

SPACE, SPEECH, AND THE APOPHATIC MOVEMENT IN VEDIC LITERATURE

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Michael A. Sells, in his book, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, says that the apophatic mode of discourse “begins with the *aporia*—the unresolvable dilemma—of transcendence.”¹ Apophasis is a Greek term that means negation, but Sells points out that the word’s etymology suggests something like un-saying or speaking-away.² He says that apophasis can be defined historically, which would limit a study to “those writers who employed the term in their own writings,” or formally, which would extend a study to any text that would fit the formal definition. He also makes a distinction between apophatic theory and apophatic discourse, and says, “A purely apophatic language would be an abstract and mechanical turning back on each reference as it is posed. On the other hand, some of what has been called *apophasis* is apophatic theory as opposed to apophatic discourse.”³ In his study, he specifically examines the writings of Plotinus, John the Scot Eriugena, Ibn ‘Arabi, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart. He says their apophatic discourses share three key features:

(1) the metaphor of overflowing or “emanation” which is often in creative tension with the language of intentional, demiurgic creation; (2) dis-ontological discursive effort to avoid reifying the transcendent as an “entity” or “being” or “thing”; (3) a distinctive dialectic of transcendence and immanence in which the utterly transcendent is revealed as the utterly immanent.⁴

But Sells also claims that apophasis, defined formally, could “embrace a large number of Eastern texts,” and cites the *Tao Te Ching* and *Vimalakirti Sutra* as examples.⁵

The current work represents an attempt to apply the category of apophasis to Vedic literature in India. While there could perhaps be made, with some effort, parallels between the

¹ Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 2.

² *Ibid*

³ *Ibid*, 3.

⁴ *Ibid*, 6.

⁵ *Ibid*, 4.

three key features of Classical Western apophasis and Vedic apophasis, I will abandon that enterprise from the start⁶ and focus on the appearance of aporias and dis-ontological discursive effort in Vedic apophasis. There will be attention given to both moments of apophatic theory and apophatic discourse, but I would like to make a distinction between implicit and explicit moments of apophatic theory, as when, for example, the affirmation of identity between opposites implies an unsaying, in some manner, of what distinguishes these opposites, or when there is a discourse surrounding “nothing” that explicitly states a theory of negation. While apophatic moments abound in Vedic literature, isolating them in a purely semantic study would yield narrow results in an attempt to determine some of their wider functions. I therefore suggest that studies of apophasis in Vedic literature be examined in the context of the Vedic preoccupation with space and the Vedic conception of speech.

The earliest written account of religious life in ancient India was recorded in the *R̥g Veda*. There is a general scholarly consensus that this text was composed by poets around 1500 BCE,⁷ but it is extremely difficult to accurately ascribe a particular date to many Hindu texts because they do not often reference historical events.⁸ The date of composition should therefore be taken as an approximation at best. Early Vedic material culture was also far less developed than the Vedic literary tradition, so the text of the *R̥g Veda* represents the only surviving cultural remnant through which we can study early Vedic civilization.⁹ It was written in the Indo-Āryan language,

⁶ Such a project would considerably violate the text in an effort to reduce apophatic movements to a distinct set of common elements, while the apophatic movement of disontology attempts to prevent the appearance of a concretized and identifiable essence.

⁷ Laurie L. Patton, “Veda and Upaniṣad,” in *The Hindu World 2004*, ed. Sushi Mittal and Gene R. Thursby (New York: Routledge, 2004), 37.

⁸ Wendy Doniger, *The Hindus: An Alternative History* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2009), 19; Doniger, *The Hindus*, 3, in fact, explains that the Sanskrit word for history, *itihasa*, implies a subjective narrative rather than an objective description of actual events. We must bear this in mind when attempting to (re)construct the historical context out of which this literary tradition grew.

⁹ Doniger, *The Hindus*, 104; Patrick Olivelle, introduction to *Upaniṣads*, trans. Patrick Olivelle (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), xxv; Stephanie Jamison, *The Ravenous Hyenas and the Wounded Sun: Myth and Ritual in*

later to be known as Sanskrit, which is thought to have entered India from without.¹⁰ The religious practices described in this text are many and varied, but this study will benefit specifically from examining the portable nature of the religion, the significance of open space and freedom of movement, and the sacrality and complexity of language.

R̥gvedic religion was easily transported wherever its practitioners needed to move. The hymns were memorized by the priests, and a sacrifice could be performed in any open space using tools that were needed for everyday life.¹¹ The people who composed the *R̥g Veda* were cattle herders who later adopted a village lifestyle in the Ganges region where they raised their cows and became familiar with agriculture and crafts. Wealth was measured in head of cattle,¹² and cattle raids were often used as a way to increase wealth.¹³ Given the portable nature of their religious practices and nomadic origins, open space and freedom of movement were qualities that were highly valued by early Vedic people.¹⁴ One hymn from the *R̥g Veda* praises the sky and earth thus:

- 1 Sky and earth, these two who are good for everyone, hold the Order and bear the *poet of space*. Between the two goddesses, the two bowls that give birth magnificently, the pure sun god moves according to the laws of nature.
- 2 *Wide and roomy, strong and inexhaustible*, the father and mother protect the universe. The two world-halves are as bold as two wonderful girls when their father dresses them in shapes and colours.
- 3 The son of these parents, their *clever charioteer* with the power to make things clear, purifies the universe by magic. From the dappled milk-cow and the bull with good seed, every day he milks the milk that is his seed.

Ancient India (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 7, Vedic literature was preserved entirely orally throughout the Vedic period so the word text should be understood as referring to both an oral form as well as a written form; Olivelle, introduction to *Upaniṣads*, xxxii.

¹⁰ Romila Thapar, "The First Millennium B.C. in Northern India," in *Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History* 1995, ed. Romila Thapar (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1995), 86, scholars have discarded theories of an Āryan race, and the theory of an Āryan invasion is also being questioned.

¹¹ Jamison, *The Ravenous Hyenas*, 17.

¹² Olivelle, introduction to *Upaniṣads*, xxvii-xxviii; Patton, "Veda and Upaniṣad," 38; Thapar, "The First Millennium B.C. in Northern India," 94.

¹³ *Ibid*, 94.

