’s words at 16:5 may seem to supply such certainty:

The celestial assemblage of qualities is considered to be for liberation, the demonic for bondage. Do not grieve: you were born to the celestial assemblage.47

47 daivī sampad vinoksāya nibandhāyāṣuṣurī maitā / mā śucaḥ sampadaṁ daivīṁ abhijāto ‘si pāṇḍava // My translation of sampad as ‘assemblage of qualities’ follows Wezler (2000,
This verse follows two lists, one of celestial virtues, one of demonic (āsura) vices. The appearance of this dichotomy is interesting, given that elsewhere the Bhagavadgītā tends to list possibilities in threes, according to prevailing guṇa. Although the list of celestial virtues does not explicitly include non-attachment, it does include ‘fixity in yoga and in knowledge’ (jñānayogayavasthīti, 16:1), two of the vital ingredients of non-attachment, and the association with liberation seems to confirm that non-attachment is implied.

Given this reading, the text is putting the matter in black and white. It seems we are to understand that there are two types of people, those who act without attachment and those who act with attachment, and that the type one falls under is, like one’s varṇa, a matter of birth. This being the case, we will find it hard to understand why Krṣṇa has spent so much time explaining the technique of non-attached action to Arjuna, why he suggests that Arjuna has had recourse to ahanākāra (18:59), and why Arjuna, later on in the Mahābhārata, admits that he has forgotten what Krṣṇa told him on the battlefield and asks for a reprise.48

If, on the other hand, we surmise that the text is oversimplifying here, and remember that, as suggested above, svabhāva is a continuously variable quality, we are left with no specific information from Krṣṇa as to whether or not Arjuna will kill his relatives and gurus without attachment. Indeed, there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that Arjuna was not non-attached on the battlefield, for some days into the war he once again tells Krṣṇa that he will not kill Bhīṣma, and has to be reminded that he has no choice – that is to say, he has to have his svabhāva re-adjusted by Krṣṇa’s words (Mahābhārata 6.103:85–96).49

As far as the present paper is concerned, the question of whether or not Arjuna fought in a non-attached manner is subsidiary to the question of whether or not Krṣṇa’s technique is available to all. Whichever approach we take, it seems that it is not. Either, following the ideas in chapter sixteen, we apply a digital whole-life hermeneutic, in which case the availability of the technique will depend on being born to the celestial assemblage of virtues, or, admitting svabhāvas to be in a state of continuous but inscrutable flux, the availability of the technique will depend upon the state of the particular svabhāva at the time of each specific action. In both cases the deterministic view means that just as one’s actions are, as it

48 Mahābhārata 14.16–50 (Ganguli 14.16–51), the Anugītā.
49 Ganguli 6.108.
were, chosen for one, so also is the manner of their performance. We may suspect that, in some cases of non-attached action, exposure to and understanding of the philosophy of the Bhagavadgītā may be a contributing factor: this, however, is pure speculation, and in any case such exposure and understanding can again be dissolved into its causal antecedents.

CONCLUSIONS

It now seems that non-attached action is not a realistic and available possibility for every human actor. Though it may happen, it is not under our control. In the Bhagavadgītā the availability of non-attachment in action functions as a narrative fiction to explain, on the conventional level, how Arjuna can satisfactorily be persuaded to fight. The revelation that he cannot but fight is preceded by the suggestion that there is a way of fighting available to him that will minimize the terrible existential consequences he fears. We can imagine prakṛti's causal networks resulting in his fighting on the basis of this information, regardless of the truth of Kṛṣṇa’s claim, be this the general claim for the universal availability of his technique, or the specific claim of its availability to Arjuna in his martial activity. The causal success of Kṛṣṇa’s words in this context is dependent on their being followed, as they are, by Arjuna’s resolving to fight. As the sequel demonstrates, the information content of those words is subservient to this purpose.

We may say that the universal applicability of Kṛṣṇa’s technique is a conceit of the way in which the text reports Arjuna’s changing his mind. And just as Kṛṣṇa employed this narrative fiction in his discourse to Arjuna in order to guide the latter to dharmic action, so the authors of the text likewise employed it in their discourse to their audience in order to guide that audience to dharmic action. Although, as I have shown, the philosophy of action contained in the text contradicts, or at least undermines, the narrative fiction, this philosophy was successfully hidden between the lines.

Returning to the present-day person who wishes to use the text’s philosophy in order to reduce their suffering, it seems that there are problems with such a desire. The text may of course contribute to a reduction of suffering, but if so this is likely to be incidental rather than deliberate. The selfconscious attempt to reduce one’s suffering, or to find a philosophy of life that satisfies, seems to figure as a symptom of suffering rather than as a cure. It involves sitting in judgement upon oneself, not in terms of whether or not one’s physical behaviour is acceptable, but in terms of whether or not one’s level of suffering is acceptable. In either case, it is the judgement, the telling of a narrative in which one is the central character, that constitutes
the mistake. This being the case, and with a vicious circle looming, the only way out is to realize that our mental state, the internal tone of our experience, is, like our actions, absolutely none of our business. If there is anything to be done to improve it, perhaps this will be arranged by prakṛti. As a wise person once said, the cure for insomnia is not to mind having a rubbish night’s sleep.

REFERENCES

The Holy Bible, revised standard version, 1952.

50 Chakrabarti (1988) makes much of the ‘distinction between acting for the sake of (desiring) happiness and acting for being worthy of happiness (with hope but not desire for it)’ (p. 333). Either way, selfconsciousness constitutes judgement, and one becomes a victim of the autobiographical instinct. The problem here, as seen by Appelbaum (1990), is that ‘we systematically attribute to the mechanical nature of our strivings the signature of our own identity’ (p. 105). Appelbaum presents this systematic attribution in terms of Husserl’s theory of kinæsthesia, but see also Schutz (1972, pp. 45–96).
102 SIMON BRODBECK


---

Asian Studies (Sanskrit)
The University of Edinburgh
7 Buccleuch Place
Edinburgh EH8 9LW
E-mail: s.brodbeck@ed.ac.uk