



Institute for Philosophy & Religion

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# “Krishna’s Instruction in the Bhagavad Gita: Many Doubts, One Faith”

Wednesday, March 23, 5 p.m.  
Boston University School of Theology  
745 Commonwealth Avenue, Room 325



The *Bhagavad Gita*, one of the most influential texts of ancient and modern India, famously begins with a vivid portrayal of a hero in crisis. Arjuna suffers a crisis of faith, for the first time unsure whether to fight or lay down arms, while the very tradition he exemplifies seems powerless to free him from his moral paralysis. His charioteer, the divine Krishna, guides him across the quagmire of physical, mental, and spiritual confusions, to the self-knowledge, detachment, and refuge-taking that reconstitute his conviction and enable him to return to his duty. Become an individual at the moment of crisis and alienation from tradition, Krishna’s instruction dissects and ultimately puts aside Arjuna’s newly realized individualism for the sake of renewed communal values.

This narrative and instruction, once understood in its Indian dharmic context, also sheds light on the individual and communal aspects of doubt and faith in contemporary Western philosophical and theological frames. Doubt can be interpreted as an assertion of individuality, unsettling the presuppositions of traditional faith; renewed faith may validate

that individuality, or mark a return to a frame of communal intelligibility greater than the individual. By proposing a three-part sequence—uncritical tradition, individualizing doubt, and a return to communal faith—the *Gita* and its commentarial tradition provoke us to rethink doubt and faith in our individualistic age.

Francis X. Clooney, SJ is Parkman Professor of Divinity and Director of the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University. He is a scholar of classical Hinduism, and a comparative theologian specializing in the mutual learning of Hindu and (Catholic) Christian traditions.

This event is supported by the Boston University Center for the Humanities.

*This lecture is free and open to the public.*

For further information, please contact:  
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