¹⁴ Doniger, *The Hindus*, 114.

- 4 Most artful of the artful gods, he gave birth to the two world-halves that are good for everyone. He measured apart the two realms of space with his power of inspiration and fixed them in place with undecaying pillars.
- 5 Sky and earth, you mighty pair whose praises we have sung, grant us great fame and high sovereignty, by which we may *extend our rule over the peoples* for ever. Give us enormous force (RV 1.160).¹⁵

There are many aspects of this hymn that provide insight into the nature of Ṛgvedic values.¹⁶ As the child of the sky and earth, the sun is given the title “the poet of space,” and the father and mother are similarly associated with space as they are called “wide and roomy.” The sun as the “clever charioteer” associates him with animal husbandry and particularly cattle as indicated later in the same verse, and the connection between the sun, space, and cattle is a motif that recurs throughout the *Ṛg Veda* literature. The hymn is also directed to “strong and inexhaustible” divinities that have the power to give “enormous force” to the poet’s own people to “rule over the peoples for ever.” We thus see represented in this poem the values of people who cared for cows, a way of life that would require a lot of open space, but these people also had a strong desire for forceful expansion, which, of course, would require a lot *more* open space. One hymn about Uṣas, the feminine goddess of the dawn, says, “Creating light for the whole universe, Dawn has *opened up* the darkness as cows *break out from their enclosed pen*,” and later in vs. 12 it says, “*Spreading out* her rays *like cattle*, like a river in full flood the brightly coloured one shines *from the distance*” (RV 1.92.4 & 12). Notice again the close connection between cattle, the sun, and space. A hymn about Viṣṇu says, “Let this song of inspiration go forth to Viṣṇu, the

¹⁵ *The Rig Veda*, trans. Wendy Doniger (New York: Penguin Group, 1981), All *Ṛg Veda* hymns are taken from Wendy Doniger’s translation unless otherwise noted. Emphasis is mine on all the following hymns from the *Ṛg Veda*.

¹⁶ Doniger, *The Rig Veda*, 203-4, The moments of implicit apophatic theory are also particularly interesting, as when the sky and earth are conceived of as simultaneously the father and mother of the sun, sister goddesses, and perhaps children of the sun (the male sun god gives birth to his own parents, certainly a feminine act), as well as the conflation of the dappled-milk cow and the bull in the androgynous image of milk that is also seed. The conflation of opposites implicitly attempts to achieve their apophatic disintegration, enacting the removal of the delimitation that constitutes their specific meaning; also see Jarod Whittaker, *Strong Arms and Drinking Strength: Masculinity, Violence, and the Body in Ancient India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 126-7, for a discussion of strength, size, and space/extension in Ṛgvedic hymns.

wide-striding bull who lives in the mountains, who alone with but three steps *measured apart this long, far-reaching dwelling-place*” (RV 1.154.3). The value of open space and freedom of movement in these hymns clearly reflects the material needs of a culture that was built on animal husbandry and forceful expansion. The ideal home for such a group of people would be “long” and “far-reaching,” and not enclosed or penned-in.

Another important aspect of Ṛgvedic religion was language. Language was understood to have an immense amount of power, Sanskrit is very complex, and Ṛgvedic culture placed a very high value on the proper memorization and recitation of hymns. There is thus a way in which the use of this language allowed for the empowerment and freedom of the speaker while at the same time maintaining a strict order to ensure the survival of the inherited hymns in the early Vedic collective memory. Hymns from the *Ṛg Veda* were believed to have existed before the creation of the world, and the poets were merely channels through which the hymns had come rather than the creators of them.¹⁷ It was the responsibility of families who knew the hymns to transmit them accurately from generation to generation, and complicated mnemonic devices were used in order to accomplish this.¹⁸ Aside from its supposed divine origin, part of what made Sanskrit such a powerful language was that it was the property of an elite minority, it would have been unintelligible to most people,¹⁹ and those who spoke it were probably bilingual.²⁰ Sanskrit is a complex language: most words have many meanings, and it also has a compound structure which can be divided in different ways. A poem can therefore mean many different things and tell

¹⁷ Patton, “Veda and Upaniṣad,” 43, The poets also play an important part in bringing about the creation of the world as they were thought to have been present at the first sacrifice through which the world was created.

¹⁸ Thapar, “The First Millennium B.C. in Northern India,” 109; Doniger, *The Hindus*, 33, apparently it was accomplished as there are no variant readings of the *Ṛg Veda*.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 5.

²⁰ Doniger, *The Hindus*, 2, the word’s etymology suggests that it is to be distinguished from ‘Prakrit’, the common language of everyday speech.

multiple stories at once.²¹ It is also multidimensional in the sense that speech was understood to extend beyond what is heard²² and had its being in undivided unity before it was separated into parts. One hymn says,

Speech was divided into four parts that the inspired priests know. Three parts, hidden in deep secret, humans do not stir into action; the fourth part of Speech is what men speak. They call it Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, and it is the heavenly bird that flies. The wise speak of what is One in many ways; they call it Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan (RV 1.164.45-6).

Another hymn uttered by Speech herself says, “The gods divided me up into various parts, for I dwell in many places and enter into many forms” (RV 10.125.3). Speech consists of four parts after it is differentiated from its state of unity,²³ and only one of these parts is sounded by human lips. This understanding of speech is fairly common in Vedic literature²⁴ and will be given more attention later in this paper. But for now, what is of particular interest is the wide range of meanings that language had for early Vedic peoples, and the idea that there were unmanifest, unavailable aspects of speech that could only be signified with the one quarter of speech that is manifest allowed composers to take liberties in the presentation of their ideas; for if what has a particular form and limit must signify what is formless and unlimited, it must be dynamic and provide space for an infinitude of reinterpretations and additions.²⁵ We find this liberty for reinterpretation taken to an almost explosive intensity in the early Upaniṣads.

²¹ *Ibid*, 44.

²² Joel P. Brereton, “Unsounded Speech,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 31, (1988): 6.

²³ It also seems to remain one after its division, and this could be understood as an implicit moment of apophatic theory; there is an assertion that maintains a meta-unity between unity and multiplicity. But if the apophatic discourse were to be performed, it would have to further affirm a supra-meta-unity between the affirmed distinction between this meta-unity and unity and multiplicity etc. With every removal of a ‘what’ comes a new ‘what’; negation is always paired with the persistence of quiddity, and *the assertion of a simple unity generates a multiplicity of distinctions*, see Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 11.

²⁴ Jamison, *The Ravenous Hyenas*, 122, 255-257; Brereton, “Unsounded Speech,” 6.

²⁵ See also Patton, “Veda and Upaniṣad,” 39.

The Upaniṣads were probably composed sometime between the eighth and fourth centuries BCE²⁶, give or take a century or so. The earliest of these texts, the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and the Chāndogya Upaniṣads can be assigned, according to Olivelle, to the seventh and sixth centuries BCE.²⁷ Archaeological evidence suggests that the fifth century BCE was a time of increased urbanization.²⁸ The homes from this period were made of mud brick, and there was a specialization in crafts and the use of punch-marked coins.²⁹ The philological evidence from the early Upaniṣads provides some support for these archaeological finds. The texts document many teachings as originating from interactions between Kṣatriyas and Brāhmaṇs, and there seems to also be evidence of a lot of mobility and trade across kingdoms,³⁰ making political relations between kings and priests from different regions a crucial part of the social atmosphere. With Vedic society less mobile than it was during the composition of the *Ṛg Veda*, it would have been much more possible to accumulate the agrarian surplus for taxation and personal gain, and this would help foster the possibility for the emergence of traders and merchants.³¹ The early Upaniṣads place economic value on the teachings attributed to individuals from particular regions,³² so the priestly role is no longer centered on just the performance of the sacrifice, as it was during the Ṛgvedic period. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad provides evidence of regional rivalry between the people of Kuru-Pañcāla and Videha and Kāśī,³³ especially in the Yājñavalkya dialogues. The early Upaniṣads also value social interaction as a means to achieving

²⁶ Brian Black, *The Character of the Self in Ancient India: Priests, Kings, and Women in the Early Upaniṣads* (New York: State University of New York, 2007), 4.

²⁷ Olivelle, introduction to *Upaniṣads*, xxxvi; Doniger, *The Hindus*, 167, places them in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE.

²⁸ Thapar, "The First Millennium B.C. in Northern India," 84.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 93, 113.

³⁰ Patton, "Veda and Upaniṣad," 45-6.

³¹ Thapar, "The First Millennium B.C. in Northern India," 114-5.

³² Black, *The Character of the Self in Ancient India*, 35, 59-60.

³³ *Ibid*, 13.

philosophical insight, rather than quiet solitary meditation.³⁴ Formal debates, called *brahmodyas*, between priests from different regions, make up much of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. These *brahmodyas* are often about the nature of the sacrifice, and are no longer memorized interactions that take place within the ritual space of the sacrifice.³⁵ Even when masters and students left the crowded city and went into the forest, it was to interact and exchange information. The texts, therefore, reflect highly complex social interactions and economic value systems, and are not merely the remnant of renunciate ascetics, even though they often present ascetic teachings. The urbanized environment in Vedic period India would have been a time of great exchange for ideas and goods, but it would also be a time that would require the malleability of the culture to be pushed to its limits. An ancient society used to roaming free in an open expanse of land, always looking for more space, continued to hold this value in the urbanized environment, but its conception of space became radically transformed.

Doniger argues that the Upaniṣads reflect a sense of group nostalgia for the R̥gvedic time “when people lived under the trees and slept under the stars,”³⁶ and the decision to retreat into the forest away from village life was an attempt to discover again the space in the open land. The theory of reincarnation, according to her, “may reflect an anxiety of overcrowding, the claustrophobia of a culture fenced in, a kind of urban Angst (*amhas*).”³⁷ The early Upaniṣads describe the process by which a person is born again and again, and they also systematically present the knowledge that one must gain if they are to break out of this cycle of rebirth. Leaving the world of cyclic rebirth caused by desire is described as a journey through different openings or holes where one finally arrives at a place where there are no distinctions between opposites.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 22.

³⁵ Black, *The Character of the Self in Ancient India*, 60.

³⁶ Doniger, *The Hindus*, 171.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 170.

Now, a person, on departing from this world, arrives first at the wind. It opens a hole for him there as wide as a cartwheel. He goes up through that and arrives at the sun. It opens a hole for him there as wide as a large drum. He goes up through that and arrives at the moon. It opens a hole for him there as wide as a small drum. He goes up through that and arrives in a world where there are no extremes of heat or cold. There he lives for years without end (BU 5.10).³⁸

While ideas about reincarnation could indeed be a reaction to living in a more restricted environment, the sages that composed the Upaniṣads were interested in probing as deeply as possible the problems of all aspects of life itself, and the survival of these texts seems to be indicative of the fact that they are applicable to many different kinds of living conditions. The composers of the Upaniṣads did not only find space in developing ideas about a state beyond life and death in the forests, they also found space at the center of the human heart, where the self (*ātman*) resides.

The space in the heart is a recurring theme in both of the earliest Upaniṣads. In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, which is associated with Kuru-Pañcāla, a region that rivaled Videha,³⁹ space is the object of discussion in relation to the heart, *brahman*, and the speech of the High Chant. The space in the heart was understood to contain all things. One passage says,

‘Now, here in this fort of *brahman* there is a small lotus, a dwelling-place, and within it, a small space. In that space there is something—and that’s what you should try to discover, that’s what you should seek to perceive.’

If they ask him: ‘Yes, here in this fort of *brahman* there is a small lotus, a dwelling-place, and within it, a small space. But what is there in that space that we should try to discover, that we should seek to perceive?’—he should reply: ‘As vast as the space here around us is this space within the heart, and within it are contained both the earth and the sky, both fire and wind, both the sun and the moon, both lightning and stars. What belongs here to this space around us, as well as what does not—all that is contained within it’ (CU 8.1.1-3).⁴⁰

Notice that the *small* space in the heart is said to be as *vast* as the “space here around us,” and that the space in the heart contains not only what belongs to the space around us, but also what does not belong to that space. This is a space that defies any easy categorization, but it is clear

³⁸ Olivelle, *Upaniṣads*, 75.

³⁹ Black, *The Character of the Self in Ancient India*, 97.

⁴⁰ Olivelle, *Upaniṣads*, 167.

that it is more widely extensive than any conception of an external space, as the earth and sky are said to be contained within it. Later in the same passage it is said that the self resides in the space in the heart, and one who has discovered this self will “obtain complete freedom of movement in all the worlds” (CU 8.1.6)⁴¹ upon departing from *this* world. If the restricted movement that inevitably accompanied the rise of urbanization in Vedic India made one feel a sense of *ámhas*,⁴² being in a tight spot, the understanding purported by the above passage would certainly provide adequate compensation for this restriction; there was a vast enough space within the heart for the cows to roam as they did in the R̥gvedic period, for the earth and sky to exist, the fire and wind, the sun and moon, and the lightning and stars. The passage attempts to present the absolute acceptance of the infinitude of changing circumstances in the external space through the identification of the external space with the space in the heart, and it claims that this space in the heart extends further and includes more than just the totality of external space. This could be an empowering viewpoint, for it is often easier to accept one’s own body and selfhood than all the things believed to be foreign to this body and selfhood, and what belongs to one’s self is also often subject to one’s own volition.

‘This self (*ātman*) of mine that lies deep within my heart—it is made of mind; the vital functions (*prāṇa*) are its physical form; luminous is its appearance; the real is its intention; space is its essence (*ātman*); it contains all actions, all desires, all smells, and all tastes; it has captured this whole world; it neither speaks nor pays any heed.

‘This self (*ātman*) of mine that lies deep within my heart—it is smaller than a grain of rice or barley, smaller than a mustard seed, smaller even than a millet grain or a millet kernel; but it is larger than the earth, larger than the intermediate region, larger than the sky, larger even than all these worlds put together (CU 3.14.2-3).⁴³

⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁴² Whitaker, *Strong Arms and Drinking Strength*, 127, points out that the “term *ámhas* is central to R̥gvedic ideology as it denotes any form of distress, narrowness, oppression, or constraint that a poet, warrior, or tribe may face and overcome...,” and stresses the value of openness, limitlessness in relation to might and strength. As can be seen, the value for open space is retained in Upaniṣadic ideology.

⁴³ Olivelle, *Upaniṣads*, 123-4.

Here, space is considered the *ātman* of *ātman*, the very essence of the self, and the self (*ātman*) has “captured this whole world,” the self (*ātman*) that is both smaller and larger than can be imagined. Space, that is the self (*ātman*) of the self (*ātman*), is presented as having dominion over all things even though it is smaller than the smallest of seeds. The elevation of the self (*ātman*)⁴⁴ to this supreme position makes it difficult to distinguish it from *brahman*, the substratum of all things, but this seems to be part of the purpose of the passage. The equation of *ātman* (the essence of a person⁴⁵) with *brahman* (the essence of the universe) can be found throughout the early Upaniṣads. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad says, “Now, what is called space is that which brings forth name and visible appearance. That within which they are located—that is *brahman*; that is the immortal; that is the self (*ātman*)” (CU 8.14.1).⁴⁶ We see here the equation of *ātman* with *brahman* and also the claim that *space generates all names* and visible appearances. The unresolvable dilemma of the *named* “space” as the origin of names could represent an implicit moment of apophatic theory; if “space” is but one name among many, it must not be the delimited and named “space” that is the space that generates all names. That is to say, the source of names cannot itself be named. But this aporia is complicated by the Vedic understanding of language which, as noted above, extends beyond the generic manifested name and, as will be shown below, is not limited by what is or can be sounded.

Space, the generator of all names, is also identified with a form of language in a passage in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. During a discussion between three men who had mastered the High Chant, Śilaka Śālāvatya, Caikitāyana Dālbhya, and Pravāhaṇa Jaivali, Caikitāyana Dālbhya says

⁴⁴ Black, *The Character of the Self in Ancient India*, 7, “Originally, in the earliest Vedic material, *ātman* was a reflexive pronoun meaning ‘self.’ The word continued to be used as a pronoun, but by the time of the late Brāhmaṇas and early Upaniṣads, *ātman* also became a philosophical term that could be associated with a wide range of meanings including body and soul, and could sometimes refer to the ontological principle underlying all reality,” but in the Yājñavalkya and Uddalāka dialogues, it appears to be more of a dis-ontology than an ontology.

⁴⁵ To put it very simply.

⁴⁶ Olivelle, *Upaniṣads*, 175-6.

that the Sāman ultimately leads to the heavenly world, but Śilaka Śālāvatya corrects him by saying his Sāman is without a foundation, and says that the heavenly world leads to this world, and this world is the foundation of the High Chant. Now Pravāhaṇa Jaivali stays silent until both of the other two men establish their own viewpoints, and then says that Śilaka Śālāvatya's Sāman is limited.⁴⁷ He says that this world leads to space, and space is the origin and end of all beings (CU 1.9.1). "This is the most extensive High Chant; this is without limit. When someone knows it in this way and venerates this most extensive High Chant, that which is most extensive will be his and he will win the most extensive of worlds" (CU 1.9.2). Space is identified with the most extensive High Chant and is understood to be an unlimited foundation. The paradox of space as a foundation is also found in a passage from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.

In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, during an instruction to Janaka, the king of Videha, Yājñavalkya rectifies, or rather deepens, a teaching that Janaka received from Vidagdha Śākalya:

"*Brahman* is the heart." That's what Vidagdha Śākalya told me,' said Janaka.

'Śākalya told you "*Brahman* is the heart?" Why, that's like someone telling that he has a father, or a mother, or a teacher! He probably reasoned: "What could a person who has no heart possibly have?" But did he tell you what its abode and foundation are?'

'He did not tell me that.'

'Then it's a one-legged *brahman*, Your Majesty.'

'Why don't you tell us that yourself, Yājñavalkya?'

'The heart itself is its abode, and space is its foundation. One should venerate it as stability.'

'What constitutes stability, Yājñavalkya?'

'The heart itself, Your Majesty,' he replied. 'For surely, Your Majesty, the heart is the abode of all beings; the heart is the foundation of all beings. For it is on the heart that all the beings are founded. So clearly, Your Majesty, the highest *brahman* is the heart (BU 4.1.7).⁴⁸

Brahman, the underlying substratum of all existence, is presented here as being contained in the heart and united with the heart, upon a foundation of space. The idea of the so-called "foundation" of *brahman* as space, in my view, is certainly paradoxical enough, and it is difficult to understand how anything could rest on groundlessness itself. This seems to be an attempt at

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 104-5; (CU 1.8.1-8)

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 56.

uniting the idea of the firm stability of a foundation with the malleable emptiness of space. To reject the simple opposition between a foundation and space requires the deconstruction of the usual separation of these concepts. If space can be understood as an empty expanse surrounding objects, when it is presented as a *stable foundation*, the reifying definition, space as an empty instability, must be invalidated and spoken-away. This opens up the word for re-imagining its meaning and definition. Space is presented *not* as unstable; it is the stable foundation of *brahman*. The deconstruction begins to free the word from its concretized connection to a clear definition, its *foundation*. This multiplicity of effects reflects the fluidity and flux of word meanings uncovered by the implicit apophatic theoretical movement. Sells points out that “the coincidence of opposites is a form of dialectical logic that plays against and upon the linear logic of delimited reference,”⁴⁹ so inasmuch as the above passage can be considered a presentation of the coincidence of opposites, it implies an apophasis. Yājñavalkya could have allowed Janaka to understand simply that “*brahman* is the heart,” but he instead complicates this equation by establishing the paradox of the foundation of space. If “*brahman* is the heart” is a one-legged *brahman*, which I take to mean that it is incomplete, it is the introduction of the idea that space is the foundation of stability that makes *brahman* complete. Furthermore, the identification of *brahman* as the heart presents us with the problem of *brahman* being the abode of itself. The simple statement, “*brahman* is the heart,” complicated by Yājñavalkya through the introduction of its abode and foundation, could act in some manner as a safeguard against the reification of *brahman* and the heart as simply this or that thing, and this process clears a space for interpretive freedom and revaluation. The expansion of plurivocity in the discourse surrounding key terms could therefore be understood to involve an implicit apophatic theory that opens up a conceptual space for reimagining what these key terms can be identified with.

⁴⁹ Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 21.

A passage later in the same dialogue provides the following description of the perception of *brahman*:

The breathing behind breathing, the sight behind sight,/ the hearing behind hearing, the thinking behind thinking—/ Those who know this perceive *brahman*,/ the first,/ the ancient./ With the mind alone must one behold it—/ there is here nothing diverse at all!/ From death to death he goes, who sees/ here any kind of diversity./ As just singular must one behold it—/ immeasurable and immovable./ The self is spotless and beyond space,/ unborn, immense, immovable.... ‘This immense, unborn self is none other than the one consisting of perception here among the vital functions (*prāṇa*). There, in that space within the heart, he lies—the controller of all, the lord of all, the ruler of all (BU 4.4.18-20 & 22)!⁵⁰

Again, the supreme principle governing all things, *brahman*, identified with the self (*ātman*), is said to be contained within the space of the heart. The passage presents the unresolvable dilemma of the transcendent source of the functions being singular, without diversity, but can yet be beheld with the mind. While this could be the beginning of an elaboration of an apophatic discourse, the passage rather just implies an apophatic theory, but it may not be completely obvious at first glance. The mind ordinarily perceives *only* diversity. The delineation of one perception from another, the marking off of the end of one object and the beginning of another, whether arbitrary and illusory or not, is what gives one the feeling of having comprehended and properly perceived something. The passage informs us that this kind of thinking is what leads one from death to death, but the question that perhaps should be asked is whether or not the discourse itself is bound to diversity. How are we to understand the distinction between the *brahman* perceived and the perceiver of *brahman*? Does it make sense to speak of perception where there is no diversity between that which is perceived and that which perceives? And if *brahman* is singular, without diversity, why is it delimited by the signification “*brahman*”? That is to say, how can the named “*brahman*” be the *brahman* without diversity, as it is necessarily distinguished from all other names? There are no easy answers to above questions, and I will not

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 67.

attempt to provide any, but perhaps it is worth asking another, and answering it too, however dissatisfying the answer may be: What does a question without an answer provide? Space? Space, as the absence of an answer. But can the absence of an answer be considered an answer? This leads me to a dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī.

What seems to me to be one of the most intense moments of apophatic discourse in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad occurs in a passage describing a conversation between Yājñavalkya and his wife about how to achieve immortality. Yājñavalkya decides to go into a different mode of life, and before he goes, he tells Maitreyī that he will first make a settlement between her and his other wife, Kātyayanī. Maitreyī asks in reply whether the earth filled with wealth would make her immortal. Yājñavalkya says that it would not, and so Maitreyī requests instead that he tell her all that he knows. He tells her that her request has made her more dear to him than she was before and then precedes to offer her a teaching about the self (*ātman*) (BU 4.5.1-5).⁵¹ He says that one holds all [different kinds of] things dear, not out of love for them, but rather out of love for oneself (*ātman*), and reasons from there that “...it is one’s self (*ātman*) which one should see and hear, and on which one should reflect and concentrate. For when one has seen and heard one’s self, when one has reflected and concentrated on one’s self, one knows this whole world” (BU 4.5.6).⁵² He then says that if a person considers anything as residing in something other than his self (*ātman*), that thing should forsake him (BU 4.5.7), and presents the analogy of all things coming forth from the “Immense Being” of the self (*ātman*) just as smoke rises up from a fire lit with damp fuel (BU 4.5.11).⁵³ At this point, the discourse seems to present the self (*ātman*) as the “ontological principle underlying all reality,”⁵⁴ as Black has described it.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 69.

⁵² *Ibid*, 70.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 70.

⁵⁴ See footnote 43.

Yājñavalkya also uses three other analogies to make his point. The last one and what follows it are worth quoting at length.

‘It is like this. As a mass of salt has no distinctive core and surface; the whole thing is a single mass of flavour—so indeed, my dear, this self has no distinctive core and surface; the whole thing is a single mass of cognition. It arises out of and together with these beings and disappears after them—so I say, after death there is no awareness.’

After Yājñavalkya said this, Maitreyī exclaimed: ‘Now, sir, you have utterly confused me! I cannot perceive this at all.’ He replied:

‘Look—I haven’t said anything confusing. This self, you see, is imperishable; it has an indestructible nature. For when there is a duality of some kind, then the one can see the other, the one can smell the other, the one can taste the other, the one can greet the other, the one can hear the other, the one can think of the other, the one can touch the other, and the one can think of the other. When, however, the Whole has become one’s very self (*ātman*), then who is there for one to see and by what means? Who is there for one to smell and by what means? Who is there for one to taste and by what means? Who is there for one to greet and by what means? Who is there for one to hear and by what means? Who is there for one to touch and by what means? Who is there for one to perceive and by what means?

‘By what means can one perceive him by means of whom one perceives this whole world?

‘About this self (*ātman*), one can only say “not—, not—”. He is ungraspable, for he cannot be grasped. He is undecaying, for he is not subject to decay. He has nothing sticking to him, for he does not stick to anything. He is not bound; yet he neither trembles in fear nor suffers injury.

‘Look—by what means can one perceive the perceiver? There, I have given you the instruction, Maitreyī. That’s all there is to immortality.’

After saying this, Yājñavalkya went away (BU 4.5.13-15).⁵⁵

Yājñavalkya goes to great lengths here to establish the supremacy of the self (*ātman*) over the objects it interacts with. Since it is the self (*ātman*) which one holds dear, one should concentrate on the self, and through this, one can gain knowledge of the whole world. Likewise, as all things are said to come forth from the self (*ātman*) like smoke from a fire, the self (*ātman*) holds an elevated position above all else. But then something interesting happens, and this is what confuses Maitreyī; after Yājñavalkya establishes the centrality and singularity of the self (*ātman*), in what seems to be the presentation of an ontology, he immediately begins to deconstruct any idea about what the self (*ātman*) is. Sells says, in an analysis of a Plotinus

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 71.

passage about the subject-predicate fusion,⁵⁶ “The disontology consists of a continual fusing of the subject-predicate dualism, and a continual displacing of the tendency for the one to revert to simply an opposite of duality and thus be reified within a dualistic relation.”⁵⁷ This could similarly be applied to the disontology above. As awareness always has its object, and the self that is a single mass of cognition “arises out of and together with these beings and disappears after them,” there being no awareness in death, the question is whether the delimited self (*ātman*), as the single mass of cognition, can be signified. The paragraph in which the “not—, not—” teaching appears recurs numerous times throughout the Yājñavalkya passages of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, it is his characteristic teaching, and he often uses it when he is threatened or pushed to the end of his knowledge.⁵⁸ It usually gets the final word in a dialogue, and as it is an apophatic discursive effort, a teaching of negation (the self is *ungraspable*, *undecaying*, *not* bound, etc.), during which there is no point of explanation about what the self *is*, it becomes difficult to say anything beyond it. Whatever the self (*ātman*) is, it is “not—”, but it cannot even be this “not—”, for it is ungraspable. Sells points out in his analysis of the disontology of Plotinus that “the very act of naming delimits. A name’s referent is, by the act of naming, marked off in some manner from those things which it is not.”⁵⁹ To describe the ungraspable, undecaying, self (*ātman*) then, requires a disontological unsaying, and in the above passage, Yājñavalkya deconstructs even his “not—, not—” saying. What seems to be the very peak of Yājñavalkya’s teachings culminates in a series of questions which he does not answer, questions to which there are no good answers, and upon asking these questions, he goes away. This is very peculiar, and while it may seem self-defeating to many, the question that is coupled

⁵⁶ Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 22-25.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 25.

⁵⁸ Black, *The Character of the Self in Ancient India*, 85.

⁵⁹ Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 15.

with no answer leaves a *space* where there might have been one, a space that opens up a path for reimagining, reinterpreting, wondering and wandering further on to wherever the religious imagination of the culture may go. This disontological unsaying, then, and the conceptual space it opens up which helps prevent the reification of the self (*ātman*), studied in conjunction with the general Vedic preoccupation with space, sheds light on one of the possible functions of apophatic discourse in the early Upaniṣads. But it may perhaps be even better understood in the context of the Vedic conception of language.

In some examples of Vedic literature, there is a mistrust of the sounded word, and what human beings express and hear as speech is understood to be a very small portion of what speech actually is. Joel Brereton, in his essay entitled “Unsounded Speech,” argues that, according to Vedic tradition, all sound can be considered a subset of the greater category of speech.

Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka 7.22 (ed. Keith) says, “‘The *brahman* is speech as a whole’ – so Lauhikya used to say. But whatever sounds (there be), one should understand them to be just speech. And as to this, the *ṛṣi* thus said – ‘I move with the Rudras and Vasus.’ Thus this speech is that which encompasses the whole of sound.”⁶⁰ A passage in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, says, “Every sound that exists is simply speech, for the former is fixed up to its limit (on the latter), whereas the latter is not” (BU 1.5.3),⁶¹ and as part of Brereton’s analysis of this passage, he says, “All sound has a distinct beginning, an end and an identifiable form; therefore, it is limited and structured. Speech, on the other hand, is not always articulated; and therefore it does not always have a limit, a fixed place, or a determined arrangement.”⁶² Speech should be understood to

⁶⁰ Brereton, “Unsounded Speech,” 3.

⁶¹ Olivelle, *Upaniṣads*, 19.

⁶² Brereton, “Unsounded Speech,” 6.

extend beyond sound, and there are forms of inaudible speech that are not confined to the limits of sound.⁶³

The division of different forms of speech is mentioned multiple times in Vedic literature, where what is ordinarily written and/or heard is said to be but a fragment of speech. Not only is it a fragment, it is the part of speech that is most imperfect. Recall that in a R̥gvedic passage mentioned earlier (RV 1.164.45-6), speech is presented as consisting of four parts, three parts hidden, and one part spoken by men. Stephanie Jamison says, “The fourth of something in Vedic often seems to be somehow leftover, at loose ends, presumably as a consequence of the common division of things into threes (the three worlds, the three pressings in the soma sacrifice, the three fires of the śrauta ritual, the three seasonal rites, the three twice-borne castes, etc.). As an afterthought, it often belongs to the mortal realm.”⁶⁴ A passage from the Kāthaka Samhitā of the Black Yajur Veda says,

Speech, (once) created, divided into four: three quarters (entered) into these worlds, one quarter in the animals. The (part) in heaven is in the Bṛhat (Sāman) and the thunder; that in the atmosphere is in the wind and the Vāmadevya (Sāman); that on the earth is in the fire and the Rathantara (Sāman). What was left over from the part in the animals they established in the Brahman. Therefore a Brahman speaks both (kinds of) speech, both divine and human (KS 14.5).⁶⁵

The Brahman is in the especially auspicious position of being able to take part in the entire scope of what speech encompasses. The idea that what was *left over* from the part of speech in animals was what was established in the Brahman, who apparently already had access to the other three quarters of speech, shows the fourth part of speech as the most insignificant part. The Brahman is also thus completed, rather than hindered, by inheriting the fourth part of speech to complement the other three parts. A passage from the Kapiṣṭhala Samhitā says,

⁶³ *Ibid*, 7.

⁶⁴ Jamison, *The Ravenous Hyenas*, 255.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 256.

Men were born with speech; the gods and Asuras without speech. When men spoke, they thrive. The gods and Asuras said to Prajāpati: “These (men) have thriven here.” He created truth from speech, (saying), “Bhūr bhuvaḥ svar.” The fourth (part of speech) was untruth. He put (it) in men. This is the untruth(ful part) of speech, which men speak (KapS 4.6).⁶⁶

Not only, then, are we told that the language spoken by human beings and animals is the lowest form of speech, but it is also the untruthful part of speech. All teachings therefore that rely on the interaction between individuals through sounded words, without being accompanied by an understanding that extends beyond the sounded and deceitful dregs of speech, must be, at best, inadequate. While there is absolutely no way to empirically investigate any speech or meaning that is essentially distinct from words that can be sounded, it is important to note that, for the Vedic understanding presented in the above passages, what is sounded is a part of speech that is the least part of what is encompassed by speech. Teachings that purposely seem to invalidate their own principles immediately upon establishing them do so in sounded speech. Now, when these teachings are *thought of*,⁶⁷ or even repeated silently, they lose some of the limitations characteristic of sounded interactions. The movement of the apophatic discourse, as in Yājñavalkya’s instruction to Maitreyī, in the context of the tradition, could thus be much less of an end than a beginning, for it is designed not to self-defeat or invalidate its own position (the self (*ātman*) is posited as the supreme principle underlying all things and then there is an attempt to remove its quiddity), but to carry one beyond the sounded words into a conceptual space where, perhaps, there is another form of language being spoken that is not untruthful and confined to sounds, but unlimited and open. For the Vedic imagination, then, the movement of

⁶⁶ Jamison, *The Ravenous Hyenas*, 256-7.

⁶⁷ Brereton, “Unsounded Speech,” 6, “In Brāhmanic symbolism, articulate speech represents the world and all things which have limits. Normally *vāk* designates such speech, and it is often contrasted to thought, which is without definable boundaries, as in ŚB(M) 1.4.4.7 ...’Now, speech is smaller than thought, for thought is much more unlimited and speech much more limited.’”

apophatic discourse could become a unique opportunity for one to open up to a space beyond the sounded word.

There is a passage from the dialogue in which Yājñavalkya is informing Janaka about *brahman* and space that speaks of speech as the highest *brahman*. It precedes the section where Yājñavalkya rectifies the saying that “*brahman* is the heart,” and follows the same literary pattern. Jitvan Śailini told Janaka that “*brahman* is speech,” and Yājñavalkya characteristically asks him if he was told what its abode and foundation are. Janaka says no, and asks Yājñavalkya to explain.

‘Speech itself is its abode, and space is its foundation. One should venerate it as knowledge.’

‘What constitutes knowledge, Yājñavalkya?’

‘Speech itself, Your Majesty,’ he replied. ‘For surely, Your Majesty, it is through speech that we come to know a counterpart. Ṛgveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda, the Atharva-Āngiras, histories, ancient tales, sciences, hidden teachings (*upaniṣad*), verses, aphorisms, explanations, and glosses; offerings and oblations; food and drink; this world and the next world; and all beings—it is through speech, Your Majesty, that we come to know all these. So clearly, Your Majesty, the highest *brahman* is speech. When a man knows and venerates it as such, speech never abandons him, and all beings flock to him; he becomes a god and joins the company of gods’ (BU 4.1.2).⁶⁸

As in the discourse surrounding the identification of *brahman* with the heart, space is said to be the foundation, but speech is here said to be the abode instead of the heart. Knowledge is identified with speech and *brahman*, and knowledge is or can be one of those forms of speech that is not necessarily sounded; it is rather the understanding that comes along with sounded words. Speech is thus defined in a typically wider, Vedic sense. This does not seem to be restricted to the sounded interactions that human beings exchange and understand as speech; it is a speech all words are a part of, but as *brahman*, it must not just simply be the aggregate of many words. The positing of a function or principle as being identified with *brahman* is one of the things that the

⁶⁸ Olivelle, *Upaniṣads*, 53.

early Upaniṣads are preoccupied with, but the above passage shows the explicit connection that Vedic composers made between speech and space.

There is one more section of interest from the Chāndogya Upaniṣad that illustrates nicely a Vedic moment of explicit apophatic theory. First of all, the dialogue between Uddalāka Āruṇi and his son Śvetaketu clearly shows disfavor for Brahmins who are so by birth alone (CU 6.1.1), and it presents the memorization of the Vedas as just one of the steps along the way in the path of knowledge, favoring the ability to hear what has not been heard before, think what has not been thought of before, and perceive what has not been perceived before as the completion of one's knowledge (CU 6.1.3). Uddalāka tells Śvetaketu a “rule of substitution” that is designed to give him access to the knowledge of the underlying universal principles behind particulars. He says, “It is like this, son. By means of just one lump of clay one would perceive everything made of clay—the transformation is a verbal handle, a name—while the reality is just this: ‘It’s clay’” (CU 1.6.4).⁶⁹ The “verbal handle” is the way in which distinctions are made, while the reality is singular. The short passage above begins a discourse in which many illustrations are made as a means of getting to the real behind the generic name. Uddalāka says that in the beginning “this world was simply what is existent—one only, without a second,” until it thought to become many (CU 6.2.2).⁷⁰ The existent, then, is considered the underlying and unified substratum of all particular existent things, the undifferentiated unity of the real behind the name. The unity of existence does not belong to the distinguishing characteristics of the name, and so the word that names must always fall short and utter only the untruthful, as the name's specularly is of particulars. So if the existent is to be free from the confining container of the name, it *must* be unspoken or spoken-away; it can never be the part of a predicative discourse.

⁶⁹ Olivelle, *Upaniṣads*, 148.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 149; Doniger, *The Hindus*, 180, points out that this is a direct challenge to a *Rgvedic* passage (RV 10.72.1-5).

And while there is left a gap between the existent and the name, the name continues to move on ever deeper into the space that surrounds and is presupposed by the fragmented discourse. It can never reach the existent, the originary singularity, for origin and singular are in fact quite fictive inasmuch as they are an object of the discourse. So what is the existent? Perhaps we can *say* this much, it is not what can be *said*. The above passage does not perform the apophatic discourse or explicitly state an apophatic theory, but there is an implied theory of negation in the distinction between the “verbal handle” and the reality. But later Uddalāka explicitly expresses an apophatic theory in his use of the concept of nothingness to describe the finest essence of all things to Śvetaketu. He says,

‘Bring a banyan fruit.’
 ‘Here it is, sir.’
 ‘Cut it up.’
 ‘I’ve cut it up, sir.’
 ‘What do you see there?’
 ‘These quite tiny seeds, sir.’
 ‘Now, take one of them and cut it up.’
 ‘I’ve cut one up, sir.’
 ‘What do you see there?’
 ‘Nothing, sir.’

Then he told him: ‘This finest essence here, son, that you can’t even see—look how on account of that finest essence this huge banyan tree stands here.

‘Believe, my son: the finest essence here—that constitutes the self of this whole world; that is the truth; that is the self (ātman). And that’s how you are, Śvetaketu’ (CU 6.12.1-3).⁷¹

The *nothingness in the space* between the cut up seeds expresses, in a visual metaphor, the negation of what can be visualized, an explicitly apophatic theory. There is no quiddity to the “essence” of the banyan tree, or of the whole world, or of Śvetaketu. To attempt to describe “nothing” in a predicative discourse, we would be left with the same problem we have in the attempt to describe the original and undifferentiated “existent”. There is no performative movement of apophatic discourse in the above passage, only an explication of apophatic theory, and given the Vedic presuppositions regarding the inadequacy of the sounded word, there need

⁷¹ Olivelle, *Upaniṣads*, 154.

not be a performative discursive effort. The disontology is an attempt to prevent the concretization of the self (*ātman*) as some ‘thing’ with quiddity; the finest essence is presented as the absence of image in the visual sphere.

The early Upaniṣads treat many subjects and could be studied from many different angles. Even though they are fairly short, they represent vast and complicated thought processes. It would be impossible to adequately address the extent of content in this Vedic literature, much less all of the apophatic movements, but in the above study, I have merely attempted to establish the validity of the category of apophasis applied to the early Upaniṣads. As Sells claims, the term apophasis, defined formally, can be applied to Eastern texts as well as Western texts. I also make use of his distinction between apophatic theory, of which he gives little attention in his study, and apophatic discourse. I also further distinguish between implicit and explicit apophatic theory in the above examples of Vedic literature. Apophasis does not signify a doctrinal statement, but usually either theorizes or performs a movement that attempts to prevent the reification of a supreme or transcendent principle. As a language of disontology, its object has no quiddity. There is thus no pure apophatic movement; it is an attempt of language (that is, sounded and limited language) to move beyond its own confining limitations, to signify what cannot be signified.

If the apophatic moments in Vedic literature were to be isolated and be studied only semantically, their function(s) would be considerably obscured, and I suggest that they be examined in the context of the Vedic understanding of language and the cultural preoccupation with the search for open space. The earliest account of Vedic religious life, the *Rg Veda*, provides evidence for a culture that was highly portable and valued open space. This text also contains the earliest evidence for the Vedic fourfold division of speech. The period in which the

early Upaniṣads were composed was a time of increased urbanization according to the archaeological and philological data. While Upaniṣadic culture retained the value of open space, it was reinterpreted and reimagined, and evidence for the group desire for wide open space abounds in the early Upaniṣads. Some ascetics retreated into the forests away from urban centers, and according to Doniger, the theory of reincarnation and the need to break out of the cycle of rebirth may reflect the “overcrowding” of the urbanized environment. There is also evidence of the need for open space in the Upaniṣadic tendency to turn to the space within the human heart, a space that was thought to contain everything imaginable, both what belongs to the external expanse and what does not. The early Upaniṣads are also often preoccupied with the connection between the heart, the self (*ātman*) and *brahman*, and space. Space is identified with the High Chant in a passage from the Chāndogya Upaniṣad which asserts that a person who knows this connection will “win the *most extensive of worlds*.”⁷² This study should have well established the value of open space in Vedic period literature,⁷³ but I also suggest that the search for open space can be identified in implicit and explicit movements of apophatic theory as well as apophatic discourse. These apophatic movements, examined in conjunction with the Vedic understanding of language, may help to explain how they function in the wider Vedic religious imagination. The inadequate and even “untruthful” sounded word was thought to be the lowest form of speech, and apophasis, taken in the context of this view of speech, could be understood as a way of demonstrating this. This study has examined different literature from a period that may have extended more than one thousand years, and apophasis, the value of open space, and the Vedic understanding of language are all vast topics that could hardly be exhausted in a work of many volumes. The considerations presented here should therefore be taken as preliminary and open to

⁷² Emphasis mine.

⁷³ And it has already been established in the work of other scholars, such as Doniger and Whittaker.

revision. Nonetheless, I hope to have established the applicability of the category of apophasis in Vedic literature and its connection to the cultural value of open space and the Vedic understanding of speech. Apophatic movements in Vedic literature, examined in conjunction with Vedic space and speech, in my estimation, provides a more comprehensive view of the possible function(s) of apophasis in Vedic literature than a purely semantic study would.

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